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# THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE NEGRO

1953 - 1956



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
John Edgar Hoover, Director

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PREFACE

This monograph is a study of the relations between the Communist Party, USA, and the Negro people in the United States and is a supplement to a previous monograph The Communist Party and the Negro, which covered the period 1919-1952. The present volume embraces the 1953-1956 period. It has been compiled from public-source, confidential, and secret material.



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## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### A. Summary

The Communist Party, USA, despite its concentrated efforts, has failed to attract even a significant minority of the Negroes in the United States to its program. While it attempts to practice its policy of agitation and propaganda among the Negroes on a nationwide basis, the majority of its attention is devoted to those Negroes living in the Southern States. This has been particularly evident during the past year in that the Party has concentrated upon organizing the unorganized workers in the South, especially those of the Negro race.

It strives to promote its aims through Negro communist front organizations and by infiltrating and controlling legitimate Negro groups. One of its chief difficulties has been, and continues to be, the problem of white chauvinism, i. e., supremacy of the white race. At the present time, it can be stated that along with the decline in the national membership of the Communist Party, USA, the Party has experienced an increasingly greater decline, percentage wise, in its Negro membership.





B. Conclusions

1. The basic program of the Communist Party, USA, in relation to the Negro in the United States from 1928 to 1956 was defined in its two slogans: "equal rights" and "self-determination" for the Negroes in the "Black Belt," which is that portion of the Southern United States containing a large concentration of the Negro population. Communists asserted that the Negroes living in this area constituted a separate nation and should be given their rights accordingly. In early 1956, the Party modified its advocacy of "self-determination," but its general propaganda on "equal rights" and other issues remains essentially the same.
2. The activities of the Communist Party, USA, are motivated not by the desire to improve the status of the Negro in our society, but to exploit legitimate Negro grievances for the furtherance of communist aims.
3. Communists in the United States believe that the movement for Negro freedom in this country merges with the struggle of colonial peoples, particularly the darker races, to free themselves from their "oppressors." The Communist Party, USA, links this struggle with the fight for peaceful coexistence throughout the world.
4. The Communist Party, USA, places particular emphasis on getting the support of Negroes employed in basic industries. It now regards the job of organizing the unorganized workers, especially in the South, as one of its fundamental tasks.
5. The Party plans to advance its Negro program in the South through its colonization program which was initiated in order to place militant and devoted Party members as workers in basic or vital industries. Under this program, communists



selected for such assignments move to new areas, assume altered backgrounds and identities, obtain employments in industry, and gradually begin to organize people believed to be "progressive."

6. The Supreme Court decision of May 17, 1954, outlawing segregation in the public schools in the United States, is regarded by the Communist Party as a decisive victory for the Negro race, and the Party has attempted to implement and exploit the enforcement of desegregation in every possible way. The case most widely publicized by the communist press in this respect was that of Autherine J. Lucy, a Negro who was the first of her race to enroll in a hitherto all-white university.
7. The Communist Party has also exploited the alleged murder of a Negro youth in Mississippi using this case as an opportunity to further its agitation and propaganda campaign among the Negroes.
8. One of the main points in the Communist Party's program in its struggle for equal rights for Negroes is its attempt to increase Negro representation in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of state and national governments. Although the Party is conducting this struggle on a nationwide basis, its main emphasis is in the Southern States where Negro representation is disproportionate according to population.
9. The Communist Party, USA, strongly opposes segregation in housing, pointing out that this is one of the issues around which Negro-white unity can be built.
10. The two principal Communist Party-Negro front groups until recently were the National Negro Labor Council and the National Association of Negro Trade Unionists. At the end of April, 1956, the former was dissolved due to financial





difficulties and to its desire to circumvent registering with the Attorney General of the United States as a communist front organization. The latter is a comparatively new group whose purpose is to organize the unorganized workers, concentrating strongly on the Negroes.

11. Communists in the United States have attempted to infiltrate and gain control of legitimate Negro-fraternal, protest-and-improvement organizations. To date, their efforts have been unsuccessful on a state or national level, although there have been some instances where the Communist Party has gained control of isolated chapters.
12. The Communist Party, USA, has been compelled throughout its history to wage a continuing fight against white chauvinism, i. e., the supremacy of the white race. Despite this struggle, white chauvinism has increased within the Party in recent years and is presently of grave concern to Party leaders.
13. Negro membership within the Communist Party, USA, as of June, 1956, was estimated to be seven per cent of the total national membership of the Party. The total national membership was estimated at slightly less than 20,000.



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## I. INTRODUCTION

A previous monograph The Communist Party and the Negro, dated February, 1953, covered the period 1919-1952. As indicated therein, the Communist Party, USA, has devoted an extraordinary amount of its time, funds, propaganda, and personnel to recruiting members from among the fifteen million Negroes who comprise approximately ten per cent of our total population. The failure of its efforts in this respect is best attested to by the fact that as of June, 1956, active, dues-paying Negroes constituted seven per cent of the total Party membership.

Its basic program in this field until recently has been set forth in its two slogans: "equal rights" and "self-determination" for the Negroes in the "Black Belt." The term "Black Belt" as used by communists refers to that portion of the Southern United States containing a large concentration of the Negro population. At varying intervals, depending on the extent of the Negro population, communists describe it as including parts of southern Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, Tennessee, and Texas. Marxists have maintained that the "Black Belt" contains all the necessary characteristics for becoming a separate nation and accordingly advanced the theory of "self-determination,"



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i. e., the formation of an independent national state for the Negroes in that area. Marxists, however, qualified this theory by stating that whenever the right of "self-determination" conflicted with the interests of the "working class" (e. g., the Communist Party, USA), it must be subordinated. This was evidenced during World War II when the Communist Party, USA, de-emphasized "self-determination" in order to promote national unity leading to greater aid to Soviet Russia.

Although the condition of the Negro in American society has improved during the last thirty years, the Communist Party, due to its subservience to and domination by the Soviet Union, has never recognized this fact and has continued to agitate among the Negroes on the same old themes. It has, therefore, stressed its demands for "equal rights" and "self-determination" with varying degrees of emphasis, governed not by any change in the status of the Negro in this country, but by the exigencies of the Soviet Union in international affairs.

In early 1956, however, the Communist Party, USA, reappraised its position on "self-determination" and decided to modify the advocacy of "self-determination" for the Negroes in the "Black Belt." While the Party



has altered its policy in this respect, its stand on "equal rights" for the Negro race in the United States remains unchanged.

Numerous reasons can be adduced to explain the failure of the Communist Party, USA, in spite of its almost overwhelming efforts, to attract even a significant minority of the American Negro population to its program. Probably the most obvious is the realization by the Negro (as well as the vast majority of Americans) that the constant shifts in the Communist Party "line" are determined by the needs of the Soviet Union and not by any factor intrinsic to the American way of life or by the Party's interest in Negro welfare. Other reasons, more specifically applicable to the Negro, include the Communist Party's previous espousal of the theory of "self-determination" (which is too similar to segregation for Negroes), in spite of the Negro's deep-rooted desire for total equality within the American society; its severe criticism of influential Negro clergymen, particularly during the late 1920's and early 1930's; its inability to justify Russia's aid to Italy when the latter invaded Ethiopia; its subversion of the National Negro Congress, which originally showed promise of becoming an important Negro improvement organization; its activities during World War II,





when it admittedly "soft-pedaled" its fight for Negro rights; and the opposition of influential noncommunist Negroes and Negro organizations.

