

More Communist Strongholds

By Jay Lovestone

THERE is no more urgent problem before the Workers (Communist) Party today than the re-organization of its Party apparatus on the basis of shop nuclei and the development of these nuclei into politically vigorous units of the Party.

This is not a question involving merely a basic readjustment of our Party's structure, important as this phase of our task may be. It is a question of outstanding political significance and of a most pressing nature for us, since it vitally involves the very development of our Party, the success of every one of our campaigns.

Our Present Organizational Structure.

OUR present organizational structure, based primarily on arbitrary territorial divisions, is a heritage from the Socialist party. The Socialist party was and still is first and foremost an election apparatus. Consequently, it was based simply on the territorial divisions most convenient for the bourgeoisie in their organization of election campaigns. In short, the territorial basis and the decentralized, the federalist character of the Socialist party cannot be separated from its all-important tasks of participating in the parliamentary campaigns and striving to reform the capitalist order.

Our Party is suffering too much from this heritage. The time is at hand to cast overboard whatever structural forms we have inherited from the old Socialist party. The time is at hand to remove completely the vestiges of social-democratic organization noticeable in our Party. The time is at hand to eradicate these serious obstacles to developing our Party into a genuine Bolshevik organization.

Our Party Today.

COMRADE Zinoviev declared before the sessions of the Enlarged Executive Committee of the Communist International held last April, that the American Party must recognize that it is "necessary to fuse the national sections of the Party into a real united Party." In the opinion of the Comintern there are few of its sections which have more organizational defects than the Workers (Communist) Party. The seriousness of this criticism becomes obvious when one considers that an effective organizational structure is an absolute prerequisite for the success of a working-class party in executing its decisions, in mobilizing the proletariat for action.

All we have to do is to look at our eighteen language sections. These separate language federations form, in effect, **eighteen parties within one party.** The existence of these language federations tends to isolate the Party center from the membership and the Party itself from the working masses in general. It must be remembered that mere orders from a central executive committee do not serve as the electric power cables for stirring up a Communist Party to action. What we need is such an inter-relationship between the Party center and the general membership as will promote the most direct contact between the two and which will thus serve to lend life to every Party decision and facilitate its execution.

And when we consider our present branch system we find

how sick the Party is organizationally. The Comrades gathered in the branches spend very little of their time at branch meetings for political purposes. The very basis of the branch organization, insofar as the execution of Party plans is concerned, is accidental. This basis has not been chosen by us because of its having been found helpful to our Party.

Let us look at the order of business of a usual branch meeting in our Party. The meetings are usually paralyzed by the palsied hands of Roberts' Rules of Order. Every regular meeting opens with the reading of the minutes of the previous meeting. Then communications are read. It will not be out of place to confess at this time that most of these communications are uninteresting and altogether too long. Very seldom do these communications have a political character. Seldom, if ever, do these communications deal with the political problems of the American working class. These branch communications rarely serve to stimulate the political development of our membership, their effectiveness as Communist workers in the ranks of the proletariat. If the road to the revolution were to be paved with these communications as cobblestones, we would have to picnic and dance our way to the proletarian dictatorship.

What is a Communist Party?

A Communist Party aims to overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie, strives for the winning of complete political power by the working class and works unceasingly for the realization of Communism. Thus a Communist Party has, for its paramount task, the winning of the majority of the working class through its vigorous participation in the everyday struggles of the working masses and through its consequent leadership of these masses. It is clear, even to the most politically purblind, that only through the closest contact with the masses, in the centers where they are found, can a proletarian party hope to achieve this program, this Communist objective.

The Fourth Congress of the Communist International declared categorically that "No Communist Party can be seriously considered as a solid, organized, mass Party unless it has strong Communist nuclei in the shops, factories, mines, on the railways, etc." Our present pure and simple territorial structure is therefore in more ways than one a millstone around our Communist neck. First of all, our present territorial structure is in conflict with the final aim of Communism. Second, the present system of our Party organization is replete with serious obstacles to our immediate tasks, to the success of all the campaigns through which the Party can be developed into a mass Communist Party.

Plainly speaking, what our Party needs is much more than a mere surface reorganization. What our Party needs is a fundamental, a deep-going change in its structure, in its organization anatomy. Only such a re-organization can lay the necessary sound foundation for the political development, for the Bolshevization of our Party.

Reconstructing our Party.

OUR entire Communist press is now printing articles aiming to enlighten our membership about the character of our

re-organization program and to convince the Party of the necessity of rebuilding the Workers (Communist) Party on the basis of shop nuclei. General membership meetings in the various Party centers, meetings of branch functionaries, branch meetings and section conferences, devoted mainly to a consideration of Party reconstruction, are additional features of the intense ideological campaign organized to insure the success of giving a Communist basis to our Party.

