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What is Empire Day?

By Geo. Padmore.

On the twenty-fourth of May every year, the British imperialists and their native lackeys in the colonies give thanks to their god that with the aid of the Bible, rum and bullets they have stolen India, parts of Africa and China, and have enslaved hundreds of millions of colonial toilers in these lands. **This is Empire Day.** With all the cynicism characteristic of the most arrogant, haughty and hypocritical ruling class in the world — it is also made a "great" day for rejoicing in the colonies.

With flag waving, military display and jingo songs à la Rudyard Kipling, millions of Negro, Indian, Chinese and other coloured children are compelled to dress themselves up in gaudy Lancashire cloth, and with the Union Jack — the symbol of oppression, assemble in public places and listen to the most arrogant speeches of colonial governors, missionaries and military officials.

Earl Jellicoe, Admiral-in-chief of the Fleet and president of the Empire Day Movement, in a recent address to the school children of Britain said:

"The celebration of the day brings before the people, and especially before **the young, the desirability of thinking imperially.**" (Emphasis ours — G. P.)

In this way these imperialist overlords foster national hatred and contempt for the peoples of other lands in the minds of working class children. Empire Day celebration in the schools is also made an occasion for spreading the most awful lies about the Soviet Union. The writer remembers as a village schoolboy in a Britain colony, how the European school inspector, the district-magistrate, and the parish priest used to compete with one another in telling us how the Bolsheviks hated the coloured races and that if it was not for the "mighty" British Empire — "of which we must all be proud, and ready to defend with our lives", — the Soviets would overrun Africa and enslave all the blacks, even worse than the German "huns".

Furthermore, out of the starvation wages of the colonial toilers, their children are compelled to make donations to all kinds of imperialist and military campaigns — ranging from the King's birthday to Poppy Day.

When the true history of British colonial plunder comes to be written from the point of view of the oppressed and exploited nations now under the yoke of these imperialist murderers it will reveal some of the greatest rackets that the world however known.

In Africa, the West Indies, and other British possessions, the wives of the European bureaucrats, not satisfied that their men are extorting millions of dollars out of the sweat and blood of the natives, are also active in promoting their own pet rackets. In order to cover up the predatory character of their doings, these proud Anglo-Saxon dames, who by the way, are no less skilful than their husbands in

patriotic demagoguery, and as a result, have been able to put over one of the biggest swindles in Trinidad, an important naval base for the North Atlantic Fleet. Thanks to their jesuitic manoeuvres, they succeeded in getting one of the officials in the Department of Education to close up one of the oldest elementary schools supported out of public revenue and turn the building over to them in order to establish a club for sailors visiting the island. It is here the ladies of easy virtue congregate to make their contacts with the navy men. What do these people care about the fact that thousands of little black children are now denied the opportunity of learning to read and write by having their schoolbuilding taken away from them. These women, like their men, realize that the British navy is the greatest instrument which they have to keep the Negroes and other colonial peoples in subjection, so they leave no stone unturned to see that all the wants of their armed protectors are fully satisfied.

Here is another case which serves to show how Empire Day is utilized in promoting British business in the colonies.

In a circular letter sent out to the African and West Indian press, by these Empire "builders", the natives of the Empire were asked on Empire Day, 1932, and in the succeeding years, to agree to use at their tables solely the food products of British lands.

The circular advances the following reasons:

"1. In humble acknowledgment of the gracious dispensation of Providence which enables the British Empire to produce every article of food needed for human sustenance. (Emphasis ours — G. P.)

2. To aid and encourage the food producers of the Empire to develop the resources of their lands. First preference should be given to the products of the Colony. Then the products of other parts of the Empire.

The help is sought of all private house-holders and managers of all clubs, hotels and restaurants, asking them:

"1. To promise to make the meals of that day Empire meals.

2. In the case of clubs, hotels, and restaurants, to allow the fact of their promise to be published in the Press."

In addition, those who are willing and able to do so, are asked to help further by:

"(a) Giving an "Empire" lunch or dinner that day, serving only Empire food.