The fact that the activities of the Communist Party, USA, are motivated not by the desire to improve the status of the Negro in our society, but to exploit legitimate Negro grievances for the furtherance of communist aims is clearly evidenced by instructions issued by the Party to its members as early as 1925 and repeatedly applied since then:

"The aim of our Party in our work among the Negro masses is to create a powerful proletarian movement which will fight and lead the struggle of the Negro race against exploitation and oppression in every form and which will be a militant part of the revolutionary movement of the whole American working class, to strengthen the American revolutionary movement by bringing into it the 11, 500, 000 Negro workers and farmers in the United States to broaden the struggles of the American Negro workers and farmers, connect them with the struggles of the national minorities and colonial peoples of all the world and thereby further the cause of the world revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat." 1



## II. COMMUNIST PARTY, USA, ON VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE NEGRO QUESTION TODAY

### A. International Aspect

The Communist Party, USA, hailed the conference of Asian and African peoples at Bandung, Indonesia, in April, 1955, as marking "the march forward of the once-subjected people of Asia and Africa," and as "one of the dicisive world forces that led to the constructive conference of the Big Four recently in Geneva." American communists believe that the movement for Negro freedom in the United States merges with the "struggle of the colonial and darker peoples of the Far East--as well as of Africa--against the common enemy--Wall Street imperialism." Louis E. Burnham, who has been reported to be a member of the Communist Party, \* stated in December, 1955, that:

"This new world, so dramatically united at the historic Bandung conference, represents an irresistible force in world affairs. The movement for Negro freedom will win, not in isolation from, but only in conscious and principled alliance with all forces throughout the world who are its natural allies."<sup>2</sup>

One high-ranking communist leader, in speaking of the Negro people in the Southern United States, asserted:

\*All information in this monograph identifying persons or organizations with the communist movement has been furnished by informants or sources which have supplied reliable information in the past.





" 'They are contributing to the lore of oppressed people all over the world in their struggle for liberation from the system of racism, terror, lynching, and assassination in the deep South. Undoubtedly, they are inspired by the great conference of colored peoples which took place in Bandung last summer.' "3

Claude Lightfoot, Negro communist leader in Illinois who was convicted under the Smith Act of 1940, \* commented that:

" 'In recent years, the upsurge of the colonial people and the Chinese Revolution have had their effect in heightening the militancy and the consciousness among my people, . . . and strengthened their unwillingness to accept the theory of "gradualism" in the winning of civil rights.' "4

B. The Negro in the Fight for Peaceful Coexistence

The Communist Party, USA, for the past several years has stressed the struggle for peace as one of the most important tasks for the communists in this country as well as throughout the world. Subsequent to the July, 1955, conference for foreign ministers of the United States, France, Great Britain, and the U.S.S.R. held in Switzerland, the Party re-emphasized the possibility of peaceful coexistence between the United States and the Soviet Union. The conference itself, in the Party's analysis,

\*Title 18, U.S. Code, Section 2385 (1948 Edition), popularly known as the Smith Act, makes it unlawful for anyone to knowingly teach and advocate the duty and necessity of overthrowing and destroying the Government of the United States by force and violence. The Act was passed by Congress in 1940.



was a "turning point" and represented the "beginning of the end of the cold war."

In connection with the role of the Negro in this fight for peace, the Communist Party recognizes that the "Negro people exerts considerable strength in the fight for peace, especially in the context of its most direct and immediate concern--the fight for civil rights." The Party feels that:

"There can be no successful effort to involve great masses of the Negro people in the fight for peace which does not take this struggle as its starting point. . ."<sup>5</sup>

The Party further believes that:

"The second specific aspect of Negro peoples participation in the fight for peace is the special importance of the struggle against colonialism. . . vast possibilities exist to enlist the mass of Negro people in the mounting struggle to reverse the Dulles policy of military alliance in the Middle East and South Asia and substitute for it a policy of national freedom and peaceful coexistence and a vast plan of economic assistance, without strings, to the underdeveloped countries of Asia and Africa."<sup>6</sup>

C. Negro "Self-Determination"

During the period 1928-30, the Communist Party, USA, defined the Negro question in the United States as "that of an oppressed nation" in the "Black Belt"--struggling for "self-determination," and an oppressed national minority in other parts of the country--fighting for full democratic rights.





By "self-determination," the Party maintained that the Negroes as a separate race in the Southern States constituted a majority of the population and had the right, if they so desired, to secede from the United States and form their own government and nation.

This conception was adhered to and developed by the Party throughout the years so that by 1954 communists asserted that:

"This conception of the Negro question as a national question is the most fundamental theoretical\* contribution our Party has made to the fight for Negro freedom. It is this insight, for example, which underlies the struggle for all-class unity of the Negro people, \* and for alliance of the whole Negro people and the working class\* in common struggle against imperialist oppression. . . ." 7

In early 1956, however, the Communist Party, USA, reappraised its position on "self-determination" and decided to modify its advocacy of "self-determination" for the Negroes in the "Black Belt." However, it will still consider the Negroes as constituting a national as well as a racial minority. One high-ranking Negro communist leader has taken the position that the Negro people in the United States do not constitute a nation but instead are a nationality.

Eugene Dennis, general secretary of the Communist Party, USA, in commenting upon this decision, stated:

\*Underlined portion italicized in original text.





"... In my opinion we should frankly acknowledge that while the Negro question in the Deep South remains a national and an agrarian question, for some time developments in the South have not\* moved in the direction of the establishment of a Negro nation.

"The basic demands of the Negro people in the South, which they themselves put forward and are struggling for, are for the right to vote and representative government, for full equality in employment, education and in all other spheres of life, and for achieving serious reforms in agriculture.

"In re-appraising our position on self-determination in the Black Belt, our Party should emphasize, as never before, that the struggle for Negro rights and freedom, north and south of the Mason-Dixon line, has emerged as a general, national democratic task, upon the solution of which depends the democratic and social advance of the whole nation, particularly of the workers and farmers."<sup>8</sup>

It can be seen, therefore, that the Party has modified its policy of "self-determination." This is a major development in Negro matters for the Party. However, its general propaganda relating to "equal rights" and other issues remains essentially the same as does the ultimate goal of the Communist Party, USA, --the establishment of a socialist United States. In February, 1956, a member of the Party's national Negro commission stated:

"... It is generally known that the proletariat of a national movement has both a national and class mission to perform. This is likewise true of the Negro proletariat in our country. It has the task of leading the Negro people to national liberation, and, in conjunction with their fellow white workers, of putting an end to class exploitation by leading the American people to Socialism...."

\*Underlined portion italicized in original text.





D. The Negro in Industry

Throughout its history, the Communist Party, USA, has placed particular emphasis on the importance of gaining the support of Negroes employed in basic industries. At the present time, the Party attaches the utmost significance to the merger of the AFL-CIO which took place on December 5, 1955. As far as the Negro problem is concerned, the Party claims that:

"The historic significance of the merger convention's position on the Negro question lies in the fact that it registered a major defeat for the racist policy of Gompersism; at the same time it registered a fundamental and basic victory for the policy of Negro-white unity, of advancing and strengthening the Negro-labor alliance, of a single trade-union center of all working people, white and Negro alike.

