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blindness which prevented them from seeing capital as a historical—rather than a natural—category. Perhaps, too, we can take some comfort in this situation from recalling that Lenin insisted on making the whole distinction between a true revolutionary and “any ordinary bourgeois or petit bourgeois” in the movement turn upon the acceptance of the subtle Marxist idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Again, congratulations on the excellent job you done in your letter to PL.

Ted Allen—1967

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## **Can White Workers Radicals Be Radicalized?**

*By Ted Allen*

*Brooklyn, NY 1967*

For more than seventy years, general historians and labor and socialist specialists have sought to explain the “traditional” generally low level of class consciousness of the United States working class, as compared with that of the workers of many other industrial countries. Scholars, such as Frederick Engels, F.A. Sorge, Frederick Jackson Turner (with his three generations of “safety-valvers and anti-safety-valvers”), Richard T. Ely, Morris Hillquit, John R. Commons and associates, Selig Perlman, with his Theory of the Labor Movement, Mary Beard, and William Z. Foster, with his analyses of “American exceptionalism”, have produced a classical consensus on the subject.

They ascribe this phenomenon to what they regard as some six actual and peculiar objective factors of United States development: 1) The existence of the right to vote and other democratic liberties from the very founding of the state; 2) The heterogeneity of composition of the United States working class, a conglomeration of many tongues and kindreds; 3) The “safety valve” for social discontent provided by the availability of homesteading opportunities in the West; 4) The “social mobility” factor, the relative ease with which poor persons could rise on the economic ladder to become not only property owners, but entrepreneurs; 5) The relative shortage of labor, resulting in a higher level of wages, as compared

with that of other countries; 6) The institutionalization of “pure and simple trade unionism”, in the form of a dominant labor aristocracy using its organizational authority to prevent the development of independent political action by labor.

For many reasons this rationale has lost much of its force. For one thing, analysis completely refutes, or at least casts great doubt upon, many of the basic assumptions involved.

For instance, the free-land safety-valve theory has been thoroughly discredited. Heterogeneity may well be considered to have brought essentially and incidentally, more strength than weakness to the United States labor and radical movement, while the implied benefits of homogeneity are hard to substantiate. The rise of mass, “non- aristocratic”, industrial unions has not broken the basic pattern of opposition to a workers n party, on the part of the leaders. The “language problem” in labor agitating and organizing never really posed any insurmountable obstacle and, in any case, has long since ceased to be a major problem.

Elsewhere I shall undertake a thorough analysis of each of the points of that consensus and a general refutation of the thesis as a whole, and I shall argue for an alternative thesis. That argument will be based on two basic and irrefutable themes: First, whatever the state of c lass consciousness may have been most of the time, there have been occasional periods of widespread and violent eruption of radical thought and action on the part of the workers and poor farmers, white and black, directed against mill-owners, landlords, bankers, loan companies, usurious merchants, mining companies, railroad “kings”. There was black labor’s valiant Reconstruction struggle against the resubjugation by the” New South”, and the grand effort of the Exodus of 1879. The “year of violence”, 1877, when a ten-cent cut in the daily wage set off fiery revolts at every major terminal point across the country. From bloody Haymarket to the Pullman strike of ‘94. were nine years during which the U.S. army was called upon no less than 328 times to suppress labor’s struggles. There were the Populists of the same period when black and white poor fanners joined hands for an instant in the South as cotton went down to a nickel a pound, and when on Mary Lease’s advice Middle Western farmers decided to “raise less corn and more hell!” And in the 1930’s, the bursting grapes of wrath revived the old militant traditions, finally established industrial unionism, and black and

white auto workers added something new, the sit-down strike.

