

The Organizational Tasks Arising from the Plenum Decisions

By F. BROWN

THE resolution of the Central Committee Plenum, after having characterized the changes that have taken place in the recent period, states the main tasks for our Party as follows:

"All this in its entirety very strongly emphasizes the necessity of organizationally and politically strengthening the Party in every possible way, of overcoming the weaknesses of its work, of recruiting new workers into its ranks, overcoming the excessive fluctuation, of increasing and improving the Party press, of developing a wide propaganda of the tactics and program of the Party, of strengthening of its independent leading role in all the struggles of the working class and all the toilers of the U.S.A.

"With these aims in view, the Party must verify its work and lay down its tasks on three most important questions—the trade union question, the united front, and the question of the possible formation of a mass Labor Party."

In line with the resolution, the Plenum not only reviewed to what extent the organizational tasks laid down by the Eighth Party Convention have been carried out, but at the same time determined also the organizational tasks that flow out of the line and decisions of the Plenum.

The Plenum registered general organizational improvement and quantitative and qualitative strengthening of our Party, through a better understanding of how to connect itself with the masses in the factories, and in the trade unions. This improvement manifested itself in the broadening of the united front movement as evidenced in the Chicago Congress Against War and Fascism and the Washington Congress for Social and Unemployment Insurance; in the gains made in the textile fields in connection with the great strike; in the progress made in the A. F. of L.

Yet, the Plenum put forward these questions: To what extent has the Party as a whole connected all of its activities with the building of the Party? To what extent have we utilized the broadened united front movement, the building of the opposition in the A. F. of L. unions, etc, to recruit the best elements into our ranks, to increase the *Daily Worker* circulation, what progress have we made in transferring the organizational base of the Party from residential neighborhoods into the shops and factories?

In answering these questions, the good experiences and also the organizational weaknesses came clearly to the surface.

The main organizational decisions of the Eighth Party Convention were: (1) To bring the Party membership up to 40,000 (in good standing) by January 21, the anniversary of Lenin's death; (2) to strengthen the existing shop nuclei and to double their number; (3) to improve the life of the units by developing the Unit Bureaus, and by introducing the group system; (4) to systematically and intensively train new cadres through the National and District Training Schools,—more educational activities in the lower units, etc.; (5) to systematically issue more and more Communist literature and improve the distributing apparatus; (6) to bring the circulation of the *Daily Worker* up to 60,000 by increasing the number of subscribers and the daily sale in front of factories, on the streets, neighborhoods, trade unions, etc.; (7) to make of every eligible Party member a member of a trade union; at the same time to build up our fractions and make them the driving force inside the unions in their struggles against the exploiters, as well as the driving force in building the opposition in the A. F. of L.; (8) to make our Party more conscious of its task in giving guidance to and building the Young Communist League; establishing a League nucleus alongside of every Party shop nucleus; assigning forces to the League and mobilizing the Party for mass recruiting into the League.

Let us examine how these tasks were fulfilled:

RECRUITING

The end of the Recruiting Drive on January 21, found the Party far from having fulfilled this important control task. We cannot speak of a real drive. The figures for the months of the drive, with the exception of December, show that the Party was not mobilized along the line of the C.C. letter addressed to every Party member. The keynote of this letter was close personal contact of the individual Party members with their fellow-workers in the shops, in the trade unions, in the mass organizations—concentration upon individual workers. It was only in December that the drive began to show some results. This fact alone has clearly demonstrated to what extent the Party members are detached from their fellow-workers, and how it took time to orientate the whole Party in the correct direction.

The Recruiting Drive also shows clearly that there is a difference in the recruiting effectiveness of the various districts. In the organizational report this was expressed in the following figures. Comparing the number of recruits with the size of the membership, the

recruiting capacity of New York was 30 per cent; Pittsburgh, 22 per cent; Cleveland, 30 per cent; Detroit, 32 per cent; Philadelphia, 28 per cent; California, 20 per cent; Chicago, 18 per cent. These percentages indicate to what extent the districts have improved the quality of the recruiting, the educational activities in the units, the system of recruiting and retaining the new members; how to get them quickly assigned to units, etc. The improvement in the recruiting capacity and power of retaining the new members in New York, for example, is explained by the fact that the Party in New York has improved its educational activities, not only in the units, but also in the form of lectures, forums, mass meetings, which to a certain extent compensates for the still weak educational activities in the units. The improvement for example, in Philadelphia, Cleveland, Detroit, is to be explained also along this line. The conclusion to be drawn is that the improvement of the recruiting capacity of the Party depends not only upon the extent to which the Party is active in leading and developing mass struggles, but also the extent to which we are improving the educational activities of the Party, and on a better understanding of the necessity of more extended, more intensive recruiting, not only numerically, but also qualitatively, as a daily task of the Party.

