Pact Parties and Slavery.

Do the Trade Unions Agree?

This election has been fought, on the Rand at least, on the events of March. 1922, just as the Transvaal Provincial elections of 1914 were fought on the deportations, etc., and the recent Indian elections on Amritsar. The Pact voters have declared by their votes that they will not tolerate the suppression of popular movements by Martial Law, bullets, bombs from the air, and shooting of prisoners. To this extent they have voted, as the 1922 strikers struck, against capitalist tyranny. But mingled with this sound revolt the Pact's vote has also, like the 1922 strike, unmistakably expressed an unsound racial hostility to, and desire to enslave, the non-European masses.

The report entitled The Story of a Crime," already twice reviewed in the "International," is perhaps the most serious recent attempt to define this vague composite sentiment common to the rank and sile of both Pact parties, a sentiment which could not but colour the legislation and administration of a Pact in office and might even precipitate great bloodshed.

This report deserves peculiar attention because it is published virtually in the name of ten of the principal Trade Unions of South Africa. These Unions no doubt endorse it in so far as it presents an indictment of the methods of capitalist imperialism so telling that it puts completely in the shade, as election propaganda, the Chamber of Mines pamphlet published four days later-and is consequently completely ignored by the Chamber Press. But we venture to think that the Unions will diesociate themselves from some of the views it expresses on the 'native question."

"SLAVERY WITHIN LIMITS."

At lucid intervals the report catches a partial vision of the truth. "The issue," it says (p. 38), "is not between white and black labour but between free labour and cheap slave labour"; and (p. 7): "All of us are agreed that the slave labour system, existing as it does only by virtue of special législation, must be kept by legislation within the narrowest possible limits. . ITS EXISTENCE IS A CONSTANT MENACE! TO ALL FREE LABOUR..."

But, save for these stray admissions, it accepts the slave labour system as an axiom, only harking back to it as it was before 1922, or perhaps before the War, as if those periods presented the perfect equilibrium; and its main protest is not against the system but only against its "extension" beyond that happy medium. "The system ! of slave labour, which is known as compounded negro labour! (are not whites also | compounded at relief works, by the way?) "is a grave menace not only to free labour of any kind and especially to free white labour, but also to the national welfare, UNLESS KEPT WITHIN LIMITS CLEAR-LY LAID DOWN BY LAW" (p. 37): and (p. 7) "We are not even expressing any opinion about the compounded native labour system for unskilled work oh the mines, since WE HAVE NO DESIRE TO EN-CROACH ON II. In short, it is "a constant-monace to all free labour," and yet "we have no desire to encroach on it." Do the ten Unions endorse that?

Mr. McFie, one of the authors, is known for his part to agree with the Chamber of Mines, and Crawford, that more black labour on the mines is desirable because it involves more white labour.

Incidentally, it is a poor justification for the system of "slave labour if kept within | limits" that even on the capitalist side it! has been admitted (see p. 37) that there may be a limit to the cheapening or ensluvement of labour. That only comes to this, that such a system is approved also by capitalism in its own interests.

"EQUALITY:

native and coloured labour. That is not "equality" but just the reverse, colour bar or no colour bar. Surely the mere absence | of a legislative colour bar does not produce equality? Clearly it is not any supposed! "equality" due to the absence of a colour bar, but on the contrary it is just the actual inequality still prevailing even at the Cape, that constitutes the real and "constant menace to all free labour." And THE ONLY EFFECT OF A "CLEAR LINE OF DEMARCATION" OR COLOUR BAR IS TALK. JUST TO STABILISE OR STEREOTYPE THIS INEQUALITY, leaving the 'menace' arising from it intact:

"SKILLED" AND "UNSKILLED."

This hard and fast distinction between "skilled" and "unskilled" work, too, is not in accordance with fact, but betrays the ALL THIS MISCHIEVOUS RACIALISM same sort of bourgeois bookishness on working-class matters as the commonplace OF THE "SLAVE SYSTEM," assigning to contrast between "workers by hand" and all whites the position of enslavers, and to "workers by brain." All labour involves skill and brain work. And every normal worker tends to become more and more skilled and to use his brains to better purpose, as the report itself admits when it says "it was only in the semi-skilled work that the European could earn enough to live whilst learning to become a skilled man on the mines." Taking the general body of South African labour as a whole the distinction of "skilled" and "unskilled" can hardly be said to be in vogue at all. It is chiefly maintained in the case of a comparative few, and the object is to class as many workers as possible as "unskilled," so as to | "equality," its rigid watertight segregation get them cheaper, although they are just as l essential to production as the "skilled." Moreover, the barrier cannot be successfully maintained by the skilled, who are too few and too weak politically and industrially to resist when, as in January, What then is the true perspective? 1922, it suits the master class to whittle or break it down, e.g., by classing any even if it includes a small "protected" number of those previously called skilled ["privileged" white section, is nevertheless as "semi-skilled, redundant and border- still in essence a capitalist class society; line occupation workers." This, coupled and the evil to be combatted is not any with the fact that it tends to set one sec- | mere shifting of the line of protection or tion of workers against another, is the weak- privilege within it, but THAT SOCIETY ness of a more "white labour" or "white ITSELF. To be "enemies of society"-South Africa" policy. The Pact proposal | that sort of society—is the role dictated to to prevent natives from doing "skilled" | the workers by the class struggle involved work (which also implies preventing whites l

in a class society. The object of the from doing "unskilled" work), even if it could possibly be enforced on a national scale, is based on unreality.

