

New Forms of Party Organization Help Us to Win the Masses*

F. BROWN

TODAY the slogan of building a mass Party is not a far-distant aim, but an immediate one. Let us examine how we stand organizationally and view the tremendous possibilities before us. We have on hand figures of the Party registration of January, 1936, and the figures of dues payments up to May. In this period some readjustments took place which changed the number of Sections, the number of neighborhood organizations, etc. Nevertheless, the figures of January, 1936, give us a good basis for an analysis of the organizational status of our Party and for drawing very important conclusions which will help us in our future work.

In January, we registered a 31 per cent larger membership than at the Eighth Convention. From the first of January up to the end of May, our membership increased by 41 per cent. Judging by the control held in May, we can safely say that

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fluctuation has decreased considerably. On the basis of the latest reports, we can state that there is no more than 20 per cent turnover, which gives us a membership of 41,000, that is, 70 per cent greater than at the Eighth Convention.

Composition of Membership

On January 1, 1936, our Party membership was composed of 73.9 per cent men and 26.1 per cent women, of which latter, 12.3 per cent are in industry and 10 per cent are housewives. These figures show that since the Eighth Convention we increased the number of women in our Party, which at that time was 9.7 per cent of the total membership. Not only that, but the number of working women has increased. However, this still shows a low percentage of women in the Party in comparison with men, especially if we take into consideration the large number of women in industry. During the recruiting drive, from January to the end of April, 2,000 more women were recruited into the Party. We are witnessing a general improvement over the past, especially in the recent period.

In January there were in the Party 90.5 per cent white comrades and 9.5 per cent Negro comrades. In comparison with the 9.1 per cent Negro workers in our Party at the time of the Eighth Convention it can be seen that the percentage of Negro workers in our Party is practically the same as two years ago. When we consider that in these two years major struggles have been conducted for Negro rights, for the Scottsboro Boys, for Herndon; when we consider the mass movement developed around the Negro Congress, the struggles developed especially among the Negro masses against the fascist invasion of Ethiopia, we must become alarmed at these figures and draw the conclusion that no real efforts have been made by the whole Party to connect such struggles with mass recruiting of Negro workers. It is true that, especially after December, through the activities around the Negro Congress, our comrades were able to entrench themselves in many Negro mass organizations and recruited very influential Negro workers into our ranks, so that between January 1, 1936, and the end of April, 1936, the number of Negro members recruited into the Party increased the total Negro membership by 50 per cent. Yet the main conclusions drawn before still remain true.

In January there were in the Party 47.8 per cent native born workers and 52.2 per cent foreign-born workers, with 64 unclas-

sified. These figures again show that the Party was not yet consciously attuned to the recruiting of native born workers. These figures have changed a bit with the recruiting drive. From January to the end of April we find that out of the membership recruited, 66.3 per cent are native born and 33.7 per cent are foreign-born. We can see that the trend of recruiting more native born, especially in relation to our activities in the trade unions, is a good sign of the correct orientation of the Party on this vital problem.

On the first of January, we registered 60 per cent employed, 34.4 per cent unemployed, and 5.6 per cent unclassified. Very probably many of the unclassified are project workers. If we add the members recruited up to the end of April there should be in the Party today 52.6 per cent employed and 47.4 per cent unemployed. But because of many changes since January, many of those listed as unemployed are today either employed in industries, or on W.P.A. projects. Here we see that the power of attraction to our Party is still great among the unemployed workers. This is not bad. The problem, however, is to increase the attraction of the Party towards the employed workers at the same time, and especially toward the workers in the basic industries—native American and foreign-born as well.

Our Party in the Basic Industries

Today we have 122 more shop units than in 1934, with 2,888 more Party members employed in them than in 1934, and 536 more shop units with 4,610 more members than in 1930. If we consider, however, that 48 per cent of these shop units, with 7.3 per cent of the total membership are located in the New York state organization alone, and that between the Eighth Convention and the Ninth Convention the objective conditions were favorable for the building of the Party in industry, we must draw the conclusion that in spite of the gains, our Party committees have not given consistent attention to the building of the Party in industry. The figures show further that 21.3 per cent of our members are in factories employing less than 100 workers, 4.4 per cent are in factories employing 100-200 workers, and 5.6 per cent are in factories employing 200 to 500 workers. This shows a total of 31.3 per cent of our members employed in what can be termed light industries. In contrast with this we see that in factories employing between 500 and 1,000 workers and above 1,000 and 2,000, 7.2 per cent of

our members are employed in what can be termed basic industries. Again we see how weak we still are in building the Party in basic industries. More than this, if we consider that at the time of the registration 38.4 per cent were employed in factories and we only had 15.5 per cent in shop units, then we must immediately see that we have another 22.9 per cent of our Party membership in factories where if correctly guided they could have become a vital force in building new shop units. Years ago we concentrated our work of building shop units in many factories from the outside, but today, besides the thousands of members organized in shop units, there are thousands of other Communists already inside the factories in which we want to strengthen our position.

