

## On the Functioning of Trade Union Fractions

**T**HE Party fraction in the trade unions is the best guarantee for the carrying out of the line of the Party in the trade unions, and for bringing in the campaigns of the Party and thus politicalizing their work. Unless this is done, our unions and leagues cannot grow into weapons of struggle of the revolutionary movement, but instead, will become merely economic organizations that are separate and distinct from the line of the Party. The danger of economism is great. Ideas are springing up of the necessity of separating the trade union work from Party work. These ideas of separatism must be fought, both in the Party proper, and in the Party fractions. The best way to overcome this danger is for the Party to really orientate itself to direct the carrying out of shop work and to give detailed political guidance to our trade union fractions. In the city of New York we have had in the latest period some experiences and some success in trade union work. It was very clearly illustrated that where we had the Party fraction as the guiding and driving force, the trade unions grew and orientated themselves in the direction. I will give just two illustrations:

1. A good functioning fraction—the Shoe Workers fraction.
2. A bad functioning fraction—the Amalgamated fraction.

In the case of the Shoe Workers, the union, after facing the attacks of the bosses, the Labor Department and the company unions, was practically liquidated. The union was only a shell of its former self. The leadership was practically non-existent. At the same time, one attack after the other was carried through

against the workers. The total paper membership was about 300. The comrades in this fraction, however, pulled themselves together, and worked out a program of action based upon shop activities and shop organization. This plan was immediately put into operation, and within a short time a number of strike struggles were carried through in the slipper trade, an auxiliary of the shoe industry. It was pointed out to the comrades that this cannot be their main orientation, and in a collective manner they started to concentrate on the large shoe shops. Today we can record the fact that there are 21 shop groups in the largest shops in the industry in the city of New York. These shop groups are given the main attention by the comrades in the leadership of this union. Instead of theorizing about shop work, they are actually carrying it into life. The greatest portion of the Party membership is involved in the daily work of the union, and in its various departments and committees. Non-Party workers have been drawn into the leadership of the union. Functioning departments have been set up, and are guided by our comrades. In the last six months, the union has grown from a membership approximating 300 to a present membership of 900. Every Party member is assigned definite tasks, for which he is accountable to the leading fraction of the union. No doubt this is one union which shows great possibilities of carrying through struggles of tremendous size within the next period. The short-coming of our Party fraction is the fact that it has not been sufficiently politicalized. The campaigns of the Party are acted upon too slowly. In the Party recruiting drive, there has been very little response in the way of recruiting new members into the ranks of our Party.

In the case of the Amalgamated fraction, our comrades have shown complete bankruptcy, both organizationally and politically. The forces of the fraction do not work as one solid unit to organize and destroy the present leadership of the Amalgamated which is exposed in the eyes of all workers. By the type and character of the work carried on by our comrades, we do not arouse confidence in the workers that we can really organize them into struggle against the machine. No political life exists in the Party fraction. In this situation, where the unemployed funds were given to hired gunmen, and where the conditions of the workers are being lowered week after week with the consent of the officials of the Amalgamated machine, our Party fraction as the leadership of the rank and file movement, plays no part. Unless some immediate steps are taken in the situation, and our Party fraction really orientated towards the shops, towards the shop problems, and taking the initiative in the struggles in the shops, there is a danger that the opposition movement will slip out of our hands.

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