"THE NIGGERS" AND RACIALISM.

In order to bolster up the shaky barricade purporting to protect skilled white labour, the report, in spirit if not in so many words, adopts the man-in-the-street's slogan of "keeping the nigger in his place" and generally hating and despising him. It repeatedly speaks of the whites as "the conquering and governing races" with "a sound instinct against giving way to the negro"-not an "alien" tradition of "Jews in Europe," by the way, but deep-seated in most white South Africans. It obviously disapproves, quite in the style of Smuts or the Department of "Justice," of native attempts at industrial organisation and Again, the report says: "We have seen strikes. It emphasises native crimes in the Cape the results of a policy of against whites and glosses over the conequality There the European artisan has | verse. It shows marked contempt for the been almost entirely displaced by cheap native voters. It sneers at those who pronative and coloured free labour." Leaving test at police ill-treatment of natives or aside the question whether labour even at who call attention to anti-native prejudice the Cape can truly be called "free" under in the northern provinces of the Union. capitalism, this displacement is obviously In its view the South African "aristocracy": the result of the greater cheapness of the is "bastard" not because it is an aristocracy but because it has coloured rather than blue blood in its veins. Its real complaint against the Cape is that the white wage-earners there have largely been "absorbed into the Negro races," which is inaccurate. It even says: "If mine native labour were free labour, the European population, especially the European women, would have to be compounded in fortificstions" (1), which besides being grotesque is just 80 MUCH FASCIST WHITE LEAGUE

The report does not even notice the suggestion that the "racial conflicts" between "poor whites" and natives on March. 7 and 8, 1922, were engineered by provocateurs: it seems to consider them quite natural—on either side.

SIMPLY AMOUNTS TO AN APPROVAL the natives, race helotry, from which flows the rule that the native is of course to be paid less than the white for the same work and THAT IS JUST WHERE THE DEAD-LINESS OF THE COMPETITION COMES IN and leads to the elimination of the whites as workers.

Do the ten Unions endorse all this?

A "NO CLASS" REPORT.

In short the report is entirely vitiated by founding on a racial instead of a class view of the labour situation. That is also the cardinal error behind its virtual acceptance of the slave system, its objection to of "skilled" from "unskilled." The result is what might be called 'Dr. MacFie's Pink Pamphlet for Pale Proletarians."

THE REAL ISSUE.

A society based on black slave labour,

(Concluded on page 7.)



Pact Parties and Slavery.

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Labour movement is to stimulate them to put in at least as much "courage, tenacity

(Concluded from page 6)

and cohesion to vindicate their rights" not. "as the middle classes have done in the past' (p. 10) but as the capitalist class has '

done and is doing in its class interests. To speak of the 1922 scabs as "traitors to

their race" (p. 25) is as much beside the point as for instance to say "the Dutch miner was driven into the mines by the poverty of the land." instead of saying "by the monopoly of the land in the hands. of the few." To present "the fight against displacement of the European by the Negro" as a totally different thing from the fight against reduction of wages, to which 'not much importance was attached," is to ignore that the two things were in fundamentals one.

If the issue were essentially racial, nosolution could ever be hoped for; an endless and hopeless struggle between races which could never exterminate each other would be the only prospect. Once only does the report stumble on the true issue (p. 10): "There is all over the world a terrific economic contest between the employing classes and the wage-earning classes.". And IT IS ONLY BECAUSE THIS ISSUE IS A CLASS ISSUE, AND BECAUSE, AS HIS-TORY HAS PROVED, ONE CLASS CAN OVERTHROW ANOTHER AND EVERY-THING POINTS TO THE WORKING CLASS BEING ABLE TO OVERTHROW THE CAPITALIST CLASS, THAT THE STRUGGLE IS CARRIED ON AND IS WORTH CARRYING ON. THE CLASS STRUGGLE AS TOUCHSTONE.

The class struggle—that was the only issue in the strike and has been the only

sound issue in this election. Into that struggle every section-including the nont | European section-of the working class is and must be drawn if it is to succeed against so powerfully equipped an enemy. The report dismisses the negro as incapable of self-renunciation, heroic self-sacrifice, or even solidarity; but experience has repeatedly shown the contrary, even while we have left him almost entirely ignorant of his own class position. And the more trained, intelligent; class-conscious, industrially organised and politically enfran-the cheed he is allowed and encouraged by white workers to become, the better fighter 34 he will make. Nor can we in these days swallow that old-fashioned notion of a limited available "wages fund" for which I European and Negro must scramble against. each other. Lowering the European wage and status has not in fact added one penny or one cubit to the native wage or statue. Equally raising the native will not lower the European. The choice is clear. Either the European

sinks to the level of the native or the native rises to the level of the European. The present system of South Africa, in fact of the whole world, outside Russia, is bringing about the former result. Werkingclass victory in S. : Africa, in fact all over the work. postulates the latter. Privilege-cum-a-sluve system (ar, "freedom" for me at the cost of slavery for the other

fellow), which the report invours. Was fought for in 1922, and the fight failed. The other system means THE ABOLITION OF ALL SLAVE LABOUR.

Which is the choice of the ten Unions? S.P.B.