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NOTES ON THE NATIONAL TRAINING SCHOOL

By Martin

We were somewhat disturbed by the reference in the F.I. convention report to a "National Training School" to be "organized next summer". It is reassuring to learn now that your conception of the Training School is not, as seemed to be implied, that of a shot-gun Summer Course. Our program for the Training School must be far more ambitious. It must contemplate not less than six months of concentrated study for each class from the very beginning. Candidates for the School must be taken from the ranks of present party functionaries; and all of them, with very few exceptions, must be put through the School in their turn. Only later, with expanded membership and resources, can the student body be broadened.

We should begin with a class of six. We must resolutely decide to take that many functionaries out of active party work for the time specified. It might be best to try to select six who are about equal in book education and experience so that they can study the same courses together most profitably. The problem is not to find candidates but to find people to take their places for six months. Such problems, however, are always bigger in imagination than in reality. We must simply take hold of six more comrades who show promise and thrust them into responsibility. They will learn by doing while those whom they fill in for are learning by study. At the end of six months we will have a double gain and the selection of the second class of six will be easier.

The problem of teachers is no problem at all. The students at the National Training School will not be college boys for whom the teacher has to do most of the work. Our students will do their own work. They need teachers mainly to tell them what to study, and in what order and to show them how. Lectures should be only a feature of the instruction in certain subjects. The fundamental method of the school should be the study of original sources by the students organized under the Seminar system.

If we start modestly, with a class of six students, the financial problem will not be as difficult as it may seem. It will cost a lot of money; we must not deceive ourselves on this score. But on the other side, the Training School, once it gets fairly started in actual operation, will arouse an absolutely unheard of response from the party members and sympathizers. New contributors will come forward. New donations, in sizable amounts, can be expected from sources now unknown. Every ambitious young militant will be inspired to increased activity and self-study, with the School as a realizable goal. In the long run, the School will not be a financial burden to the party.

I heard that M. objected to the plan to pay the expenses of the students on the ground that this will promote subservience to the bureaucracy (leadership). Such possibilities cannot be denied. Every paid leadership is a bureaucracy in one sense of the word.

In every measure of centralism there is a danger of the development of bureaucratism in the invidious sense of the word. The concentration of finances in the hands of the leadership, and therewith the power to grant or withhold appointments to paid positions, including paid scholarships, contains the possible danger of corruption at each end -- bureaucratic abuse at one end and subservience at the other. The history of the Stalinist degeneration of the Comintern outside Russia is convincing evidence that even revolutionary militants are not permanently immune to this danger.

But what is the alternative to professional leadership and centralism, including its financial appurtenances? -- that is the question. In the field of party organization in general the alternative is that primitive amateurism in the field of leadership which characterized the pre-Communist radical movement in the U.S. That is a program for futility.

The fact that professional leadership sometimes works out badly; that under certain conditions it has been seen to degenerate and be put to the service of ends opposite to those it was originally designed to serve -- this is something to keep constantly in mind. It is a warning to keep all the democratic correctives of centralism in working order and not let them get rusty from disuse; to devise new methods of making the democratic correctives more actual, more effective. This was the thought which motivated my proposals on the election of the N.C. at the recent party convention.

But to guard against the degeneration of centralism is one thing. To discard centralism altogether, or one of its most essential features, the professional staff, -- that is something else; it would mean in effect to renounce the idea of a combat party. And that in turn would mean to reduce the program of proletarian revolution to a dilettante play with ideas.

The professional staff must be an educated staff, or at any rate, in process of acquiring the necessary education. Militant workers do not come to the party already thus equipped. And if they have to work every day in the factory, and carry a load of practical party work in addition, their educational advancement must necessarily be slow and difficult. We must try to speed up and facilitate this process because we rely mainly on workers for the future leadership of the party. I will not accept the idea that the intellectual leadership belongs of necessity to those who have been taught at college at the expense of mamma and papa. Neither do I think it right to leave the talented workers to their own devices, to the hard and bitter task of educating themselves in their limited spare time, for fear of corrupting them by full-time periods of study at party expense. That would mean, in effect, to close the doors of the higher circles of the leadership to the worker militants.

