

Party Building and Political Leadership

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PART I

IN THE United States, under the blows of the difficult economic situation and the threat of political reaction, the masses are moving towards the People's Front; they are being rapidly radicalized and are breaking the leading strings that held them so long under the control of the capitalist class. There is a deep class differentiation and shifting of class forces. This is shown by the unparalleled regrouping of political and economic organizations during the past year, including splits in the Republican, Democratic

and Socialist parties, the rise and breakup of the Townsend and Coughlin movements and the deep split in the American Federation of Labor, and also especially by the growth of the C.I.O., Labor's Non-Partisan League, the great peace movement, the youth and women's movements, etc. Especially are the forces of reaction and incipient fascism grouping themselves around the Republican Party, and those of democratic progress around Roosevelt.

But the Communist Party and the *Daily Worker* do not experience an organic growth corresponding to the expanding mass movement of the toilers. Our Party is active in every phase of the developing People's Front movement and it has greatly increased its prestige and forces in mass organizations of all kinds—trade unions, labor parties, fraternal, national, farmer, youth, Negro, women, peace, anti-fas-

cist, labor defense, unemployed, veterans, as well as in political life generally. This lays a sure basis for future growth, but for the present the expansion of the Party and the *Daily Worker* lags badly. Thus, during the past year, a period of unparalleled mass organization and class struggle, our Party's membership has fluctuated around 40,000, and the circulation of the *Daily Worker* stagnates.

The problem of speeding up the growth of the Party and its press, of liquidating the contradiction between the rapid intensification of the class struggle and the slow growth of our Party constitutes the most urgent issue now before the Party.

Before analyzing this problem it is necessary first to eliminate a harmful misconception. This is the opinion that the economic situation in the United States is not favorable to the rapid growth of the Communist Party,

that the Communist Party cannot grow in periods of "prosperity" but requires a situation of economic crisis or depression.

Such a notion is basically wrong. The growth of the Communist Party is conditioned by a whole complex of factors, not the economic question of industrial production alone. When, as at present, with some 9,000,000 workers unemployed, with the cost of living rapidly rising, with the masses more conscious of economic and political grievances than ever, with millions of workers and other toilers organizing and fighting, the groundwork is at hand for a rapid expansion of the Communist Party's strength and influence. Therefore, if our Party and its press are not now growing faster the reasons are not to be found in an unfavorable objective situation, but in other factors which we shall develop as we go along. There is absolutely no

reason in the objective situation why our Party should not be numerically several times stronger than it is at the present time.

REVIEW OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONDITIONS AND METHODS

That the Party as a whole needs greatly to improve its organizational work, its recruitment and assimilation of new members goes without saying. There is the grossest neglect of this fundamental question. Without definite improvement in this vital work all talk of building the Party and its press will remain fruitless.

The Resolution of the June Plenum of the Central Committee correctly calls for "a general review of the organizational conditions and methods of the Party."* This general review

* *Resolutions of the Ninth Convention of the Communist Party*, Workers Library Publishers, New York, 10 cents.

and the improvements that should result from it must have as its starting point the strengthening of the Party's united front alliances, of developing the Party's contacts in the numerous mass organizations, of intensifying the toilers' struggle and raising it to higher political levels, and of fulfilling the Party's general tasks in the developing People's Front movement. Examined from this standpoint, the following can be summed up as an outline of some of the Party's major organizational tasks.

A. *A greater organizational consciousness.* Our Party needs further education in the necessity of carrying on systematic Party organizational work. Too much reliance is still placed on mere agitation, the regular building of the Party being left largely to spontaneity. This situation must be drastically corrected. The whole Party membership must be made acutely organization conscious, and educated

never to forget that the building of a great mass Communist Party is the center of all of our activities. Party building must be made the central issue everywhere and at all times throughout the Party.

b. *Intensified preparation of cadres.* The cadre question also must be reshaped in view of the present situation. Our whole system of the training of cadres must be broadened and speeded up to satisfy the great demand for trained personnel created by the growing mass struggle and the multiplying activities of our Party. It must be especially directed toward producing the new types of cadres demanded by the new mass organizations. All our schools must be extended.

