
THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PRESENT RECRUITING DRIVE FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR PARTY

BY FRED BROWN

THE two-month recruiting drive launched by our Party is of special significance, not only for the growth of our Party, but for the whole course of the development and progress of our country. Its aim is to strengthen our ranks with thousands of new members. At the same time it is a test of the possibilities and the ability of our Party to root itself deeply among the organized masses.

The preparations and the beginnings to date indicate that the drive will be a success, despite its short duration. This is due primarily to the objective conditions in the labor movement, to the awakening of the American toiling masses to the consciousness of their power, and to the growing understanding reached by the membership of our Party as to the necessity of the drive for building a mass Party capable of coping with the new developments, with the needs of the laboring people.

GREATER CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RECRUITING

The history of the growth of our Party shows that the recruiting drives conducted in the past have not given

the best results. This was due either to lack of preparations and correlation, or to the fact that the lower organizations of the Party were not sufficiently prepared to accept, develop, and retain the new recruits. The present drive has the advantage over the past ones in that the Party has accumulated a treasury of experiences on recruiting and is better co-ordinated by a special apparatus that is conducting the campaign from top to bottom. Furthermore, the drive is better connected with the daily activities of the Party and its campaigns. The outstanding advantage, however, is the political understanding of the significance of such a drive not only by the leading committees of the Party, but by the lower organizations and by the individual members, who today are connected with masses of organized workers. The best proof of this preparedness and understanding was given by the splendid Party-wide discussion of the last Central Committee plenum decision, and by the special regional conferences that took place in Chicago, New York, Minneapolis, Denver and Chattanooga.

The outstanding feature of these conferences was the thorough discussion on the common problems that the Party faces in the various states and in connection with building the Party and with the development of the labor movement and the building of a broad front of progressive forces. In all these conferences, it was encouraging to hear the voice of the representatives of the units, of the fractions, of the comrades active in the trade unions. It was the voice of the determination of the units to plunge into the recruiting drive with enthusiasm—an enthusiasm that grows out of a profound political understanding of the needs of building our Party into a mass Party.

The conferences not only discussed how best to mobilize the units and the individual Party members, the methods to be applied, and the political approach to the masses, but also measures to improve the inner-life of the lower organizations for the purpose of retaining the new members and, in this way, to reduce the fluctuation in our ranks. The conferences proved that our Party realizes that a successful drive requires not only the mobilization of the Party to reach the potential Communists, but special organizational measures for the reduction in fluctuation which in the past, to some extent, lessened the results obtained in previous drives.

REDUCING FLUCTUATION

The membership realizes that at this time it is necessary to make the utmost efforts to eliminate the discrepancies between the steadily growing influence of our Party among the broadest masses and its slow organ-

izational growth due in large part to fluctuation. For a long time the problem of the high rate of fluctuation occupied our attention. This problem has been studied in detail. The causes were investigated and remedies proposed. It has become evident that the inability to retain all the new members, or a large percentage of them, was bound up with the poor political life of the lower organizations, with the lack of proper education of the new members, and, in general, the lack of education and political discussions of the main problems facing the Party everywhere. These, however, are not the only reasons. The high rate of fluctuation has been also a product of weaknesses in the organizational apparatus and in the organizational functioning of the units.

In the last period the leading cadres have become more and more conscious of the necessity of solving this vital problem. In line with the decision of the Ninth Party Convention a series of measures were adopted for the purpose of increasing recruiting and, at the same time, keeping the new members in our ranks. Membership committees were established; a yearly control was introduced; and steps were taken to train the leading comrades of the units, to make the unit bureaus more efficient leading bodies. Yet, in spite of the emphasis placed on the importance of all the organizational measures decided upon by the convention, by the plenums following it, and at the special organizational conference, the problem of improving the life of the units politically and organizationally, is still confronting us. How can we explain the contradiction of the grow-

ing understanding of this problem and the fact that the growth of the Party is not in proportion to the steady increase of its influence among broad masses, especially among the workers in the basic industries?

