
Com. Coolidge's 124 points can be roughly classed under five major headings: I. Historical background, or what goes under the heading of "The Place of Slavery in Creating the Negro Problem", p.5.

II. Negro as an oppressed race and race consciousness, including the section, p.8, "Race Consciousness vs. Class Consciousness".

III. Previous mistakes on the Negro question in all movements, "reformist" error (Coolidge means liberal), "Social reformism" (Coolidge means Social Democracy) and "Negro Particularism", p.9.

IV. Opposition to LF, p.15 LF's "ignorance of the Negro in the US was probably profound and complete."

V. Attitude toward rank and file Negro members in our party, and proposals for future work. p.19 "There is nothing more nauseating then to see a Negro picked to do Negro work who doesn't know his head from a hole in the ground."

I. "The place of slavery in creating the Negro problem."

p.5

Point 26 states: "Present disabilities suffered by the Negro in the U.S. have their roots in three centuries of slave status. These disabilities were not removed by emancipation. The most significant result of the Civil War was not so much taking the shackles off the Negro as the unshackling of Northern capitalist enterprise. The emancipated slaves were not prepared to take a place in industry..." (My emphasis)

p.6.25

Point 28 states: "The freedmen therefore were not integrated into industry as were the white workers.... They (Negroes) became through no fault of their own shock troops of industrial reaction. They were revolved as strike breakers and as a reserve for the hardest of common labor..." (My emphasis)

p.6.

Point 26 and "The establishment of slavery in the colonies was a demonstration of the late development of capitalism in the colonies.... Furthermore in that particular economy (tobacco, rice and cotton) slave labor was so cheap that the development of other methods of production were not indicated: "The presence of the Negro was really a boon to young capitalism. A planned and conscious scheme of dual exploitation was adopted.... Thus was the Negro recallslave by the bourgeoisie with bonds which remained unbroken to the present day."

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II. Negro as oppressed race and race consciousness

Par. points 6 & 7: "The suppression of civil liberties, the denial of democratic rights, the confinement of the lowest brakes in the economic scale & the withholding of cultural and educational advantages to the "race" as a group is the correct sense to speak of the Negro as an "oppressed race"......It does not follow that the Negro group is economically, politically and socially homogeneous." (my emphasis)

p.2, point 7: "Negroes do not think alike or act alike. They do not march together nor strike together."

p.2, point 11: "with the above reservations and restrictions we can now proceed to further examination of the meaning of the struggle of the Negro for liberation, for his democratic rights......It is the struggle of an oppressed race (with the explanation cited above) to satirize bring itself up to the level of other groups and races. This is a struggle to escape the status of second class citizenship, to deliver oneself from a special and peculiar caste category." (my emphasis)

p.7, point 37: "In self defense, under the blows of the bourgeoisie, the machinations of bourgeois politicians, the ruling class engendered hostility of white workers, the capricious and misleadership of Negro leaders, the Negro masses developed the theory and practice of race consciousness."

p.9, point 38: "In a discussion at a meeting by the Buffalo Workingmen's Welfare Committee a new member objected to the statement in the Declaration of Purpose that Negroes should demand social, political and economic equality. This man said that he did not want social equality, that he was willing and preferred to confine his social life to "my own people". This is "race consciousness" as used and meant by Negroes."

p.9, point 38: "Race consciousness" as enunciated by Negroes is not a gateway to united mass militancy and revolt...... As meant by Negroes and advocated by their leaders, great and small, the doctrine of "race consciousness" is devoid of revolutionary content and revolutionary potential."

(by emphasis)

p.9, point 40: "The "race consciousness" theory promotes acceptance of Jim-crow." (my emphasis)

p.9, point 41: "The doctrine of "race consciousness" is a theory which promoted acceptance of capitalism and of bourgeois democracy in place of white. It places the Negro masses in the contradiction of accepting in black face what the thing which is the root cause of his misery in white face."