It is true that the continuous attacks by the enemies make the mass activities of the Party more difficult. In many of the districts, especially in the South and the West, and also in some of the concentration districts, the terror, in the form of discrimination and victimization in the factories, makes recruiting more difficult. But on the other hand, the changing attitude of the workers, of the masses, their disillusionment with the N.R.A., makes them look for a way out, makes them eager to listen to our arguments, and more receptive to the program and policies of the Party.

This means that intensive recruitment is possible. But to improve this and to improve the ability of the Party to keep new members, it is necessary to strengthen the consciousness and determination of the Party members in this task. Furthermore, to be able to win over larger and larger masses it is not enough to improve our press as a means for convincing the workers of the correctness of our position. We must at the same time strive to make each individual Party member a convincing agitator and organizer. In other words, we have to improve the educational activity of the Party and to strengthen the connections of each individual Party member with his fellow workers in the shops and mass organizations.

The discussion showed that with a correct orientation, as was shown especially in the month of December, we were able, if not to double the recruiting, to improve the quality of the recruits. In

comparison with the month previous to the Recruiting Drive, the recruiting in auto, textile and shoe was tripled. Good improvement has also been made in transport, needle, and a slight improvement noted in steel. These facts show clearly, not only the necessity for carrying on recruiting as a daily task along the line of the C.C. letter to the individual Party members, but also the necessity for concentrating especially in the basic industries, particularly in view of the coming Spring struggles. The preparedness of the Party for the coming Spring struggles depends primarily on our ability to strengthen our position in the basic industries, and in the trade unions, in the A. F. of L. unions in these industries.

The drive officially closed with the Lenin Memorial meetings. In line, however, with the Plenum decision, recruiting has to be intensified. This means that all districts will have to continue to conduct their own drives, concentrating especially in the basic industries and in the A. F. of L. unions. The recruiting tempo reached in the month of December must be kept up.

SHOP NUCLEI

How do we stand with the shop nuclei? To what extent have we built new ones, and strengthened the old? How do the shop nuclei function today? Are all the shop nuclei issuing their own shop papers? To what extent are the shop nuclei developing initiative, establishing themselves as the Party in the particular shops, mills, mines, factories, etc?

In answering these questions, the discussion showed that progress has been made in practically all the districts, but also in this respect, not in the same proportion. Headway has been made in Cleveland, Detroit, Philadelphia, and especially in New York. But Chicago, Pittsburgh and other districts are moving slowly.

The example of the New York district, where from the time of the Eighth Party Convention the number of shop nuclei has more than doubled, shows the possibility of a real turn in transferring the center of gravity of our Party organizations into the shops. Section 2 of the New York District has today 66 shop and building nuclei, comprising 600 members, as against six street units, with 250 members. More than that, each shop nucleus is making real efforts to issue a shop paper. How do we explain these results in the New York District? By the fact that for months the New York District not only conducted a campaign of enlightenment on the necessity of building shop nuclei, thereby orientating also the street units to becoming instruments for building shop nuclei, penetrating the shops, etc.; but because the New York District also took organizational measures to bring about such a change, by the assignment of leading

comrades to the existing shop nuclei, by improving the section apparatus to secure better guidance for the shop nuclei, etc. The New York District not only improved to some extent the educational activities of the units, but has also taken steps for training new cadres. It has established the *Party Builder*, which discusses organizational problems, and popularizes the best experiences. Not only has the district established such an organ, but the sections have started to issue their own Org. Bulletins.

The experiences in New York show also that one of our major instruments for the improvement of the organizational methods of the Party, for the improvement of the apparatus, is the *Party Organizer*, and the "Party Life" column in the *Daily Worker*. In this respect, the Plenum discussion brought forward how the districts from now on, besides having their own district Party organs, must utilize to a greater extent the *Party Organizer*, and the "Party Life" column, to deal with the most important organizational problems, exchange experiences, especially on the life of the shop nuclei, thereby making of these columns such instruments that will guide the Party in the day to day organizational activities.

