

American Imperialism and the Negro.

By D. Ivon Jones.

In March of last year, *The Philippines Review* reported the farewell address of Governor General Francis Burton Harrison, after eight years of office in the Phillipine Islands, "carrying out the policy of the best President of the present generation", as he himself described it. It had evidently been President Wilson's objective to grant complete independence to the Phillipines, relying solely on the silvery threads of finance. But the sorrowful Harrison had to confess his great disappointment that he was not the last Governor General. He had on a previous occasion gallantly offered to resign in favor of a Filipino Governor General. "I am convinced that you are ready to take your place among the independant nations of the world", he said. But he hoped to return again to pay his first official visit to the First President of the Phillipine Republic at Malaccnaby Palace.

However, that was not to be. The "best President" made way for Harding. And instead of the Jeffersonian Harrison came Major General Wood, and a large contingent of American Jesuits to take the place of the Spanish Catholic Missionaries hitherto established in the Islands. And so the Filipinos were taught the elementary lesson that financial bonds are not the last, but only the first stage of Imperialist occupation.

And Wilson himself knew that; for even while he was drawing up the notorious Fourteen Points, were not his troops and marines in actual occupation of the Negro Republic of Haiti? Six times did the Wilson Government made overtures to this Island Republic for the control of its customs during the imperialist war.

The need was urgent. The Island of Haiti with its 2,000,000 Negroes was in a strategic position in the Carribbean Sea commanding the Panama Canal. Finally, the disturbances of July 27, of 1915, afforded the pretext for securing control. We know very well that the United States is never at a loss for "disturbances", whenever it finds it necessary to intervene in any country covered by the Monroe Doctrine.

Since then, the American occupation of Haiti (sketched in the May number of the "Labour Monthly") makes a long and gruesome story, in which the browbeating of the Negro islanders, putting them to forced labour, torturings and persecution by negro-hating Southerner officials (see "Negro World", May 6th), in the approved style of King Lynch, are the dominant features.

The description given in "The Negro World" of the "free" elections to the legislature is a typical example of the extent to which Imperialist violation is prepared to go in keeping up the outward farce of democratic forms for purposes of home consumption. The anti-American votes were indicated by pink papers, and the pro-American by yellow papers. American marines, fully armed, stood on guard to see that fair play was observed, and to do some observing of their own. There were piles of pink papers nicely tied up in bundles for any one who might have the temerity to trouble the registration officer to untie them, while the yellow papers lay ready to hand for all who came to vote. The result of course was an overwhelming majority in favor of the nominees of the glorious Democracy of the West.

It is now announced that the United States Government is trying to force a loan of 14,000,000 dollars on the Island, in order to liquidate certain European creditors. The loan is issued under such ruinous terms that even the puppet President himself is kicking against it. It will involve the Haitian budget in an annual deficit of 1,000,000 dollars. The scandal of the occupation is arousing the liberal elements of the States into vigorous protests. But the Government sits unmoved.

Dr. Burghardt Du Bois, the leader of the Negro intellectuals, announces in his paper, "The Crisis", that the Republican and Democratic Parties have come to a pact not to compete for the Negro vote. And Du Bois exclaims: "May God write us down as asses if we ever support these parties again". The reason for this conspiracy of silence is obvious. Harding in his election addresses, denounced the employment of American marines to subjugate a free and independent people, and proclaimed that he would never, no, never, be a party to such an outrage. Since his coming to office the American Government is digging itself in upon the island with a vengeance. The Senate Commission on Haiti has reported that things are very much better there now, thank you! And there the matter of America's little Ireland now rests.

Meanwhile, the distressed Negroes have been buoyed up with hope by the passage of the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill through the Lower House of Legislature. But great difficulties are being experienced in its further progress through the Senate, in spite of the fact that the lynching horrors and burning of Negroes have again broken out at the rate of eight in two weeks in the Southern States.

But the American Senators are not altogether blind to the positive advantages to be derived from the Negro Movement, especially from the "Back to Africa" cry of these poor, hunted and harrassed people who are looking for any way of escape. Senator McCullum of Mississippi, and Senator France of Maryland have both expressed their sympathy with the "Back to Africa" movement of the Negroes. The former has introduced a resolution in the State Legislature to petition the President to use his good influence in securing from the Allies sufficient territory in Africa in liquidation of the war debt, "which territory should be used for the establishing of an independent nation for American Negroes".

Senator France on his part put the matter in the following noble terms:

"We owe a big duty to Africa and one which we have too long ignored. I need not enlarge upon our peculiar interest in the obligation to the people of Africa. Thousands of Americans have for years been contributing to the missionary work which has been carried on by the noble men and women who have been sent out to that field by the churches of America".