The reason is clear. The Ninth Convention of our Party, on the basis of a long period of experimentation, carried through a thorough reorganization of the Party structure. Its aim was to adapt the organization to the new conditions which have arisen in the country, to the new needs of the masses. But the deep-going reorganization was not properly guided. Such a reorganization required the utmost attention of the leading committees. It required the assignment of the best forces to sections and units to raise the understanding of the membership to the political significance of the changes, to orientate the units toward their new political tasks. The reorganization, however, was carried through more or less without proper daily supervision and follow-up. This was due in a large measure to the fact that precisely at this time the powerful organizational drive in the basic industries was gaining momentum. The best forces were thrown into the trade union organizational drive. The leading Party committees were occupied for many months with the important problems pertaining to this drive, with legislative problems, and the building of united front movements. The Party was faced with a new situation, with tremendous political tasks, but only a part of it was prepared to cope with this situation.

The leading committees which were able to make a sharp turn, to grasp the significance of the line laid down

by the Ninth Party Convention, of the new developments in the country, and accordingly develop new political vitality, did not see, sufficiently, however, that exactly at this moment the raising of the understanding of the entire Party to the new tasks was required to take the fullest advantage of the objective conditions.

The main organizational problem before the Party at that moment was the strengthening of the leading committees and, in many cases, the replacement of the leading forces absorbed by the trade union drive and by the activities in the united front movements, with new elements from among the most promising forces in our ranks. This lack of alertness was not due so much to the preoccupation of the leading forces with the political problems arising nationally and locally but, to some extent, to lack of clarity on the role of the Party organization, to insufficient consciousness of the profound change from the period of acute unemployment to the period of a powerful drive in the trade union field, and, to a certain degree, to the lack of faith in the ability of many of the promising comrades in the lower organizations.

WEAKNESSES IN LOWER ORGANIZATIONS

What was the result of this lack of foresight? On the one hand, through the activities of its best forces, the Party achieved real results; it has become one of the recognized factors in building the powerful C.I.O. unions; it has succeeded in establishing its "citizenship"; it has made itself felt in the political life of the various states; and has become one of the driving forces in the creation of united

front movements, in the initiation of various legislative measures, in the campaign to aid democratic Spain. On the other hand, the shop units, industrial units, branches—the organizations through which the Party connects itself with the broad masses—were weak in initiative and independent activities, because they were left without the proper attention and guidance of the leading committees.

In certain places the lower organizations were not even involved in the trade union organizational drive. While thousands of Communists, individually, were doing splendid work under the direct guidance of the leading committee, the work of the Party as a whole could not be appreciated by the masses. The Party was not sufficiently seen by the workers as an organization. Even in places where the units were active in developing various activities in support of the strike, these activities were not sufficiently felt by the masses.

During the early period of the organizational drive in the basic industries there were few units which took the initiative of issuing literature and shop papers, many not only failing to present to the workers the position of the Party, but failing to make known their support. Recruiting was done by the most active comrades, but there was no intensive recruiting through the units.

From the foregoing it would be wrong to conclude that the Party did not move forward in this period. The Party made real headway. We have cause to be proud of our strong, sincere support of the C.I.O. drive, of being the driving force in the campaign to aid democratic Spain, of our

role in the struggle against the reactionary forces at home. Organizational gains were also made. Splendid elements that came forward in the struggle joined our ranks. Had the Party, however, better activized the units, it would have been able to mobilize many more forces in effective support of the recent mass struggles and drives, and build up its ranks with thousands of new members.

Today, these past weaknesses are not only recognized by the leading forces, but a healthier attitude prevails in the lower organizations, especially among the Party members active in the trade unions, mass organizations, and in united front committees. The entire Party understands that the strengthening of the labor movement as a whole, the course of the development of the struggle against reaction, the unification of the progressive forces of the country, depend a great deal on the strength and the ability of our Party. At this time, not only the units, but the individual Party members who, in the recent period have been able to connect themselves with large organized masses, see the tremendous possibilities and the value of recruiting into our ranks the thousands of workers, farmers, Negroes, and women, who have abandoned their prejudices and who are becoming sympathetic.

This short-term recruiting drive is very timely because of the ripeness of the situation and because its necessity is felt and understood. The November Congress of Party Builders, at which the most active Party members in the recruiting drive will gather to report on the gains made, on the methods employed in the drive, and

to interchange experiences, will become the point of departure for the intensification of recruiting as part of the daily activities of the Party.