In such times as those, any proposal to discuss the “relative backwardness of the United States workers and poor farmers” would have had a ring of unreality. If, in such crises, the cause of labor was consistently defeated by force and co-optation; if no permanent advance of class consciousness in the form of a third, anti-capitalist, party was achieved; and, if subsequently, the scholastic harpies were emboldened to reappear questioning the fighting mettle of the black and white working people of this country—then there must have been reasons more relevant than “free land” that you couldn’t get; “free votes” that you couldn’t cast, or couldn’t get counted; or “high wages” for jobs you couldn’t find or, if found, you couldn’t live on; or “big deals” that never panned out; or... the rest of the standard rationale.

Second: Each of the “facts of life” as set down in the classical consensus must be decisively altered when examined in the light of the centrality of the question of white supremacy and of the white-skin privileges of the white workers, in particular. “Free land”, “constitutional liberties”, “immigration”, “high wages,” “social mobility”, ‘aristocracy of labor” – all, white-skin privileges. Whatever their effect upon the thinking of white workers may be said to be, the same cannot be claimed in the case of the Negro—“the excluded class.”

All this leaves us with two questions:

Why is it that the, at time, militant and radical anti-capitalist movement of industrial and agrarian toilers merely flared and then died without either changing power relationships or establishing an independent mass party of its own?

Why did no independent anti-capitalist Negro liberation party come into being?

The discussion of this latter question lies outside the scope of this article, except to the extent that white supremacist ideology and practices among white workers and radicals may have functioned to inhibit the development of a black radical party.

As with streams and their sources, it is axiomatic that the political level of a movement cannot rise above that of its leadership, in this case, the radical vanguard. It devolves upon them to educate and organize, to instill class consciousness in the others and to bring them to life, so to speak, in

the political-historical sense, as a self-conscious part of the class struggle. Therefore, to learn why the past upsurges of radicalism affected so little of a lasting nature “for the good of the order”; we must give first attention not to the workers in general, nor even just to the white workers, but to the radical movement. For, as it was said, “Ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted?”

And, indeed, wherewith, but from a black prophet-without-honor who was always seated “below the salt” at white America’s table—from Dr. W. E. B. DuBois?

Almost sixty years ago, DuBois warned American radicals: “The Negro Problem is the great test of the American Socialist.” A fighter by nature, he left the Socialist Party, saying “Can the objects of Socialism be achieved as long as the Negro is neglected? Can any great human problem wait? If Socialism is going to settle the American problem of race prejudice without direct attack along these lines by Socialists, why is it necessary to fight along other lines?” (*New Review*, Feb. I, 1913)

In his chief historical work, DuBois found that Black Reconstruction was “a normal working class movement, successful to an unusual degree, despite all disappointments and failures.” Its final defeat was due to “the race philosophy” of white supremacy, operating “to make labor unity or labor class-consciousness impossible.” (*Black Reconstruction*, pp. 383 and 680). He wrote that as the Great Depression withered the land and he saw the fatal race differential still unchallenged in the ranks of the jobless, penniless and starving white masses. By the light of the times in the mirror of the past he descried something of the future:

“The South, after the Civil war, presented the greatest opportunity for a real national labor movement which the nation ever saw or is likely to see for many decades. Yet the labor movement, with but few exceptions, never realized the situation. It never had the intelligence or knowledge, as a whole, to see in black slavery and reconstruction, the kernel and the meaning of the labor movement in the United States.” (ibid., 353)

Let no one lay the flattering unction to his whited soul that there is more Negro than historian in this work of DuBois. Being black helped him to see; but what he saw, was there.

Georgia Populist leader Tom Watson in 1892, boggled at the gaping pit waiting for him and his cause: “... the argument against the independent

movement in the South may be boiled down into one word—nigger.” Like farmers, like workers: “...if a body of (white) workmen generate sufficient temerity to ask for less hours or an advance in wages,” wrote Georgia American Federation of Labor Leaders Will Winn in 1898, “the Goliath in command has only to utter the magic word ‘Negroes’ to drive them back into the ruts in fear and trembling.”

