



HARRY HAYWOOD spoke movingly about his experiences in the class struggle. (Call photo)

Harry Haywood Honored 78 Years of Struggle Hailed

A testimonial dinner was attended by 250 people in Chicago March 13, honoring Harry Haywood's "78 years of struggle."

Haywood, a veteran communist leader is best known for his contributions to the understanding of the Afro-American people's struggle as a national question and his principled stand against the revisionist line as it developed inside the once-revolutionary Communist Party.

Haywood's life has been one of fighting for the rights of all workers and consistent dedication to the goal of socialism. In his youth he moved from membership in the African Blood Brotherhood, a revolutionary nationalist organization, to joining the Young Communist League and the Communist Party in 1923. He later spent four and a half years studying in the Soviet Union and participating in the work of the Communist Internationale.

Haywood was among the earliest communist fighters to fully understand the imperialist oppression of the Black Belt South, upholding and popularizing the right of Afro-Americans to self-determination there.

Some of Harry Haywood's most

important works such as *Negro Liberation* (1948) and *For a Revolutionary Position on the Negro Question* (1957) have recently been reprinted by Liberator Press. Many of those in attendance at the dinner, had only recently become acquainted with these classic writings on the national question.

The dinner was representative of the recognition Haywood's work is once again beginning to receive. The 250 people in the audience included a number of veteran revolutionary fighters, activists in the Black liberation struggles of the 1960's, Marxist-Leninists from different organizations, and a large number of workers who came to hear about the history of the communist movement in the U.S. People came from at least ten cities and telegrams were read from several others.

Harry Wells, master of ceremonies, introduced a number of the guests including Black historians Ernie Mkalimoto, John Higginson and Lerone Bennet, Jr.

Amiri Baraka, chairman of the Congress of Afrikan People told of Haywood's contribution in giving the nationalist upsurge among Afro-Americans a scientific analysis

and highlighting the revolutionary significance of their right to self-determination.

Nannie Washburn, a member of the October League in Atlanta, commented on her own 76 years of struggle, remembering the work she had done with Haywood for the freedom of Angelo Herndon in the 1930's.

Introducing Haywood, Sherman Miller from the October League told the audience, "Comrade Haywood has demonstrated dedication to the cause of the working and oppressed peoples. It is risky enough to be a discontented Black in this country, let alone a Black communist fighting to overthrow this rotten system. Without wavering, comrade Haywood has withstood the pressure of the Klan, police and the state."

Miller added, "When the present pack of revisionist renegades who now control the CPUSA began to betray proletarian revolution and Black liberation, comrade Haywood refused to capitulate."

Following this introduction, Haywood spoke to the crowd about some of his experiences in the revolutionary struggle. He was greeted by a resounding standing ovation.

Explaining the work the party did in the 30's, Haywood said, "We had a *real* Communist Party in those days. But since the 50's, this country has not seen a revolutionary Communist Party in action. When the CP gave up its revolutionary program and became reformist, it cut off a whole generation, the youth of the 60's and 70's. Cut them off from the experiences and traditions of earlier fighters.

"One thing that made the party so effective at that time was its understanding of the revolutionary potential of the Black people's movement.

"Our starting point was understanding that imperialism everywhere bases itself on exploiting the workers and oppressing whole nations of people. And this applies right here inside the U.S. where Blacks are an oppressed nation in the Deep South and an unassimilated national minority in the North; a virtually captive colonial people in the metropolitan heartland of an imperialist superpower.

"This means that the Black struggle for equality and democratic rights is revolutionary in itself.

"But Black demands for equality are empty phrases unless there is political power to enforce equality. That's why we called for self-determination."

Haywood spoke vividly about Chicago's southside communists who built the anti-fascist united front in the Black community through a "Hands off Ethiopia" movement when it was invaded by Mussolini. "For Black Americans, Ethiopia, an independent Negro state in Africa, had always been a symbol of freedom and independence in history and folklore. Masses of Black people strongly supported Ethiopia. Their readiness to defend Ethiopia from fascist invasion was linked to the struggle against the enemy at home. The defense of Ethiopia inevitably became a fight against the growth of fascism in Chicago, against every petty persecution, Jim Crow degradation, misery and discrimination."

The Communist Party rallied over 10,000 on Chicago's southside to oppose fascism abroad and at home. Through struggles like this, the CP became known as a vanguard for both the workers and the masses of Afro-Americans.

Speaking on behalf of veteran communists, Haywood said that it is "...exciting to see the rise of a new movement with new communist leadership, combining the lessons and the spirit of the 60's with a revolutionary line fundamentally the same as guided us in the 30's. This movement is uniting the best fighters of the old and young generations into an unbeatable force. And I'm glad to see my friends in the OL in the front ranks of this movement."

In a toast at the conclusion of the dinner, October League chairman Mike Klonsky pointed out the great unity expressed in the dinner—unity between old and young, between people of different nationalities, and between Marxist-Leninists presently in different organizations. He pointed out that this was the type of unity necessary to forge ahead with the task of building the new party.