"Its significance is to be found in that after a century of bitter struggle, the decisive national center of organized labor is committed formally and officially to a line of Negro-white unity, to a line of equal rights for the Negro workers in industry as well as in the labor movement."\*10

In this connection, the Party is referring specifically to the action of the convention regarding:

"... The resolution on civil rights, the speech by Thurgood Marshall, special counsel for the NAACP, \*\* the speech of Carey on the civil rights resolution, the added statement in the speech

\*Entire quotation italicized in original.

\*\*National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.



of Adlai Stevenson in his criticism of the violence directed against the Negro people in Mississippi. And last, but not least, the election of two Negro vice Presidents to the Executive Committee of the AFL-CIO. . . . "11

The Communist Party takes credit for the emergence of Negro leadership at the convention by stating:

"... The struggle for Negro leadership was a product in the first place of the consistent and sustained demands of the progressives and Communist forces in the labor movement for the last 20 years. . . ."12

Among the tasks now facing the Party as a result of the merger is that of backing a drive for organizing the unorganized workers particularly in the South.

"Of all the immediate tasks facing the AFL-CIO with respect to Negro-white unity none is more important than that of organizing the unorganized in the South. . . . The demand for organizing the South must reach a level of intensity that will result in the Federation's passing over from words to deeds on this question. "13

Other problems confronting the Party include:

1. "... an interpretation of the constitution to help end all bars to Negro workers in affiliated international unions. . . ."14
2. "... an end to Jim Crow locals. . . ."15
3. "... the need to rally support for the civil rights mobilization announced by the UAW\* and the NAACP. . . ."16

\*United Automobile, Aircraft & Agricultural Implement Workers of America.





In addition to advocating certain demands arising out of the AFL-CIO convention, the Communist Party continues to demand a policy of nondiscrimination for Negroes in industry. It claims that Negroes, in the great majority of cases, are only able to obtain positions as laborers, that there "has been no gain in breaking the 'last-to-be-hired, first-to-be-fired' pattern of discrimination against the Negro people."<sup>17</sup>

This is particularly true in the transport, garment, maritime, and electrical industries. Communists feel that:

"Special attention should be given to current efforts to squeeze Negro and Puerto Rican workers out of longshore and maritime...."

. . . . .  
"The main channel\* through which such struggles for jobs for Negroes can best be conducted is the machinery of the trade unions--especially the network of shop committees and the regular programs of the unions."<sup>18</sup>

They believe that the struggle to abolish Jim Crow in the railroad industry is of "prime importance" to the advancement of the fight for jobs and state that:

"... The basic aim of this fight must be to win equality for Negroes on every type of job which exists in the industry--conductors, ticket agents, locomotive engineers, firemen, brakemen, switchmen, station masters, head baggage men, clerks, dispatchers...."<sup>19</sup>

\*Underlined portion italicized in original text.



**E. Communist Party Colonization Program**

One method by which the Communist Party hopes to advance its Negro program in the South is through its so-called colonization program. It anticipates a very difficult struggle in that area and, in the latter part of 1955, issued instructions that a number of people, both Negro and white, should be sent into the Southern States where they are to obtain industrial jobs. These potential colonizers are to be childless couples, preferably between 21 and 34 years of age. Any person having a reputation as a radical or a communist will not be considered. Selections are to be made, at least in part, from Party members presently active in Labor Youth League\* work.

Those individuals chosen as colonizers are instructed to remain in their new assignment on a more or less permanent basis, "root" themselves in their new jobs, and for the present conceal their communist tendencies. They will be concentrated in the larger cities of the South especially Birmingham, Memphis, and cities in Mississippi.

Those colonizers assigned to the textile industry are to be financed, if possible, through their own means or supported by their

\*The Labor Youth League has been designated by the Attorney General as coming within the purview of Executive Order 10450.



Communist Party district. The national office will, if necessary, defray any expenses. For a period of about one year, the colonizer is told to make no attempt to organize or recruit for the Communist Party but to spend this time establishing himself in the community. He is to become active in church and civic affairs thus establishing a good reputation in the community. He is not to have any open contact with the Party in that area nor to get a reputation as a Party member or sympathizer. By the end of a year, he is to begin to organize persons who he believes are "progressive."

Colonizers are expected to receive indoctrination courses prior to leaving for their assignments. It is reported that this colonization program has been started by the Party and that plans are being made to fix a certain quota of colonizers to be sent down South during 1956. Plans are also allegedly being made by the Party to have a number of their trustworthy youth members, who are attending college, transfer to colleges in the South to enable them to carry on Party work there.

F. Civil Rights

1. Supreme Court Decision Outlawing Segregation in Public Schools, May 17, 1954, and Subsequent Rulings Affecting Publicly Owned Recreational Facilities and Interstate Transportation

On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court of the United States decreed that compelling segregation in the public schools on the basis of race is a



denial of constitutional rights. The doctrine of "separate but equal" facilities handed down by the Court in 1896 (Plessy v. Ferguson) was set aside. On May 31, 1955, the Supreme Court implemented this decision by stating the principle previously announced should be carried out "with all deliberate speed." This ruling permitted account to be taken of local conditions and requirements affecting the manner and timing of implementation. This principle was also found applicable in cases involving racial segregation in publicly owned recreational facilities, and adhered to in decisions of the Federal Interstate Commerce Commission embracing segregation in interstate transportation.

The Communist Party, USA, hailed the 1954 decision of the Supreme Court as a:

"...real victory for democracy in the United States, and especially for the harassed Negro people. It will have world-wide repercussions. The decision is body blow against the whole jimcrow system, which has for so many decades persecuted the Negro masses and disgraced this country. All the friends of freedom will hail this great democratic achievement."<sup>20</sup>





The Party also took its share of credit for this achievement:

"The Supreme Court decision on segregation in education reflects the tremendous new growth in the Negro liberation movement. . . . It is due in no small part to the pioneering role of the Communists and the Left in the struggle for Negro rights." <sup>21</sup>

The Party pointed out, however, that a legal victory does not mean the automatic end of segregation but necessitates a drive for its enforcement:

"... The legal form does not correspond to the social actuality. The struggle for equal rights cannot rest with legal victories, important as they are, but must drive to enforce\* such victories and change the conditions of day-to-day living." <sup>22</sup>



In this connection, communists have attempted to implement and exploit the enforcement of desegregation in every possible way:

"... The struggle against segregation should be tied up with the struggle against jim crow in employment, for jobs for all, for equal work for whites and Negroes, for women as well as men, for ending jim crow in housing, for enactment of an FEPC, against fascism and McCarthyism, and for peace. Meetings should be held, demonstrations arranged under broad united front conferences. These meetings can be the beginning of the most popular and broadest coalition activity that our country has seen in a long time."

\*Underlined portion italicized in original text.

"... Hundreds of trade union, church, professional, student, national-group and other organizations with predominantly white membership--including many in the South--are formally on record in support of the Court decision. The big need now is to get them all into motion.