In the thirties the bright brave crusade of American labor ground to a halt on the Southern approaches. “Both the AFL and the CIO encountered special difficulties in this effort,” explains one sympathetic white author. Instead of being glad that the Negro workers “were more easily organized than whites,” the “organizers” backed away, since “to organize the Negro workers first, was to risk alienating the whites.” (Ray Marshall, *The Negro and Organized Labor*, p. 44) Add one more epitaph on the tomb of labor’s buried dreams: “Don’t alienate the whites!”

Like dormant spores, the “kernel and meaning” of the working class movement in this country began to produce mass understanding only when they were watered and warmed in the ambience of the surging national liberation struggles of the peoples of the colonial world, and of the Negro people of the United States, in particular. Viewed thus in its historical context, it is a matter of profound significance that throughout the Left, not only the blacks, but white radicals are raising the old question about “the backwardness of the United States working class”, in this new and more meaningful form: “Can the white workers be radicalized?”

The very asking of this question by white radicals reflects a historic advance of understanding in that quarter. It fixed upon the white supremacist attitudes within the United States working class, as the No. 1 barrier to the development of a class conscious movement, and places this question as the central problem for the radical movement of today and tomorrow. In passing, let us acknowledge our debt to the black liberation struggle for this advance in our understanding; it is a debt which can be repaid in only one way.

To ask this new-formed question, “Can the white workers be radicalized?”, really is to ask, “Is it in the interest of the white workers, as workers, to become radical?” For, if we are to disregard the guiding principle of class interest, we may as well start with “revolutionary” preachments to the power-elite, themselves. At the same time, since everything contains

its own immanent opposite, this form of the question, though it marks an advance of understanding, bears the potential negation of the whole concept of proletarian radicalism as the motive and mode of social progress.

Indeed, many have opted for the negative, influencing yet others to be troubled with doubt. The negaters argue as follows:

“To become radicalized means above all, to believe that ‘An injury to one is an injury to all.’ But the injury dealt out to the black worker has its counterpart in the privilege of the white worker. To expect the white worker to help wipe out the injury to the Negro is to ask him to oppose his own interests. This would violate the condition of ‘class interest’ which you, yourself, have set. Therefore, the answer to the question, ‘Can the white workers be radicalized?’, is simply, ‘No.’ But do not be discouraged; do not forget, you said everything contains its own immanent opposite: Hegel in fair weather, Hegel in foul! Have we not vowed to follow the truth wherever it leads? If the truth leads us away from the working class, count yourself blessed since it also leads you out of the century-long shadow of ‘proletarian’ dogmatism!”

Whether they are right or wrong, I believe that this states their case fairly. Furthermore, it is a fair challenge and it is as futile as it is dishonest to dodge the issue. Yet that is precisely what some “working-class-oriented” radicals (blacks as well as whites), along with liberals tend to do. They want to be somewhere on the “yes” side of the question of the white-skin privilege. That is why the first question is not “Can the white workers be radicalized?” but “Can the white radicals be radicalized?” The first step toward a positive answer is to cut the ground out from under all the artful-dodging, as I shall try to do with some typical rationales:

### **Artful-Dodge No. 1:**

“Level up; don’t level down! The way to handle the problem of the white-skin privilege is not to take anything away from the whites, but to give something to the blacks. “

If there is one sure way of perpetuating the white-skin privileges, this is it. This thesis is typified by the “Fair employment-through-full-employment” approach. Since nothing is to be “taken away” from the white worker, including his privilege of being first hired and last fired, this policy simply means the preservation of the Negroes’ status of last-hired and

first-fired, as long as there is any hiring or firing to be done, and there are any white workers left to be hired or any black workers left to be fired. The same may be said, *mutatus mutandis*, of this approach to anti-Negro discrimination in housing and education.

**Artful-Dodge No 2:**

“The new working class—the technical specialists and educators—will be able to deal with this problem of the white-skin privilege because of the unique powers deriving from their strategic place in the economy, and because they are almost completely insulated from the effects of Negro competition, they are not affected by the white supremacy that the lower orders of white have taken on in the hurly-burly.”