This was spoken in the Senate. Translated into plain English, Senator France wished to say it was about time that American business followed up the labours of its own missionary agents-in-advance in Africa.

This proposal was immediately followed by a timely interview with Dr. Heinrich Schnee, a former governor of German East Africa, in which it was suggested that America should take over the mandates of Great Britain and France in Africa for the colonization of American Negroes. Marcus Garvey's paper, "The Garvey's paper "The Negro World", was jubilant, and headed the announcement with big block letters, "Africa's Redemption Draws Near".

Secretary Hughes, no doubt, will keep that pot simmering for a suitable occasion. Meanwhile, he is taking practical steps. The United States Government has in one stride stepped across the Atlantic and planted its foot in the Little African Republic of Liberia. Liberia was founded about a century ago as a refuge for American slaves in West Africa. Within the last few years its narrow confines have been very much encroached upon by French and English expansion in the neighbouring colonies.

Liberia has a foreign debt of 1,650,000 dollars owing to J. Pierpont Morgan and Co. and his financial confreres in New York, acting for themselves and for European banks. The United States has drawn up an elaborate agreement with the Negro President for the granting of a loan of 5,000,000 dollars to the Negro Republic. Detailed stipulations are made regarding the spending of the money. One clause provides for the immediate repayment of the money owing to Pierpont Morgan and Co., with the result that the market price of that loan has already jumped up from 75 to 98, putting over 300,000 dollars in the pockets of Morgan and Co. at one stroke of the pen.

But that is only a little side-pocket money. The most significant clauses in the loan agreement refer to the appointment of a Financial Commissioner, with 21 other American officials under him. This official will control the finances and customs of Liberia. Certain provisions are also made for the control of the Legislature. The financial commissioner will determine the size of the Liberian police and the military frontier force, which will be commanded by American army officers. He will have the power of veto over the Liberian budget, and the right to order the passing of any financial legislation which he may desire. He is empowered to limit the annual expenditure of Liberia to a total of 650,000 dollars, of which 109,700 dollars will go to pay the salaries of the American officials. In short, he will be the well-paid dictator of Liberia, with an armed force of American paid police to do his bidding.

This control is to last for the lifetime of the new loan; and a special clause prohibits the contracting of other loans without the sanction of the financial commissioner, so that there is no chance of Liberia trying to buy itself out of Uncle Sam's clutches. The loan therefore promises to have a long life, long enough, in fact, to enable American Imperialism to get a foothold on the African continent, and to follow its religious agents further afield into the interior as opportunities arise.

In 1909, says the New York "Nation", (which gives the text of agreement in its issue of May 31st), we sent a commission to Liberia, which was much impressed by the high handed methods of the British in assuming control of the Liberian customs and frontier force. This commission reported that "It is difficult to find among the Liberians anyone who has entire confidence in the disinterestedness of Great Britain"; that "French interest in Liberia is apparently that of an heir expectant", that "Germany has lent her at least a sympathetic understanding", but that since Germany had "ambitious designs in Africa", Liberia naturally turned to the United States for disinterested help.

Nevertheless, it took thirteen long years for that wave of disinterested emotion to flow eastward in the shape of a financial dictator and an American police force...

The American bourgeoisie finds itself obliged more and more to renounce the angelic role of "pure democracy", and to take up the openly Mephistophelian one of Imperial expansion. The Negro question bids fair to become the moral lever for it. And soon we may have the whole history of England's criminality in starting the slave trade and the plantation system raked up as a preliminary to the reconsideration of the African mandates.

The Negroes themselves are being encouraged to look forward to a change of slave drivers for Africa. Marcus Garvey, the religio-racial charlatan who claims to voice the needs of the Negro masses, carries on a persistent campaign in his paper, which has a large circulation among the Negroes, for the liberation of Africa from the European Imperialists, and welcomes with joy the new loan to Liberia as a start in this direction. He is assiduous in the sale of excursion tickets for Liberia to his Negro dupes, on "The Black Star Line", the steamships of which are not yet built! A short while ago he was arrested for obtaining money on false pretences in this manner. But nothing further has been heard of the matter, and he now seems to be as busy as ever denouncing the Bolshevik members of his race. But even the "Negro World" is compelled to expose the crimes of American Imperialism in Haiti. So that Garvey and his organisation, "The Universal Negro Improvement Association", typify the immature consciousness of the Negroes in the first stage of awakening.

But the growing band of young Negro radicals, who look to Soviet Russia for guidance and inspiration in the struggle,—they are not deceived. Under the banner of the African Blood Brotherhood, and in close touch with the class conscious white workers of America, they are pointing the way to proletarian emancipation as the only hope for their oppressed Negro brothers in Africa and America.