

Some Weak Spots in Our Organizational Work

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THE editorials in last month's **Party Organizer** pointed out the discrepancies between our intentions of carrying out Party decisions and the concrete measures that would guarantee their execution. From the many observations made during the last period on the work of our Party in a few of the Districts in checking up the decisions made during the last Plenum, we find it necessary to make a short analysis of some of the main weaknesses. We will point out only the most outstanding.

Stagnation in Shop Units

In our previous discussions on fluctuation we came to the conclusion that while fluctuation is very high, especially in street units, this is not the case with shop units. However, investigation of a few shop nuclei shows that while we have a relatively low fluctuation in the shop units, we are still confronted with the problem of stagnation.

I shall take the example of the Otis Shop Unit in Cleveland to illustrate this point. This nucleus which one year ago played such an important part in building the union, in coming forward to the thousands of employees with concrete suggestions on how to improve conditions in the various departments, on how to strengthen the union, etc., is today reduced to a unit with only a few active members.

Only in the last few weeks has the nucleus taken steps to revive its activities and increase its membership. At the last meeting of the unit, in addition to the few active Party members, some five or six workers were present. At this meeting the organizational drive for the union was discussed in minute detail. On the basis of the reports given by the Organizational Secretary of the District and the Secretary of the unit, and the discussion in which all the members showed their determination to be the driving force in this organizational drive, the sympathizers who were brought to the meeting decided to join the Party.

Very soon, however, it appeared that these new applicants were not new sympathizers, but that every one was an ex-Party member. The discussion also revealed that these ex-members had been lost to us for a period of from six months to one year, not only because of the shifting of meeting places and other reasons (showing that the bureau was not functioning properly), but for a more fundamental reason which was expressed by one of the young comrades. He stated that he

joined the Otis Shop Unit at the time when the union was built, because he understood that it was only through organization that the workers in the Otis mill could win better conditions, and because he saw that the Communists in the mill were the most active element. At that time however he did not clearly see the difference between his activity as a union member and as a Party member. Besides, he was burdened with many tasks. He did not understand his duty as a Communist to meet regularly, because he did not fully understand the role of a Communist unit. It was only after he had discontinued coming to meetings of the unit that he started independently to read the **Daily Worker** and other Party literature. Today, he declared, he understands why his place is not only in the union, but also in the ranks of the Communist Party. He could have understood this duty and remained an active Party member, if the Party a year ago at the time he first joined the Party had made of him a Communist, had given him the elementary principles of the Communist program, had explained the role of the shop unit, etc.

We cannot consider this an isolated case. There are hundreds and hundreds of workers who join our ranks and leave us very soon because the units, especially the street units, before making Communists of these comrades, burden them with hundreds of tasks, not allowing them an ounce of free time. This is not a new problem. Yet when we take into consideration the emphasis that the last Plenum laid on organizational problems and mainly on the problem of educating new members, and we see what little is being done in the various Districts to carry out the decisions, it is necessary to hammer away again on this vital point, and call it to the attention of the District and Section leadership.

Shop Papers, the Spokesmen of the Party, Neglected

Another problem of vital importance for the unit, which is also being neglected and which shows how formally the decisions of the Central Committee are being carried into life, is the fact that shop papers are still being issued irregularly; that only during certain periods, under pressure of a drive, and for a short period only, are shop papers being issued. Examination of a few units shows clearly that this weakness is due mainly to the little understanding of the units on the role of the shop paper as the spokesman of the Party to the masses in the factories. How do we explain this meagre understanding of the units: clearly by the lack of proper attention on the part of the leadership to such vital problems, to the lack of education in the units, showing concretely to the members of the units the role of the shop nucleus. To illustrate this point: while the comrades in the Otis unit, for example, and in other units in steel are

discussing the organizational drive to strengthen the union, there is very little simultaneous effort being made to issue shop papers. What are the results of this neglect? The workers will see the activity of the individual Party members, of the most militant workers in the shop (the Communists), will see a group of workers active in the organizational drive, yet they will not see the Party, will not see the unit of the Party in the shop as the initiator of the campaign, and thus logically will not be able to appreciate the work of the Party unit, of the Communists.

To illustrate the importance of the shop paper, let us take a positive example of good work. There are shop units that issue their shop papers regularly in which the burning problems of the workers are discussed, in which suggestions are made on how to improve the life in the unions, to conduct certain campaigns, etc. In such shops the workers, without knowing who the Party members are, see and feel the Party, discuss the editorials in the shop paper, the suggestions made by the paper, so much so that many times rank and file workers bring the suggestions made by the Communists to the floor of the union meetings, discuss them in their departments or support the suggestions and proposals when made by some of the militant workers, by the Communists. In such shops the units become a real power, and the masses wait for the shop paper to get their guidance. The red scare spread especially by the Hearst press is being smashed in these shops because the workers realize that Communists are very concrete people that make the most sound proposals to improve the conditions of their fellow workers and are not the enemies of the working class, as painted by the bourgeois press, are not some mysterious instrument that bores from within to destroy the working class organizations, but on the contrary are the best fighters for the immediate interests of the exploited, for the unity of the working class.

Can we bring about a situation where every shop nucleus will regularly issue its shop paper, have its editorial committee, its own technical equipment, will make of the shop paper the real direct spokesman of the Party in the shops, mills, and mines? The good examples show the possibilities of reaching such a stage, but its realization depends on more persistent attention by the leading cadres to the shop nuclei, and by more education in the lower units.