We must especially adopt a bolder policy of promoting comrades to more responsible work, and thus bring out their latent abilities. While stressing the great importance of the cadre ques-

tion we must not, however, fail to combat the wrong theories of those who try to justify inexcusable inactivity by urging a lack of capable cadres.

c. *Link together the Party's organizational and educational work.* The education and organization of workers are essentially one process, both on a Party and mass scale, and the two phases of the work must be closely co-ordinated. The combination of the two former separate agitprop and organization departments into the educational-organizational department is an important step forward in the methods of Party building and mass work, and the full logic of it must be developed throughout the districts. This department should study the methods of agitation and organization used by various other organizations—political parties, trade unions, fraternal organizations, etc. The department should also send out instructors to the districts to

check up on the carrying out of its directives.

d. Connect Party recruiting with the mass movement. Party building must be made an organic part of every mass campaign of the Party. The education-organization department must concern itself directly with the planning of our mass work and weave into it the various tasks of Party building. Heretofore, Party building has been considered too much as a separate Party activity, detached from actual mass work. Thus, for example, during the recent election campaign, many big mass meetings were held; radio speeches delivered; literature distributed; etc., in which no appeal whatever was made actually to draw workers into the ranks of our Party.

The Party must also fight energetically against the "stages" theory of organization; which is, that first we build the mass organization and later the

Party. Party building must be a continuous process, proceeding simultaneously with the development of the mass campaigns, and must not be the object simply of occasional Party recruiting drives. The *Party Organizer* should be broadened out from its present narrow inner-Party line (that is, its dealing almost entirely with purely Party affairs), and should also concern itself directly with all important problems of mass organization, linking Party building with them.

e. *New methods of Party recruiting.* Our methods of recruiting members into the Party should be restudied with regard to our united front situation in the developing People's Front movement. Very often prevailing methods of recruitment are too narrow, too much confined to close Party circles. We must find broader approaches to the awakening masses and develop systematic efforts to recruit among them

on the basis of the shop, union, family, friends, neighborhood, fraternal organizations, etc. Special attention must be paid to developing recruiting activities by all our contacts in the mass organizations, particularly our hundreds of new functionaries. Also, the fractions should be given more responsibility for Party recruiting. A better planning and check-up should be developed for all recruitment work.

F. Reduction in membership fluctuation. Our efforts to correct the evil of membership fluctuation, through which we lose a large percentage of the new members recruited yearly, must also be based upon the united front situation of the Party and the tasks of the developing mass movement. There must be a better distribution of tasks to new members, a more systematic education of these new members, a better dues collection system, a more thorough check-up on those who have

dropped out of the Party, the raising of the political tone of the unit life, etc.

g. *Connect the Daily Worker more closely with the mass movement.* The problem of improving the circulation of the *Daily Worker* must also be examined in the light of our tasks in the growing People's Front movement. In the first place, it is necessary to link the paper up more closely with the workers' struggles. The *Daily Worker* must be not only a first-class journal of general labor information and comment; it must especially be a fighting organ and leader of the mass struggle. It must be reorganized as the main agitational expression of the Party. The paper should display greater initiative in the inauguration and intensification of the mass struggle by systematic exposures of bad conditions in plants; concentrated reporting of strike situations; specially organized

circulation of the paper in struggle zones, etc. The special editions in the auto strikes, the steel strikes and the Minnesota elections are very good steps in this general direction.

This sharpening up of the role of the *Daily Worker* as the outstanding leading fighting paper of the workers can only be successful provided it is backed up by a better organization of the circulation department. At present there is gross neglect in circulating the paper at mill gates, union meetings, and in many other situations where the workers welcome it. It is necessary that skilled assistance be brought into the circulation department to organize our circulation methods on a modern basis. There should be developed in the Party a spirit and organization something similar to the old *Appeal Army*. Circulation of the *Daily Worker* should be raised to the height of a major political task.

H. Strengthen the shop papers. Our shop papers also face new problems in connection with the organization of huge masses of unorganized into the C.I.O. unions. These papers are not prospering as they should. Some are displaying a tendency to stagnate and this must be corrected; for the shop papers can be built into powerful weapons to bring the Party's policy to the masses, and generally to show the face of the Party in the shops.

I. Self-criticism, Party democracy and collective leadership. Improvement in all these elementary respects is necessary for the strengthening of our Party politically and organizationally. There must be a better examination made of our weaknesses—a franker admission of errors, if we are to sharpen up our policies and activities; a better combination of democratic procedure with firm Communist discipline, if we are to give the workers

more of a feeling of active participation in the life of the Party, and a more systematic development of collective leadership if we are to develop the best leading and working ability that our Party has in its forces.

Substantial improvement of the Party's organizational methods along the above-suggested lines is bound to result in a decided speeding up of Party building. It would result in much growth for our Party and the strengthening of its influence on all fronts. The need of the betterment of our organization work, therefore, cannot be overstressed.