"Petitions should be filed with the Supreme Court prior to the December 7th hearing on implementing decrees. Conferences and mass meetings should be organized. Resolutions should be adopted and publicized. Delegations should be sent to public officials on national, state and local levels.... And every effort of reaction to organize mob violence should be countered with overwhelming mass protests by the democratic forces of the people."23



The Communist Party has been particularly vehement against opposition arising to the enforcement of segregation in the Southern States and has alleged lack of enforcement by Congress and Federal authorities. An editorial in the Daily Worker, east coast communist newspaper, in the latter part of 1955 declares:

"Most of the segregated schools which were declared illegal on May 17, 1954, and again on May 31, 1955, are still segregated. White supremacists, using legal technicalities and terror, including murder, have challenged the authority of the high court and federal law and order...."24

On January 12, 1956, in an editorial entitled "Dixiecrat Defiance," the Daily Worker asserted:



"State after state in the Deep South has announced its planned refusal to comply with a U. S. Supreme Court order. Brownell has pretended not to hear these threats, not even when they reached the level of a movement to 'nullify' all federal laws dealing with desegregation. . . ."

. . . . .

"... The times cry out for an Attorney General with a passion for defense of the Constitution and the rights it bestows upon all citizens. Brownell, by his actions and his lack of action has proven beyond a doubt that he does not meet present requirements."25

In March, 1956, 96 Southern Congressmen issued a manifesto pledging themselves to use "all lawful means" to reverse the Supreme Court decision outlawing racial segregation in public schools. This manifesto was presented to both Houses of Congress and inserted in the Congressional Record.

The Daily Worker editorialized on this resolution by saying:

"This is the Dixiecrat attempt to roll back the democratic tide rising behind the movement to enforce the Supreme Court's rulings. These racists do not want 'moderation' or 'gradualism' or even reasonableness' in approaching the desegregation issue. They want nothing less than the perpetuation of the 'lawful means' by which they have ignored the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments."

. . . . .

"The 96 Congressmen have borrowed heavily from the secessionist documents of 1860 in drafting their declaration. Their arrogant attempt to intimidate Congress and the nation has not met with a resolute determination to enforce the Constitution and federal law everywhere in the United States. Let Congress pass civil rights laws. Compel Brownell to enforce the right to vote for southern Negroes! Push the Justice Department into actions to enforce the Supreme Court's desegregation decisions. Oust Eastland from the U. S. Senate. End the retreat before the Dixiecrat minority in Congress and the country at large."26

a. Autherine J. Lucy

Probably the case most widely publicized in both the communist and the free press of a Negro attempting to enroll in a hitherto all-white university is that of Autherine J. Lucy. Subsequent to the May 17, 1954, decision of the Supreme Court invalidating segregation, Miss Lucy was admitted to the University of Alabama by order of a U. S. District Court in Alabama. After attending the University for three days under full police protection, she was excluded from class by the board of trustees on February 6, 1956. This decision was made under the University's police power and for the protection of students, the faculty, and Miss Lucy in view of demonstrations by students and outsiders.

The communist press decried this action by University officials and demanded Federal action in the matter:





"It is a national disgrace that the university authorities have indefinitely barred Miss Lucy from the campus. This is craven surrender or, worse, collusion with the Kluxers. It is not Aurtherine Lucy but the wretched band of lawbreakers who should have been barred from Alabama University."

"And where is President Eisenhower amidst this violation of law? Silent, upon a farm in Gettysburg? And where are Attorney General Brownell and G-Man Hoover? Blind, as usual, to Dixiecrat defiance of the law?

"We are confident that a great outcry from the people will be heard in the White House, demanding federal action to carry out the law in Alabama."<sup>27</sup>

Party members stated that the Communist Party would utilize every possible facility to create a national incident in connection with this matter.

On February 9, 1956, Miss Lucy filed a petition with a U. S. District Court in Alabama, asking the court to issue an order to show why the University board should not be held in contempt. She alleged that the suspension was not done for her personal safety but to appease others. On February 29, 1956, the District Court ruled that University officials were not in contempt of court; that the officials had acted in good faith in their attempts to protect Miss Lucy; and that her suspension from the University

should be lifted as of March 5, 1956. However, the University expelled Miss Lucy on March 1, 1956, on the basis that she had made false charges and allegations against University officials.

Benjamin J. Davis, a member of the national board of the Communist Party, USA, who had been convicted under the Smith Act of 1940, "rapped the expulsion of Autherine Lucy. . . and called for prosecution of the trustees who voted the action." He demanded:

"... enforcement of the Supreme Court decision of desegregation and the arrest and prosecution of Eastland, Talmadge and 'the gang which controls the White Citizens Councils, and all others who conspire to keep the Negro people from enjoying rights guaranteed under the Constitution.' "28



b. Bus Boycott in Montgomery, Alabama

In early December, 1955, Negro leaders in Montgomery, Alabama, demanded equal rights for their race on segregated city buses. The issue was precipitated when a Negro seamstress refused to move to the rear of the bus, was arrested, and fined \$14. Immediately thereafter, Negroes instituted a boycott of the buses, causing police cruisers to escort the buses through Negro areas to prevent violence. On February 22, 1956, approximately one hundred Negro religious and political leaders in the Montgomery area were indicted on charges of violating a state antiboycott statute.



Communists immediately took up the defense of the Negro leaders and the boycott. Eugene Dennis, general secretary of the Communist Party USA, urged Federal intervention, declaring that:

"... united response, courage and organizational inventiveness of the entire Negro community of Montgomery has electrified the whole country. It is giving birth to a movement of mass civil disobedience to unconstitutional jimcrow statutes, and mass civil enforcement of the law of the land..."

"All workers -- Left, progressive and conservative -- can be expected to join with the heroic Negro people and all other sincere advocates of the Constitution in full devotion to this historic struggle."<sup>29</sup>

An editorial in the Daily Worker claimed that the Federal Government was:

"... duty bound, under law, to act against officials who, under cover of law, deprive citizens of their basic and federally guaranteed rights...."

"Meantime, it is up to all of us to bombard the Department of Justice for action before extra-legal violence follows illegal 'law.' If Montgomery is the Dixiecrats' first line of defiance, it is for patriots democracy's first line of defense."<sup>30</sup>

Negro religious leaders sponsored a nationwide "Day of Prayer" to aid the boycott movement. The communist press exploited this situation wherever possible and said it:

"... marked a moral and social renaissance in American life stemming from the resistance of southern Negroes to racist tyranny."

"Maybe the millions who prayed last Wednesday will continue their efforts against segregation by pressing the President and federal agencies to act against those who illegally deny Negroes their rights as American citizens."31

In May, 1956, an incident, involving the arrest of two Negro college students for sitting beside a white woman in a bus, took place in Tallahassee, Florida, precipitating a similar Negro boycott of buses in that city.

## 2. The Till Case



The Communist Party, USA, has placed the utmost emphasis on propagandizing the alleged murder of Emmett Louis Till. Till, a fourteen-year-old Negro youth from Chicago, Illinois, was reportedly kidnapped and murdered in Mississippi, in August, 1955. The two white men charged with his murder were acquitted after a trial, and a grand jury later refused to indict them for kidnapping. The Party as well as its numerous front organizations regarded this case as an excellent opportunity to further its agitation and propaganda campaign among the Negroes. The Party press



has carried innumerable articles on the Till case and issued many pamphlets and leaflets regarding it, invariably referring to the case as the Till "lynching."