It is not the competition that white workers have with Negro workers that explains their infection with the poisonous ideology of white supremacy. After all, all workers compete with all other workers under this system. The reason for the white supremacist infection is the white-skin privilege which the power structure confers on the white workers.

The competition is an economic law; the racist form of it is a social and political contrivance. When white educators of the New York City schools invoked “due process” from Black Reconstruction’s Fourteenth Amendment to defend white job privileges, they merely showed what a college education can do to put irony at the service of white supremacy. When a section of “new working class” gets involved in the hurly-burly of the competitive struggle the next time, it is to be hoped that they, unlike the UFT, will make more common cause with the Negro than with their brother aristocrats of labor. But if they are not ready to face the hurly-burly of job competition with blacks, they are not ready to advise the “traditional working class”.

**Artful-Dodge No. 3:**

(More “radical” sounding) “The immediate interests of the white worker are in conflict with those of the Negro, where white-skin privileges are concerned. But their long-range interests in ‘the revolution’ are in common. Therefore, we need a strategy of ‘parallel struggles’ with each group fighting for ‘its own interest’ against the Establishment. Eventually our efforts will join when the long-range tasks are at hand. In the mean-

time, however, racism cannot be the main issue among the white workers; at the same time it must be the main issue among the black workers.”

Obviously, as far as the fatal poison of white-skin privileges is concerned, these dodgers do not have in mind “parallel” struggles, but opposite ones. We shall never get to “the day” except day-by-day, never to the “leaps” except by steps; and we can never come to either by going in opposite directions on the ground that separates us. The day-to-day real interests of the white workers is not the white-skin privileges, but in the development of an ever-expanding union of class conscious workers, white and black. That is the only sure measure of proletarian class interests. That is why racism must be made the central issue day-by-day if the white workers are ever to have anything at all to say about their “long-range” interests.

#### **Artful-Dodge No. 4:**

(More “radical” sounding yet) “Eventually, when the depression and/or austerity times roll around, the corporations will move to cut their losses by reducing the privileges that they have extended to the white workers. When that time comes, the white workers will sing “Solidarity, forever!” again and join with the black workers in the struggle against capital.”

If it was “forever”, why does it have to be “again”? Besides, that sort of “automatic” solidarity always seems to have a white top and a black bottom, and that’s how we got to where we are today. After all, the next depression will not be the first one! First, explain what went wrong in 1837, 1873, 1892, and 1929, just to mention the initial years of some famous depressions, none of them distinguished for the elimination of the divisive line of white-skin privilege. Whether that privilege is an extra sack of Red-Cross flour or a swimming pool in the back yard; each does its poisonous work of feeding racism. Reduce the white-skin privilege? Why, the power-elite in this country would, to paraphrase Marx, give up 24 of the 25 Amendments, and the Democratic and Republican Parties, to boot, before they’d voluntarily withdraw one-twenty-fifth of the white workers’ race privilege. It is the keystone and mortar of their over-arching power. It will not “go away”, it will not be taken away; it can only be ended by repudiation by those on whom the rulers confer it.



**Artful-dodge No. 5:**

(The most “radical” sounding) “Don’t waste time on the United States white workers. For the time being, forget them. The privileges of these workers are paid for by the super-profits wrung out of the super-exploited black, yellow and brown labor of colonial peoples (including the special case of the oppressed Negro in the United States). The victorious national liberation struggles of these peoples will, sooner or later, chop off these sources of white-skin privilege funds. Then, though not before, the white workers will ‘get the message’. Meantime, the role of white radicals is simply to ‘support’ the colonial liberation struggles.”

This is 1) wrong; 2) dishonest; 3) cowardly.