Entire Party Must be Involved in Trade Union Work

Another observation on one of the main weaknesses of our work in the last period. There is no doubt that excellent work has been done not only in orientating the Party to trade union work, but also in having developed in many of the unions, the beginnings of a real rank and file movement.

These are already being felt as the driving force that moves the masses towards more militancy and determination to struggle for their immediate demands, for the right of the workers to organize, for democracy inside the unions.

At this point let us ask the question—how many Party members are involved in trade union work, and to what extent are the shop units and street units actively participating in the work? Not only will we find that the percentage of Party members in the trade unions is still very low, but that the basic units of the Party are as yet not definitely orientated towards this work. The results we have achieved are due mainly to the hard work of the leading bodies who have recently given their major attention to this phase of activity, guiding day to day the Party members in the unions, keeping in contact with rank and file workers who are looking for our leadership. While doing this very important work, no proper measures are being taken at the same time to center the attention of the whole Party, of every individual Party member, on this task. Did the leading comrades in Pittsburgh, in Youngstown and in practically every other District do their utmost to concretize the Party line in the trade union field? Yes! The comrades responded splendidly and the results are the best proof. Yet in Youngstown, for example, in one of the outstanding steel towns in the United States and in the world, where the leading cadres have been active in steel and have been a contributing factor in the results in this sector of trade union work, the units of the Party have not discussed steel for a long time. The street units have not been involved in this phase of activity. The units in Youngstown are very active and are making some progress, but not by concentrating on steel and connecting all their activity with the aim of making the Party in Youngstown the driving force in the organization of the masses of steel workers. The Party in Youngstown is fully aware of this shortcoming and is taking steps to overcome it. The same thing can be said of Pittsburgh in regard to mining and steel, and of the other districts as well!

More Politics in Our Trade Union Work

Another weakness in connection with our trade union work is that while developing a rank and file movement around the immediate demands of the masses in the American Federation of Labor unions, at the same time there is a lack of education, connecting the immediate economic demands with the political problems facing the American working class. This was clearly expressed at the auto workers' convention where the rank and file fought splendidly against the American Federation of Labor bureaucratic machine on all immediate issues, but at the same time their political under-

standing was so weak that the American Federation of Labor bureaucracy was able to have a resolution passed against the Soviet Union.

The contrary example which shows the correct line to be pursued in the rank and file movement was given by the rubber convention where the delegates of the convention defeated the resolution for the ousting of Communists. Not Communists, but rank and file workers stated that the scabs do not come from Communist ranks. This shows that the rank and file movement sees in the Communists their brothers-in-arms, the best fighters. Here again the lesson to be drawn is that while we must continue to give proper guidance to the Party members, to sympathizers active in the unions, we must also involve in trade union work more and more the whole Party, and especially the shop nuclei which in most cases identify themselves with the fractions inside the local unions, the members of which are in daily contact with the masses in the factories and in the unions. The problem of orientating the basic organizations of the Party to trade union work, and of raising the political level of the lower units is one of the burning problems before us. We do not have to look for new formulas, but only to follow and concretize the decisions of the May Plenum of the Central Committee.

It is because of the weak political life in the rank and file movement inside the unions that some Districts, for example, Ohio, Western Pennsylvania and others, are far behind Connecticut and New Jersey in having developed a real campaign for a Farmer-Labor Party inside the unions. The shop papers should be the instrument in presenting the problem to the masses in the factories, and in the local unions in developing discussion among the workers, and in this way stimulating the campaign.

With few exceptions, however, most of the shop papers have either been silent on this subject, or did not present the problem of the necessity of a new broad Farmer-Labor Party involving workers, farmers, all categories of exploited, all strata who are interested in their common problems (social insurance, against fascism and war), taking into consideration also the concrete problems and conditions of their particular shops, and the town where the shop is located. The leadership in the Districts and Sections must not only realize this shortcoming but overcome it.

Decisions Cannot Be Applied Mechanically

Here is a concrete example of how comrades are trying mechanically to apply the Party decisions in regard to concentration on certain industries and key men. A year ago in a certain Section there were registered 60 members; today not a single unit is functioning—there is just a skeleton of

cadres embodying a few of the leading comrades. This is due to the neglect of the District leadership which did not keep close contact with the Section Committee and with some of the most important units, thus permitting the disappearance of the Section Committee, which in turn brought about the inactivity of the units. This case happened in a Section which has a long tradition of struggle, where workers were recruited from mines and factories, and where schools were conducted. The line of leadership there now is to concentrate in specific places, and in this way rebuild the Party through new, sound elements, disregarding completely the fact that in this Section there are still dozens of former Party members, many of whom were recruited during times of struggle, many of whom very probably are still in key positions and are known to the masses in the various localities. At this point we must ask: what do these ex-Party members think of our leading bodies when for months and months nobody visits them, nobody gave guidance or tried to find out what the units were doing, and now they discover that there is a leading body in their Section that is ignoring them? We believe this is not an isolated case, and it is for this reason that we are raising the problem. Yes, it is clear that we must concentrate on important shops, that we must concentrate on key workers, that we have to eliminate elements that are not fit for the Party; yet we cannot neglect elements that joined our Party, were willing to be active, but whose activity was paralyzed not through their fault, but because of the lack of guidance from the leading bodies. This problem must be thoroughly analyzed, especially by the District leadership of Western Pennsylvania.

These few examples, which indicate some of the weak spots in our political organizational work, must spur the leading bodies to a thorough investigation of the status and activities of the shop nuclei, and our activities in the trade union field, along the line of the discussion and decisions of the May Plenum of the Central Committee.