In September, 1955, the national administrative committee\* of the Party issued a memorandum to all districts regarding the Till "lynching, pointing out that the marked increase of anti-Negro terror in the South should become the immediate concern of the entire Party membership. In this connection, the Party suggested (1) development of the movement to force the Eisenhower Administration to intervene in the Till case, (2) petitioning of city councils throughout the United States to urge the Attorney General to act, and (3) projecting the "struggle" into the preparation for the convening of Congress in 1956. The memorandum said that the above actions would necessitate hundreds of thousands of postcards, telegrams, letters, petitions, and resolutions to the President and the Attorney General from individuals and organizations.

The Daily Worker subsequently proclaimed:

"THE SAVAGE LYNCHING of the Till boy must be fought militantly. This has already been well begun by many demonstrations and other activities. . . . The whole American people should be aroused to the terrible outrage of this boy lynching.

\*The national administrative committee is now dissolved. For over a year, this group largely directed the Party's open activities.

And, not the least important, this case should be publicized all over the world. Abroad it will get a powerful response from the democratic people, who already thoroughly hate the U. S. jimcrow system, with all its oppression, exploitation, and murder."<sup>32</sup>

The Communist Party has attempted to enlist the support of any organization, communist or noncommunist, interested in this campaign. According to information originating from a communist spokesman, the Party was able to reach an agreement with leaders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People on a plan of work. The Party regards the Till matter as a historical event and the turning point in the struggle for Negro liberation.

### 3. Negro Representation

One of the key points in the Communist Party program in its struggle for "Negro liberation" is its attempt to increase Negro representation in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of state and national governments. Party Voice, a bulletin issued by the New York State Communist Party, asserted that:

"The fight for Negro representation must become a major concentration throughout our Party; and our most immediate concern must be to win new advances in the fall elections of 1955. In the process, efforts should be made to lay the basis for still further gains in 1956."<sup>33</sup>



Albert E. Blumberg, legislative director of the Communist Party, USA, who was convicted under the Smith Act of 1940, called for "sharply increased Negro representation in conventions, Congressional and other posts."34

The communist press hailed the appointment of J. Ernest Wilkins, an Assistant Secretary of Labor, as the "first time in history a Negro has been appointed to a sub-Cabinet post in the United States Government."35 But the communist press deplored the fact that in 1955 "there is still just one Negro judge in the entire federal court setup," suggesting that "it is time to revive pressure for a Negro U. S. Supreme Court judge when a vacancy occurs, as well as Negro federal judges at all levels."36

The fight for increased Negro representation includes the demands for:

"... abolition of the poll tax, federal protection of the right to register and vote, passage of an anti-lynching bill, and reduction of Congressional representation of States which deliberately disfranchise Negroes..."37

Although the Party proposes to conduct this struggle on a nationwide basis, its main emphasis is in the Southern States where Negro representation is disproportionate.\* Pettis Perry, chairman of the national

\*According to population .

Negro commission of the Communist Party, USA, and convicted under the Smith Act of 1940, pointed out that "in some states, especially in the South, the fight for Negro representaiton today must move from the general question of representation to that of proportional Negro representation."<sup>38</sup>

The Communist Party's course calls for an immediate solution to this problem--an immediate increase in Negro representation. It decries the "gradual" approach claiming that it leads to "the gradual eclipse of Negro citizenship." Abner W. Berry, Negro affairs editor of the Daily Worker, in speaking of Senator Eastland of Mississippi, declared:

"...Eastland's very seat in the U.S. Congress is a result of the victory of that 'gradual' approach, for in 1875, Eastland's state had a mass of Negro voters. The Lieutenant Governor, the Superintendent of Education and a number of state legislators were Negroes. Today, 80 years later, there are none, and it is Eastland's intention that there will never be any more."<sup>39</sup>

#### 4. Housing

The Communist Party, USA, strongly opposes segregation in housing and points out that this is one of the issues around which Negro rights can be advanced and Negro-white unity built. The communist press propagandizes this situation whenever possible. The Worker, Sunday edition of the Daily Worker, in September, 1955, declared that:





"...Outside of discrimination in the field of employment and education...there is another big area in which minority groups--particularly Negroes--suffer grievous discriminations. This is in housing."

" 'Intrusion' of Negro families into white neighborhoods is still resented with threats of violence, stoning and riots. The Negro ghettos stand out like sore thumbs..."<sup>40</sup>

In July, 1953, such a situation developed in the Trumbull housing development in Chicago, Illinois, a project operated by the Chicago Housing Authority. A Negro family moved into Trumbull Park which at that time had only white tenants. Shortly thereafter, periodic acts of vandalism began to occur in the project including breaking of windows of automobiles driven by Negroes. A police emergency plan was put into effect and a large number of police were detailed at the project on a 24-hour basis.

On August 20, 1953, a picket line of some forty persons demonstrated before the offices of the Chicago Housing Authority, opposing any move of the Authority to evict the Negroes from Trumbull Park. The pickets were led by a Communist Party member while other Party members were present in the picket line. Leaflets were distributed protesting eviction. The Civil Rights Congress was also reportedly interested in protesting any eviction in

this area. This organization has been designated as a communist front group coming within the purview of Executive Order 10450.

The Communist Party called for the development of an energetic campaign involving the organized labor movement in the area together with church groups and mass organizations. The campaign to be organized demanding an end to violence included:

1. A campaign around the elections seeking to influence all candidates to make this a major issue
2. Letters and telegrams to local and national public officials calling for prosecution of the violators of the law, use of the National Guard to protect the Negro people, and a grand jury investigation of the responsible individuals
3. Delegations to the mayor and aldermen
4. Letters to the press
5. Meetings of all possible mass organizations particularly among the trade-unions



The communist press in late 1955 demanded an immediate expansion of the "inadequate federal housing program," and insisted that "this program has to have guarantees written into the law that there will be no discrimination as to occupancy."<sup>41</sup>



### III. PRINCIPAL COMMUNIST PARTY-NEGRO FRONT GROUPS

#### A. National Negro Labor Council

Until the Spring of 1956, the principal communist-Negro front group in the United States was the National Negro Labor Council (NNLC). It was organized in October, 1951, at Cincinnati, Ohio, with the support of the Communist Party, USA. The Party urged "all out support" for the program of the NNLC which included the following points:

1. A nationwide drive for 100,000 additional jobs for Negro workers, with particular emphasis on jobs for Negro women
2. A campaign to solicit a million signatures petitioning for a national Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC)
3. Universal adoption of a "Model FEPC Contract Clause" in every union contract with management guaranteeing hiring, upgrading, promotion, on-the-job training, et cetera, without discrimination
4. A pledge to work with other Negro rights organizations in an attempt to influence the trade-union movement to support demands for abolition of the poll tax, antilynch legislation, official union action against police brutality and other invasions of the rights of Negro union members, and integrated housing

At its founding convention, the NNLC adopted resolutions calling for trade-union organization in the South on the basis of absolute equality,

freedom, and "self-determination" for oppressed colonial peoples throughout the world, and an end to the so-called United States policy of supporting colonial "oppressors."