(By emphasis) Members who accept the theory of "race consciousness" must become protagonists & advocates of self-deter.
p.9, point 49: "But while the Negroes continued to talk about "race consciousness" they refused to follow Garvey. It is true that for a time he had an immense following but it was short-lived and today the Garvey movement is dead."

p.10, point 46: "The fact that Garvey planned to set up his republic in a foreign land was not the decisive factor that made Negroes indifferent. Again and again the proposal has been made for the establishment of a 49th state in the U.S. by Negroes. The response has been almost zero."

p.12, point 60: "Race consciousness leads to the cult of Negro Nationalism. This is the belief that the Negro as a homogeneous oppressed group can or should attempt to take his place in the country as a self-contained and self-sufficient national entity. The logical development of this concept is the advocacy of the formation of Negro states. The fact that Garvey planned to build his state in Africa is not important. The important point is the effort to separate the Negro as Negro, politically and socially. Furthermore, Negro Nationalism also rejects the idea of class and the class organization of society. Negro nationalism is bourgeois in its ideology. It would only change the color of the exploiters."

p.13, point 63: "The Party, in my opinion, must definitely reject the theory of "race consciousness" as I have defined it. It is a reactionary doctrine. It can only retard the day of the liberation of the Negro masses."

p.14, point 67: "Assigning the Haitians a separate culture is not based on the fact that they have a state but primarily because of their history and the mode of development of these people over more than a century...I would say the Haitians have a different culture from "white" France even though both speak substantively the same language."

p.16, point 80: "They (Negroes) are jubilant when they read of the black kingdom of Abyssinia despite its slavery and mud road capital city. But as for them they prefer to spend their lives in the red mud of Georgia."

p.11, point 54: "Theory of "race consciousness implies class homogeneity of the Negro groups. It thereby becomes a theory of class collaboration."

p.10, point 49: "The general class oppression to which Negroes are subjected is identical with the exploitation and oppression of the white workers...It is at this point that the interests of the Negro as a group (own emphasis) and the interests of the white worker cease to become identical...This is the fundamental approach in a class society and there can be no other. This is a theory of primary disability. (own emphasis) Negroes do not understand it...There are some "Marxists" who seemingly do not understand it...But the Negro has a secondary disability (own emphasis); that is his oppression and exploitation as a Negro. It can have no solution (my emphasis) separated from efforts to eliminate the primary disability...This is a class issue."
III Previous mistakes on Negro question

p.2, point 25: "Three serious mistakes have been made... There is the reformist error which makes the struggle for democratic rights in bourgeois democracy the only struggle and the totality of one's aims. Secondly, there is the other type of reformism, social reformism, which takes the position that no special forms of struggle are indicated in the case of the Negro, that the transformation from capitalism to socialism will solve the problem. This position ignores the painful fact that men's minds are not changed instantaneously with the overthrow of capitalism. The third mistake is nationalization... By Negro particularism I mean the advocacy of separatist tendencies within the framework of bourgeois democracy in the U.S. Secondly by particularism or exceptionalism I mean the doctrine that Negroes as Negroes are or are liable to become the chief driving force of social change in the U.S." (By emphasis)

p.16, point 78: Is it probable that Negroes will desire to separate from the new socialist state? I am convinced that they will not.

p.16, point 82: "Negroes who have any intelligence know that they could not maintain a separate state. It would undoubtedly be a bourgeois state of some sort. If not then there would be no reason for separation from the new socialist state." (By emphasis)

p.25, point 111: "Members forget or never knew that Negroes have been representing the leadership of white people for over 300 years in one or another and in one organization or another."

(NB: Coolidge says he will grant the Negroes self-determination if they wish and then goes all out to prove that not only they do not wish it, but if they did it would be reactionary.)
Com. Coolidge, Com. Trotsky and the Negro question

Com. Coolidge writes: "It is reported that Com. T. held the view that the N. in the US is a nation, using himself in part on his belief that the N. here has a separate language. During the National Training School in the lecture devoted to the Negro and the Unions*, I made reference to this position given. I said that his ignorance of the N. party in the U.S., was probably profound & complete (my emphasis). I doubt that the presumptuous airs that Com. C. has indulged in here

flow from an abysmal ignorance of Com. T.'s position on the part of Com. C. as he alleges is profundity of Com. T.'s ignorance of the N. ques. Rather the presumptuousness flows from the fact that Com. C. is arguing against his own kind of opponents. He is not arguing against Com. T.'s position, but against a position he himself has alternatively brought out of the air, labeled wrong and "exposed." We shall soon see how Com. C. puts up his straw men and nos then deem.

