

Building the Party During the Election Campaign

By F. BROWN

AT THE Ninth National Convention of our Party there was an enthusiastic response to the appeal of Comrade Browder to double our membership by the end of the election campaign. Everyone present at this historic convention understood that the problem of building a mass party could not be considered as a distant perspective. It is a problem of immediate importance. A mass party is demanded by the present situation. We need a mass party to cope with the big tasks before us, rallying the masses into a mighty People's Front to check the advance of the fascist forces, and closely connecting our Party with the organized masses of city and country.

The statistics and facts brought forward at the Ninth National Convention are evidence that the possibilities for building a mass party are here. The influence of our Party is increasing steadily among broad masses, and we have created during the last few years a solid foundation upon which we can rapidly build a mass party. Our Party of 50,000 young and adult members constitutes a powerful working force which if properly mobilized can use the election campaign for recruiting and drawing into our ranks tens of thousands of workers, farmers, professionals. The statistics prove our strong points, but at the same time they also show some fundamental weaknesses which we must overcome during the course of the recruiting drive.

During the last recruiting drive, 6,000 native born and 3,000 foreign born were recruited. Today for the first time the majority of our Party members are native-born workers. This is a real advance. It shows that the Party is consciously orientating towards recruiting native-born workers. Yet we must go a step further and make *the composition of the Party reflect the composition of the American working class*. This does not mean that from now on we will neglect the recruiting of foreign-born workers. On the contrary, while concentrating our efforts on the native workers, we must at the same time intensify our recruiting of the foreign-born workers, especially among the largest nationalities, the Germans, Italians, Poles, Jews, Spaniards, who constitute the overwhelming majority of the foreign-born masses. The strength of the Party among the

Italian, German and Polish workers is especially important if we are to check the influence of fascism amongst these nationalities. Another reason is the position of these masses in the basic industries of the country, in the steel, rubber, and auto industries, and hence they play an important part in the organizing drives.

It is well known that in those places where the Party made inroads among the American masses, recruiting young and new people, there we registered the best progress, and there we have people who can be developed into leaders.

From January until April of this year over 1,000 Negro workers were recruited into the Party. Other hundreds have been recruited since then. Yet this does not match the influence that the Party has among the Negro masses, and the possibilities for mass recruitment of Negro workers. If we consider the struggles conducted in the past two years by our Party among the Negro masses, the continuous struggle for Negro rights, the Scottsboro and Herndon campaigns, the struggles developed among the Negro masses against the fascist invasion of Ethiopia, then we see that our splendid opportunities have not been fully used among the Negro masses. Where the Party concentrated properly and strove to build the Party during these campaigns, the results are noticeable, as, for example, in Harlem, where our Party not only extended its influence, but has grown in size and today is a significant factor in the political life of this large and strategic Negro center. The example of Harlem must become typical of the whole Party and it is on the basis of studying the experiences of the Harlem Division, especially in regard to building the All-People's Party in which the Negro organizations are playing a decisive part, that we will also be able to build the Party in the other Negro centers, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, Baltimore, etc.

In the South where our Party has become known to millions of suffering Negro workers, tenants, and sharecroppers, the possibilities of building the Party are tremendous. The problem is to transform these possibilities into realities. It is true that in the South we cannot conduct a recruiting drive with the same methods as in the North, yet the experiences of the past have shown that with proper methods weak Communist forces were able to build a Sharecroppers' Union of thousands, and the International Labor Defense into a mass organization.

At the Ninth National Convention one of the Negro comrades from the South gave a concrete example of how he was able to build the Party and the I.L.D. in his territory under the most difficult conditions. The example given of how the Party is being built among the Negro masses in Florida proves that the Negro comrades in the

South know exactly what methods to pursue for the building of the Party in spite of terror. The Negro people in the South have the experiences of hundreds of years of struggle against a powerful enemy. These splendid organizational experiences must be studied and used by our people. A successful recruiting drive in the South will be successful to the extent that every Party member draws into the Party all those persons who are sympathetic to us, to the extent that we recruit white workers, to the extent that our Party will further strengthen itself among the Negro masses in the North, will continually develop the broadest campaign for Negro rights which will have a far greater repercussion among the Negro masses in the South. Especially in the South, the building of the Party depends a great deal upon the development of local forces. We have made some headway recently through schools in the South. Yet the problem of education, of schooling, must be raised to a higher stage, must follow a definite plan; it must not be sporadic as in the past.