Wrong, because it confuses the white-skin privilege in general, which is the prerogative of every white person living in the United States, with the special form of that privilege, the payment (direct or indirect) to the “aristocracy” of labor above what would be necessary according to the laws of normal competition, and which enables those few workers to escape in all but a formal sense from the proletarian to the petit-bourgeois life.

The white-skin privileges of the masses of the white workers do not permit them nor their children to escape into the ranks of the propertied classes. In the South, where the white-skin privilege has always been most emphasized and formal, the white workers have fared worse than white workers in the rest of the country. The white-skin privilege for the mass is the trustee’s privilege, not release from jail, merely freedom of movement within it and a diet more nearly adequate. It is not that the ordinary white worker gets more than he must have to support himself and his family, but that the black worker gets less than the white worker. The result is that by thus inducing, reinforcing and perpetuating racist attitudes on the part of the white workers, the present-day power-masters get the political support of the rank-and-file of the white workers in critical situations, and without having to share with them their super profits in the slightest measure, as contrasted to the case of the “aristocracy of labor.” The phenomenon of so-called “social overhead” capital expenditure does not alter this situation qualitatively; they do not change the economic status of the rank and file of white workers, and they do conform to and serve the needs of white supremacy.

Dishonest, because it promises to “support” the black struggle, but refuses to give the most meaningful “support” of all, i. e., to challenge the ideology and practice of white supremacy among the white workers.

Cowardly, because it chooses the role of “supply troops” rather than that of “front-line fighters” against the vile racist theory and practice of white supremacy.

In order to face this issue squarely, then, we must understand that the initiator and ultimate guarantor of the white-skin privileges of the white worker is not the white worker, but the white worker’s masters. They have maintained it for nearly four hundred years as an indispensable necessity for their continued rule. Consider a few historical facts.

All authorities agree (McMaster, Commons, Coman, and Schlesinger, for example) that the conditions of the masses of white industrial and agricultural workers, North and South, were abominable in the decades before the Civil War. Still they had their white-skin privileges: The white worker was an actual or potential citizen, with citizen’s rights; the black had no rights. The white, as possessor—if not immediately, then within a definite time—of his own person, had legal freedom of movement; the black did not own himself. The white, if bound by indenture, debtor apprenticeship, or in some other manner, might still succeed in escaping into the free-moving white world much more easily than the black worker. As possessor of himself, the white workers could—even though not always immediately—take a better job, if he could find one; the black had no such chance. The white worker, if opportunity afforded, could learn to read and then study as a means of improving his lot; the black worker was forbidden by law even to learn to read. The white worker could aspire to become a farmer, a merchant or an industrialist; the black had only flight, revolt, revenge to dream of.

At this point, the white skin privilege of the white worker was simply the right to be free; to abolish slavery was to abolish that privilege as a white-skin prerogative. challenge our present-day-nay-sayers to say that the victory of Emancipation in the Civil War was not in the interest of the white workers!

Reconstruction was defeated by armed lynch-terror against the Negro which redefined the white-skin privilege of white labor as the right to vote, to serve on juries, to become landowners in the South or West. It

was sealed with the establishment of the cotton textile mill industry in the South to prevent the poor white from competing and consequently uniting with black labor. (See, Report of the Industrial Commission of the United States, vols. vii and xiv., especially the latter, "Review of the Evidence", p. III, Washington, D.C., 1901; "Broadus Mitchell, Rise of the Cotton Mills in the South", page 137; W. J. Cash, "The Mind of the South," page 1790.) Its accounts thus settled with black labor in the South, the nationally consolidated power of capital confronted the workers of the North and crushed them in a series of sharp, often armed, struggles in the next ten years. Their voting, jury service and homestead rights were of no help to the strikers of 1877, or to the counted-out Greenbackers and Single Taxers, or the Molly Maguires, or the Haymarket defendants in those fierce battles with the Robber Barons.