In my opinion, such a procedure would be the greatest error of all; precisely the error that has taken such a costly toll in the past experience of the party in this country and not only in this country. It is against this error that I am campaigning. I am bent and determined on the training of a proletarian leadership for the proletarian party of the future. In order to do that seriously and properly we must provide, at a certain stage in the advancement of the most

talented workers, for a fairly extended period of full-time study to prepare them for more important political responsibilities. That cannot be contemplated -- it is vicious stupidity even to talk about it -- unless the party makes practical arrangements to pay their expenses. Again I grant that such a project is not entirely free from dangers. But we must risk them. I am more worried about the other dangers.

Naturally, we must not expect miracles from the National Training School. Rather, we should view it, in all its aspects, as the beginning of a new stage in the general development of the party, and also in the personal development of new leaders and potential leaders. By putting the accent on the educational qualifications of candidates for party leadership, and making generous provisions to aid them to improve their qualifications in this respect, the party will have fairly gained the right to demand more from the leaders. That will be a new gain, and a very important one. At the same time, the militants who have profited by the new educational facilities will, it may be assumed, do their work better and with more assurance. They should feel more closely bound to the party which has valued them so highly and invested so much in them. That will be an important new gain too.

January 11-14, 1945

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NOTES ON THE 8-PAGE MILITANT

-- Proposals --

By Farrell Dobbs

1. A Combination Paper.

The 8-page Militant must be a combination paper which interests and serves the needs of:

- a. The new reader picking it up for the first time.
- b. The reader beginning to think of himself as a Trotskyist without yet thinking about the party.
- c. The educated party militant.

The new reader must be led step by step into the deeper questions of Marxism, from the burning issues of the day into the more profound questions of class and party.

2. Attracting the New Reader.

The paper must be lightened up and brightened up to hold the interest of the new reader and lead him into deeper studies.

It must provide color, entertainment, information, drama, recollections of things past, especially where recollections bring human personalities into view.

We must provide a great variety of departments and features, especially light, short features, and an abundance of cartoons, drawings and pictures.

We must tell the history of the movement over and over again, dramatizing the great events and personalities of the past, to strengthen the idea of tradition.

We should print news about all progressive, dissident tendencies.

We must be alert to publicize and protest against all infringements on democratic rights.

The Militant should be made the recognized leader and the best, most reliable source of news of general interest to dissident and generally progressive circles.

The paper has improved enormously in this respect during the past year. We must keep the direction clear and go farther.

3. Supplying More Information.

We must make a studied effort to give more information, more factual data in the paper, especially information not easily found elsewhere by the average reader.

To do this we must pay close attention to the systematic gathering of facts.

We need to build a Militant-F.I. reference library with:

- complete indexes and clipping files of our own press
- files of other newspapers and periodicals
- reference books
- bibliographies for research work
- biographical material
- pictures, cuts, etc., etc.

We must strive constantly to expand our sources of information.

Several good textbooks on newspaper reference methods are available.

4. Getting News From the Field.

Everyone has an occasional story to tell about some incident on the job or in a union meeting which is like a candid-camera shot of the workers' daily life.

Many of these stories are well worth repeating in the paper and with an absolute minimum of literary polish.

Our problem is to stimulate a flow of such news items from the field.

We should institute a systematic campaign for such material from the party membership. Their example will encourage non-party readers to follow suit.

The easiest way for the average worker-reader to send news to the paper is by means of a letter to the editor. Therefore, we should make definite plans for the expansion of the "Workers' Forum" column.

Another, quite simple means of sending news to the paper is to prepare a factual report which can be worked up into an article by one of the staff writers.