But before analyzing C's vehement opposition to his own straw men, it is necessary to know what in reality is the Party position, not the one C. ascribes to it, but it as formulated in documents, and how it arrived at that position.

The Background

When the Stalinists were first advocating "self determination for the black belt", the Party, as per usual, had no position. Com. Sh. made a study of the N. question in which he proved—at least to the satisfaction of the present writer—who then held his position—that the slogan of economic, political and social equality for the Negroes was sufficient to solve the problem in question. Trotsky disagreed. He stated that just because the Stalinists were for self-determination, we need not necessarily be again that slogan; that in no case should we definitely commit ourselves against the slogan for all time, since it was a question the Negroes themselves must decide and if they should ask for it, first we would have to fight for it, or, if we were in power, would have to grant it. He emphasized that he, Trotsky, had not studied the Negro question and had no definite opinion. But he was drawing from his experiences during October...
many nationalities asked for self-determination after October.
Naturally, it was granted then. But the crucial point was that
not only had the Tsarist Empire not known of some of these national-
ities but even the Bolshevik leaders did not know they existed
as separate cultural entities. It was only with October that
they became aware of the existence of these groups and began to feel they were men who wished to decide their
own fate. Therefore, concluded T., it would be wrong, on the basis that
the Negro did not now ask for self-determination, to shut the door on
that question for the future.

Com. J. visited Com. T. during that period and had a very
short and brief conversation with him. He was convinced of the correctness of Com.
Trotsky's position. During that conversation, Com. Trotsky inquired,
parenthetically, isn't it true that some of the Negroes
used a different language? That conversation was reproduced for
the information of the membership. In its majority, I should say, the NY
leadership was much opposed to the fact that a few brief questions
and one single instance of a definite opinion based on the Russian
experience were sufficient to "convince" Com. Sw. that Shachtman was
wrong & T's position, which he had never elaborated on, such right.
But that was an opposition to Comrade methods of arriving at
political position then to either position as such. As a matter of
fact, we knew so little of Negro history that for the maj. of us that
was the last we had heard that there was such a Negro tribe in Am.

Com. Sh. did not pursue his position. If my memory is right, he
had never published or even mimeographed the results of his study and
only the NY membership who heard his oral report at any educational
knew of it other than by third-hand hearsay. The minute it was known that
Com. T. did not share Com. Sh.'s views, mam. right embarked upon a
study to prove his views; that "study" was never completed.
who favored self-determination
some comrades on the West Coast had made a study but I had never seen it.
I continued to hold Com. Ch's position. I felt that Com. T. did not know enough, etc. of the Negro ques. When I was in Wash., prior to my departure to Mexico, I was instrumental in having a professor at Howard, who was an ex-member of the J.P., draft a document on the Negro in America to be sent to IT. The document may not have been as lengthy as Com. Velidé's but it had the benefit of being more coherent. Its main purpose was that the Negro not only did not wish self-determination but were opposed to it; that in fact it was only the Negro "bourgeoisie" who favored such segregation only in order to have the privilege of exploiting the Negro masses themselves. An account of the professor went into detail of her all the Negro leaders in the C.P. opposed the slogan when she first presented it at Com. Trotsky's files. I found when I got down in 1936-7 to work there, were filled with just such documents, "proving" that the Negro had no separate culture from that of the USA. the separate language, and no desire to be jin-crowed once again nor under the euphemistic title of self-determination. So Com. T. "did know" the N. ques.—that is traditional did know what those who held to the slogan of social, eco. & poli. equality as sufficient to cover the ques. wished him to know. But he felt that he had not studied the ques. and hence could not have a definitive position on the ques. He felt that it was up to the Am. section to elaborate such a definitive position after a profound study of the Am. Civil War, without a thorough knowledge of which he felt any study of the Negro ques. would be incomplete. (He stated, furthermore, that the Negro intellectuals were not the best judges of what the Negro masses wanted. The intellectuals were "emancipated" and wished full social equality with the white. But the Negro masses continued to flock to the churches where they could be free of "white eyes". (1) Obviously he felt that he didn't really need to be "convinced" in this all Trotskyists had rushed to inform him—that Garvey was a faker. What he wished the American comrades would be to why such a faker got such a mass following. That in the faker's program inspired the Negro masses to join him, but did not inspire them to join us.

