

Problems of Unit Leadership

"The center of gravity of Party work must be shifted to the development of the lower organizations, the factory nuclei, local organizations and street nuclei."

—Open Letter.

THE basic task in the shifting of gravity of Party work to the development of the lower organizations, is the development of leadership in these organizations. The tremendous fluctuation in the Party, the insufficient recruiting, the unsystematic participation in the mass struggles, the unsatisfactory position of the Party, can be explained by the fact that: "In the Party and particularly among the leading cadres, there is a deep going lack of political understanding of the necessity for strengthening our basis among the decisive sections of the American workers"; that we do not realize fully that "we have to carry on a systematic struggle . . . for the development of political life in the lower organizations, particularly in the factory nuclei, for the development of thorough-going self-criticism, for development of initiative in the lower organizations and for improvement of its functioning cadres."—Open Letter.

This basic problem of the Party has not yet been tackled with sufficient energy. If we examine the situation in the shop and street nuclei, we will find that the leadership of these organizations do not get sufficient attention from the higher committees. The election of these leading bodies of the lower organizations is not based on the activity and ability of the comrades, but in most of the cases, it is a voluntary proposition. The units elect their leadership from among those who have "time" to fulfill the functions. Did we ever consider seriously the problem which is raised so sharply in the Open Letter, that the carrying out of the decisions of the higher committees, depends entirely upon a well functioning, able leadership in the units, upon unit bureaus that are leaders of the masses in the factory or in the territory, on comrades who have experience in the struggles that are carried on, comrades who have sufficient training in giving leadership not only to the units, but also to the masses in the factory and in the territory?

Unit Bureau—a Political Body

We have examples in many units of the Party which show that the unit bureaus are considered not only by the membership but by the higher committees as an administrative body. We elect as **unit organizer**, the comrade who is able to keep records of the membership or the comrade who does not belong to any unions or other mass organizations, the comrade

—it doesn't matter whether he has been only two or three months in the Party—who is willing to take over the job. We do not consider the unit organizer as a political leader of the unit, and of the workers in the shop or territory.

We elect as **agitprop director** in the unit, the comrade whose English is perfect, who can compose sentences perfectly, who can use the typewriter, but we never consider that the agitprop director's task is to produce material for agitation among the workers in the shop or in the territory, who has the task of giving political education to the members in the unit, who is responsible for the development of new forces from among the Party members, and from among the non-Party members in the shop and territory.

We forget that the **financial secretary's** task is not only to collect dues from the members, or sell tickets for various affairs at the unit meeting. We forget that the financial secretary has a very important political function in the unit, that he is responsible for keeping the membership, for working out ways and means to insure that every member of the unit attends unit meetings, is up-to-date in his dues payment, that he, being constantly in touch with every member of the unit, must be able to give valuable information to the bureau about the activities of the members; that he, through a well planned system should find out whether the members of the unit are active in the unions or other mass organizations. It is he who must find ways and means to establish a fund for the unit through various activities, a fund which will enable the unit to extend its mass agitation among the workers in the shop or in the territory.

The **Daily Worker agent** in the unit should be a comrade who is not only able to mobilize the membership of the unit to sell the **Daily Worker** every day in the factory or in the territory, but who is able also to mobilize the sympathizers in the shop or in the territory, in the unions, in the mass organizations, and make them enthusiastic distributors of the **Daily Worker**.

The **literature agent's** activity should not be limited to the distribution of literature inside the unit, but he must be able to teach the Party members how to bring the literature into the factories, how to distribute the literature in the territory. He is the one who should be able to mobilize the sympathizers around the Party unit for distribution.

If we succeed in selecting from among the Party members the best, the most developed, the most devoted comrades for these leading forces in the units, then the situation can be changed in a very short period.

We do not want to create the impression that the new Party members shall not be drawn into the leadership, but

we have to keep in mind always that these new forces must be guided in their work by the more developed comrades in the unit.

Too Many Changes in Leadership

There is one more very serious weakness in connection with our leadership in the lower organizations. That is the lack of stability in the leadership. It is the exceptional case when in any street unit we have a bureau for a period of six months. It is not an exception when every two or three months, new functionaries are elected to the unit bureau. We must understand that an able and stable leadership is necessary and that without this the work of the lower Party organizations will not improve.

In order to bring about this situation, the higher committees must immediately tackle this problem. They should concentrate on the most important shop nuclei and street nuclei. A member of the Section Committee should be assigned to a unit, not as a representative of the Section committee but as a member of this unit. His task is to attend the unit bureau meeting, help them to prepare the agenda for the unit meeting, discuss with them thoroughly every point on the agenda and at the unit meeting he should actively participate in the discussion.

The members of the Section Committee assigned to a given unit must participate in the mass activities of the unit. He should help the comrades in their daily work. This comrade should report about his experiences in the unit to the Section Committee so that the section leadership is continuously informed about the situation in the shop and street nuclei. Periodically it will be necessary to take up in the section the problem of a shop nucleus or an important street nucleus which is concentrating in a factory or an important territory, at a meeting to which the unit bureau concerned is invited.

As a result of this discussion a letter should be worked out by the section committee to the membership and the given unit. This letter will serve as a basis for discussion to improve the situation in the unit. The District Committee should do likewise with the section committees and important shop nuclei.

As far as possible every section committee or district bureau meeting should place one of the lower organizations on the agenda. By this method, concentrating on a small number of nuclei, we will create good examples in the section and district, and these examples, properly popularized in the other units, will help to improve the situation.

Classes and Discussions Necessary

We have good experiences in certain districts in developing the various functionaries through regular weekly discussions. In the big cities where it is possible to bring together the unit organizers or the other functionaries of the units, it is advisable to have weekly meetings with them. In these meetings the old practice where the section organizer gives out instructions to the unit organizers on what is to be done in the unit the next week should not be followed, but instead one or two of the most important actual problems should be taken up and a political discussion on this question developed so that the unit organizers will be able to go down to the unit and present the problem properly to the membership. Besides this, at these meetings a very elementary class on organization should be conducted, taking up the functioning of the unit, the method of work, how to participate in mass work, how to mobilize the workers in the shop or in the street for a certain action, the problem of developing the new forces, the problem of building shop nuclei through the members who work in the factory but belong to a street nucleus, the method of distribution of the **Daily Worker** and literature, etc.

In this class we could very easily give a theoretical basis to these problems. The same method can be used by the District for developing Section forces. In Districts where the units are scattered all over in the territory in various towns, the problem is more difficult. Here the question of instructors from the District to the Sections, or directly to the most important nuclei must be considered. It is possible even in these districts to have functionary conferences once a month, calling in the section and unit actives for discussion.

If we have a systematic cadre policy, then the problem of developing new forces will be solved very easily. We have to keep in mind what the Open Letter says about this:

“Every Party member, and especially every Party functionary, must be a real organizer of mass struggles in his particular sphere of work. From this standpoint, the Party must judge the activity of its functionaries and must choose its leading bodies.”

— J. P.