

Communist Youth Advances

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THE problem of building and strengthening the organization of the Communist youth, the Young Workers (Communist) League, as the leader of the young workers in the struggle against the capitalist system and as the recruiting ground for the Communist Party, is a problem not only for the League, but for the Party as well.

It is from the ranks of the League that the best elements representative of the American working class will come. Already today, there is a fair group of Party functionaries who received their training in the League, and this group will grow larger. The League can supply to the Party many elements of the working class whom the Party reaches but little at present—the young, American workers, particularly in the basic industries, who are just beginning to orientate themselves toward the class struggle in a conscious manner. To the degree that the Party understands how to guide the League in its activities, assist the League in its work, and utilize the League as an important factor in the revolutionary movement—to that degree will the Party as an organization be strengthened thru the accession of the new generation of workers.

Relations to Party Poor.

At the very beginning it must be stated that the Party as a whole has paid insufficient attention to work among the youth generally, and to the League particularly. We cannot say that the relations between the League and the Party are satisfactory, altho they are improving. Nor can we be content with the assistance that the Party has been rendering to the League. The aid that the Party and the various sympathetic organizations around it can give the League is tremendous, and the possibilities must not be thrown away.

It must be stated that there are comrades in the Party who believe that this is not the time for building up a Communist youth movement. They believe that only after the Party has grown to a hundred thousand members will it be possible to really apply ourselves to the task of building a mass Communist youth organization. That these comrades are absolutely wrong can be seen from even a cursory analysis of the development of the League organization in the course of the last year. This development is only an indication of the possibilities that exist, and of the progress we can make with the proper policies and activities.

I intend here to discuss only the organizational aspect of the League's work in the past year and to draw some conclusions from that discussion.

Organizational Growth.

The main characteristic of the development of the League organization in the past year has been the growth of membership. If we compare this growth with the previous period of relative stagnation, insofar as membership is concerned, we can almost characterize it as a remarkable growth. In October, 1927, when the last convention of the League took place, the total membership was 1,950. In December, 1928 the total membership had grown to

Best Labor Elements Will Come From Its Ranks; Increase In Proletarian Elements

3,479. This is an increase, in round numbers, of 90 per cent in a period of approximately one year.

When it is considered that during this period the Party increased in membership but slightly, and that on an international scale the Communist youth movement was standing still in this respect, this development is indeed significant. The period including the year before the last convention, with which a comparison should be made, shows the following:

In November, 1926, the total membership was 1,712. In June, 1927 it was 1,900 and in October, 1928, as already indicated. Therefore, a period of one year prior to the last convention shows an increase of only 230 members, while a period of one year after the convention shows an increase of 1,729 members. That this is not an increase on paper can be seen from the dues payments. The average good standing membership, based on dues payments, for 1926 was approximately 500; for 1927 it was 700 and for the first 10 months of 1928 it was 1,860, while the months of May, June, July, August, September and October give a good-standing membership of a little over 2,000.

Previous Period.

It is important to remember that from the time of its organization in May 1922 to the end of 1925, the League had about the same number of members—1,500. The internal struggle in the League at the end of 1925, and the disastrous reorganization at the beginning of 1926; carried out in the most mechanical manner conceivable, reduced the membership to a little more than a thousand. From March, 1926, when it reached this low point, to the present, the growth has been more or less steady, interrupted by periods of decline during internal difficulties.

Mass Work Cause.

How do we account for the increase in membership since the last convention? It is based on the orientation of the League to mass work,

to the struggles of the young workers in the basic industries. The League has begun to travel the road to mass organization. In the year in question, the League participated actively in every important strike—the mining strike; the textile strike in New Bedford, Fall River and Paterson; the Colorado mining strike.

The League has actively participated in the formation of new unions and has worked to draw the young workers from the respective industries into these unions. The League has turned its face to real anti-war and Bolshevik anti-militarist activities. Work in the factories has increased, as has work in the trade unions, in spite of many serious shortcomings and even neglect in this field. It is on this basis that the League membership has increased and on no other.

Social Composition Improves.

It is also important to note some improvement in the social composition of the League. Up to February, 1928, the League suffered from a process of de-proletarianization. The proportion of industrial workers was only 43 per cent, as against 37 per cent for students. Energetic measures and mass activities have put a stop to the de-proletarianization process, but the turn in the opposite direction is still very slight. Today, 44% of the membership is made up of industrial workers and 32% of students. Eight per cent are farmers and the balance non-industrial workers (clerical workers, domestic workers, etc.)

Increase Proletarian Elements.

It can therefore be seen that one of the main problems of the League on this field is the improvement of the social composition. This can be achieved only thru drawing in proletarian elements from the heavy industries and in no other way. Thru activity in the basic industries and thru conscious pushing forward of the proletarian members of the League—thru throwing the entire

League into mass struggles will the social composition be improved.

In some respects progress has already been made. Between June and December 1928, the number of miners in the League increased from 133 to 193; of textile workers from 59 to 125; of steel workers from 43 to 55 and of metal and auto workers from 28 to 44.

There has also been an improvement in this period in respect to the size of the factories in which our members work. In June, 1928 of the industrial workers the size of whose factory was known, 322 or 41% worked in large factories (over 500 workers), 59 or 7% worked in medium factories (200-500 workers) and 51% worked in small factories (under 200 workers). In December, there was an improvement—494 or 43% worked in large factories, 204 or 18% in medium, and 457 or only 32% in small factories. Thus we see a shift to the large and medium factories and away from the small factory. This of course is largely due to the increase in the number of members working in the heavy industries indicated above.

Growth Where No League Before.

Another important feature of the increase in membership that we must note is that it has taken place largely in the small industrial towns, thru the building up of a League where none existed previously. Thus, League units have been established for the first time in the middle west, in the south, in textile cities and in mining camps and some steel towns.

At the same time, however, must be noted the fact that as a rule the League organizations in the big cities have gained either very little or not at all. In the most important cities—New York, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Cleveland—the League organization has grown insignificantly in comparison to the general growth of the League. This is a negative aspect of the situation which will have to be remedied, or it will in turn become a hindrance to the further development of the League.

Districts Function.

The growth of the League has been accompanied by its organizational consolidation. We have today functioning district organizations in practically every part of the country, where we had only city organizations previously. These district organizations react to events in their particular territory and are learning to become the leaders of the young workers in their struggles, as contrasted to the situation in the past, where local organizations carried on only routine, administrative activities, if at all.

Task Is Mass Organization.

While we can thus see that the League organization has made progress, we can by no means rejoice or become satisfied with it. The League is still very tiny compared to the millions of toiling youth outside its ranks. The basic task—to build the League into a mass organization—still remains. We have but taken the first step in that direction. But the results achieved from this first step show us the possibilities that exist for taking many more strides in that direction. These possibilities it will be the duty of the Party and of the League to utilize to the fullest degree, and only if they are utilized will further progress be made.

Thank You, Mr. Mussolini

