

# St. Louis Convention of the League of Struggle for Negro Rights

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Article No. 1.

ST. LOUIS, Mo.—There have been several fine conventions of class struggle organizations during the past year—the Trade Union Unity League convention in Cleveland, the convention of the International Labor Defense in Pittsburgh, etc. None has shown a more militant spirit or a finer representation of workers from the factories and fields than the convention just ended of the American Negro Labor Congress, whose name is now by unanimous decision of the convention the League of Struggle for Negro Rights.

One hundred and twenty delegates were present, a number of them arriving late Sunday. They came from 18 states, and from as far away as California, Alabama, New York. They represented 17 organizations in addition to the local branches of the League of Struggle for Negro Rights. Seventy-three of the delegates were Negro workers; forty-seven, white workers. There was a women representation of 17, most of them Negro women from the South and the Middle West. There were 25 young worker delegates, some of them members of the Young Liberators, the youth organization of the League of Struggle for Negro Rights.

The spirit of the delegates was expressed not only in their enthusiasm and militancy in the convention but by the grim determination by which they overcame every obstacle arising out of their wretched economic conditions as a result of their exploitation by the white ruling class and of the efforts of the bosses and their state agents to prevent them going to the convention. Some came by old Fords which broke down many times on the way. Others arrived by buses.

Several rode the rods part of the way. One young Negro worker from Birmingham traveled by freight to Chattanooga where he attended the Southern Anti-Lynching Conference and was elected a delegate to the St. Louis convention. He was told by his father that he need not return if he "mixed himself up" with the anti-lynching convention. He made the most militant speech at the Chattanooga conference, expressing the readiness of the southern Negro masses, and especially the youth elements, for militant struggle against boss oppression. He arrived in St. Louis penniless, but militant and happy to be a part of a convention organizing a real struggle against the savage oppression to which his race is subjected. Another Negro young worker rode the rods into St. Louis from Youngstown, Ohio. Most of them starved on

the way, being barred from eating in the white lunchrooms, and not always able to go out of their way to the Negro sections, which are always segregated away from the main streets of the towns. The white delegates suffered along with the Negro delegates, walking out of the white lunchrooms in company with the Negro delegates when the latter were refused service. In one town in Ohio, a delegation of Negro and white workers traveling by Ford was held up by police at the point of a gun and forced to submit to a search of their persons for no other reason than that they were white and Negro workers traveling together.

The most militant speeches were made by the southern Negro delegates during the discussion from the floor. Mary Pevey from Georgia electrified the convention with her bitter indictment of the capitalist oppressors of Negro and white workers, declaring that "not only the Negroes are being oppressed but the workers everywhere are being brutally exploited and thrown on the streets to starve during the present crisis of capitalism. The conditions concern not only one race of people but all the workers. We say that if a worker cannot get a living wage—they are not free; they are slaves. It is our duty to tell you that the preachers will tell you when you return to your homes to pray these conditions away, but we cannot pray these conditions away. We have got to organize, white and Negro, side by side, against our common enemies. We must be willing to die if necessary for the cause.

A Negro delegate from Indianapolis was so thrilled by the fighting spirit of the convention that he wished its proceedings could be broadcasted to all the workers throughout the world. He told the convention how he had joined the church, he had joined the fraternal bodies, he had joined all sorts of reformist organizations, and never until he joined the League of Struggle for Negro Rights did he find an organization really fighting for the rights of the Negro masses. "My people are being lynched and these churches, lodges, etc., are not raising a hand to fight the lynching mobs. I am here with you to live and die in this struggle for Negro rights."

Delegate Kingston from Philadelphia declared that "the working class today, both white and Negro, are faced with a problem that we must either submit to slavery and starvation, or combine our forces to combat them. We must stand together. The capitalists are able to maintain their rule only by creating a division in the ranks of labor. We must organize to fight."