During its existence, the NNLC directed campaigns against discriminatory practices engaged in by certain major industries in the United States. These included a drive to win better positions for Negro women in Sears, Roebuck and Company, an attempt to obtain jobs for Negroes as pilots, stewardesses, ticket clerks, et cetera, in the airlines, and a national campaign to upgrade Negroes in the railroad industry.

Beginning in 1953, the NNLC attempted to promote a non-discriminatory hiring policy among certain large industrial plants being built in Louisville, Kentucky. Using the slogan, "Let Freedom Crash the Gateway to the South," the NNLC advanced its campaign on a nationwide scale through newspaper advertisements, petitions, delegations, and leaflets. The NNLC also filed a complaint against one of the plants involved with the President's Committee on Government Contracts.

In connection with the merger of the AFL-CIO, the NNLC sent an "open letter" to the heads of these organizations demanding an unequivocal



equal-membership-rights constitutional provision and the election of Negro trade-unionists to top offices in the new organization. One hundred thousand copies of this "open letter" were distributed and circulated nationally.

While the main sources of funds of the NNLC were membership dues, contributions from members, and contributions and the sale of literature at meetings and rallies, it did obtain considerable financial support on certain occasions from so-called left-wing trade-unions such as the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UERMWA). \*

In January, 1954, the NNLC was designated by the Attorney General as coming within the purview of Executive Order 10450. On September 28, 1955, the Attorney General, under the provisions of the Internal Security Act of 1950, petitioned the Subversive Activities Control Board for an order to require the NNLC to register as a communist front organization. The order was granted and a petition served against the NNLC. A hearing was set for April 30, 1956, for the NNLC to appear before the Subversive Activities Control Board. However, on April 29, 1956, the NNLC voted to dissolve itself.

\*UERMWA was expelled from the CIO in 1949 on the grounds that it was communist dominated.



While increasing financial difficulties were a factor, the principal reason for the dissolution was to circumvent the Government's attempt to compel the NNLC to register with the Attorney General. Coleman A. Young, executive secretary of the NNLC, commenting on the dissolution, said:

" 'We are unwilling to subject our thousands of members and supporters, who are innocent of any wrongdoing, to the loss of jobs, blacklisting, and other forms of persecution entailed in the registration requirements of the unconstitutional McCarran Internal Security Act. . . .'"<sup>42</sup>

B. National Association of Negro Trade Unionists

1. Michigan Association of Negro Trade Unionists

The Michigan Association of Negro Trade Unionists (MANTU) was organized in 1955 in Detroit for the purpose of seeing a Negro placed on the international executive board of the AFL-CIO. In November, 1955, it was reported that if MANTU materialized on a national basis the National Negro Labor Council would dissolve and would be replaced by the Michigan Association of Negro Trade Unionists.

MANTU held a conference in November, 1955, in Detroit, at which several hundred were present from about eight different states. This conference concerned itself with Negro rights in the AFL-CIO merger and adopted the following four resolutions:





1. Resolution on Negro representation and membership rights dealing with agitation for a Negro representative on the merged executive board of the AFL-CIO
2. Resolution on organization for the purpose of initiating such action as would result in the advancement of the principles of democracy and Negro rights in the trade-union movement, particularly with regard to the AFL-CIO merger
3. Resolution on an all-out drive to organize the Southern workers on an equal rights basis
4. Resolution on the Till case characterizing it "as part of the great struggle for democratic rights and trade-union organizations now being waged in the South"

A high-ranking Communist Party leader in commenting on this conference stated that approximately 20-30 Party members were present but remained in the background. He declared that the Negro trade-union movement at this time was not under the control or influence of the Communist Party, but that the Party planned to develop it as the merger of the AFL-CIO progressed.

On April 29, 1956, the same day on which the NNLC was dissolved, MANTU held another conference in Detroit at which permanent officers were elected. William Henry Johnson, recording secretary of Local 600, UAW, AFL-CIO, was elected president, and Nat Turner, executive vice president. David William Moore, a member of the Communist Party, was elected organizational director.

2. Negro Trade Unionists Committee

Another Negro trade-union group was formed in October, 1955, in New York City under the title of Negro Labor Unionists Committee, later changed to Negro Trade Unionists Committee (NTUC). This organization was reportedly the result of a meeting of Negro leaders present at the UERMWA national convention held in September, 1955. The NTUC was designed as a national organization and was subdivided into ten groups throughout the country. Its chief purpose was to guarantee full and equal membership rights for Negroes and minority groups in the AFL-CIO and to fight for trade-union organization of both Negroes and whites in the Southern States.

The NTUC proposed to advance its aims by mass distribution of leaflets throughout the United States and to foster recognition of these aims through churches and fraternal organizations.

3. National Association of Negro Trade Unionists of New Jersey

In the early part of 1956, another group with similar aims and purposes was formed in New Jersey under the name of the National Association of Negro Trade Unionists of New Jersey.



4. Amalgamation of These Three Organizations

These three organizations held a national steering committee conference in Detroit, Michigan, on February 24 and 25, 1956, and adopted the name National Association of Negro Trade Unionists. A statement was adopted indicating the purpose of the group is to organize the unorganized workers, concentrating strongly on the Negroes.

Two committees were established, a resolutions committee and a constitutional committee. The former endorsed a civil rights conference scheduled for March, 1956, under the sponsorship of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and other supporting groups.



**IV. THE COMMUNIST PARTY -- NEGRO-FRATERNAL, PROTEST-  
AND-IMPROVEMENT ORGANIZATIONS**

**A. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People**

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is unquestionably the most important agency for the Negro people in the United States "in their struggle against caste." It was started on the initiative of a group of white citizens who in 1909 called a conference, supported by both Negroes and whites, to organize a "national conference for the discussion of present evils, the voicing of protests, and the renewal of the struggle for civil and political liberty."

In 1910, this group merged with the Niagara Movement (formed in 1905 by a group of Negroes who urged protest rather than accommodation in an effort to secure equal rights for the Negroes) to form the NAACP with the objective of winning full equality for the Negro as an American citizen.

The national office of the NAACP in New York City supervises the work of approximately 1,355 branches, youth councils, and college chapters located throughout 41 states, the District of Columbia, and Alaska. While the leadership of the NAACP has always been interracial, the majority of its membership, which is largely confined to upper-class





Negroes, is practically all Negro. According to a report of the 47th annual convention of the NAACP held in June, 1956, this organization reached a new high of 309,000 members with gains concentrated in the South. Income soared to a record \$635,000. In addition to its official publication, The Crisis, it publishes literature on various aspects of the Negro question.

The major portion of its work is carried out through its national office which keeps a constant check on Negro rights and attempts to secure passage of favorable state and Federal legislation. In a broad sense, the NAACP strives to create favorable publicity for the Negro and air his grievances before the American public. In recent years, it has shifted its emphasis from the defense of the Negro to a more offensive position in his behalf.

