
A Study of Fluctuation In the Chicago District

(Excerpt from Report of J. Peter to Central Committee)

THE Central Committee, at its July session, after discussing the unsatisfactory situation regarding the growth of the Party and the question of fluctuation, decided to examine the lower organizations in several districts in order to ascertain the reasons for the high fluctuation and unsatisfactory recruiting.

This decision was carried out immediately and in July

three concentration districts were visited. Although only five days were spent in each district, a thorough investigation was made of at least two units and one section in each district, from which certain facts were learned and certain conclusions drawn.

In the investigation, the Commission concentrated on the work of the street nuclei, where the fluctuation is one of the most outstanding problems. One or two shop nuclei were also examined, and it was discovered that in the shop nuclei there is practically no fluctuation. In fact, there has been a definite improvement in recruiting through the shop nuclei. There are also many street units in the districts which function very well, participate in and lead the struggles of the workers in their territories, do real mass work, recruit new members, build mass organizations, spread the **Daily Worker** and grow steadily, entirely eliminating fluctuation.

The examination of the units and sections was based on the following points: (1) Mass activity of the units as an independent Party organization; (2) utilization of the **Daily Worker**, literature, leaflets, shop papers, neighborhood papers, meetings, etc.; (3) initiative of the unit; (4) leadership in the unit; (5) inner-Party education, discussion; (6) dues-paying apparatus; (7) method of recruiting; (8) composition of membership; (9) guidance from higher committees.

In order to ascertain the actual fluctuation in the units examined, a comparison was made of the membership in each unit today with that of six months ago. In this article we will deal only with a portion of the examination conducted in the Chicago District, which with slight variations is the picture presented by all three districts.

Territorial Unit Loses Seven Members

In Section 7, which covers a territory of Negro and white population, the commission examined a territorial unit, which six months ago had 20 members: five social workers, seven housewives, one storekeeper, one peddler, one janitor, three office workers, one shoe worker and one hotel worker. Of these eight were employed, either in offices or on relief jobs. Seventeen were native born. There were three Negro women—housewives, and 17 white members in the unit. This was the picture six months ago. Today the unit has 15 members; **seven dropped out of the Party.**

Why did these seven members drop out of this unit? The three Negro housewives had been in the Party almost a year, and had been very active. They were in the forefront of every struggle. They have all dropped out, but, what is most interesting, have remained in the I.L.D., where

they are very active. We tried to find out why all of the Negro comrades dropped out of this unit. The comrades tried to explain it on the basis that they got tired; that they had no money to pay dues, etc., etc. Only after a more thorough discussion were we able to learn the real reason. We found that at the unit meetings, the white social workers and office workers occupied the floor all of the time, pushed the Negro comrades in the background, and that there were definite white chauvinist tendencies in the unit. This point came out only after cross-examining the unit bureau. This unit recruited two members during the six months—one lawyer and one social worker. Two other members were recruited through the general activities of the district and assigned to this unit. There is no organized discussion at the unit meetings; discussions are not prepared. The agenda of the unit is based on the Section Org. Letter and checking on the activities of the mass organizations (the unit has an I.L.D. branch and Unemployment Council in its territory with a membership of approximately 100). **The Resolution of the Eighth Convention had not been discussed**, and only 100 Manifestos of the Convention had been distributed. **Eighteen Daily Workers** are sold daily by two comrades of the unit. The other comrades are not involved in soliciting for the **Daily Worker**. In six months, no leaflets of any kind were issued by the unit, and with the exception of one protest meeting against police brutality, no meetings were organized.

No Political Life In Concentration Unit

The next unit which we examined was a unit concentrating on a railroad yard employing 400 workers. Six months ago this unit had 14 members. In this period no new members were recruited, but four of the original 14 dropped out. With transfers in and out, the unit today has 13 members, of whom three are native born. All members are paid up in dues to date, and nine or ten attend meetings regularly. The unit bureau does not meet. In the six months period there was only one discussion—on the Election Campaign. No leaflets were issued; no meetings were held in the name of the Party unit. No **Daily Workers** were sold in the unit territory. **Of the 13 members, only one reads the Daily Worker regularly.** Six buy the **Party Organizer**. Literature is not sold by the unit, and only 100 copies of the **Manifesto of the Convention** were distributed. An agenda of one of the meetings was as follows: (1) Election of Chairman; (2) Roll call, checking on dues, etc.; (3) Railroad Work—one comrade assigned to help distribute the **Daily Worker** at the yard on Mondays; (4) Activity of the Unemployment Council, which has 120 members, with

five Party members in it leading the organization; (5) Raising money for the Section; (6) Signature Drive for the Election Campaign; (7) Demonstration Against Discrimination; (8) Activity of the I.L.D. (which has a membership of 10, with 4 Party members).