Com. J. arrived after I left. His lengthy conversations with T. were mimeographed. At the J.I.J. convention preceding our expulsion...
From the S.P. a Negro Comm. was elected to work out a draft thesis.

Based on these discussions. Com. C. was on that commission and opposed

the draft it drew up, not because it advocated self-determination—no one

advocated any such thing—or any of the other straw men, such as

race-consciousness that he now has put up. I do not know why he did

oppose it. I do know that he offered no counter-resolution, despite

his voiceferous objections. That resolution we did not reject when we

were expelled. The proposals Coolidge now offers differ in

no essential respect from those, despite the big talk of "reorienting

the party" and finally adopting a definitive position; in some respects

they-backtrack. That resolution plus the lengthy discussions should

be republished and should serve as a basis for elaborating a 

resolution respectfully the ignorance. They will prove conclusively the

ignorance of C., not of Com. T.
II. The basis

Then Com. says, that before we can have a fundamental position on the Negro ques. we must know our historical background, he is, whether he admits it or not, that the position Com. T. has so long insisted upon, is to that extent his methodology is correct. The trouble

is that it is neither a single, isolated upon a basis of ill-digested facts.

He says, for instance, that in the particular economy of the South, "slave

labor was so cheap that the cost of other methods of proc. were not indi-
cated." There is no doubt that slave labor is cheap, but so it would

have been in the North, why did it take root in the South only? He almost

hit the right spot when he spoke of the particular economy, but he

promptly diverted from the correct basis by his emphasis on the cheapness

of slave labor. It is not the mode of labor that calls forth the mode

of production, but the mode of production corresponding mode of labor.

Slave labor was not suited to the economy of the N., industrialized

even for those days, for the very first days the North had lumber mills,

for ex., and was becoming industrialize, and with, if not to the extent

mentioned "free" labor, slave labor. One big factor of the mother country, the agricultural South however, particularly

the crops specialized in slave labor, not suited, among other things:

not so much because slaves were cheap but because they were as productive as the economy had need of. He would

not stop at this point if it were merely a question of abstract theory, but only because C., having established a wrong theoretical basis,

proceeds to draw a wrong and reactionary conclusion when he

says that the "disabilities" (C.'s terminology for the double oppression

the Negro bears as a proletarian and as a Negro) the Negroes suffered

were not removed by emancipation because: "The emancipated slaves were

not prepared to take a place in industry." That is as reactionary a

phrase as I have ready in any bourgeois textbook where the fact is

attested to "to prove" that the master-slave relationship was after all

the best relationship —for the slave! Now, of course, C. did not mean

that. That isn't the point. The point is that one says all kinds of
things one does not "mean", once the theoretic base is wrong.

What does "not prepared to take a place in industry" mean anyway?

Where the "enslaved" sorts in Europe prepared to take a place in industry?

It was industry that prepared them for that place. And industry moved South it could have "prepared" the Negro to take a place in it. Post-
Civil war South did not "prepare" "white trash" for industry either. The South could not economically "enslave" either the Negroes or the "white trash" because it itself was not economically free, that is not industrialized. The did not industrialize white carpet baggers greatly despised the South, but merely spenged upon it.

Instead of being a prosperous colony of Agincourt, the South became a defeated "colony" of the No. capitalists, because, not cotton, but steel was king.

In the same non-Marxian manner that Coolidge speaks of the Negroes "not being prepared", he speaks of "enslavement" using the word loosely, without regard to the issue of "reenslavement" which is the decisive issue. After C. correctly stresses the fact that young capitolly exploited the Negroes doubly and kept them in inferior position as agricultural laborers "away from the enlightening experiences of factory work". he concludes, without warning, so-to-speak: "Thus was the Negro reenslaved by the bourgeoisie with bonds which remained unbroken to the present day."

(My emphasis-PP) What broke those bonds today? Has the Negro been "enslaved" again? Was a civil war necessary to assert that freedom?