(b) In the case of such restaurants and stores as make special displays of food, reserving such displays for Empire products."

The circular goes on to make a direct appeal to the various imperialist agents as follows:

"1. If you are a Minister of Religion: to ask your congregation to join on Empire Day in acknowledgment to the Almighty for the great resources with which the British Empire has been blessed. (See Revelations Chapter 22, Verse 2.)

2. If you are civic head of a town or village: to ask your fellow citizens (by a letter to the press and/or by a reference at your Council meeting) to observe Empire Day in this way.

3. If you are of the governing body of any patriotic society: to invite its members to observe Empire Day in this way.

4. If you are head of a University, College, or School: to call the attention of students to the food resources of the Empire.

5. If you are a private citizen: to decide that in your household Empire Day meals will be on Empire food products only; to ask your neighbours to come to the same decision; to speak to the tradespeople who have your custom, urging them to stock Empire food products."

What cynicism! There is hardly any part of the world where there is more misery, squalor and starvation than in the black colonies.

In the midst of all the widespread misery and unemployment, due to the economic crisis of world capitalism, these imperialist parasites are only concerned with extorting taxes out of the Negro workers and peasants, in order to enable a handful of European bureaucrats to equander millions of pounds upon their idle women.

Empire Day—is only one of the many "national" celebrations promoted by the British imperialist officials to foster patriotism and loyalty among the workers and their children in England as well as in the colonies, in order to enable the ruling class of England to continue to carry on their regime of hunger, starvation, plunder and annexation, wholesale slaughter of defenceless natives, lust, profit and bloodshed, which has been the historic policy of the so-called British Empire from the slave raiding days of Elizabeth to the forced labour regime of George V.

See page 12 — How The British Empire Was Built.

The War Danger

South Africa and the Imperialist War

By T. Jackson (Johannesburg).

The Anglo-Boer imperialist rulers of South Africa had gained a certain cheap "notoriety" through their opposition of the creation of black armies in Africa, especially does it show this opposition towards the black army of French imperialism, while glossing over the existence of the King's African Rifles in East-Africa and the West African Frontier Force, two native armies of British imperialism, which African children in the schools are taught to admire and feel proud of.

The reason for this policy and attitude of the South African slave holders is quite understandable. A black army in South Africa would cause the bourgeoisie sleepless nights. They can only feel a certain amount of "security" while the natives are completely unarmed and defenceless. But this is only one side of the question. The other side is, that this policy lulls the vigilance of the revolutionaries in the struggle against imperialist war. South African natives have participated in every war of the imperialists in recent times to a greater or lesser extent, in one way or another. This participation was especially significant during the War of 1914—1918.

It is an incident in this connection that has impelled me to write this article for the benefit of the readers of the "NEGRO WORKER" because it exposes the despicable role of the African lackeys, better known as "good boy" reformists in South Africa in the service of British imperialism. The incident I have in mind is the foundering of the "Mendi", a British steamer in the English Channel, on February 21st, 1917, with 800 African workers bound for the battle fields of France, an incident, "immortalised in song" by middle-class Negro composers in South Africa and around which, the imperialists with the aid of their black agents, especially the parsons have spread a halo of mystic glamour taking good care in hiding the ugly reality of African workers and peasants dying in the cause of their bloody capitalist enslavers.

For fifteen years the imperialists forgot all about the widows and dependants of the men who went down in the "Mendi". But on February 21st this year, they staged a huge memorial service in the "Bantu Sports Ground" in Johannesburg, attended by the "respectable" citizens of the city from the white Mayor and Bishops down to the native parsons, and underpaid teachers, who brought native boy scouts and girl guides and all the reformist misleaders whom they could mobilize for the occasion. It is interesting to give quotations from the speeches of the white citizens which were very "nice" indeed—and then to ask the question, why is it that these arrogant people whose usual references to the native people