Today only one-third of our membership is composed of women. If we consider that our largest contingent of women comes from New York where the Party is strongest among the needle trades workers and among the workers of other light industries, it becomes evident that we are not yet consciously concentrating among the large mass of women employed in basic industries, as in the textile field, in the chemical industries, munitions industries, to mention industries where women are subject to the hardest work. Considering the increasing role that women are playing in industry, in the political life of the country, and the big efforts made by the reactionary forces in the country to reach the women, organizing them into organizations of various forms, the raising of the consciousness of the Party to the importance of recruiting women into the Party is one of our main tasks today especially considering the approaching battles against fascism, and the war danger. Concretely, during the recruiting drive special attention should be paid to working women.

The high cost of living must be met by the development of gigantic struggles that will involve masses of women. The experiences so far prove that not only are we able to develop such struggles on a broad scale (see the splendid examples of New York and Detroit), but that during these struggles we can recruit hundreds of women into our ranks.

It is by drawing new thousands of women into our ranks, by developing struggles, by linking our women comrades with organized women all over the country that we will be able to fight against the demagoguery of the Liberty League-Republican Party-Hearst combination and win masses of women for the class struggle.

In April, on the basis of statistics there were 22,000 employed

and 20,000 unemployed workers in the Party. Recently a slight change has occurred. The number of employed members is higher. Yet the figures indicate that the proportion between the employed and unemployed does not reflect the relation of the employed to the unemployed in the United States. This is due to the fact that in the last six years the Party developed and gained its prestige by the leadership given to the big unemployed movement, so that thousands of unemployed workers, active in the Unemployment Councils, were drawn into our ranks. Today we cannot neglect the unemployed. On the contrary, our task is to strengthen the united movement of the unemployed represented by the Workers Alliance of America. Yet our emphasis must be placed on the employed and especially those working in heavy industry, the young American workers, and the members of the A. F. of L. unions.

The figures prepared for the National Convention show that while there were some 10,000 members employed in what can be termed light industries, there were only from 2,500 to 3,000 employed in basic industry; there were over 1,500 in agriculture, farm workers, agricultural workers, sharecroppers; over 6,000 professionals, consisting of teachers, social workers, office workers, etc. These figures are slightly higher today. Yet the proportion is more or less the same. They show concretely a big disproportion between the Party members coming from the basic industries in comparison with those coming from light industries, and those not involved in production. The problem of anchoring the Party in the basic industries (which does not mean that we shall neglect to recruit new thousands from light industry or close the doors of our Party to professionals, students, housewives), still remains the fundamental problem to be solved for the purpose of changing the composition of the Party and strengthening the Party among the masses of the basic industries.

Today we have at our disposal forces which, if properly mobilized, can reach the basic masses. We have 600 shop units with over 5,000 members, which if correctly mobilized during the recruiting drive should be able to double their membership. There are another 7,000 Party members employed in industry. Here we have 7,000 Communists who must surround themselves with a group of their fellow workers for the purpose of building new shop units. There are approximately 15,000 Communists who are members of A. F. of L. unions. Fifteen thousand Communists connected with millions of organized workers. Here again we see that with the proper mobilization of these forces there are tremendous possibilities. Today the 15,000 Communists in the unions are no longer strangers to their fellow workers. In the past period the masses who at one time were prejudiced against us through anti-Red propaganda have come into

physical contact with Communists, have learned how to appreciate their work and have learned that the Communist Party does not divide the working class, but, on the contrary, brings about unity. With the Communists at the head of every struggle, of every action in the interests of the masses, it is not difficult to break the prejudices spread by William Green, Matthew Woll, and William L. Hutcheson. The masses see the Communists in action right in their midst. The recruiting possibilities have broadened out and this is already shown by the hundreds and hundreds of recruits coming from A. F. of L. unions.

The Red scare is not over. It is being intensified in various forms. It must be met boldly by our Party as the only way to strengthen the position of the progressive movement in the unions and get into our ranks thousands and thousands of American, militant workers who hate Wall Street and the bosses, and understand the necessity of the struggle against capitalism, but have been kept away from us by the demagoguery of reactionary leaders.

