

Achievements and Shortcomings of the Harlem Liberator

By CYRIL BRIGGS

In the course of the recent struggles in Harlem, the Liberator has come forward as a powerful weapon in the hands of the militant workingclass movementa developing in this section. It was in the very forefront of the preparation of the Scottsboro Protest March. It has vigorously supported the actions of the hungry unemployed workers before the relief bureaus. It is today leading the struggle against the recent police jim-crow order aimed at disrupting the growing unity of black and white workers in the struggle for bread and freedom. Cyril Briggs, editor of the Harlem Liberator, was the first victim of this vicious jim-crow edict.

The Harlem Liberator has thus become an important factor in the struggles of the toiling masses of Harlem for the right to existence, against the cutting off of relief, against police terror and all forms of oppression. It is no accident that the editor of the Liberator has been twice haled into court during the three months the Liberator has been in existence, in an attempt to railroad him to jail. The Tammany bosses fear the growing power of the Liberator. They know the value of the Liberator as a weapon in the hands of the toiling masses of Harlem.

Shortcomings Can Be Overcome

At the same time, it must be frankly stated that the Liberator still suffers from certain shortcomings. These shortcomings,

however, can and will be overcome by the support and constructive criticism of the workers of Harlem. It is their paper. Its existence is tied up with their struggles for existence. Some of these shortcomings are the small size of the paper, and its skeleton staff which makes it sometimes impossible to properly report all struggles that the Harlem masses are involved in.

In addition, the Harlem Liberator must compete with the reformist papers for the masses still under their influence. While functioning as the voice of the Negro workers already involved in the struggle for bread and freedom, against starvation and oppression, the Liberator must act as the agent of these awakened masses in penetrating the ranks of other sections of the toiling population of Harlem. The Liberator is thus faced with the necessity of reporting all phases of community life, of meeting the varied interests of all sections of the Harlem working-class. It must reach these masses in order to combat the influence of the reformist misleaders who seek to divert these masses from struggle into channels harmless to the lynch lords. It could not reach these masses by any sectarian approach in handling news. Its news columns must reflect the interests of the sports fans and of the housewife, etc.

Workers Must Build Their Paper

The workers in the militant organizations in Harlem can and should build the Liberator. On the other hand, these organizations can be built into powerful instruments of struggle only with the help of the Harlem Liberator. The Liberator in reporting the activities of the I.L.D., the Unemployed Councils, etc., brings these organizations before those masses they have not yet reached serving to popularize them and clarifying the masses on the militant programs of these organizations as opposed to the treacherous activities of the reformists. The task of building the Liberator is therefore intimately tied up with the work of building the Unemployed Councils, the I.L.D. and other militant organizations in Harlem.

Already Popular With the Masses

The shortcomings of the paper already mentioned above can be overcome with the support of these organizations and the broad masses of Harlem. The size can be increased as enough support is developed around the paper and its circulation and advertising built up.

Even with these shortcomings, the Liberator has already made a warm response from the masses of Harlem who are increasingly recognizing in it their staunch defender and champion and a relentless fighter against all forms of oppression, against the hunger policies of the bosses and for the daily needs of the masses. The increasing popularity of the Liberator was graphically demonstrated last week when by Saturday every copy of that week's edition was sold out.

The Liberator can be and must be built into a mass organ in Harlem. Building the Liberator is the task of every sincere worker, black and white, desirous of supporting the liberation struggles of the Negro People.

Local 280 Laundry Industry

Local 280 and the strike was sold out by the leadership. In 1925 there was a strike in the Giant, Oak Liberty and Phoenix laundries. This strike too was sold out by the corrupt leadership. Since 1925 Local 280 has led no strikes. They have been busy going about trying to get Negro women (shirt ironers) off their jobs and trying to get the bosses to help organize the laundry workers. Of course the bosses laugh at them and did the boss of the Nonparail laundry (Bronx).

Since the Industrial Recovery Act has been passed, this local 280 is trying to come forward with the assistance of the laundry bosses) and fix up a code of wages, hours, etc. that will be in the interest of the laundry masses.

They come to the Negro workers because they have the same idea about Negroes that they have always had. When they conducted organizational campaigns, they always thought that Negroes were too stupid to understand what a union is and what a union can do for workers. Now they feel that Negroes are stupid and can be herded into a union that never has, never can and never will serve the interests of the Negro laundry workers.

In the next issue of the Liberator there will appear an account of the role of the Laundry Workers Industrial Union and its struggle for all of the workers of the laundry industry, Negro and white.