

ORGANISATION

The Organisational Growth of the Workers (Communist) Party of America.

By Jay Lovestone.

It is now (at the end of May 1927) only a little more than one month since the various districts of the Workers (Communist) Party of America have swung into full activity in the Ruthenberg enrolment. Already the results achieved are gratifying evidence of the vitality of our membership.

In the first three weeks of the Ruthenberg enrolment to secure new members and activate our units, our party members showed their capacity for work, their ability to meet difficulties and a spirit and devotion of the first magnitude to respond energetically to the Party's tasks under the severest hardships. Our leader, Comrade Ruthenberg, died. A vicious offensive by the labour lieutenants of American imperialism, the employers, and the government had been going on for months against our Party. All our enemies were busy singing our requiem. They said: The Communist Party in America was a thing of the past. The Communists were no more.

Here are some interesting figures that will make the socialist historians of the bourgeois chairs sit up and be paralysed with disappointment.

In September, 1925, our Party counted 14,037 dues paying members. Of this number there were at least from three to four thousand who were counted as members through the dual stamp column; that is, they were wives of members who purchased dual stamps — one stamp for husband and wife. Particularly among the former foreign language federation was this practice in vogue.

In October, 1925, the National Organisation Department began the reorganisation of the Party on the basis of shop and street nuclei. We proceeded with great energy to reorganise the party. We had just emerged from the most costly, disastrous factional struggle our Party had ever experienced. Also, our Party was then completely isolated in the labour movement. Practically only half of our membership responded immediately to the reorganisation call. To be exact, the dues payments in October 1925, the first month of reorganisation, were only 7,213. By November of 1925 the number rose to 8,064. In December it mounted to 8,154. By January 1926 the figure reached was 8,389. In March 1926 we totalled 9,052. This was the high point for some months to come. The summer period drew on, and our dues payments naturally shrunk.

No one will deny that due to reorganisation our Party has temporarily been reduced in size, numerically. But we must keep clearly in mind that the loss of dues-paying members is not as great as it would appear to the superficial observer. First of all, a minimum of twenty per cent of our dues payments before reorganisation were not dues stamps actually sold to individual members but were only dual stamps — stamps given away to wives of comrades who were members of the party by grace of their husbands holding membership in the party. After reorganisation, this social-democratic practice was dropped. There are no longer any dual "by grace" members in the Workers Party.

Furthermore, the newly organised shop and street nuclei do not as yet all function regularly and well. There are many party members — far more active than many of the "regular dues payers" in the pre-reorganisation days of our party — who, because their units to which they are attached do not function as well as they should, are unable to pay dues regularly. We make these remarks not by way of seeking to explain away anything or to hide any of our weaknesses. The case is quite the contrary. We are here pointing out one of our most serious shortcomings.

The death of our leading communist fighter, Ruthenberg, was an irreparable loss to the Party. This has been recognised by our sworn foes as well as by our most loyal followers. But the Party set itself to work with a zeal and a determination to make good as much as possible the loss thus suffered by us. The Ruthenberg drive to build our Party was launched under

the most trying circumstances. The response of the membership exceeded the most sanguine hopes of the most optimistic in our ranks. There was a new spirit in the Party. The inactive, to a large extent, became active. The active members redoubled their efforts. Better results were evidenced in all our fields of activity. Every section of the Party responded promptly and vigorously to the call of the Political Committee, the leadership of the Party, to close ranks and build the Party.

Immediately the new communist spirit showed itself in the status of our organisation.

For the month of March 1927 the dues payments rose to nearly 9,500 — to be exact 9,490. This is the highest dues payments we have had since September 1925, the last month preceding reorganisation. We must here keep in mind the fact that many hundreds of our members are at present involved in the severe unemployment in the needle trades of New York and in the strike of the United Mine Workers of America. The largest proportion of these party members who are blacklisted, locked-out, striking, or out of work, refuse to take exempt stamps and prefer to wait in their dues payments until the time when they can afford to pay their back dues. This means that we now have a minimum active party membership of more than twelve thousand.

April reports are not yet complete. All indications point to the upward swing in dues payments being continued.

The number of initiation stamps are not an exact index of the number of new members entering the Party during a particular month. Some units do not report promptly such entries. Other units even permit a new member to be in the Party months before securing from their district offices the necessary initiation stamps. Yet, inaccurate an index of the influx of new members as the sale of initiation stamps may be, it has quite some value as an index of party organisation progress. Let us again examine some figures.

In September 1925 — the last month of the party organisation on the old basis of foreign-language federation branches — 286 initiation stamps were bought from the national office by the various federation bureaux. With the first month of reorganisation, October 1925, the number fell to 253. It continued to fall in November to 158 and to 135 in December. By January 1927 the new units began to function with increasing regularity. There was an upward swing in the number of workers initiated into party membership. The total initiation stamps sold in January 1927 was 214. In the short month of February last the number rose to 278.

By mid-March most of the party districts had not yet swung into the Ruthenberg drive. Still the few days which the districts participated in the drive, told appreciably in the influx of new members. These figures of new members will be especially important for April. In March 336 initiation stamps were sold. This means that a minimum of 336 workers were admitted to party membership in March. This is the highest figure reached in many months. Of course, there were many hundreds who applied for membership in the rousing Memorial demonstrations held immediately after Comrade Ruthenberg's death. Not all of these workers were immediately enrolled into party membership.

It is clear that the Party organisation has taken a turn for the better. We have seen our most difficult days in the immediate post-reorganisation period. We still have many serious problems of reorganisation to solve. Some of these problems we have not even scratched the surface of in the least. But on the whole we have turned the corner — for the better.

Table showing condition of the Party organisation.

	1925			1926			1927		
	October	November	December	January	February	March	January	February	March
Dues Payments	7,213	8,064	8,154	8,389	7,146	9,052	8,368	7,714	9,490
Initiation Stamps	253	158	135	105	125	145	214	278	336

The pessimists may throw sand into their own eyes. The enemies of the party may hope in vain and perish in disappointment. The Workers (Communist) Party of America is a living, growing force, moving forward in the revolutionary spirit and line of its dead leader Comrade Ruthenberg.