Already a majority of our Party is for the reorganization on the basis of shop nuclei. The primary purpose of this ideological campaign is to promote a more conscious acceptance, a real understanding of the political significance of the organization of our Party on the new basis.

After the Party has completed its preliminary ideological and organizational campaign we will proceed with the organization of shop nuclei on a wide scale. Wherever three or more of our Party members work in a mill, mine, factory, shop, etc., they will be organized into a shop nucleus. Immediately upon organization, this shop nucleus is a basic unit of our Party. In cases where less than three Party members work in a shop or factory they will, in many instances, be temporarily attached to another shop nucleus in the same industrial section. In some cases we will form shop nuclei consisting of a number of individual comrades working in separate plants in a specific industrial area. Of course we will bend all of our efforts to form big, powerful shop nuclei in as many factories as possible.

Those Party members who are not employed in shops, mills, mines, etc., will, as a rule, be organized into street nuclei. These street nuclei may also be called international branches—particularly by our Party with its minimum of eighteen national language sections. Such international branches or street nuclei will not be based on the present lines of language spoken by a particular national group. Often, when an individual comrade works in a plant and when there is no shop nucleus in the neighborhood to which he or she may be attached, the comrade in question will be permitted to be a member of a street nucleus.

It must be remembered that the more completely the Party is organized on the basis of shop nuclei, the stronger will it be. In the early stages of our reorganization many street nuclei may be set up. With the development of the Party as a mass Party, with the increase of our Party's influence over the working masses found in the big basic industries, over the industrial proletariat massed in the giant factories, the number and importance of our street nuclei as units of the Party will decrease and the number and strength of the shop nuclei will increase.

The shop and street nuclei are to be coordinated into sub-sections, where conditions require them, and into sections, sub-districts and districts, through executive committees. The guiding center of the Party, the Central Executive Committee, will be in a position to transmit its policies and instructions directly to the comrades at the head of the various Party centers, shop nuclei, in the factories, in the mines and on the railways, etc., where the great industrial proletarian masses are found. The gap between the Party directing center and the Party masses and the chasm between the Communists and the army of

workers congregated in the giant capitalist establishments, will thus be reduced to a minimum.

The Shop Nuclei at Work.

THE center of gravity of the political and the other numerous activities of our Party will swing towards the shop nuclei.

Our shop nuclei units will participate actively in the election campaigns of the Party, for it is in the factories that the greatest number of workers are found who are responsive to the Communist program. It is in the shop that the Communist has the opportunity to make the most effective individual appeal to the non-Communist worker.

In plants where a Party nucleus has sufficient strength it will publish a factory newspaper dealing with the immediate, tangible, and pressing questions of the workers. But these shop nuclei papers will not limit themselves to the immediate factory problems only. The papers of, by, and for the workers will strive to broaden the point of view of the non-Communist workingmen, will, on the very basis of these immediate issues, educate and inspire these workers to class action, to political action.

These shop nuclei will become the veritable steel rods of the organized workers, of the existing trade unions. In cases where the workers have not yet been organized into trade unions, our shop nuclei will serve as powerful agencies for the unionization of the unorganized workers.

And particularly because the shop nuclei will be centers for developing militancy among the great non-Party masses in their struggles for their immediate every-day demands, will these shop nuclei provide the most organically suitable basis for politicalizing our own Party and for developing the political, the class consciousness of the American proletariat.

In the shop nuclei our Party members will also have the best opportunity to show that the Communists are the most loyal champions of the interests of the working class and that the reactionary bureaucrats and the social-democrats are the enemies of the working masses.

More than that, the shop nuclei, forming as they do veritable Communist phalanxes in the ranks of the employed masses, will be in a strategic position to prevent misunderstandings between the employed and the jobless workers and to unite both against the capitalists and their government.

In the shop nuclei our members will have a genuine opportunity to lend blood and life to the idea of workers' control of production and to win over the non-Communist proletariat, working side by side with them, to the idea of working-class ownership of the machinery of production and exchange, to the idea of the socialization of industry.

And when the workers of one industry, or of one plant, are attacked by the municipal, state, or federal strike-breaking agencies of the capitalists, the various government bodies, the shop nucleus system of Party organizations will enable the Communists to rouse the workers in the other industries, in the other factories, to rally to the defense of their attacked brothers. With Communists embedded deep in the ranks of the industrial proletariat, defense of the Communists by the proletarian masses will be much facilitated.

These are only a few of the countless ways in which the

shop nucleus units of our Party will afford a far better basis for building our Party.

The Why and Wherefore of Shop Nuclei.

LENIN has said that "Every factory is our stronghold." The reorganization of our Party on the basis of shop nuclei, on the basis of organized Communist groups in the factories, is an absolute necessity for our Party's realizing this great truth spoken by Lenin.

