



**Smithsonian Institution**

*National Museum of African American History and Culture*

## **Pamphlet: The Negro Worker Vol. 1 No. 10-11**

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# Forced Labour under the British Flag

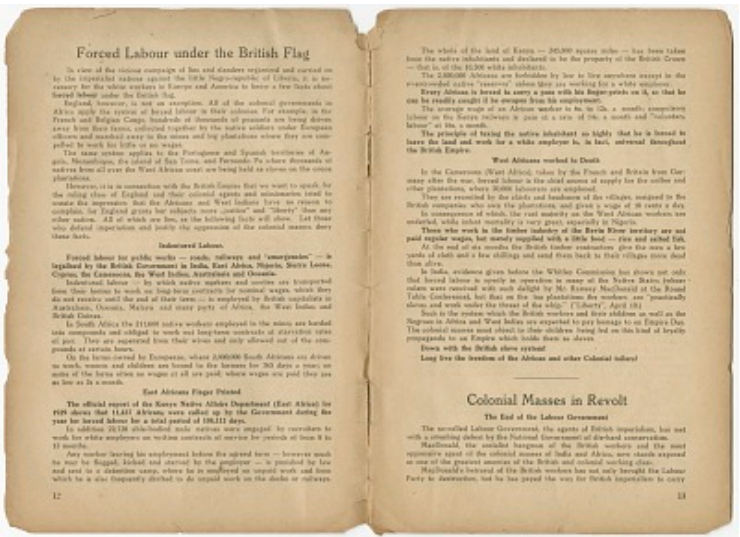
In view of the vicious campaign of lies and slander organized and carried on by the imperialist nations against the little Negro-republic of Liberia, it is necessary for the white-workers in Europe and America to know a few facts about forced labour under the British flag. England, however, is not an exception. All of the colonial governments in Africa apply the system of forced labour in their colonies. For example, in the French and Belgian Congo, hundreds of thousands of peasants are being driven away from their farms, collected together by the native soldiers under European officers and marched away to the mines and big plantations where they are compelled to work for little or no wages. The same system applies to the Portuguese and Spanish territories of Angola, Mozambique, the island of San Tome, and Fernando Po where thousands of natives from all over the West African coast are being held as slaves on the cocoa plantations. However, it is in connection with the British Empire that we want to speak, for the ruling class of England and their colonial agents and missionaries tried to create the impression that the Africans and West Indians have no reason to complain, for England grants her subjects more „justice" and "liberty" than any other nation. All of which are lies, as the following facts will show. Let those who defend imperialism and justify the oppression of the colonial masses deny these facts.

## Indentured Labour.

Forced labour for public works - roads, railways and "emergencies" - is legalised by the British Government in India, East Africa, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Cyprus, the Cameroons, the West Indies, Australasia and Oceania. Indentured labour - by which native workers and coolies are transported from their homes to work on long-term contracts for nominal wages, which they do not receive until the end of their term - is employed by British capitalists in Australasia, Oceania, Malaya and many parts of Africa, the West Indies and British Guinea. In South Africa the 211,600 native workers employed in the mines are herded into compounds and obligated to work out long-term contracts at starvation rates of pay. They are separated from their wives and only allowed out of the compounds at certain hours. On the farms owned by Europeans, where 2,000,000 South Africans are driven to work, women and children are bound to the farmers for 365 days a year; on some of the farms often no wages at all are paid; where wages are paid they are as low as 2s a month.

## East Africans Finger Printed

The official report of the Kenya Native Affairs Department (East Africa) for 1929 shows that 11,437 Africans were called up by the Government during the year for forced labour for a total period of 108,113 days. In addition 22,728 able-bodied male natives were engaged by recruiters to work for white employers on written contracts of service for periods of from 8 to 12 months. Any worker leaving his employment before the agreed term - however much he may be flogged, kicked and starved by the employer - is punished by law and sent to a detention camp, where he is employed on unpaid work and from which he is also frequently drafted to do unpaid work on the docks or railways.



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The whole of the land of Kenya - 245,000 square miles - has been taken from the native inhabitants and declared to be property of the British Crown - that is, of the 10,300 white inhabitants.

The 2,500,000 Africans are forbidden by law to live anywhere except in the overcrowded native "reserves" unless they are working for a white employer.

Every African is forced to carry a pass with his finger-prints on it, so that he can be readily caught if he escapes from his employment.

The average wage of an African worker is 6s. to 12s. a month; compulsory labour on the Kenya railways is paid at a rate of 14s. per month and "voluntary labour" at 16s. a month.

The principle of taxing the native inhabitant so highly that he is forced to leave the land and work for a white employer is, in fact, universal throughout the British Empire.

#### West Africans worked to Death

In the Cameroons (West Africa), taken by the French and Britain from Germany after the war, forced labour is the chief source of supply for the coffee and other plantations, where 20,000 labourers are employed.

They are recruited by the chiefs and headsmen of the villages, assigned to the British companies who own the plantations, and given a wage of 10 cents a day.

In consequence of which, the vast majority on the West African workers are underfed, while infant mortality is very great especially in Nigeria.

Those who work in the timber industry of the Bevin River territory are not paid regular wages, but merely supplied with a little food - rice and salted fish.

At the end of six months the British timber contractors give the men a few yards of cloth and a few shillings and send them back to their villages more dead than alive.

In India, evidence given before the Whitley Commission has show not only that forced labour is openly in operation in many of the Native States (whose rulers were received with such delight that Mr. Ramsay MacDonald at the Round Table Conference), but that on the tea plantations the workers are "practically slaves and work under the threat of the whip." ("Liberty", April 10.)

Such is the system which the British workers and their children as well as the Negroes in Africa and West Indies are expected to pay homage to on Empire Day. The colonial masses must object to their children being fed on this kind of loyalty propaganda to an Empire which holds them as slaves.

Down with the British slave system!

Long live the freedom of the African and other Colonial toilers!

#### Colonial Masses in Revolt

##### The End of the Labour Government

The so-called Labour Government, the agents of British imperialism, has met with a smashing defeat by the National Government of die-hard conservatism.

MacDonald, the socialist hangman of the British workers and the most oppressive agent of the colonial masses of India and Africa, now stands exposed as one of the greatest enemies of the British and colonial

working class.  
MacDonald's betrayal of the British workers has not only brought the  
Labour Party to destruction, but he has paved the way for British  
imperialism to carry

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