We already have a limited number of field correspondents who send in their news reports in article form. Close attention must be paid to the problem of helping these comrades to improve their writing ability.

In general, we must be very careful to acknowledge all material received from the field and to give all possible help to our volunteer contributors.

We should organize a training school for field correspondents in which a selected group of students can get a sufficiently well-rounded training in journalistic techniques to qualify them for special field assignments.

Comrades so trained can in turn become teachers of other comrades in their districts.

5. Simple, Clear Explanations.

The dominant note of the 8-page Militant must be simplification and agitation, concentrated hammering on a very few basic slogans of the day.

We must make a more studied effort to convey our ideas in small doses, subtly and sometimes indirectly.

The average worker doesn't like to be pounded over the head with direct argument in every article and every headline.

Our language must be simplified, made more accessible to the new reader.

This does not mean to vulgarize, to "talk down" in "Labor Action" fashion, but to study and learn the art of popularizing our propaganda.

It is an art that can be learned and practiced without revising or watering down a single basic principle.

The problem is one of presentation, with the new readers in mind. They are only, for the most part, newly interested, only partly interested.

All copy must be carefully edited to make sure that our explanations are simple, clear and direct, and that all expressions used convey a clear meaning to the new reader.

6. Applying Journalistic Techniques.

We should make a systematic effort to acquire every important journalistic technique developed over the years by both the radical and bourgeois journalists.

As a beginning, every staff member would profit by a study of "Headlines and Deadlines", by Garst and Bernstein, a textbook on copy editing and headline writing.

Comrades learning to write for the paper should study "Reporting News", by W. E. Hall, especially pages 51 to 156.

Bibliographies of the best textbooks dealing with the various aspects of journalistic techniques should be prepared and made available to all party writers.

February 27, 1944.

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REPORT TO MILITANT INSTITUTE

New York, March 11, 1945

By Farrell Dobbs

Our party membership is demonstrating in most striking fashion that The Militant has entered the stage of mass circulation.

Four years ago, in a 2-month sub campaign, we sold 905 subs. We thought we had done very well, as indeed we had -- for that time. Changing times, however, have brought greater opportunities. By 1944, we became more optimistic; we then set a quota of 3,000 subs, three times the 1941 total, for a 3-month campaign. Our membership more than doubled this quota, selling 7,614 new subs. And now, with our sights raised to a quota of 10,000 subs for a 3-month campaign, the party has already sold 2,070 subs in the first two weeks of the campaign.

The party membership is thus demonstrating its ability to get new subscribers, not by the hundreds, but by the thousands.

Our task in turn, as editors and writers, is to hold these new subscribers, to make them confirmed readers of The Militant. If we are to achieve maximum success in this task, we must pay careful attention to the need for certain readjustments in our method of writing. To make these necessary readjustments, we must first understand why we tend to write the way we do, and why the new reader cannot always understand what we write.

We are trained Marxists, armed with the sharp tools of the dialectical method.

We know the rich history of the revolutionary movement and have the full benefit of the great lessons of that history.

We are not deceived by capitalist propaganda.

We are not misled by the false policies and the cynical promises of the class-collaborationist trade union leaders.

We are thoroughly class conscious; we reject collaboration with the capitalists.

We have a clearly defined basic program for independent working class political action.

We always think in terms of the burning need to overthrow capitalism and build a socialist society.

All of this is settled policy with us, and we analyze events in the light of this broad revolutionary understanding. In our thinking we tend to cut through the web of details so as to get at the political essence of every question. We apply the criterion of class interest at all times, viewing with instinctive suspicion and hostility every action of the capitalist class and its agents. Once we

detect the class line in a given governmental policy, for example, we need no documentary evidence to convince us that a blow is being aimed against the workers.

Therefore, we have a natural tendency to present our analysis of events in a manner which the politically uneducated readers find abstract, arbitrary and unsubstantiated by facts.

