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S. Form #1

P.A. to ROBESON. 44990.

EXTRACT.

Copy also in PFI 8597 - ROGGE.

755b

Extract for File No. OF 347 & RF 44,990 Name:

Original in File No. SF 491/29(3) Supp. vol. Serial: 6a Receipt Date: 7.6.50

Original from Telscheck Under Ref. None Dated: 2.6.50

Extracted on: 21.6.50 by: A.C. Section: B.11a

i/c from Mr. Pat SLOANE.

DISTANT asks if LILLY knows that ROGGE is having a private Press Conference that morning. He asks her to convey this information to ROBESON and any of the other Delegates. LILLY says she does not know where they are. She will try to get in touch with JOYCE. DISTANT is most anxious that ROBESON should be at the meeting in the audience.

23.

10,19 a.m.

155a

America's 'guy in the street' doesn't want to fight

The Negroes hold a key

FIFTEEN MILLION "fourth-class citizens" may save the world from the horror of an atomic war. They are the Negroes of America, and if they are determined on peace there will be peace.

Kept down to the status of fourth class citizens in their own country, they are of first-class importance in the world-wide movement to halt the march toward

for America's Negroes are the key to the country's economy.

The whole of the South, one third of the nation, depends on Negro labour. In many industries throughout the country at least half the workers are Negroes. As a group, they are twice as numerous as America's trade unionists. If Negroes stopped work the whole American nation would be at a standstill.

So American war planners must ask: "Would the Negroes fight in a war against the Soviet Union?"

It is a question which Negroes are asking themselves. And more and more of them are answering with an emphatic "NO."

An America in which the 15 million Negroes had full civil rights would not want to make war. An America which continues to deny Negroes those rights cannot count on their support in the event of a war against a country where Negroes have equal rights with all other citizens.

The fight for peace in America is bound up inextricably with the fight for civil liberties, for Negro emancipation, and for higher wages.

KIDDING?

THAT is how Paul Robeson, one of the greatest living Negroes and one of the American delegates to the World Peace Committee, sees it.

In an interview before he flew back to the U.S. after speaking and singing at the World Peace Rally in London, he put it to me this way:

"Truman says the free nations of the world must gird themselves. Negroes ask: 'What free nations? Us here in America? Negroes in South Africa? Is he kidding? What the hell argument is this?'"

There are 15,000,000 of them in the United States and if they stopped work the nation would be at a standstill.

In America they are an oppressed race. Would they fight against a country that grants them equal citizenship?

PAUL ROBESON

talks about his countrymen in an interview with Patrick Goldring

"Negroes in the U.S. are fourth-class citizens. In the South they vote at the risk of their lives. They are never safe from lynch mobs or legal frame-ups. They are denied work and educational opportunities enjoyed by other citizens.

"Some of our people supported the Truman Government because of its promises. Now they see that war preparations have brought them no new jobs, but only increased terror and the failure to gain civil rights."

A CHANGE

NOT only among Negroes, but among ordinary people throughout America a great change has taken place in the last few months.

For one thing red-baiting has over-reached itself. When it was only Communists who went to jail, there were people who allowed themselves to be intimidated in the hope that the red-baiting would stop at that.

Now Liberals are going to jail, too, and people are realising that the defence of civil liberties means the defence of Communists and Liberals alike.

And since it is no guarantee of safety to keep quiet, Liberals and

Progressives are finding new courage to speak their minds.

This spirit was exemplified in the great Mid Century Peace Congress in Chicago, the broadest and most widely representative peace meeting ever held in the U.S.

"Even to have it take place at all marks a great turning point," Robeson emphasised. "It couldn't have happened a few months ago. The red-baiters tried to intimidate them, but they just laughed.

"That's very important. Where people are frightened of saying anything, there is no peace movement."

The greatest need in the American peace movement today, Robeson thinks, is unity.

Very strong peace groups of clergy of many denominations, and of women, already exist. They have to be drawn together to exert their full strength.

Division and confusion have weakened the Progressive forces of America in the past. But now these forces are gathering together in a mighty peace movement based firmly on the ordinary working people.

That great rich voice took on a compelling note: "The workers aren't going to fight in any war. The guy in the street doesn't want to fight. With the workers behind it, the peace movement should move forward at a tremendous rate."

POOL RESOURCES

WITH this faith in the ordinary American worker and especially the Negro worker, Robeson is confident for the future. He said:

"I would be on the optimistic side. Our reactionaries are desperate, but they can't afford to play with war if we do our job. The masses of American people are not for war."

Much more contact is needed, he believes, between the peaceable peoples of different countries.

"Here's Acheson sitting down with Bevin to pool their war resources. If they pool their resources, we should pool ours.

"We must find ways of getting trade unionists, artists, all sorts of people from different countries, together. If war planners can fly back and forth, we can fly back and forth.

"This great world peace movement is the highest expression we have today of international getting-together. We must do this in every field."



Paul Robeson believes in acting as well as talking and writing. Here he is picketing against anti-Negro discrimination.

But always Robeson's thoughts return to the Negro people. Their attitude, he believes, is decisive.

For the whole moral basis on which the cold war is "sold" to millions of Americans is that America and the British and French Empires are "The Free World" with a democracy to be defended. Many Americans believe it to be true.

But 15 million American Negroes are reminded every day of their lives that it is a life; that they are not free, that democracy does not include them. And their attitude will affect 150 million Africans, 60 million Latin Americans.

"If all these people were on the side of peace, it would transform the world," said the man who has dedicated his life to the service of the Negro people.

And, he added: "It is unthinkable that the 15 million Negroes of America should not be actively on the side of peace. But they can be there much more quickly if the Progressive movement understands their aspirations and identifies itself with them."

AS/BIB
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