

# "The People."

## The White Labour Illusion.

The Municipal Elections in Johannesburg have somewhat revived the old "white labour" cry of the so-called Labour Party (known to coloured workers as the "White Labour Party") probably because that Party's recent endorsement of the notorious Trades Hall "Europeans only" resolution seemed to require some appeal to old precedent to support its disregard of patent facts and reduction to absurdity of its name "Labour." A Labour manifesto, speaking of the "business man" ticket, says: "by their opposition to a white labour policy and insistence on cheap servile labour they have restricted the spending capacity of the majority of the people" (sic, compare "Het Volk"). "By cheap labour, high rents and costly transit they have driven the poorer section of the community (sic) to lie cheek by jowl with the exploited and helpless kaffir, Asiatic and coloured man." Up therefore with "the people" and "the community"; but as for the aforesaid exploited and helpless darkie, though his conditions are so similar to those of "the people" and "the community" that they all live cheek by jowl together, equalised by Capitalism, yet "if you wish to establish Native locations"—outer darknesses where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth—then vote for me.

In that Athanasian creed of the white labour policy, the Mining Industry Commission report of 1907, signed by Creswell and Whiteside (Conclusions and Recommendations, clause 66) we read: "The most effective action would be to fix a maximum limit to the number of natives from outside British South Africa who may enter the Transvaal to serve indentures on the mines. . . . until importation is entirely stopped, which should not be later than three years from now. (Clause 67): "The next step will be to allow employers to find their native labour within British South Africa, but only on the same footing industrially as it is employed in Cape Colony, outside Kimberley. Large employers of labour there engage their coloured labourers as free labourers and exercise no power of coercion over them." Hence the S.A.L.P. platform urges or urged, the abolition of the indentured labour and compound systems—and the Pass Laws would evidently have to go too.

Good enough, barring the obviously one-sided, sectional and therefore (when it comes to the point) Capitalist-serving viewpoint and motive. But we hear nothing about the matter nowadays. All that your Labourites have done all these years to carry out their "policy" is to entrench their "workers" (alias "the people" alias "the community") by tame agreements with the masters, and to spurn the native labourer who was to have been put "on the same footing industrially as free labourers"; to howl down, as a recent Miner's meeting did, a protest against the Trades Hall resolution; and to "persecute the prophets" who alone, as pioneers, have had the sense to apply the elementary principle of Labour

solidarity. Meanwhile their clients, the supervisor whites, dwindle daily. Unwilling to save others, themselves they cannot save.

The real White Labour Policy, so much of it, that is, as had any reality and vitality and contact with facts about it, will be brought into effect by the non-whites, and in the teeth of passionate opposition from this, "White Labour Party" of petty bourgeois. For a tainted charter of capitalist liberty for the benefit of the liberator they will substitute a seizure of proletarian freedom for the benefit of the freed. To the bumptious self assertion of an ostrich "people" they will reply with the unmistakable power of the real people,—Abantu—who appreciate the remark of the Mining Industry report that "the people who do the work of a country will in the end inherit it." Already the different races of workers of this country, whites, coloured, natives, Indians, are rapidly coming together to form one great Industrial Workers' Union of Africa. The movement appeals to them, it broadens, it uplifts, it civilises them. It gives them a glimpse of the only liberty, equality and fraternity worth having. That is why the "Sunday Times" sneers at it; but that is also why no one who has once tasted its live spirit can ever again content himself with the vanities and futilities of the mere white man's so-called "White Labour Policy."

S.P.B.

## Plechanoff on Russia.

"Justice" quotes the following interesting estimate of the Russian situation by George Plechanoff. Plechanoff, it should be noted, although gone "ratty" on the war, is a Marxist who knows how to size up economic factors:—

According to the "Edinstvo," edited by Comrade George Plechanoff, the political revolution in Russia was complete when Kerensky, P. Sköbeloff, supported by Tcheidze, reorganised the Provisional Government. Then began what the "Edinstov" calls the greatest social revolution that the world has witnessed. "The democracies of the West cannot understand it, because it proceeds in complete internal peace. This is due to the anomaly in Russian society which presents but two opposed classes, instead of three, as does western democracy. In Russia there are the toiling needy masses, and there are the enormously wealthy privileged classes. Between them Russian society has evolved no small business men or prospering bourgeois rising by means of a competitive industrialism to increasing influence. Such elements in Russia are insignificant when they are not exotic. There exists in Russia nothing upon which democracy in the western sense could be based.

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