Similarly, we frequently tend to employ involved political terminology which conveys little meaning to readers, politically uneducated, or only partly educated.

We should become fully conscious that we tend to write in this manner because that is the way we tend to think. Moreover, these writing habits have become quite deeply grooved in many of us in the course of the years of concentrated ideological struggle, when the paper addressed itself primarily to the politically educated militants.

Today, however, we are addressing ourselves to a considerable and steadily growing audience of worker-readers with very little political education.

They are not familiar with Marxism.

They know very little about the history of the revolutionary movement.

They have been thoroughly saturated with capitalist propaganda.

They have been taught that class consciousness is unpatriotic, and therefore unthinkable; they have been told that Marxism is a hateful thing.

They have been taught from childhood that the capitalist world is the best of all possible worlds, that socialism can exist only in the heads of "a few screwball radicals."

They have been terribly confused, cruelly deceived by the false policies and cynical promises of the class-collaborationist trade union leaders.

They do not understand the class character of the capitalist government; they consider the government their friend as against the bosses.

They have been told there are good and there are bad capitalist politicians, and above all that Roosevelt is their friend.

Yet, despite this miseducation, they are learning under the hammer blows of the capitalist overlords that something is very much wrong. They are groping for a solution to their problems, and they have turned to The Militant seeking answers to two questions:

1. What are the true facts about the burning social questions of the day?

2. What can the workers do to right existing wrongs?

We must keep constantly in mind this background from which our new worker-readers come to us. We must understand clearly how much they have to unlearn, as well as how much they have to learn. Our writing must be adjusted to suit the needs of this considerable and rapidly growing new group of worker-readers.

Trained Marxists understand, for example, that Byrnes, Vinson, Davis, McNutt and their kind are acting for Roosevelt. But our new worker-readers must have simple, clear, direct explanations, fully reinforced by factual information, before they will understand the trickery of Roosevelt. The same applies to every other question; we must explain everything fully, buttressing our arguments with every fact we can dig up. Moreover, our explanations should employ simple, concrete expressions free from technical or learned terms, unless these terms are fully explained.

One Militant editorial, for example, referred to "degenerate parties of the POUM variety" in seeking to define a political tendency. This is a graphic illustration of our tendency to write like we think, forgetting that many of our readers haven't the slightest idea what a party of "the POUM variety" is. Consequently, that section of the editorial, if not the entire editorial, was meaningless to those readers unfamiliar with the history of the Spanish Civil War.

Our many new readers require full explanations, written in simple, clear language, with plenty of facts.

Among other things, we must find ways and means of expanding our sources of information so that we can provide more factual details in the paper. To do this right we need to build a Militant-Fourth International Reference Library, which must be organized and maintained under the direction of a full-time librarian. Ample space and all the necessary facilities must be provided for this project. The librarian should become thoroughly familiar with established newspaper reference methods and should train part-time helpers to assist in building up the reference library.

One of the first projects for the library should be the compiling of complete indexes and clipping files of our own press.

Our selected files of other newspapers and periodicals should be expanded. We should examine more of the leading capitalist house organs, such as the publications and reports of the National Association of Manufacturers, United States Chamber of Commerce, Investment Bankers Association, Foreign Policy Association, leading monopoly banking houses, steel industry, auto industry, shipping companies, etc.

We need a reference file on the big corporations showing the extent of their monopoly control, corporate structure, interlocking directorates with other corporations and the banks, cartel connections, profits, executive salaries, government handouts they have received, known frauds committed, examples of their greedy practices,

record of government investigations and prosecutions of corporations, list of corporation agents in the government, public statements by corporation officials, anti-union records of the corporations, capital investments in foreign countries and direct involvement of U. S. corporations in foreign political affairs; U. S. State Department actions on behalf of corporations holding foreign investments, etc. This material can be used in many ways. Whenever a big strike occurs, we shall then have the material at hand to show the predatory character of the corporations involved, the injustice of government policy, etc. Such a story was the one item missing in an otherwise excellent layout on the long lines telephone strike last fall. This store of information will prove invaluable when we really begin hammering on the transitional slogan, "Open the books."

