

The Socialist Party and the Ku Klux Klan

By George R. Kirkpatrick.

The Ku Klux Klan is a secret organization which assumes that the American Republic is in danger and unable to defend itself by its own legal agencies. The Klan therefore appoints itself as the Republic's defender—particularly against Roman Catholics, Jews, Negroes, foreigners and radicals.

The attitude of the Socialist Party toward the Klan is easily understood, but it can be understood only in the light of the main fact that the Socialist Party sets for itself one task. That one task is the freeing of the workers from industrial domination under the capitalist system of industry. In taking its attitude of opposition to the Klan the Socialist Party is guided by the following facts:

1—For hundreds of years the majority working class has been dominated and exploited by a minority ruling class,—and it is so dominated and exploited now.

2—The minority ruling class has been able—and is able now—to rule and exploit the majority working class chiefly by preventing the workers from combining their entire power for their common defense; and the exploiters have accomplished this by over-emphasizing minor issues or by raising irritating false issues among the workers, thus engendering factions

and factional quarrels among the workers, and in this way rendering them hopelessly unable to unite for effective self-defense against their industrial exploiters.

3—The workers will continue incapable of freeing themselves from their exploiters as long as they are thus divided into quarreling factions, unable to use their united power in self-defense in the struggle for freedom; that is, the workers will never be able to struggle all together and victoriously on the great issue of freedom as long as they are struggling against one another on minor issues or false issues.

4—The Ku Klux Klan interferes with the great movement for the freeing of the workers by dividing the workers on false issues and thus confusing the workers on the main issue, which is their own freedom.

As for the sincerity and personal character of the members of the Klan,—these matters need not be here discussed. The Klan is thoroughly guilty because of the methods it employs and especially because of the results of its activities.

The Socialist Party, of course, frankly condemns the secret and terroristic methods of the Klan; yet the Party's attitude of opposition toward the Klan is determined largely by the fact that the Klan raises not simply *one* false issue but *several* false issues among the workers:

First—The Klan raises the issue of color among the workers, setting the white workers and the black workers against one another; while the real question, the all-important issue, for the workers as workers, is the industrial freedom of all workers of all colors.

Second—The Klan injects the always ir-

ritating issue of religion into the discussions of the workers, setting the Protestant workers against the Catholic workers and the Jewish workers. But here again the supreme question for the workers as workers is, not their religious affiliations and differences, but the industrial freedom of all workers of all religions and all denominations.

Third—The Klan raises the issue of race, setting the Keltic, Teutonic and Latin races against the Jewish and the Yellow races; while the main question for all the workers is the industrial freedom of all the workers of all races.

Fourth—The Klan raises the issue of birth-place and nationality, setting the American-born workers against all others. But freedom for all workers regardless of their birth-place and nationality—that is *the* issue for all workers to settle first of all.

Fifth—The Klan raises the issue of the personal moral character of and the liberalism or radicalism of individuals. But once more it must be insisted upon that the first and all important issue for the workers to keep before them to be settled regardless of all others is the issue of the industrial freedom of the workers,—the workers of “good” character and “bad” character, the conservative and the radical workers, the Jew and the Gentile workers, the white and the black workers, and the workers of all countries—freedom from exploitation.

The industrial rulers’ purpose is profits, and they exploit the workers *as workers*, not caring whether the workers are Protestant or Catholic, white or black, good or bad in character, Jew or Gentile, American or foreigner. The employers’ supreme problem is successful exploitation of all workers; and therefore the supreme problem for all the workers every-

where is freedom for all workers from exploitation everywhere—first, last, and all the time; and they should beware of any organization that sets workers against workers in the great struggle for freedom.

The Socialist Party opposes the Ku Klux Klan because of its terroristic methods and because of the damaging confusion and conflict it creates among the workers.

Interference with religious freedom is clearly un-American. The First Amendment to the National Constitution declares:

“Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion or the free exercise thereof.”

The Constitutions of the forty-eight States of the Union are uniformly against interference with religious freedom, and the National Convention of the Socialist Party in July, 1924, was wholesomely American in passing the following Resolution:

“We emphatically condemn the Ku Klux Klan and every other effort to divide the workers on racial or religious lines or to effect political purposes by secret and terroristic methods.”

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