The figures of the registration show 25.6 per cent members in the A. F. of L. unions, 13.3 per cent in independent unions, and 1.4 per cent in company unions. In addition, during the recruiting drive, up to April, 2,136 more A. F. of L. members joined our ranks, and 768 more from independent unions. By this time, with the unification process, most of the Party members in the independent unions are now in the A. F. of L. This is a real gain in comparison with 1924, when only 6 per cent of the Party members were organized in fractions inside the A. F. of L. and 15 per cent in the revolutionary unions. Not only did we more than double the Party membership in the trade unions, but approximately 36 per cent of our Party membership are today in the A. F. of L.

Over 15.2 per cent of our Party membership are in unemployed organizations, mainly the Workers' Alliance; 62.9 per cent of our Party members belong to various organizations such as the I.W.O., 20.7 per cent; the I.L.D., 7.9 per cent; the F.S.U., 1.6 per cent; the American League Against War and Fascism, 4.3 per cent; 9.1 belong to various sympathetic organizations; 17.9 per cent to language and cultural organizations. But there are very few who are members of organizations not under our influence. Only lately (and chiefly in New York and other large centers) we find Party members active in other organizations such as the Townsend and Coughlin clubs, veterans' organizations, the Parent-Teachers Association, etc.

From the registration figures we also note that the Party is drawing young people into its ranks. There are in the Party 10.7 per cent under 25 years of age; 20.2 per cent between 26-30; 16.7 per cent between 31-35; 16.8 per cent between 36-40; there are 64.2 per cent under as against 35.7 per cent over 40. If

we add the figures of the recruiting drive we see that the trend is towards recruiting younger people. Out of those new members analyzed, 75 per cent are below 40. Of those figures, 51 per cent are below 35.

Figures on the length of time in the Party are not complete. Some 10,000 were not classified. Yet we can see that the overwhelming majority of the members have been in the Party from one to three years.

Regarding the composition of the membership; instead of giving category by category, because it would take up too much space, the membership has been divided into several main divisions. In analyzing the composition of the trades of the Party members we find 10,474 come from light industry, 1,345 from agriculture, such as farmers, agricultural workers, sharecroppers, etc.; 3,307 housewives; 3,527 relief workers; 1,300 miscellaneous, unclassified; 6,221 professional, and 5,000 from basic industries.

These figures indicate the big disproportion between the Party members coming from basic industries and those coming from light industry, and those not involved in production. It is readily evident that anchoring the Party in the basic industries (which does not mean that we neglect the penetration of light industries, or close the doors of our Party to professionals, students, housewives, and others), remains one of the main problems. The recruiting drive shows that lately the trend of recruiting is towards the basic industries. Yet, the percentage is still too low in comparison with recruiting of workers from light industry and especially of professionals and other categories. From January to the end of April, 1,151 workers from basic industries were recruited. At the same time we recruited 2,724 workers from the light industries.

In the Party there are 2,600 veterans, of which, according to statistics, only several hundred belong to the American Legion and other veteran organizations. This figure shows an improvement, and the big possibilities in penetrating such important organizations, especially if we consider the efforts of the reactionary forces to utilize the veterans' organizations as instruments in the struggle against the working class.

In regard to nationality, I will only mention a few. We find in our Party a substantial increase over the Eighth Convention in the number of Germans, Italians, Spanish-speaking, Polish, and Jewish workers, etc., not so among the immigrated Irish workers of which there are but too few in the Party.

The figures further show that only 64.9 per cent of the Party membership in January read the *Daily Worker*, 38.7 per cent the *Party Organizer*, and 32.3 per cent *The Communist*. If we consider that the Party press is one of the main instruments for education of the Party, these figures must sound an alarm to all leading committees.

Building a Mass Party

In summarizing the analysis of the Party statistics, if we especially consider the forces in the industries, in the trade unions, we see that we have created a real base for the building of our Party into a mass Party. While turning the Party in the direction of developing mass struggles, we must at the same time take all those measures, political and organizational, that will make of our Party a more flexible organization, to be able to connect itself more strongly with the masses and their organizations. We must adapt our structure and organizational forms not only to the new political needs, but also to the customs and to the organizational traditions of the new thousands of workers who are ready to join our ranks.

We must make up our mind that in order to draw thousands of new workers into our ranks, and to keep them, we must adopt the simplest structure and forms of organization which workers can administer. There should be a minimum of machinery, but a most simple and effective minimum. In brief, we must *Americanize* the Party in its form and structure, in its simplicity, in its practicality. By doing so, we shall increase the power of attraction also through more appropriate forms of organization and methods of work. By doing so, the Party does not deviate an inch from its program, from its fundamental political organizational principles. We are not modeling organizational forms after the Social-Democratic Party, insofar as our basic organizational form still remains the shop unit. Our main objective is to entrench ourselves stronger with the masses in their places of work, in their organizations. On the contrary, we will succeed in building a stronger Party, concentrated in the basic industries, in the trade unions, and establish a more flexible organization, connected with the everyday problems of the masses.