Throughout the years, the Communist Party, USA, has tried to infiltrate and gain control of the NAACP, using tactics consistent with Party policy during its alternate militant and "united front" periods. It recognizes the NAACP as "the most important Negro organization, dedicated to the fight for Negro equality." At a national conference of the Communist Party, USA, held in 1953, a statement was issued to the effect that:

"... The N. A. A. C. P. is increasingly becoming a coordinating center for all major organizations among the Negro people, and the pivot for the further advancement of the Negro-labor alliance. . . ."43

Accordingly, the Party instructed all of its Negro members to join established Negro people's organizations including the NAACP:

"... the time has come to put an end to the self-imposed isolation from the Negro community of key Negro cadres. We must insist that all Negro Party members, without exception, develop and strengthen their ties with the organized sections of the Negro community. "44

The Communist Party has had a certain measure of success in controlling isolated chapters of the NAACP but has been unable to secure domination of the organization on a state or national level. The NAACP is alert to those instances where communist control has been effected. At its 41st national convention held in June, 1950, the NAACP went on record as opposing communism and empowered its board of directors to revoke the charter of any chapter found to be communist controlled. In June, 1955, it reaffirmed its stand against communism, calling it an anti-democratic way of life, and warned its branches to be constantly alert against communist infiltration.

Persons identified with the Communist Party and the NAACP have, in the past, acted jointly and frequently engaged in parallel activities. However



must be kept in mind that the ultimate aims of these two groups are entirely distinct. The Communist Party seeks to foster discord and discontent among the Negro race by agitation and propaganda in order to facilitate the rise of socialism in the United States, whereas the goal of the NAACP is to achieve full racial integration and equality within the present form of Government. \* One recent instance in which the two organizations reportedly cooperated was in the Till case which has been previously described. According to information originating from a communist spokesman, the Party was able to reach an agreement with leaders of the NAACP on a plan of work. The NAACP has taken an extremely aggressive stand in the Till case and has sponsored numerous rallies and meetings in protest against the death of Till and the conduct of the trial in Mississippi. The Communist Party has afforded the Till case continued attention, constantly urging the Department of Justice to intervene, and agitating for a mass march on Washington, D. C., to enforce its demands.

In recent years, the NAACP has actively campaigned for desegregation in housing, at public beaches and amusement centers, in transportation, and in the television industry. The Supreme Court decision

\* It is to be noted that the Communist Party, USA, in order to confuse the American people, is attempting to make its policies parallel to those of the NAACP on controversial, racial issues.

against school segregation in May, 1954, was acclaimed by the NAACP as the high point for civil rights during that year. At its 44th national convention held in 1953, the NAACP promulgated the slogan "Free by '63" which launched a program to win total integration of Negroes by 1963, the one-hundredth anniversary of the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation. The Communist Party has given considerable publicity to all of these issues and has attempted to further them whenever possible.

In March, 1956, a national conference on civil rights, attended by 1,500 delegates, was held in Washington, D. C., under the sponsorship of the NAACP and other supporting organizations. Its over-all objective was to bring to the attention of Congress the following program, certain measures of which, if enacted into law, would:

1. Create job equality through the establishment of an effective Federal FEPC.
2. Withhold Federal funds from any institution which defies the constitutional prohibition against segregation in public facilities
3. Make lynching and other race-inspired acts of violence Federal offenses
4. Abolish the poll tax and create protection of the right to vote



5. Establish a civil rights division in the Department of Justice with authority to protect civil rights in all sections of the country
6. Create a permanent Federal Commission on Civil Rights
7. Eliminate remaining segregation and other forms of discrimination in interstate travel

Activities of the conference included briefing on how delegates should conduct themselves when contacting congressmen; speeches on the need for additional civil rights legislation; talks by individuals from Southern States who were allegedly victims of civil rights violations; speeches by representatives of the Democratic and Republican Parties; and contacts with congressmen with a report session on results of contacts with congressmen.

The Communist Party considered this conference to be very significant. Furthermore, at a prior meeting of the Party's national Negro commission, Party leaders had declared that the principal task of the Party was to influence this mobilization of the NAACP. Delegates to the conference were screened by the NAACP, but the Party attempted to gain acceptance of a form of observer status so that persons other than approved delegates

could participate. The Party favored a program including support for proposals by Congressmen Adam Clayton Powell of New York and Charles C. Diggs of Michigan to unseat the Mississippi representation in Congress; support for all civil rights, desegregation, and antipoll tax legislation; attacks against Attorney General Brownell; and a fight for a new enforcement order from the Supreme Court for desegregation.

Seven Party functionaries are known to have attended various sessions of the conference as spectators since none of them had been able to obtain authorized credentials. Communist literature such as the Daily Worker and a pamphlet entitled Behind the Lynching of Emmett Louis Till was distributed outside conference sessions.

The Party was quite disgruntled at its extremely limited role in the conference as was evidenced by Abner W. Berry in his column "On the Way, " in the Daily Worker:

"...the assembly leadership caused unnecessary griping and confusion by applying too much zeal in keeping delegations small blocking all attempts to discuss issues and in insisting upon injecting the alien note of anti-Communism."<sup>45</sup>

However, Berry pointed out that "the movement for civil rights was able to surmount these political diversions and make its imprint on the official mind of Washington."<sup>46</sup>





The NAACP held its 47th annual convention in San Francisco, California, from June 26 to July 1, 1956. It reaffirmed its anti-communist position and at the same time extended its policy of non-cooperation with communist-controlled groups to declare communists ineligible for membership in the NAACP. The NAACP also added the National Association of Negro Trade Unionists to its list of labor groups forbidden cooperation with the NAACP.

B. Improved Benevolent Protective Order of Elks of the World

The Improved Benevolent Protective Order of Elks of the World (IBPOE of W) was organized in 1898 as a fraternal organization for Negroes with the following objectives:

1. Promote better citizenship among Negroes
2. Promote better relations between Negroes and the Caucasian race
3. Provide an educational program for the enlightenment of the Negro and establish scholarships as awards to deserving individuals for furtherance of their education in specialized fields
4. Promote the general health, welfare, and status of the Negro through Christian principles, doctrines, and teachings based upon the American way of life



5. Establish a fraternal organization to provide for economic, social, and recreational facilities for Negroes

The IBPOE of W is an entirely separate organization from the well-known Benevolent Protective Order of Elks (BPOE).

Lodges of the IBPOE of W exist in practically every major city in the United States, each lodge having a women's auxiliary section known as Temples. Affairs of the organization are handled by the office of the grand secretary in Washington, D. C., assisted by the grand exalted ruler in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The IBPOE of W issues a publication known as the Washington Eagle published in Washington, D. C.

Prior to the 55th national convention of this organization held in Chicago, Illinois, in August, 1954, the Communist Party, USA, was said to be in the process of establishing a policy accelerating its infiltration of the IBPOE of W. At that time, 21 Party members were reportedly affiliated with the IBPOE of W although none held a top office.

The Communist Party fraction of the IBPOE of W held a pre-convention caucus at which it was decided that Party work in this organization should proceed slowly and should concentrate on the civil liberties, legislative, and educational committees. Meetings were held in New York



City and Chicago prior to and during the convention for the purpose of establishing the precise Communist Party policy to be followed during the convention. Pettis Perry, chairman of the Party's national Negro commission, was the "guiding light" in effectuating this Party policy. Party members felt that they were successful at the convention in that (1) all officers they backed were successful, (2) every member was acceptable to the other state delegates, and (3) the resolutions they wanted passed by the convention were incorporated into the final convention resolutions. These resolutions dealt with such issues as discrimination in industry, FEPC, segregation in schools, peace, outlawing of the poll tax, and others, which matters are of vital interest to all Negroes whether Communist Party members or not. Consequently, it cannot be stated that these resolutions were communist inspired.

