

# THE NEGRO MOVEMENT

## The International Conference on African Children.

By J. W. Ford (Geneva).

The International Conference on African Children which closed at Geneva on June 25 fully confirmed what the representative of the **League Against Imperialism and the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers** declared on the floor of the Conference: "This Conference is trying to conceal the fact that the dreadful fate of the African children is due to imperialist Exploitation". . . . "It is imperialist barbarism in the colonies, and in particular in Africa, that is the immediate cause of the terrible death rate among African Children. . . . Imperialist exploitation keeps them in ignorance, exploits their youthful energies to exhaustion and death, . . . threatens the population of Africa with extermination." "These facts you are attempting to conceal and shut up!"

The discussion that arose on the "prepared reports" and the fact that every effort was made to keep the representatives of the Africans from telling **the truth about the African Children** showed this very clearly. There were nineteen pamphlets prepared beforehand as the basis of discussion, dealing with such topics as "Still-birth and Infant Mortality, preventive measures and remedies" "Education with regard to preparing children for Life." "General Conditions of work for children and adolescents" etc.

The reporters were slave-driving doctors, preachers, industrialists, old women missionaries, government officials, etc. The doctors talked about the suffering of the mothers at child birth, about the "prevalence of syphilis, gonorrhoea" and other diseases; the missionaries wanted more mission schools and bibles; the industrialists wanted more "legal" means of enforcing Forced Labour conditions on the natives. The labour "leaders" supported the industrialists. One "labour" leader, a Mr. Harris of the British Labour Party, declared that he was against the mass education of the natives. Each Governmental official was trying to show the good side of his government in colonial exploitation.

The pamphlets and reports skilfully concealed the facts about the terrible high death rate among the African Children, about the tremendous high death rate among the whole population. They ignored the fact that malnutrition of mothers, lack of sanitation as well as compulsory labour in advance stages of child birth and ruthless exploitation was the cause of high mortality. They "forgot" to say anything about the educational system (or what is called educational system) being subservient to imperialist exploitation.

Despite the fact that the invitations to the Conference offered "a **Common Platform** for the pooling of experiences and the ex-

change of ideas": the representatives of the African people had forcibly to wring out of the organisers sufficient time for a representative to give the **truth about the African Children**. One of the Negro representatives from the Gold Coast was called a liar from the platform when he stated facts about the ill-treatment of the natives in his country by the white missionaries. The representative of the League Against Imperialism and the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers was chosen by the Negro delegates to make the report.

He had not spoken two minutes before he was interrupted and declared out of order, the chairman shouting: "Sit down, sit down!" a priest on the platform came up to eject him. The representative of the League refused to budge and told the chairman that he would not sit down until he had completed his speech. There was commotion in the hall. The chairman, realising that greater disturbance would ensue if he tried to prevent the reports, allowed the speaker to proceed.

The speech based on the memorandum of the League Against Imperialism and the International trade Union Committee of Negro Workers, endorsed by the Negro delegates, was a pitiless and scathing exposure, backed up by quotations from various documents, of the brutal oppression and savage treatment of the Negro population of Africa by the imperialist exploiters and their agents, and completely showed up the whole hypocrisy of the conference, the organisers of which were supposed to be concerned about the well-being of the African children. It was a terrible story of the enslavement and gradual extermination of the black population, out of whose sweat and blood the white invaders amass huge fortunes.

All these facts are of course ignored by the so-called Saviours of African children. That is why the representative of the League declared that the African people must not have any faith in the Conference: that there was no remedy without the abolition of imperialist oppression and domination. Attention was called to the fact that in the United States nine young Negro boys from 14 to 20 years of age have been sentenced to the electric chair on frame-up charges. That is the method of imperialism in dealing with Negro children.

The League Against Imperialism and the International Trade Union Committee pointed out at this conference that only by an uncompromising, determined and ceaseless struggle against imperialism and its lackeys could the toiling masses of Africa win their freedom; and that this struggle must be conducted by fighting for the right of the workers and peasants of Africa to organise, for freedom of trade unions and the right of assembly, for higher wages and better working conditions, for a working day of not more than 8 hours for adults and 6 hours for young workers, for special labour protective legislation for women workers and young workers, for the complete abolition of all forced labour, contract labour and all other systems of disguised slavery; by driving out of their country all labour recruiters and tax collectors; refusing to pay hut, poll, head and other taxes imposed by the imperialist exploiters. Their demands must also include leave with pay for expectant mothers before and after child birth, and the abolition of labourious work for women and children altogether; the return of all confiscated land to the natives, the elimination of illiteracy, establishment of free universal education and the abolition of child labour; free medical attention for women and children at the expense of the State—free hospitals and dispensaries; the introduction of obligatory unemployment insurance for all unemployed workers, to be paid for by the State; grants to be given out to unemployed workers in case of sickness, etc., free rent for all unemployed workers, abolition of hut taxes altogether; free fuel, potatoes, milk etc., for children of unemployed workers to be paid for by the State. They must organise defence against all forms of terror, refuse to serve as cannon-fodder, fraternize with soldiers of opposing armies in case of war, join in international solidarity with the workers and all oppressed people against imperialist war. They must fight for the right of self-determination, for the complete independence of all Negro colonies from imperialist rule, for the defence of the Soviet Union.

There were 7 Negro representatives present. Although they voiced their protest by united action, most of them were not determined and sufficiently militant against these fakers. This is explained by their social composition. Two of them were school teachers, one a lawyer from the Gold Coast, one a law student in London, one from America representing a fraternal organisation, one representing an East African organisation but now residing in London.