

Building the Communist Party

By Wm. Z. Foster

BROWDER revisionism, from its incipency at the beginning of the Roosevelt period, embodied a deep underestimation of the role of the Communist Party. Its tendency was to look elsewhere—to the trade union officialdom, to the liberal bourgeoisie and, eventually, to the National Association of Manufacturers—for working class and national leadership. This resulted in a great neglect of Party building in all its phases. In his revisionist degeneration, Browder came to look upon our Party as an obstacle in the way of the working class and of American democracy. That was why he dissolved the CP into the CPA, and why he contemplated eventually liquidating it altogether, as he did in the South.



The Communist Party has largely freed itself from this poisonous liquidationism. It has reacquired an understanding of the vital leading role of the Party and, as never before, it is determined to build itself into a mass organization, developing its press into a powerful voice of the people. The Party is infused with a new, invigorated spirit of Party building. In order that this situation may result in the maximum growth of the Party and its press it is necessary that the Party leaders and membership bear carefully in mind at least the following six major propositions:

First—Our membership must undertake Party building in a full realization that it is thereby carrying out a major political task. In the past, especially during the period of the Browderite revisionism, the question of Party building was relegated to an inferior category. It was considered as merely an organizational matter that could be attended to after all political issues had been disposed of.

This incorrect attitude placed a big barrier in the way of Party building. Fortunately, the Party is now rapidly getting rid of such liquidationist tendencies. All through the Party there is a growing realization that the workers, that the whole American people, in fact, urgently need a strong

Communist Party in order to cope with the evermore complicated and difficult problems with which they are daily confronted. This is the spirit that will really build our Party. We must never lose sight of the fact that in building the Party we are fulfilling a first-class political task.

Second—We must have a deep consciousness of the need to develop the vanguard role of the Party. Our Party, on the basis of its Marxist-Leninist principles, must be clear enough theoretically and bold enough politically to speak out definitely on all the complex economic and political problems of our times. The Party must understand how to explain the daily domestic and foreign problems of the working class and the people and their connection with the imperialist, decaying phase of capitalism. Our press and other publicity material must clearly and energetically present the practical political answers to these problems and fight vigorously for them.

The Party is now making considerable progress in developing this practical ideological leadership. It has done especially good work with regard to explaining the expansionist role of American imperialism, the move to the right of the Truman administration, the growing necessity for an independent anti-monopoly party, the national character of the Negro question, the problems in achieving trade union unity, etc.

This active ideological leadership of our Party, far from weakening the bonds with our progressive allies, is laying the basis to strengthen these relationships. This matter of ideological leadership is of basic importance. Only when the workers understand that our Party is truly the political leader of the masses will they feel impelled to join it freely in large numbers. And by the same token, it will be then, too, that our progressive allies will really respect us as a political force.

Third—Our Party must also develop a clearer understanding of the fact that our Party can only be built on a broad basis in mass struggle. This means that if our Party is to grow it must participate in all mass struggles of the workers and the people with its entire strength and energy—something that the Party is increasingly learning to do as it frees itself from the long-ingrained

Browder tailism.

It also means that we must not forget actively to build our Party while participating in these mass struggles. Too long have we suffered from the infantile disease of neglecting to build our Party, and especially its press, while we are engaged in mass activities of various kinds. This deadly neglect has in the past cost us many thousands of good members and it must be cured at all costs. We must learn to combine mass work and Party building as related parts of one operation. Every activity of the Party must be saturated through and through with the consciousness of the need to build the Party.

Any mass campaign is only one-sided if it does not also include a well-thought-out program of Party and press building. One of the healthiest signs at present in our Party is that it is beginning definitely to learn the vital lesson of building the Party simultaneously with the carrying on of our general work among the masses.

Fourth—Another fundamental for the building of the Party, including its press, is to develop skill and energy in applying the principles of concentration. The power of an army, of a political party, and of various other types of organization, depends upon their ability to concentrate their forces directly and effectively for the accomplishment of a specified urgent task. Traditionally, our Party has been very weak in this vital respect. This has seriously hampered us in Party building, in the development of our mass prestige, in the winning of democratic allies, and generally in the increase of our political strength.

This grievous weakness simply must be drastically overcome. We must learn to concentrate upon decisive political tasks and upon specific Party building in given industries, areas, or groups of the population. During the recent successful membership campaign considerable progress was made in developing concentration upon workers in the basic industries. Our present Party building campaigns are also steps in this general direction. But all this is only a beginning. Our Party must become an unequalled master of the strategy of concentration in all its aspects.

Fifth—We must also learn how
(Continued on Page 7)

Building the Communist Party

(Continued from Page 5)

to integrate our new recruits into the fibre and activities of the Party. Our inability to do this effectively has cost us very dearly in the past. Often we have carried out successful mass recruiting drives, only to have the great bulk of the new members slip through our fingers like sand. Since our Party was organized at least three or four hundred thousand members have passed through our Party in this man-

ner. No doubt large numbers of these members could have been retained had we but used the proper means of integrating them into the Party.

It is imperative, therefore, that we radically improve our work in this respect. The 15,000 new members brought in by the recent recruiting drive must not be decimated by poor integration work. The integration of these members must be carefully attended to, especially by those who recruited them. They must be made into real members of the Party clubs; they must be involved in the Party's mass campaigns; they must be taught the elements of Marxism-Leninism, and they must be absorbed socially and made to feel thoroughly at home in the Party.

If we are really determined to build our Party into a mass organization we must put a drastic halt to the wholesale leaking away of new recruits that has hitherto taken place. Our Party must no longer be a sieve. Once members join our ranks we should see to it that they stay there. We can do this with correct methods of work.

Sixth. In order to achieve the maximum speed in solidly and quickly building our Party and its press we must find ways to involve a much larger percentage of our membership in this work. The present situation, where only a fraction of our members can classify as real Party builders, is completely unsatisfactory. This lethargy in Party building on the part of so many of our comrades constitutes a very serious problem. And it does not admit of a simple, off-hand solution. To better the situation will require much intelligence and hard work on our part.

The main thing to be done is

to saturate the Party completely with the conception that Party building is a highly important political task. Doing this will lay the ideological basis for far more active recruiting than now exists. But in addition to developing this political understanding, the most systematic work is also necessary to organize our Party so that the members in all spheres of Party work will be stimulated and enabled to recruit members in their representative fields, particularly in the trade unions, and so that they will also work energetically to activate, educate and integrate these members once they have recruited them. Our slogan must be "Every Party Member A Party Builder."

The present economic and political situation in the United States provides a favorable opportunity for building our Party and its press. This is true in spite of the fact that this is the most powerful and "prosperous" of all capitalist countries. But to transform this favorable opportunity into a bigger and stronger Communist Party will require far better Party building work than we have been doing.

Our capitalist enemies, with their program of imperialist expansion abroad and of fascist-like reaction at home, understand quite well the important role that a strong Communist Party can play in arousing the people to defend their democratic interests. Hence these reactionaries will leave no stone unturned to prevent the growth of our Party, or even to try to crush our organization.

But their opposition can't be counter-checked and we can vastly strengthen our Party if we will but apply the sound principles of Party building taught the workers of the world by the great Lenin. We can and must build a mass Communist Party in the United States.

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