To enumerate briefly, we may say that the following are the outstanding advantages of the shop nucleus system of organization:

1. The shop nucleus affords our Party the best opportunity of establishing continuous and close contact with the proletarian masses.

2. The shop nucleus lays the most suitable basis for our Party's realizing the needs and gauging the reactions and sentiments of the masses. A full understanding of the moods and demands of the masses is an absolute prerequisite to the Party's achieving success in its campaigns against the exploiters and their government.

3. The Party's being organized on the basis of shop nuclei gives added life to all our campaigns, for we are thus enabled to appeal most directly to the broadest masses whom we must reach in order to take our campaigns out of the columns of the newspapers and into the avenues of reality.

4. The organization of our Party on the basis of shop nuclei will proletarianize our Party. It will put us eye to eye with the actual class conflicts of the American workers. The factory becomes at once the battle ground for our forces and the reservoir for our new adherents. Being based on the units, on groups of Communists found in the shops and mills, our Party will have the opportunity to be a proletarian Party in the truest sense of the word and spirit.

5. The shop nucleus brings our Party into vital touch with the everyday demands of the workers and thus gives an immediate concrete basis to the plan of the Communists, and to the struggle of the workers who are not yet in our Party, for proletarian control of production. This problem of working-class control of production must not, and cannot, be relegated to the realm of the actual moment of the revolution. Workers' control of production assumes increasing importance with the intensification of the efforts of the bourgeoisie to promote their fraudulent schemes of class collaboration.

6. Last, but not least, the organization of our membership into shop nuclei will tend to increase the initiative of our individual members. Increasing sections of our members will be placed in positions where they will have to assume responsibilities and take the leadership in the struggles of the workers employed in the same mines or factories with them. There can be no better guarantee for the development of our Party into the real advance guard, into the undisputed leadership of the American proletariat, than the enhancement of Communist initiative in our rank and file membership.

Experiences With Shop Nuclei.

MANY of our European brother parties have already made considerable headway in reorganizing themselves on this basis of the shop nucleus plan. The mightiest political party in the world, the Russian Communist Party, is organized on the basis of shop nuclei. It is precisely because of

this that it had such a sound organizational foundation for achieving its splendid political victories.

The French Communist Party has in recent months shown marked improvement. It will be no exaggeration to state that the success of the French Communist Party in its campaign to reorganize itself on the basis of shop nuclei has played a very important and decisive part in its latest successful political campaigns. The shop nuclei of the French Communist Party have facilitated tremendously the Party's mobilization of the masses against the imperialist war in Morocco, for trade union unity and against political reaction.

In our own Workers (Communist) Party we have not had such big scale experience with shop nuclei. The number of shop nuclei organized today does not exceed sixty. Not all of these are functioning well. Hitherto the Party's campaign for reorganization on the basis of shop nuclei has not been coordinated and has lacked energy and planfulness. Yet meager as our experience with shop nuclei has been to date it is already clear that the road to the saving of our Party, the road to laying a proper organizational foundation for the Bolshevization of our Party, lies in such a complete and fundamental reorganization.

One of our comrades who is a member of a shop nucleus organized in a big automobile factory has thus summed up his experiences to me: "In all of my fifteen years of labor movement activity, I never saw the comrades take so much interest in having the papers (the Daily Worker) distributed at their respective plants as on this May Day. In the past comrades went from house to house where they were unmolested in their work, but this year, especially at the Ford shops, with all the police interference, the comrades went at it in a revolutionary spirit. . . . They were going to have their shopmates read their paper and they were interested in having their shop organized."

Such spirit and determination as were shown by these comrades characterizes the activities of our comrades in the shop nuclei in the other Party campaigns.

Towards Bolshevization.

THE first step towards the Bolshevization of our Party is the Party reorganization on the basis of shop nuclei. With the reorganization on this basis, our Party will rid itself of its social-democratic elements. Regardless of the theoretical correctness of our program, regardless of the true Communist character of our campaigns and slogans, our Party cannot be a Bolshevik party unless it has a Bolshevik basis of organization.

Bolshevization of the Workers (Communist) Party means the application of the lessons of the proletarian revolution in Russia and the lessons of the experiences of the Russian Communist Party to the specific conditions before our Party. The experiences of the proletarian Russian revolution and of the Russian Communist Party indicate that a Communist Party can achieve success in its struggle for the destruction of bourgeois rule and the establishment of the Soviet power only to the extent that the Party organization is based on the proletarian masses. A Communist Party cannot lead the working masses unless it is in constant contact with them and their needs.

The reorganization of our Party on the basis of shop nuclei is the building of new, impregnable Communist strongholds. The building of our Party on the basis of shop nuclei is the setting up of Communist fortresses in every factory.