A civil war was not necessary for the simple reason that the Negro has not and could not have been "reenslaved" because the mode of production had developed along capitalist lines on a nation-wide scale. What is the point of using the word "enslave" so loosely? When he "wants to" C. himself puts the case clearly when he says "in all capitalist society I suppose there has been no worker so 'free' as the Negro." Put two hammers beside this Marxian explanation of the word "free" worker. And because he is so free, that is because he is economically, legally a wage slave, his bonds could be so easily broken on the eve when war economy demands a large supply of free labor, with or without "disabilities".
Rhys Hixson: The knowledge of the 3 centuries of slave status is sufficient to fully of the Negro does not explain the present "disabilities" (read: disabilities) oppression of the Negro. Something more is necessary. Instead of analyzing it, something more, however, and we have turned into the big bug:  the race consciousness. Let us watch how he has built his straw man, and move him down with the superior class consciousness.

III. Race consciousness and class consciousness

Com. C. asserts that "the Negro masses dev. the theory & practice of race consciousness". The k. classes may "practice", that is, feel race conscious but they surely develop no theory about it. Those who did develop a theory, such as the Harley, have been close to take advantage of that feeling, in order to lead it into reactionary channels. C. e.

Race consciousness and class consciousness are two to form a round concept of Negro consciousness in Buffalo. The Negro proletariat in Buffalo who said "he did not want social equality, that he was willing to prefer to confine his social life to his own people" is being impersonated by a White and the poor and less by those who are fighting for the direct control of their country in one category. "When the worker says he wants to defend his country, it is the instinct of an oppressed man that speaks in him," wrote Lenin, but C. proves both an "impersonal factor".

Race consciousness, C. assures us, "promotes acceptance of Jim Crow", promotes acceptance of esp. and bourgeois democracy, "implies class homogeneity of the Negroes and becomes a theory of class collaboration".

The theory of self-determination directly flows from that; race consciousness gives it the appearance of a conflict between races & leads to that of W. Notley, the logical dev. of which is advocacy of N. State (12). Against whom is C. arguing? Who is advocating either self-determination or the formation of a Negro State? Not one. In fact, no one that I ever heard. C. has built up straw men and moved them down.

Coolidge assures us that he is for class consciousness vs. race consciousness. Good! But does that solve the special problem of the Negro? That it is a special problem C. admits. In fact, once he puts quotation marks around "race consciousness" and then
is permitted to use the words "group disability", he in fact describes
with
that "race consciousness", if you will, which the Negro proletarians
are permeated and which is healthy even when we support. For the
Negro as an "oppressed race", even when in quotation mark, one has to
fight against Jim-crow, discrimination and the crude oppression the Negro
can not suffer. Coolidge correctly assures us that "it is the struggle
of an oppressed race to bring itself up to the level of other groups
and races", he is, rightly, for active participation in this struggle.
He furthermore assures us it is a unique struggle "and must not therefore
be summed under camo. struggle of white races or dissolved in
rev. struggle." The man who puts up the best arguments against Coolidge
is still Coolidge. If one says, contradictory arguments are a weakness,
Coolidge by himself in his speech. He would say, "The Negro
the Negro's right and the wrong. Absolutely unbelievable. That is satire
'Negro the right'? Yes, the Negro. The right to vote, etc. -- for
Coolidge.
IV. "Negro particularism" vs. Coolidge's equanimity

A clue to the contradictions can be found in Coolidge's treatment of what he calls Negro particularism, and which he defines as "the advocacy of separatist tendencies within the framework of bourgeois democracy in the U.S. That is the advocacy of Negro going it alone organizationally, socially and economically to whatever extent is possible." He then proceeds to analyze a second characteristic of particularism which has nothing at all to do with the first.

The second characteristic is "the doctrine that N. as Negros are, or are likely to become the chief driving force of social change in the U.S."

Now, pray tell me, what has the alleged doctrine of the Negro's special revolutionary role got to do with the expression of separatism within the framework of bourgeois democracy? None, unless you think the chief driving force of social change, and make it synonymous with separation.