A Good Example

The Commission examined another unit, in Section 4, Chicago, which can be held up as an example of how a unit should function. This unit is concentrating on a machine shop employing approximately 500 workers. Six months ago there were only seven members, six of whom were foreign-born. The social composition of the unit was 100 per cent proletarian. During the last six months, the unit recruited 7 members, and expelled one disruptive element who was suspected of being a spy. Not one member dropped out of the Party during this period. Today the unit has 14 members (one gained through transfer). During this period it has built up a shop nucleus inside the concentration factory. The street unit has two brigades for concentration—one which brings the Party's face to the factory, sells **Daily Workers**, distributes Party leaflets and shop papers before the factory gate; the other a union brigade, which agitates the workers to join the Metal Workers' Industrial Union, distributes union literature, union papers, etc. The leadership of this unit is young. The organizer has been in the Party 9 months; the agitprop director 8 months; but these comrades understand how a Party unit should function. The unit bureau, which meets regularly and works out concretely the agenda for the coming unit meeting, discusses ways and means of developing the work among the masses in the territory and in the concentration point. Every second week the unit has a street-corner meeting in the name of the Party unit. The basic weakness of the unit consists in the fact that only two members live in the unit territory, but despite this, splendid work is done among the population of the territory. Every member of the unit buys five pamphlets of every new edition and sells them to other workers. The unit sells 60 **Daily Workers** and 100 copies of the Saturday issue. Because of the many young workers in the unit territory, the unit bureau decided to organize a soccer team. Two comrades were assigned to organize it and in two weeks the organization was built, creating great enthusiasm among the young workers. In this sport group, the assigned comrades lead regular discussions on political questions. Four comrades, who are assigned to unemployed work, work as a brigade and report regularly to the bureau on their activity, and the unit bureau, after a discussion, brings the main problems before the unit

meeting. Of the 14 members, 13 read **The Communist**; 10 the **Party Organizer**. The unit has a discussion at every meeting, prepared a week in advance by the bureau, and material is given out to every member to read on the subject a week in advance, resulting in very interesting discussions on current problems. There is real enthusiasm among the Party members for the work. Every member of the unit is paid up in dues, and from 11 to 13 members attend meetings regularly. Those who are not present have legitimate reasons for absenting themselves.

Conclusions From Examination

What general conclusions can be drawn from the examination, as to the cause of the unsatisfactory growth of the Party and the tremendous fluctuation?

1. The most outstanding shortcoming, from which many others flow, is the weak leadership in the lower organizations. The Party has not yet carried out the task set by the Open Letter of shifting the center of gravity of Party work to the development of the lower organizations, the factory nuclei, section organizations and street nuclei. There is still too much reliance on written directives from the higher bodies, and insufficient daily guidance to the lower organizations. If the situation is to be changed, the Party Committees must take immediate steps to develop the forces in the units and sections, by patiently helping and teaching the new undeveloped cadres: showing the unit bureaus how to plan their work, and encouraging the lower organizations to use the greatest initiative in their work. The members elected to the Section Committee are not activated sufficiently. Two or three comrades carry all the responsibility in the Sections.

2. Another shortcoming, flowing directly out of the first, is the extremely weak, and in some cases the lack of political life in the units and sections, which become merely the apparatus in the hands of the higher committees for leaflet distribution, money collection, etc. It is easily understandable, therefore, that many members, not only new ones, but even older comrades, not having any perspective in their work, and not receiving any political education become discouraged and drop out of the Party. Regular discussions in the units, carefully prepared from material supplied by the higher Party Committees will help to strengthen the political life of the unit.

3. The **Daily Worker** should be utilized more as a guide for the work not only by the District Committees, but by the lower organizations. Most of the units examined by

the Commission did not understand fully how the **Daily Worker** could be of help to them in their work.

4. Insufficient effort to recruit new members for the Party. In some cases, recruiting is not carried on because of fear of spies. But in general we do not recruit because there is no systematic, daily hammering at the necessity of getting new members into the Party. At the same time, the Party organizations, especially the units, do not come forward to the masses as the Communist Party, but work among them as representatives of various mass organizations. As a result of this method of work, the workers in a given territory do not know that a Communist Party exists in that territory; they do not know what the Communist Party stands for, and as a result the poison spread by the demagoguery of the bourgeois politicians finds a fertile field.

5. In those units where the membership reads the Party literature and the **Daily Worker**, good work is done, the fluctuation is cut to a minimum, and the general mass work of the unit is more effective than in the other units.

6. In most units there is an insufficient reaction to local political issues.

7. Insufficient work is carried on among the Negro masses; there is general confusion on the Negro question; an insufficient struggle is carried on against white chauvinism, and there is too little systematic work for developing new forces from among the Negro members, as well as from the native-born white workers.

8. Too many unemployed members are dropped for non-payment of dues. The Party organizations must find some method of solving this problem, since a large majority of our membership is unemployed, many of whom either receive no relief, or receive only food, rent checks, etc.

9. There are too many collections in the units. The unemployed members cannot contribute to the various campaigns, and even the employed workers find it very difficult to contribute to the numerous collections. The Party must learn how to develop these campaigns among the masses, thus increasing the effectiveness of the work, and relieving the Party members from the heavy financial burden.

Fluctuation Can Be Stopped — Every District Must Set Up Commission

The work done by the Special Commission is only a beginning. It must be continued by the establishment of special commissions in every district. In most cases, despite the reasons given by the comrades who drop out of the

Party, a close examination will reveal that we lose our members, not because of personal reasons, but because of political and organizational weaknesses in the Party organizations. Such investigations will help us correct our work, and enable us to quickly change the unsatisfactory situation in regard to fluctuation and recruiting.