CONCENTRATION ON THE BASIC INDUSTRIES

During the short time that separates us from the Congress, our main task is to concentrate especially among the workers in the basic industries. Today, this concentration is much easier than in the past. A few years ago, when we spoke about concentration, we meant a specific place, a specific industry. In order to make inroads among the masses it was often necessary to make contacts from outside and conduct lengthy preparations. Today the situation is more favorable. Tens of thousands of Party members are directly connected with millions of organized workers. And, what further increases our possibilities is that larger and larger masses express appreciation for the work of the Party, for the efforts of the Communists, and that many of the prejudices against us are disappearing. These masses see more and more clearly that our Party has their interests, their welfare, at heart, that the Communists have no interests separate from those of the toiling people.

Today it is not a difficult task for the units, fractions and individual Party members to approach their fellow workers in the shops and trade unions and to talk to them frankly, not only about the Party position on the immediate problems facing the toiling people of our country, but on our full program, our ultimate aims. Today, we must make clear to the masses what a strong Communist

Party means for the labor movement and for the future of humanity.

The latest struggle in the automobile, steel, and other basic industries, the enthusiasm with which masses are entering the industrial unions, have proved that the American working class has made great strides forward and is awakening to class consciousness. Labor as a whole feels the necessity of becoming a more determined political factor in the life of the country. Among these masses there are thousands and thousands who have been steeled by the recent struggles and organizational drives. They have learned a great deal; they are able to see ahead and visualize the future political role of labor. These are the potential Communists out of whom our Party must further be built up. These are the fresh forces growing out of the class struggle in the last period —forces that are bound with the life and hopes of millions. No efforts must be spared to win these forces, to make clear to them that the doors of our Party are open to them, that the ranks of our Party is their natural place, that they belong in the vanguard of the American working class. That these masses are ripening politically is evident also in the fact that the organized masses do not confine themselves purely to the building of the unions, but are already passing over the wider forms of struggle, such as campaigns against the high cost of living and exorbitant rents. They understand more and more that the trade unions, the labor organizations, must become the bulwark in the struggle for the preservation and extension of democracy. The most advanced understand that the

working class cannot be bound merely by local, state and national ties, but that, in order to secure the maximum effectiveness, the closest international ties must be established.

These facts, again, demand that our Party, while entrenching itself among the organized masses, especially among the masses of the basic industries, make clear the distinction between the program and role of the trade unions and the ultimate aim of the Party. We must make clear to them that the Party, armed with Marxism-Leninism, sees ahead; we must convince them of the necessity of strengthening the vanguard whose role it is to lead the toiling people onto the road to a new society, to freedom from exploitation, to real democracy.

Another phase to be kept in mind is how to win and organize into our ranks the tens of thousands of workers, professionals, and farmers, who have sympathetically followed our Party for the last few years. Thousands of such people in the unemployed field, in the field of social insurance, in the trade union movement, in the election campaign, in the struggle against fascism and reaction, in the struggle against war, are readers of the Party press, especially of the *Daily Worker* and *Sunday Worker*, and are active forces, in the many organizations, following the Party in all its campaigns. Thousands of these would like to be part of our family. They even call themselves Communists and act as Communists. But they are kept from joining the Party by all kinds of doubts; especially by the fear that they would have to lessen their activities in the organ-

izations they have at heart; or by the feeling that the Party will demand so much, that they will be forced to give less attention to their families, or break the ties with their circle of friends.

This question is a vital one, which every Party member must be equipped to clarify fully to these sympathizers. The Party does not intend to request all of their time. The Party appeals to them to join our ranks for the purpose of raising their efficiency in their sphere of activity. The aim is not to take them from their actual field of work, but to improve and strengthen their work through the guidance of the Party organization. The people who today work side by side with our Party members in the trade union movement; in the fraternal, cultural, and various united front fields; and who get the line of the Party through the Party press, the mass activities of the Party, and mass meetings, must be made to understand that, after joining the Party, their activities will not only be guided by the Party press which guides all our activities day by day, but that they will have the benefit of the discussion and of the education within the Party. This will raise their political level and understanding, thus developing their individual abilities to the real advantage in their sphere of work.

The Party must make clear, again and again, that good Communists do not underestimate their family ties or their circle of friends. One of the good qualities of a Communist is his keeping close to his dear ones and to his friends, bringing them closer to the revolutionary movement and into the Party. It is much easier to convince

relatives and close friends than outsiders. Communists must learn how to discuss with their fellow-workers, relatives, and friends, and convince them of the correctness of the immediate program of our Party and its ultimate aims. We must learn to be patient and persistent. We must learn how to teach and learn at the same time, learn to be modest because we never can know enough. We must learn to avoid breaking relations with fellow-workers and friends because of disagreements on insignificant and petty questions. We will be successful in convincing people of the correctness of our program and in recruiting, if we keep in mind that our aim is to win the majority of the working class, to mobilize the toiling people around our program, and to prove by deeds in our daily, concrete work that we mean exactly what we say, that our theory is combined with practice, that we have only one aim—the welfare and the emancipation of the toiling people.