It was substance and symbol that the very federal troops withdrawn from Reconstruction duty in the South were mobilized against the great railroad strike of that year. In the South, the tragedy of the defeat of Reconstruction had its farcical sequel in the defeat of the white supremacist poor southerner 'readjusters' in Virginia, Georgia, South Carolina and Mississippi at the hands of the Bourbons whom they had helped to power over the broken hopes of the black man.

The Populist Revolt was dissipated and destroyed by the redefinition, "constitutional and legal", this time, of the white-skin privilege to vote, to free public education, and to segregation of Negroes into the worst conditions in all public accommodations. (William Mabry, *The Negro in North Carolina Politics*, p. 69) Equally important, was the rejection of Booker T. Washington's Atlanta Compromise, and the driving of Negroes out of their traditional position in industrial crafts, as the role of the white labor aristocracy was established in the new imperialist scheme of things.

During the next quarter of a century the millions of Negroes who migrated to the North were assimilated into industry on the basis of the white-skin privilege system imposed by the industry-owners and the political and social order prevailing. When, at the end of that time, the Great Depression radicalized the masses of workers, there were sharp and bloody class struggles. Solidarity, forever! Industrial Unionism! Labor Political Action! Black-white unity! Under such slogans the masses of the workers poured into the labor movement. But when the dust had cleared, any threat

to the power of the capitalist class had passed by harmlessly and things were “under control” again.

### **Sealing the Bargain**

While in the South, the open appeal to white racism had stopped the labor movement, in the North, the white-skin privilege was institutionalized in the very form of trade union collective bargaining contracts. Instead of solidarizing with the black worker as the black worker had solidarized with the white worker, the unions gave contractual force to the white-skin privilege pattern which the employers had previously developed. Thus the employers were able to adapt standard trade union demands for seniority, promotion lists, job classification, closed and/or union shop, etc., to their larger purpose, just as the labor reform legislation served to seal a bargain with the white-supremacists in the Democratic Party.

Has this been in the interests of the white workers? The thirty-year boom is drawing to a close, as we can sense by the tightening noose of “austerity.” To see the enervating effect of the complicity of white workers in defending their white-skin privileges under conditions of downward economic indices, look at the soft coal industry.

At one time, the coal miners of this country were called the “backbone of the labor movement”, the great center and backlog of the industrial union upsurge and political action trends of the 1930's. They had the largest union, and the largest number and proportion of Negro members, in a solidly organized industry. They won the biggest mass wage increases of any union on the basis of equal pay rates for Negroes. They abolished the North-South wage differential in coal, winning an immediate twenty-five percent increase in the basic daily wage in the Southern mines in 1941. In the mining regions they had much authority in the selection of local, state and national officers, elective and appointive, working in political cooperation with the Negro people's organizations in large measure.

### **‘Local Customs’ in charge**

On the other hand, they made no attack upon the white-skin privileges in the union, nor in the mines, nor in the mining communities. With rare local exceptions, Negroes were excluded from top union positions; housing in mining towns usually did not have running water, but the segregated

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status was maintained. White-supremacist “local customs” were ruling doctrine in the Southern mining areas.

And if two-thirds of the miners white and black were handloaders, ninety percent of the Negro miners were in that category, in keeping with the prevailing white-supremacist pattern of excluding Negroes from other categories, especially those involving the operation of machinery or supervisory functions. The absence of seniority rights in the United Mine Workers contracts was, in this particular instance, a special disability for the Negro miners, in contrast to the situation of Negroes in many other industries, because they were by no means “newcomers” to that industry. In 1900, forty percent of the coal miners in the Southern and Border States were Negroes. In 1923, in the nation as a whole, one out of every twelve soft coal miners was a Negro.