What is that C. is trying to stress when he emphasizes that "Negroes think of no reason whatever for holding to this belief." I'm assuming that this sentence does not refer to his prounthetic expression as to belief that Negroes are a nation since the latter sentence was not in the parenthesis. If, however, I'm wrong, there still remains the implication that any doctrine that envisages the Negroes as a special driving force of social change is wrong. As a specially oppressed group with least to lose there is no doubt that the Negroes once awakened will play an especially militant role. Even in a passive way, they anti-war anti-war anti-war anti-war anti-war anti-war anti-war anti-war which is far to the left of the American middle class as a whole. On the other hand, it is true that the white middle class as the majority group in this country will either play the chief revolutionary role, or there will be no successful revolution. That is the understanding of what is behind the dissatisfaction that rev. groups are led by "foreigners" or "Jews" in any country, not because of any prejudice against them but because it is a sign of the weakness of the movement, of the fact that it has not yet taken root in native soil.
that over-all truth, special groups do play specially significant parts in a revolutionary struggle. Again Coolidge himself is the best authority against himself when in another section of the document he speaks of why we wish to draw the N. proletarians into our ranks. "The Negro proletarians have become inured to hardships, tough going and revolutions. They are not soft." Fine, these are the qualities a revolutionary movement needs; our special appeal to the negroes is not that they are an especially oppressed group and we wish to "help" them but because they comprise especially steely elements that will "help" bring the revolution on, or when it gets going, help bring it to a successful revolution.

V—Revolutionary vs. Reformist View on Negro problem

Peculiarly enough, the discussion on Negro particularism followed the discussion of "subsuming" the Negro struggle/struggle of white workers or "dissolving" it in a workers' movement. It was the third in a series of mistakes on this question. The other two mistakes were: the liberal bourgeois/white liberal error that the "struggle for democracy" etc. in bourgeois democracy is only struggle and the totality of one's aims, and (2) the reformist/social democratic (O. calls it social reformist) view that no special forms of struggle are indicated in the case of the N., that the transformation from capitalism to socialism will solve the problem. Very instructive as to O.'s own attitude is his criticism of this view: "This position ignores the painful fact that men's minds are not changed overnight and that the struggle against race prejudice would not end instantaneously with the overthrow of cap." (3) It is not the doctrine itself which O. criticizes. It is not evidently wrong now, but will be wrong after (1) the rev. because men's minds do not shift change overnight. O. thus makes the solution of the N. problem from this generation and puts it on those that will remain after the rev. He, dear man, the fact that men's minds will not change overnight has absolutely nothing to do with the struggle against race prejudice nor, nor against the complacent attitude of the S&D as a reformist current which we must combat now. The S&D says that the transformation from cap. to soc. will solve the problem because they do not wish to make any revolutionary moves now, they are satisfied to participate.
in the struggle against race prejudice to the extent of the liberals and no more, to circumscribe it that is within the framework of bourgeois democracy, or to doctor up the latter, not transform it. Perhaps here and there there is a member of the B-D who thinks that that is the solution—the revolution will take care of it. But regardless of what they think, the policy [objective policy] leads to push that problem further away from a solution by pushing the revolution itself further and further away from placing it on the agenda of today instead of the tomorrow.

But that Coolidge finds to criticize is not their policy today but the fact that their policy does not envisage the minds of men tomorrow.

How is it that a revolutionist leader is constantly slipping into a reactionary channel he does not "warn" to get to? That is eating Coolidge?

VI Garveyism: contrasting G's attitude and T's attitude

We're back to where we started: the approach to the Negro question. In addition to saying it was reactionary, he states that the fact that the Garvey planned to set up his republic in a foreign land was not the decisive factor that made Negroes indifferent. (10) But, that isn't true. Its reactionary character is precisely in that it demanded a separate state—in Africa. That way the most reactionary Hisbo could support it. And it demanded it here—that it would have raised such revolutionary situation that no only no reactionary could support it, but the Govt. would have to be looking for at her ways of solving the N. problem than by giving a few Negroes good jobs, positions and have/hoosacat appear on the same platform with a few others. As it is the Negroes preferred Ga. soil that he knew to African soil that he did not.

Toward religion too one can easily see the difference in approach. Coolidge tries to avoid the question by stating that all of America is religious conscious forgetting the distinguishing feature that white Am. goes for custom but black Am. goes to a place where he can finnally be rid of white eyes.