Improving the shop papers, increasing the number of shop and neighborhood papers, is of vital importance. It is through the shop and neighborhood papers that the units speak to the masses among whom they are active. A larger number of shop papers means not only closer connection with the masses, instruments for guiding the masses in their daily struggles, for recruiting the best elements, but also better preparation for the Party to remain connected with the masses through the shop and neighborhood press in case of the suppression of the legal press. The day that each unit issues its own paper, shop or neighborhood, we will have at our disposal hundreds of papers that will bring the slogans and the program of the Party, connected with local demands, to hundreds of thousands of workers. To solve these problems, one of the main tasks is to further improve the life of the units.

LIFE OF THE UNITS

To improve the life of the units, we must improve primarily the functioning of the Unit Bureaus, develop the Unit Bureaus to the point where they become real leaders of the unit. We must also extend the Group System. The Plenum discussion proved that it is precisely in those districts where attention has been paid to the development of the Section and Unit Bureaus, where the life of the units has been improved by more educational activities and especially where the Group System has been introduced, which permits more educational activity in the units, that we have the best results. In

those districts where the Group System is functioning, the Party is able to secure better attendance, more regular dues-payment, quick distribution of propaganda and agitational material, and also quick mobilization of the Party. For example, Section 1 of District 2 was able in 24 hours to mobilize 400 Party members for a demonstration by mobilizing the captains, who, in turn, mobilized the members of their respective groups.

There is still misunderstanding and confusion as to what the Group System should be. There are comrades who see in the Group System the possibility of a mechanical multiplication of the units. There are other comrades who would like to overburden the Group System with all sorts of tasks. There are others who see in the system only a preparation for illegality. The experiences prove, however, that we must insist that the main and fundamental task of the Group System shall remain, insuring better attendance, more regular dues payment, and quick mobilization of the Party for mass distribution of propaganda material, the instrument for quick mobilization of the membership. These were the reasons that caused us to build such a system, and not the building of a new form of organization in case of illegality. It goes without saying, however, that such a system, while improving the activities of the Party, is at the same time a splendid training for the functioning of the Party in case it should be forced into illegality. The examples of how the Party is functioning in the South, in California, under the continuous pressure of the growing terror, are of tremendous value for the Party as a whole. These experiences, enriched by the international experiences, must steel the Party to better withstand all attacks.

* * * * *

The problem of training new cadres, the problem of literature, which are part and parcel of the organizational problem of how to improve the Party organization; how to make the Party better able to connect itself with larger and larger masses, were considered specifically by the Agitprop Conference. These questions are dealt with in the March *Party Organizer*.

“DAILY WORKER” CIRCULATION

In examining the status of the *Daily Worker* circulation, the Plenum concluded that the main task to be solved in order to secure a larger circulation of the *Daily Worker*, as one of the main prerequisites for building the Party, for reaching new masses, is of an *organizational character*. The circulation of the *Daily Worker* is not growing because of the lack of an effective apparatus of

distribution, failure to mobilize the Party in the Circulation Drive, and failure to utilize the organizations around the Party.

In this regard, too, every district must emulate New York, where, through the building of the Red Builders, we were able to increase the circulation of our central organ. As the circulation stands now, it is clear that only a part of the membership reads the *Daily*, that we reach a very small number of the workers in the organizations under the influence of the Party, that we do not reach the masses organized in the A. F. of L. oppositions, to say nothing of the masses we want to penetrate. In this respect, the Plenum put the question very sharply: If we believe as we do, that the central organ of the Party is the instrument through which we must guide the Party membership in their day by day activities, that it is the instrument through which we must reach and influence the largest masses, then we must be able to build its circulation. In this respect, we have to solve the organizational problem of how to improve the distribution apparatus of the *Daily Worker*.

The decision of the Plenum is to raise the circulation of the *Daily Worker* to 100,000 by July 1, 1935. It can be done; it must be done! In each city of the United States, there is the possibility of building groups of Red Builders, especially in the concentration districts, in the nearby districts reached by the *Daily Worker* on the date of issue. But the Red Builders alone will not solve the problem if the units of the Party are not mobilized, if they do not organize their Red Builder brigades; if we do not organize *Daily Worker* committees in the trade unions and mass organizations, and if the District and Section Committees of the Party do not take responsibility for the carrying out of this task, by checking up on the decisions day by day. Here, again, we must emphasize the necessity of utilizing the *Party Organizer* and the "Party Life" column as a means of giving organizational guidance and for bringing forward the best experience in this campaign, that must be launched immediately.

TRADE UNIONS

In reviewing to what extent the Party has fulfilled the control task in regard to the trade unions, the Plenum brought forward the best results, the best experiences. In practically all districts, the number of Party members active in the trade union field, and especially in the A. F. of L. unions, has increased. This was shown especially by the results of the work inside the A. F. of L., in the A.A. in Pennsylvania and Ohio, in the U.M.W.A. in Western Pennsylvania, in the textile territories, in the increasing number of Party members and Left-Wing workers elected by their trade union

locals as delegates to the city central bodies of the trade unions in a number of cities.

