

On the Politminimum Course

By WILL HERBERG.

THE league politminimum is already out. By this time every district and city organization of the league should have in its possession copies of the Syllabus-Outline for the league politminimum course as well as the reading and literature list that goes with it.

The Purpose of the Politminimum.

What use is to be made of this material? First, what is the idea of the politminimum course? The politminimum does not aim at converting our league comrades into finished Marxists and Leninists. Nothing of the kind. We are aiming primarily at developing in the average league comrade that elementary understanding of the fundamentals of Communist theory that it is absolutely necessary to have in order to function in a league that strives to be the vanguard of the proletarian youth of America. The politminimum, as its name shows, proposes to impart the absolute minimum of political fundamentals; it proposes to make the league member politically literate.

Politminimum Circles in the Nuclei.

In view of this it is evident that the politminimum must reach the entire league membership and especially its lowest circles. For this reason politminimum circles should be organized wherever possible in the fundamental units, in the nuclei or concentration groups. Every comrade of the nucleus (with the rarest exceptions) should be obliged to participate in the politminimum circle. Above all should such participation be required of new comrades joining the league. In this way, a step forward will be taken in one of our most fundamental propaganda tasks—the development of a uniform Leninist ideology in our league.

It is our opinion that it is best to have this politminimum circle take place every week in connection with the regular meeting of the nucleus. If the meeting begins at seven o'clock, say, the period from seven to eight can be given to the political circle and then the regular business meeting may proceed. Experience will show that this is a very serviceable arrangement. However, if for various reasons such an arrangement proves impracticable the politiminimum circle may be held on a special evening but certainly no less frequently than once a week.

The Method of Political Instruction.

It is impossible in these brief notes to take up in detail the question of method. But it may be said that the best method is an apt and careful combination of the lecture (report) method and the discussion method. One of the best methods we know of runs somewhat as follows: The class leader starts reporting (lecturing) on the subject in hand. Every member of the circle, however, has the right to interrupt the speaker at any point. Whenever an interruption takes place the matter is discussed by the class leader and students in a collective way and when a conclusion is reached, the speaker proceeds. At the end of the session the class leader places before the class a series of questions covering the material just gone over. At the beginning of the next session answers to these questions are called for and this constitutes the review.

A method like this combines the best features of the lecture and discussion methods. Of course, it places considerable responsibility on the class leader. It devolves upon him to see that his class follows him, that the study material is absorbed and assimilated. These are the dangers of the lecture method, and above all, that the discussion does not become "wild" and that it does not leave the line mapped out in advance (this is the most serious danger of the discussion method). But then, any method places great responsibilities on the class leader and we believe that this method does not do so to an unusually great extent.

One more point. The question of literature and references has proved one of the most difficult for the national agitprop. There is so very little in the English language that can serve as reading and study material. And above all there is nothing that can serve as a political textbook. In view of this we have been forced to regard our literature and reading references as, to a large extent, a makeshift. The national agitprop intends in the very near future to issue a politminimum text following the lines of the politminimum outline. That will go some way towards solving the problem. The national agitprop also intends, both before and after the issuance of the text, to issue various mimeographed bulletins on special subjects that can not be fully covered in the text book. Finally we intend to keep the reading list itself as up-to-date and as complete as possible thru issuing additions to the list whenever a new reference presents itself. We think that, taking all this into consideration, the question of reading and study material will be treated as best it possibly can at the present time.

A Critical Evolution of Our Experiences.

The politminimum is largely an experiment. It was constructed on very little concrete experience—as was naturally unavoidable. It is certainly not permanent. The constant improvement of our politminimum work can only come thru a collection and analysis of the experiences of the league organizations in the use of the politminimum outline and reading lists. For this reason it is absolutely important for our comrades to go about the politminimum work in a critical way—to carefully watch their work to examine their experiences, to formulate their suggestions and criticisms, and to transmit everything to the national agitprop. This is the only way in which the league as a whole will be able to march forward. This is what is expected of the entire league.

Forward With the Work of Political Education!

The work of political education in the league has only just begun and the politminimum is an important step forward. The united energies and constant co-operation of the league are absolutely necessary for the successful development of our most elementary tasks.