In order to improve Party activities and make our Party a more flexible organization capable of connecting itself with broader masses, leading these masses in daily struggles and making our Party a driving force for the building of the People's Front, the Ninth Party Convention on the basis of the experiences gathered in various Districts decided to solve two main problems.* First, the Party structure was readapted through certain readjustments in the lower organizations, the top apparatus on a state, county and city scale, to the need of the Party becoming a political factor in the life of the country. And second, the necessity of improving the political education in the whole Party, making every Party member a capable agitator and organizer, educating the thousands who join our ranks and making the units political bodies. In this connection the development of new personnel, of hundreds of capable, trained leaders developed from among the militant workers coming from shops, trade unions, neighborhoods, among the comrades that show initiative, practical sense in the everyday work of the Party is essential to the building of the Party. It is by solving these fundamental problems that we are taking a step forward in raising the consciousness of the Party with regard to recruiting.

How is the Party carrying out the decisions of the Ninth Convention in regard to organizational problems? Readjustments of the lower organizations are going on. Here and there we have splendid examples of how a shop unit can play an important role, what an effective organ industrial units can be.

We cannot say, however, that all the shop units, industrial units and branches are functioning properly, are already what we want

them to be. Side by side with the readjustments below, the structure of the organization has changed on a state, city and county scale. These changes have brought about an improvement in the political life and activities of the Party. The form of state, city and county organizations which pay attention to the local problems of the masses has proven its greater effectiveness in bringing forward the role of the Party to the broad masses. There is one fundamental weakness that we must overcome. It is an organizational one which up to date has hindered recruiting.

We readjusted the forms of the lower organizations, we adjusted the structure of the Party as a whole, to the new political needs. But we didn't give the necessary attention to the organizational apparatus as the guarantee for a correct and proper functioning of the lower organizations, for improving attendance and due payments. We did not attune the entire Party to the problem of recruiting. To make the recruiting drive successful, it is not enough that the state, city, county and section organizations work out their plans. We must have an apparatus that will guide and check on the activities of the units, of Party members in the trade unions and mass organizations during the recruiting drive.

We know from experience that the lowest fluctuation and the best results in recruiting are to be found in those state organizations where a membership commission is on the job. In regard to the recruiting drive, a membership commission is not enough. In the larger state organizations a special committee must be set up following the example of New York where a committee composed of leading comrades drawn in from among the leading Party members, leading comrades in the trade unions and mass organizations, is doing excellent work. We need committees that will guide week by week, day by day and check on the activities of the sections and units during the recruiting drive, reporting the results regularly to the city committees.

The Organizational Department of the Central Committee already has some of the plans of the Districts for the recruiting drive. In the main these plans follow the line of the Ninth Convention. They are concrete and based on the experiences of the last recruiting drive. They assign concrete tasks to the units in accordance with local conditions. But there are still instances which show that we are working along old lines, calling on the comrades to make the recruiting drive part of our campaign to build the mass organizations, specifically all the organizations around the Party, but neglecting concrete suggestions to the units, concrete suggestions to Party members in the trade unions, to the members of the branches, etc. We must help build the Workers Alliance, the American League Against

War and Fascism, the International Labor Defense, etc., we must take organizational steps to assign forces to these mass organizations. The main question, however, is to bring before the Party members the necessity of building the Party, and to show them how to recruit new thousands of workers by concretely deciding what has to be done by the Party members in their various fields of work.

This means that there must be a thorough discussion at functionaries meetings, at meetings of trade union comrades, of comrades working in mass organizations not only of how to mobilize the membership, but how to work out methods and tasks for the units, fractions, individual Party members in their places of work or unions. In order to have a successful recruiting drive, the main task is to make of every unit of the Party (shop units, industrial units, branches) political bodies that will act more independently and will develop their own initiative, that will connect the recruiting drive with the campaigns conducted by the units in their respective places. The leading committees must help the units react to the daily issues confronting the masses, lead the units, develop struggles around the various issues that are arising. It is by intensifying the various campaigns, by developing struggles that workers appreciate our Party and that we will be able to recruit them.

We must end one of the old habits of our units, that is, the habit of units bringing before the masses only the demands of the Party that are of a national character, the program of the Party in general. We must teach the units how to link up the general Party program, the election platform of the Party with the immediate program of action of the units. Yes, every unit must have its own program of action dealing concretely with the issues and needs confronting the people in their sphere of activity. For branches, there are, for example, housing problems, school problems, relief, rent, etc. The branches, the Party in a ward or assembly district, must present a platform of struggle counteracting the bourgeois political parties in the territory and mobilizing the masses in the struggle for their immediate demands. It is on the basis of a concrete program of action that our units will be able to build broad united fronts in the neighborhoods and in the industries. Thus our Party will enter the various neighborhood organizations, and our Party will become not only known in the various localities, but will become a real political factor.