In regard to the building of fractions and the functioning of the fractions inside the trade unions, the discussion also brought forward very good experiences as evidence that the Party members are getting a better understanding of fraction work, of its importance. However, the task set by the Eighth Party Convention that all eligible Party members become active in the trade unions, of building the fractions, has not been fulfilled to the fullest extent. In line with the Plenum decisions, calling for the strengthening of our position in the trade unions, in line with the decision on the Labor Party, which calls for the Left-Wing forces, especially in the trade unions, to become the steering wheels that will correctly orientate the desire of the masses (coming from below) for a Labor Party, we must conduct a real drive to accomplish the task set by the Eighth Party Convention and by the last Plenum.

The fractions as a whole are still functioning very poorly, and in many instances, are not clear on their role. Instead of being the driving force in the unions, many of the fractions are still lagging at the tail-end of the organized masses. This means that, in the process of building the fractions, we must clarify the membership on their role and tasks. The building of the fractions must go hand in hand with continuous education. The task confronting the Party in trade union work, which has developed to such an extent, makes it imperative for the districts and sections to build Trade Union Commissions. More than that, even in the units where these constitute the Party, as in small towns, or in important industrial territories of the large cities, we must have trade union directors. The Trade Union Commission must be the instrument of the district committees, or of the section committees in guiding the trade union work, in building, and educating the fractions, developing cadres, etc.

The good examples of the progress made in New York, Philadelphia, Cleveland and Chicago, where such commissions have already been established, must be emulated by all districts and sections. To make real progress in this sphere of activity, to more closely connect the Party with the organized masses and take leadership in the daily struggles, we must learn from the experiences of the last period, improve our methods of work, make the Party more and more conscious of trade union work, by continuous discussion and enlightenment on this vital problem, and by giving continuous guidance to the fractions.

THE YOUNG COMMUNIST LEAGUE

In checking up on the control task of the Party Convention

regarding the Y.C.L., the Plenum found that, with the exception of New York, there has been very little effort made to fulfil the task laid down. Only New York is an example to all the districts for having fulfilled the task of making the Party more conscious of youth work, of giving the Y.C.L. some attention and guidance, of assigning young Party forces to the Y.C.L. for the purpose of strengthening its cadres, to aid the Y.C.L. in becoming a mass organization by carrying on increasing and systematic recruiting of young workers. The New York District, immediately following the Party Convention, not only assigned a good number of young Party members to strengthen the Y.C.L., but threw all of its forces into making the National Youth Day demonstration of last year the largest ever held in New York. In this demonstration, the young workers saw in the thousands of Party members and adult workers participating in that demonstration, not only the solidarity of the adult workers, but saw concretely the effect of the aid given by the Party. From this moment on, in New York, the Y.C.L. registered a steady growth. From an organization of 1,100 members at the beginning of last year, it grew to over 3,000 at the time of the last plenum, almost tripling its membership.

But, even in New York, the Party did not help sufficiently in building Y.C.L. nuclei where Party nuclei exist. In most of the districts, the adult comrades, busy with numerous tasks, do not sufficiently realize that the strengthening of the Y.C.L. means strengthening the Party; that it is from the American-born, from the American young workers, principally, that the Party will get new, sound forces—the cadres that are needed for the building of the Party to a mass Party. But the Party will gain forces from the Y.C.L. only if we strengthen the cadres of the Y.C.L., helping to build it into a mass organization. The Y.C.L. set before itself the task of securing a membership of 12,000 by July 1st. This figure must be reached. But the Y.C.L. needs the full assistance of the Party, especially in the concentration districts, and in those districts where the gap between the size of the Party and the Y.C.L. is great.

The Plenum decisions in regard to the Y.C.L. are as follows: (1) to give full assistance to the Y.C.L., to build it to a real mass organization; (2) to undertake in the period from now until July the building of at least 50 shop nuclei of the Y.C.L. Every district must select the factories to concentrate upon. This means assignment of forces, continuous follow-up, etc.; (3) as part of the *Daily Worker* circulation drive, the Party units must spread the *Young Worker* among the youth in the shops, unions, mass organizations. The *Young Worker* must become the best means of reaching young workers, the best means of recruiting for the Y.C.L.; (4) the lead-

ing cadres must be strengthened in all districts. This means assigning young Party members for youth work. The example of New York, which has already assigned 100 young Party members for League work must be followed by all other districts; (5) there must be more attention and guidance to the Y.C.L. In connection with the broad movement around the American Youth Congress, the Y.C.L. is learning to connect itself with broad masses of youth; (6) leadership and guidance to the Y.C.L. must take the form of assistance in developing youth activities in connection with all the mass campaigns of the Party. No Party plan can be considered complete unless it indicates how the youth are to be mobilized for specific campaigns, and how the Party will aid the work of the youth in these campaigns.

