

anti-pacism·DOD·pacism

"Words are like money. They can easily be counterfeited. We must distinguish the true ones from the false."

The recent debate caused by the terms 'non-racialism' and 'anti-racism' in the new trade union federation unity talks has prompted the writing of this article. We emphasise from the outset that we believe that the words or terms used are not as important as the political content that is given to them and the practical manner in which they are implemented.

Those organisations within the liberation movement who used to put forward the view that South Africa is a 'multi-racial' country composed of four 'races' no longer do so for the same reasons as the conservative and liberal ruling-class theorists. They have begun to speak more and more of building a 'non-racial' South Africa. The term 'non-racial' however, has a multiplicity of interpretations and has been widely used by organisations in the broad liberatory movement. On the one hand, an organisation like the UDF, purporting to be 'non-racial', asserts the existence of four so-called 'races' or 'nations' and actually organises on an ethnic basis, hence TIC, NIC, etc. It has become fashionable to intone the words 'a non-racial democratic South Africa' as a kind of open sesame that permits one to enter the 'hallowed' portals of

the 'progressive democratic movement'. It would thus be correct to say that the two terms, 'non-racial' and 'multi-racial' could be said to be synonymous. On the other hand, the term 'non-racial' is also used by organisations like SACOS for example, whose interpretation is acceptable in that it involves the total rejection of the concept 'race', denies the existence of 'races' and in turn opposes all actions, practices and policies based on the concept of 'race'.

It is clear then that if in practice and in theory, we believe that South Africa is inhabited by four so-called 'races', we are still trapped in multi-racialism and thus in racialism. We make it clear that we believe in the existence of only one race - the human race.

Non-racialism, meaning the denial of the existence of 'race', leads on to anti-racism which goes beyond this in that it not only involves the denial of 'race', but also opposes the capitalist structures for the perpetuation of which the ideology and theory of 'race' exist. In other words, we are living in an exploitative society and apartheid or racism exists merely to enhance greater exploitation.

There are, however, certain organisations in the liberation movement who view the concept 'anti-racism' as being exclusively black i.e.

that the struggle for liberation can only be waged by black people (in the South African context, black people are those who are politically, economically and socially oppressed). Anti-racism is clearly not the equivalent of black and serious dangers are posed by 'black exclusivity' in that it focuses primarily on national oppression. Class exploitation which is at the root of the system, is not given the priority it deserves. It is not correct to say that all blacks are workers, similarly it is not correct to say that all whites are oppressors.

However, one CANNOT ignore national oppression in our country. The reality is that we do presently have a system of racial capitalism, and that the majority of workers are black. It is also a reality that the majority of white workers in the country do have a vested interest in the status quo and as such, cannot be viewed as allies of the revolutionary working class in the short or medium term.

Thus when we emphasise the leadership of the black working class, we are merely relating to the most oppressed and exploited sector of the working class. By virtue of their class and national position, they are the class who have the most to gain and the least to lose in a socialist revolution. This is why they must be the vanguard of the struggle, and not for any romantic or racist reasons.