ARMING THE PARTY MEMBERSHIP WITH MARXIST-LENINIST KNOWLEDGE

One of the main questions at this point is that of arming the Party with knowledge, knowledge which, properly expressed, will influence large masses and win them for our Party. The problem is one of arming our Party with Marxist-Leninist education which not only presents socialist society as the only form of liberation from exploitation, but which guides our daily activities, teaches us the methods to be pursued in bringing our program to the masses, and shows us how to convince, organize, and move them forward towards the final

goal. The membership must be armed with the knowledge of the line to be pursued in the various fields of activities toward achieving an immediate objective—as, in this period, the line on the united front, on the People's Front—at the same time, keeping in view the long-range perspective and moving the masses in the direction of complete freedom.

We must raise the discussion in the units to a higher level so that every Party member may keep pace with the new developments and with the position of the Party on various issues, especially today when the Party is confronted with so many new problems and complicated situations. There is no excuse now for not improving the discussions in the units, for not holding successful educational meetings throughout the Party. *The Daily Worker*, *the Sunday Worker*, *The Communist*, *The Party Organizer*, the Party press in general, are giving the position of the Party on the problems arising every day, and furnishing sufficient material on the basis of which lively, interesting discussions can be held. There was a period when we were satisfied with our agitational abilities because we were able to put into the field a few good agitators and because of the good agitation in the Party press. Today, however, we realize that this is not sufficient, that the strengthening of the political capabilities of the lower organizations and increasing the knowledge of the individual Party member, are of decisive importance.

More education in the lower organizations means a step forward in the work of making every Party member an agitator and organizer, of improv-

ing our shop papers, neighborhood papers, and of improving our approach to the masses.

During the recruiting drive—when the Party as a whole is mobilized to go to the masses and convince the thousands of sympathizers and friends, the thousands of militant workers, professionals and farmers, that their place is in our ranks—the strengthening of the education in the lower organizations, the arming of the individual Party member with convincing arguments, are decisive. We must consider that the recruiting drive is being conducted at a moment when the American working class is on the march, is awakening to class consciousness, is becoming more labor and political-minded and feels the growing power and role that labor must play in the life of the country. The answers given to the questions on which workers, farmers and professionals are still in doubt will to a great extent determine the results of the drive.

It is indisputable that the influence of our Party today reaches large strata of the population, that it has become a recognized factor in the life of the country. Yet, we must not forget that much scepticism still exists even among the thousands who have broken with their old prejudices against us. There are many people who appreciate our position and activities in some fields, but disagree with our line in others.

There are still many workers who want more clarification on the position of the Party on the question of the family, or on religion. There are others who, while fully agreeing that only a fundamental, radical change

will bring freedom from exploitation, maintain all kinds of doubts in regard to the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. There are others who fully agree with our principles but have doubts in regard to our inner life and do not join our ranks because of misconceptions of Communist discipline. All of these questions must be answered, not only through our press, our literature, and through mass meetings, but by the individual Party members in their daily contact with workers. There is no lack of argument on our side; we have the most powerful arguments in the world, arguments that are based on facts and figures. Let me take just one example to show how important it is to answer such questions with decisive arguments and how education is necessary in order to be armed with convincing arguments.

Today, when masses are in motion and listen more eagerly to our program, many of the prejudices have disappeared among middle class elements, farmers, and workers under middle class influence, yet you will hear such expressions: "Sure, we understand the necessity of a radical change. We see the Soviet Union is making headway, it is a very interesting experiment; but you Communists want a bloody revolution!" And those among these strata with a wider knowledge will even cite as examples the French Revolution or the Russian Revolution. But have we not arguments, facts and figures at our disposal to make these individuals realize how wrong they are?

