

South African Communist Party Documents. 1923

## **A Helots' Bill of Rights**

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Every intelligent worker, whether of European or African descent, must associate himself with the demands of the SA Native National Congress, representing for this purpose, we think, the subject races of the Union in general, for equal rights with the other races, right to ownership of land, equality in the eyes of the law, 'equal rights for all civilised men', equality of treatment and citizenship irrespective of race, class, creed or origin, equal share in the direction of public affairs, and direct representation by members of their own race in all legislative bodies.

It is easy to quibble at the wording of these demands; let that task be left to the enemy. Nor is it necessary here to point out their incompleteness — there is much more that should have been included in a Bill of Rights. But what matter? For the working class of the whole world, struggling to shake off the yoke of imperialist capitalism, the essence of imperialism is the subject status of the exploited races. As long as one section of the working class acquiesces or participates in the subjection of another, so long will that other be used to bring it down lower and lower. If the enemy is to be dispossessed by the working class, it will take all the power of the whole working class to do it, and the victory must be shared by all the victors. The native workers cannot be expected to throw their weight into the fight if no benefit to them is expected out of it, nor if they are asked to fight for people who promise them still nothing but helotry. At present the capitalist class has got the chief hold on the minds and even sympathies of the native masses, or at least of their leaders, not because the capitalist class really offers them anything substantial but because the working class movement in general has boycotted them and left the field clear for capitalist dope. Let the organised workers boldly and honestly champion the helots' demands and prove themselves worthy of their confidence. On the helots' side are, all the professed principles of the bourgeoisie: logic, justice, common sense, liberalism, progress, freedom. If we want that sort of argument to 'excuse' us for being 'negrophiles', there we have it in plenty, unanswerable, impregnable. On their side also is the historic fact that national liberation is, in the case of subject races, the necessary introduction to proletarian revolution. On the ruling class side, the only argument — and the fact that it is the only argument shows only the more the strength of the natives' case — is 'ANNIE GET YOUR GUN and your sword and your pistol' — and your aeroplanes.

Workers of South Africa, support every movement for emancipation from capitalist oppression, irrespective of race, colour or country.

<http://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/sections/sacp/1923/helots.htm>