The example of the Harlem Section which is taking serious steps to intensify youth work must be followed by all sections, by all units of the Party.

NEGRO WORK

A political organizational problem of vital importance that came up in the Plenum discussion was the necessity of making a turn in our Negro work, learning from the experiences in the trade union work, in order better to connect the Party with the organized Negro masses. The Plenum noted that while the influence of the Party is increasing among the Negro masses, they are still, organizationally, detached from us. The political-organizational problem to be solved is how to penetrate the large organizations of the Negro people, the fraternal organizations, churches, etc. We must not be content with the united front established at the top. The past united front conferences had a tremendous repercussion all over the country. But they did not bring the expected organizational results, for the simple reason that in the branches of those organizations there were no forces to take up the decisions of the united front conferences, to fight for these decisions, and mobilize the masses around these decisions. To mobilize the organized Negro masses, we must be among them, inside their organizations. For this reason, the units, which include Negro workers, especially those units where the percentage of Negro members is high, must see to it that the Party members join or rejoin the Negro organizations. We must break with the situation where Negro workers, upon joining the Party, leave their mass organizations, thus separating themselves from their fellow-workers with whom they had had contact. Yes, our task is to increase recruitment of Negro workers, but not to take them out of the mass organizations. On the contrary, to build the Party in these organizations, we must see to it that the Party members go back to

their old organizations. This will mean that the street units with Negro residential sections in their territory, will work in the neighborhoods, and at the same time carry on work through Party fractions inside these organizations, which have their headquarters in the same neighborhood. Along this line, we will maintain better connections with large Negro masses, and our forces in the Negro organizations will become, not only the driving force for drawing the Negro mass organizations into the struggle for Negro rights, in the daily struggles of the masses, but at the same time, the driving force for bringing these organizations into a powerful League of Struggle for Negro rights on the basis of affiliation. The problem can be solved by going into these Negro organizations, working among these masses from within.

TIGHTENING THE PARTY APPARATUS

Great emphasis was laid on the problem of tightening up the whole Party apparatus. On the extent that the Party connects itself more firmly with the masses, and that large masses are put in motion under the leadership of the Party, depends our resistance to the attack of the enemy. Especially today, under the growing attack against the Party by the Government, Chambers of Commerce, the Hearst press, the Dickstein Committee, which are phases of the general plan of attack for the suppression of our Party, phases of the general attack against the working class, as can be seen in the recent attack of the government against the A. F. of L. unions, it is imperative that the Party take steps to improve the life of the shop nuclei, and fractions, to improve the Group System, the functioning of the leading forces, to build a whole network of shop and neighborhood papers; in short to make every step for the improvement of the whole Party organization. There must be closer connection between Organization and Agitprop work, in line with the two phases of the task already emphasized—improving the Party, politically and organizationally and of enhancing the ability of the Party to win and organize the masses. The forces of reaction are working at full speed to strike new blows against the working class in their scheme of war preparations, especially for attack against the Soviet Union. We must learn to be practical; we must take all those measures that can better adjust our apparatus to the daily needs of the Party. We must learn how best to utilize all of our activities, the various campaigns, to build the Party. While in the various campaigns we aim at particular objectives, we must see in the campaigns means to draw in larger and larger masses into struggle, by uniting these masses into a powerful united front movement. Through their experiences in these campaigns, in the daily struggles,

the masses will learn that the Communist Party is their Party, and in learning this, the best elements will swell our ranks.

Building the Party to a mass Party means reaching larger masses, means strengthening the Party position in the A. F. of L. unions and other mass organizations, means developing, strengthening our struggle against the capitalist offensive, against War and Fascism, in defense of the Soviet Union; means better preparation to withstand all attacks.

To achieve this, we must also learn to fulfil the tasks by continuous check-up.

The organizational results and experiences registered by the Plenum have shown that the correct line of the Party has been followed, and also the means of solving concretely the organizational tasks flowing out of this line. The good experiences, the results brought forward by the Plenum must be a stimulus for further increasing the tempo in perfecting the building of the Party.