Who was responsible for the blood spilt during the French Revolution, in the Paris Commune, during the

struggles for the unification and independence of Germany and Italy, during the October Revolution? Is it not a historic fact that the French Revolution, the Paris Commune, the October Revolution had the majority of the toiling people on their side and that bloodshed did not come when the French masses stormed the Bastille, when the Parisian workers set up their Commune, when the peasants and workers took over the Winter Palace, but when the counter-revolutionary forces took up arms against the victorious toiling people? It was not the forefathers, the majority of the American people who wanted independence, who called for bloodshed, but the British oppressors who, against the will of the American people, wanted to continue to keep America in chains. Blood was shed not when the toiling people took power, but the moment they were forced to defend their liberties against the bloody reactionary forces.

Unfortunately, these facts are hidden from the masses in the capitalist countries, are hidden or distorted in the textbooks of the high schools and universities, and in the bourgeois press. This is a simple example which shows that all the arguments are on our side. At the same time it proves how necessary education is in the organizations of our Party, to arm the individual Party members with knowledge, Marxist and Leninist knowledge, thus increasing the power of our agitation and propaganda among the toiling people.

IMPROVEMENT OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL FUNCTIONING OF THE PARTY

Simultaneously with the improve-

ment of our education, we must take a series of organizational measures that will guarantee a better-functioning apparatus of the Party as a whole and of the lower organizations in particular. While we lay great emphasis on recruiting, we must take all those measures that will create the conditions for retaining the thousands of new Party members in our ranks. Splendid decisions have been made and are written into our resolutions of the Ninth Party Convention, in the documents of the last plenum, on how to improve the life of the lower organizations, the methods of work, the activities of the unit, and the functioning of the leading committees, especially the unit bureaus.

The problems of dues payment, of attendance, etc.—all organizational measures that not only lead towards increasing the Party activities, but help to reduce fluctuation—must be solved. We cannot ignore these “small” matters which in their totality are of tremendous importance in building the Party. Now when the Party is being mobilized for the recruiting campaign, the leading committees must establish conditions in the units of the Party so that the new Party members will feel at home, will feel that the Party is the highest form of organization, not only because of its aim and because of the fraternal feeling existing among its members who work and fight for the same cause, but also because of its organizational forms and its inner life.

The workers who join our ranks with enthusiasm from the trade unions and other mass organizations, are at times very much surprised to find that, here and there, discrepan-

cies exist between our teachings and our conduct. They cannot understand, for example, why the Communists, who can be such good advisers in the trade unions in regard to the tightening up of the organizations, in regard to improving the meetings, in regard to collecting dues, etc., can, in their own organization, overlook things that are so important. Our Party is growing steadily, yet the dues payment, which to some degree is the barometer of its growth and activities, does not show a corresponding increase.

How can we explain this? Is this due to the fact that thousands of Party members, according to the dues payments have left the Party or are inactive? This is clearly not the case. The yearly controls prove that even those members who do not appear to be active, because of non-dues payment, are still functioning as Party members. The reason for the discrepancy is to be found in the fact that, in spite of our membership commissions, we have not developed the system of collecting dues. Also we have not yet developed the best system in regard to the attendance of unit meetings, the conduct of the meetings, the division of activities, etc.

In connection with the recruiting drive, we must take all those steps that will eliminate these apparently small shortcomings, which, as has been said before, when added up, prevent the rapid growth of the Party and obscure the many excellent features of our organization in the eyes of the new enthusiastic Party members.

Our present drive will be successful to the extent that we understand the great task of the Party at the

present moment and our role as the driving force molding all the progressive forces of the country into a powerful People's Front movement is the prerequisite for checking the advance of fascism.

We have reached a point where we can speak of being a mass Party because of our mass activities, of our influence in the life of the country. We still have far to go, however, to reach the point where we shall not only be able to influence but to lead the majority of the toiling people towards their complete emancipation.

The recruiting drive which we are now conducting will be a great step forward on the glorious road of Party growth and power. Let us make this recruiting drive not only a landmark in the history of Party growth, but the point from which our Party will become the organization to which the masses will look for guidance in every sphere of their activity in the labor movement. We shall reach this goal if the leading committees, the leading comrades from the Central Committee down to the units, will give attention to the functioning of the Party organizations in the same manner, with the same enthusiasm, that they are today guiding the recruiting drive. We will reach our goal when every leading comrade will realize that more attention must be paid to our Party as an organization, that by improving our Party organization we shall not only strengthen the Party as such, but also the activities of the Party members and of the sympathizers connected with the organized masses of the country, thus improving and strengthening the life and activities of the labor movement as a whole.