Similar plans of action must be worked out by the comrades active in the unions which shall include the Party tasks of recruiting, the struggle for industrial unionism, the problem of building the unions, and so on. Our comrades in the unions, especially in those places where the unions are part of various united front movements,

such as the American Labor Party in New York, the Farmer-Labor Progressive Federation in Wisconsin, and others, must not forget that while our forces constitute one of the most important factors in the building of these united front movements, at the same time one of the main tasks that the Party members must bring before the trade unions is the election platform of our Party. They must develop the election campaign among the workers, popularizing our presidential candidates, Comrades Browder and Ford. Concretely, this means distributing literature and leaflets, especially the *Daily Worker* and *Sunday Worker*, calling special meetings of the progressive forces. It is only in the course of such a campaign, in concretizing the plan of action that we can recruit hundreds and thousands of trade unionists into our ranks. This means not only strengthening the Party forces in the A. F. of L. unions, but also the progressive movement, the movement for industrial unionism, for inner democracy against the reactionary bureaucratic leadership.

The Ninth National Convention decided to make the recruiting drive part and parcel of the election campaign. At present masses are eagerly waiting for the message of our Party. We are making our election campaign a channel through which we are reaching millions. The mass meetings at which our presidential candidates speak prove the response of the masses to our program, prove that there are thousands and thousands of workers, farmers, professionals outside of our ranks that fully agree with the Party platform. These thousands that agree with us belong to us, for them the doors of the Party must be opened. They must be convinced in the places where they work, in trade unions, in mass organizations, through our people who are in contact with them, that their place is in our ranks, that their aim, together with us, is to march toward a free, happy and prosperous America.

We must convince them that it is by making our Party a mass party, by joining with us that we will be able to check the advance of fascism, and rally the masses into a mighty people's front movement.

Concretely, no meeting, no election campaign rally, no struggle, no campaign shall be conducted without continuously appealing to the workers who support our program and our actions to join the Communist Party. In this recruiting drive, enriched by the experiences of the last drive, not only a few section organizers, but every leading comrade from unit functionaries up, must set the pace in recruiting. It is by developing socialist competition between leading comrades, state organizations, sections, units that we will swing the whole Party into a furious recruiting pace. The Party election candidates must always remember that their task in this election campaign is not only to bring to the masses the Party platform, but that

they are at the same time Party builders. Their task is to appeal for members, to build the Party in localities where there are only groups of sympathizers, in localities where we enter for the first time. Every candidate, every leading comrade and every Party member must understand that we must come out of the election campaign not only with a higher vote which will reflect the growing influence of our Party, but that we must come out with a stronger party, with a mass party.

The utmost attention must be paid to the distribution of the *Daily Worker*, of the *Sunday Worker*, of our literature, because after our message at mass meetings and over the radio, we must give the masses something to bring home with them to read, to think over. The distribution of literature must also be regarded as one of our best mediums through which to argue with the masses, and convince the best workers to join our ranks. Where we are utilizing the radio we must have an apparatus that will answer the many letters, the questions raised by workers. We must have on hand the necessary literature. Meetings, house gatherings, should be arranged for the time of the radio broadcasts to which our comrades should invite sympathizers, their friends in the factories and trade unions, their friends from the neighborhood organizations, not only to listen to the message of our comrades over the radio, but to discuss the proposals of our Party right on the spot.

The past recruiting drive ended with the Ninth National Convention. It brought into our ranks 12,000 new members. This shows that when we put our shoulder to the wheel, we are able to achieve our aim. There is no Party member in our ranks today who does not understand what we must do for the working class, who does not see the growing fascist danger, the struggle in the United States as a struggle of democracy against fascism. The triumph of the cause of democracy depends on the extent to which the American toiling masses will unite on a common platform of struggle into a People's Front expressed in the form of a Farmer-Labor Party. Our Party is playing a big role in developing such unity. Yet we are only at the beginning and it will be to the extent that our Party will become a mass party connected with the millions of organized in city and country that the People's Front movement, the Farmer-Labor Party, will become a power that will smash fascism.

Recruiting, recruiting and again recruiting means building a mass party, a Communist Party capable of performing its historic mission.