Meetings of a number of Communist Party members were again held preceding the 56th annual convention of the IBPOE of W the following year. Discussion centered around the development of a joint program between the NAACP and the Negro Elks relative to FEPC, integration and the right to vote in the South, and Negro representation at all levels of

government, as well as arousing interest of state delegates at the convention in resolutions dealing with civil liberties, political action, the Walter-McCarran Act, and unity between the IBPOE of W and the NAACP.

The report of the resolutions committee for the 1955 IBPOE of W convention included resolutions against discrimination in employment, housing, Negro representation, and transportation, and commended the NAACP for its efforts in implementing the United States Supreme Court decision against school segregation.

During early 1955, the national administrative committee of the Communist Party issued a memorandum defining certain tasks for Party members and any other individuals concerned with the struggle for Negro rights. This document pointed out that the primary organizations through which these tasks could be achieved are the established mass organizations of the Negro people and joint Negro-white membership including the Negro Elks.

Communist infiltration into this organization can be exemplified by one communist couple who joined the IBPOE of W upon the direct orders of the Communist Party. The wife was initiated into the women's auxiliary of the Negro Elks in March, 1955, her husband having been a member of



the Elks for several months. In the latter part of April, 1955, she reportedly was actively engaged in a fund-raising drive for her auxiliary. By August, 1955, she was advancing in the Elks organization due to her diligent efforts. Her husband was also persevering in his activity in the Elks and in the latter part of 1955 was elected chairman of the civil liberties committee of his lodge. In July, 1955, the Communist Party reportedly had 88 of its members in the IBPOE of W as contrasted with 21 in 1954.



V. RESULTS OF COMMUNIST PARTY ACTIVITY DIRECTED  
TOWARD NEGROES

A. Effects within the Communist Party (White Chauvinism)

Although the Communist Party has consistently advocated full social, political, industrial, economic, and political equality for the Negroes, the application of certain facets of this policy within its own organization must be considered.



The Communist Party, USA, has frequently elected or appointed Negroes, at least nominally, to positions of authority. Two Negroes, Henry Winston and Benjamin J. Davis, Jr., were members of its national committee prior to their convictions in 1949 for conspiracy to violate the Smith Act of 1940. Three other Negroes, James E. Jackson, Claude Lightfoot, and Pettis Perry were alternate members of the Party's national committee. All three have been convicted of violation of the Smith Act, and Jackson and Perry are presently serving sentences under this conviction. In addition, Negroes have frequently held other positions of importance in the communist movement. Doxey A. Wilkerson is a former member of the Party's national committee and is presently instructor and



director of faculty and curriculum at the Jefferson School of Social Science which has been designated as a communist front organization coming within the purview of Executive Order 10450. Abner W. Berry is also a former member of the national committee and is presently Negro affairs editor of the Daily Worker, east coast communist newspaper.

Yet, in spite of this and the voluminous publicity which it has given its slogan of equal rights for the Negroes, the Communist Party throughout its history has had to wage a continuing fight against what it describes as "white chauvinism," or "white supremacy."\* In 1953, the Communist Party declared that "in recent years the Party has waged an intensive fight against expressions of white chauvinism within the Party. We must continue this fight."\*\* It noted, however, that the "past two years have witnessed a noticeable decline in the struggle against white chauvinism and for Negro rights in a number of key districts. In several respects this is also true on a national scale."<sup>47</sup>

\*Webster's New International Dictionary, Second Edition, Unabridged, 1955, defines chauvinism as "the sentiments or disposition of a chauvin; hence vainglorious or exaggerated patriotism."

\*\*Italicized in original text.

In 1954, William Z. Foster, national chairman of the Communist Party, USA, pointed out that the Party's struggle against chauvinism must be combined with the fight against Negro bourgeois nationalism. He stated:

"While the Communist Party militantly combats white chauvinism as the worst ideological menace to Negro-white co-operation and solidarity, it does not ignore the lesser danger of Negro bourgeois nationalism as a divisive force. It fights on both fronts. Bourgeois-nationalist ideology 'is the instrument through which the Negro petty bourgeois leaders, posing as champions of general "race" interests, i. e., the interests of the whole Negro people, seek to rally them in support of the narrow class interests of the Negro bourgeoisie.' It manifests itself in a two-fold way: in reformist illusions of automatic integration into white institutions and, consequently, in the idea that there is no need to struggle against the white oppressors; or in sectarian, isolationist policies of segregationism. In both cases it is a surrender to white supremacy."<sup>48</sup>

In 1955, Foster further declared that:

"...there are more than a few traces of white chauvinism even in our own ranks, although our Party is far in advance of other organizations as to being free of this poison. The fight against white chauvinism is one we must make constantly, not only among the white masses, but also in our own Party...."<sup>49</sup>

The national committee of the Communist Party, USA, held an enlarged meeting in New York City on April 28-May 1, 1956. While there, several of the Party's Negro leaders criticized previous Party policy in the field of Negro activities. They complained because there were so few Negroes



and no Negro women present at this meeting. They charged that the Party had failed to eliminate white chauvinism and urged that another meeting be held in the near future to deal exclusively with the Negro question.

To alleviate this situation, one western district of the Communist Party recommended that county committees should evaluate their Negro work by discussions with various Negro Party members; Negro committees should be established to analyze work in Negro communities; and each area should be examined for its activity in community organizations, trade-union and its educational programs.

B. Effects on Noncommunist Negroes (Negro Membership in the Communist Party)



Throughout its history, the Communist Party, USA, has constantly endeavored to increase its Negro membership. According to William Z. Foster, the highest percentage of Negro membership in the Communist Party was attained in 1947 when it totaled 17 per cent of the entire national membership.

Along with the decline of the national membership since 1948, the Communist Party has experienced an even greater decline, percentage-wise, in its Negro membership. At a national conference of the Party

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held in 1953, a report was given on the Party's work among Negroes. The report asserted that in recent years there had been a decline in Negro membership and noted the reasons therefor:

"...The attacks upon our Party by the white ruling class, the concessions, even though few, thrown in the direction of Negro reformists, the growth of Red-baiting influences among Negroes, and the lack of sufficient struggle by the Party to adjust to these new developments, have, among other causes, contributed to this decline...."50

In November, 1954, the New York State Communist Party, which is the largest district in the country, commented on the loss of Negro members, giving as the reasons for this decline, the attacks made against the Party and the failure of Party clubs, sections, and higher bodies to maintain their vanguard communist role of militant struggle in behalf of Negro rights.

As of June 30, 1956, the Negro membership of the Communist Party, USA, was reliably estimated to be seven per cent of the total national membership of the Party. The total national membership was estimated at slightly less than 20,000. The Party's Negro membership is in marked contrast to 1947 when there were nearly 13,000 Negroes, or 17 per cent, in the total national membership of the Party of 75,400.

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