The operators struck back at the miners’ union gains by way of the Joy loader and other mechanical loading devices, and in the post-World War years hand-loaded coal became a thing of the past and two out of every three jobs were abolished. But, instead of rallying black-white unity in the face of this murderous economic onslaught of the coal operators, the union united with the coal companies in the name of “competitive efficiency with other fuel and energy sources” and the way was smoothed by throwing the jobs of the Negro miners first before the steam-roller. The lay-off rate of all the Negro miners in the industry as a whole was one-third higher than that of the white miners. In West Virginia, where more than half of all the Negro miners in the country were employed, the lay-off rate was one-and-a-half times that of the white miners. In Alabama, the state with the largest proportion of black miners, the lay-off rate for Negro miners was more than three times that for whites.

And did this treachery serve the interests of the white miners? Go ask it in the “hillbilly” ghettos of Chicago and Detroit. Or in the hopeless hollows from which so many fled. Or in the bereaved and grieving mining towns where scores of the “lucky” ones are each year entombed below or petrify their lungs in black, whites sacrificed now in their turn on the alter of “competitive fuel efficiency.” Go ask it in fields where the contract wage scale has become a mockery, whether in the dog-holes, the truck mines, or in “union operations” where all that is “union” is the dues and the royalties, if that.

Whether or not the miner's general conditions might have been better if all had joined to enforce the seniority rights of the Negroes, for instance, we cannot know. But two things which we do know persuade us that solidarity would have been better, not just for the black miners, but for the whites. First, as Douglass taught us, where there is no struggle there is no progress. And, second, every miner had taken a solemn oath "never to wrong a brother or to see him wronged, if it be in my power to prevent it." By their complicity with the coal operators in robbing the Negro miners of their job rights, the white miners cancelled that sacred pledge—not just to the black man, but to each other—and placed themselves at the mercy of their ancient enemy.

The implications would seem to be unmistakable. Yet there are time-slicers who will argue that the white-skin privileges makes the sufferings of the white worker less and of shorter duration than those of the Negro, and that therefore it serves the former's interest to that degree. But how can they possibly know? Has the other way been tried? Have the white workers ever been asked to cast off the albatross of privilege and to take the side of the Negro workers instead of the white bosses? Can anyone believe that such a course would not be accompanied by a qualitative transformation in the unity and militancy of the working class? Having that, all things shall be added unto labor's cause.

While history has shown that the white-skin privilege does not serve the real interests of the white workers, it also shows that the concomitant racist ideology has blinded them to that fact.

Undeniably, the wrath of the gods will crackle about the heads of the white workers, especially the "early joiners", who reject the racist privileges—Columbia University students fighting the white-privileged gymnasium and urban "removal"; the white Chicago toolmaker denouncing in his shop and union meeting the white privileges of his own craft; the minority of white New York teachers tearing away at the "job security" mask for white privilege; the "keep-on-pushin" types of the Southern Conference Education Fund exposing the poison of the privilege to the eyes of the southern white workers. Jail, harassment, police surveillance, rain down on such as dare to blaspheme against the holy of holies. In this way, quite possibly, the first white-skin privilege to fall will be the low ratio of whites to blacks in the prison population.

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### **The Road to Power**

Still, in the storm, some reassurance; it means that a shaft of challenge has struck the premises of power. It signifies that the road to power begins with drawing from these few courageous examples two general rules of attack: First, face the problem of the necessity to repudiate the white-skin privilege. Second, act; repudiate the privilege by violating the white “gentleman’s agreement” as completely as you can at every opportunity. Once radicals adopt such an approach to radicalizing the white masses, the implications for particular areas of activity will not be hard to find. If in doubt at first, just make a list of the privileges and start violating them.

Whether the white workers can today or in the future be radicalized in a historically more important and lasting sense than in past crises of our history, depends mainly upon the function of the white radicals. A radical is one who understands that race privilege masked as “college training” or “seniority rights” or “civil service ratings”, or “apprenticeship training”, will prove no less fatal for the U.S. labor movement than less sophisticated versions of it have been in the past; who understands that “Solidarity forever !” means “ Privileges never! ”; who understands, not only that white supremacy is the Achilles Heel of American Imperialism, but that the white-skin privilege is the Achilles Heel of the American working class.

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