Whoever is assigned to specialize on this particular subject should make a thorough study of corporation history, beginning with "Essays in the Earlier History of American Corporations", by J. Stancliffe Davis (Harvard Economic Studies, 1917). Every important book on the history and technique of corporate organization and practice should be read. Gustavus Meyers' "History of Great American Fortunes" and Ferdinand Lundberg's "America's Sixty Families" are especially important. For a well-organized mass of facts "The Structure of the American Economy, Part I, Basic Characteristics," by the National Resources Committee (U. S. Government Printing Office) is a very useful handbook. Lenin's "Imperialism" should be studied as a Marxist guide for the work on the file.

In addition to the Congressional Record, we should add to our files reports of government departments and special investigating committees, together with special governmental publications dealing with specific economic problems. A judicious selection of general reference books is also required.

Biographical material is very important. We should assemble files on every prominent national and international figure in the news; and we should gather the widest possible collection of biographies of personalities in the working class movement. There is one special group of biographies that we want particularly: the record of all the "democratic" renegades who turned up as lackeys of American imperialism in the war, all the traitors who betrayed strike struggles, the time-serving union bureaucrats who have expelled militant workers from the unions, the turncoats who sided with the bosses in driving rebel workers off the job, every Stalinist hatchetman in the movement -- we want to be prepared to put the screws on every one of these betrayers of labor. Our slogan should be, "Let no scoundrel cover up his tracks!" Although the workers are not yet ready to begin this job, we should prepare now for the time when they will be ready. We should prepare dossiers containing a full account of the treacherous acts of each individual culprit, together with pictures, for future publication. We must count heavily on the party branches in assembling this data.

We shall require bibliographies of research material other than that on file in our own reference library. In this connection the New York Times Index will be especially valuable to us, providing

not only a direct key to important information in the files of the New York Times, but also a chronological guide for research among other publications. Our research workers should become completely familiar with the New York Times Index, and they must also become expert in looking up information at the public library.

As we progress with the building of the reference library, the party writers and speakers will find an increasingly valuable store of information at their disposal. And equally important it will be organized information, gathered and classified by specialists who know their business and are anxious to be helpful.

Another important project we must undertake is the establishment of a training school for field correspondents. This is a most necessary step to facilitate the general gathering of news from the field and to get better coverage of the most important events. Comrades whose political education and general experience in the mass movement is sufficient for them to know what to write should become candidates for the school, where they will be taught how to write. They can in turn become teachers of other comrades in their districts. We can hope thus to find more Greys and Kovaleskys and Jacksons.

It is not for The Militant alone that we need more trained writers. In the next mass upsurge the party will make real gains in the trade unions. Many comrades will have opportunities to write for trade union papers; others will become responsible for the editing of trade union publications. We must be prepared to provide fraction-helpers who can teach these comrades how to write and how to edit a paper.

There are quite a number of amateur photographers in the party who have their own equipment and are fairly skillful in the art of photography. We should solicit the cooperation of these comrades, teach them the special techniques of newspaper photography and organize them into a nation-wide staff of Militant photographers. Then we will get the kind of pictures the paper really needs. And when we send a special reporter to cover a union convention or a big strike, we should send along our cartoonist and a photographer so that we are supplied with cartoons, human interest sketches and pictures of the kind that fit precisely into not only the line but also the spirit of our report of the event.

Over 2,000 years ago Aristotle counseled against wasting time in trying to solve problems already solved by somebody else. We should apply this excellent advice more fully on the technical side of the paper. We can learn a lot from textbooks on editing copy, writing leads and headlines, makeup, feature writing, brightening up the editorial column, advertising, preparing a style book, and many other problems. For the same reasons we should study the entire press for ideas which we can use to good advantage. The newspaper house organ, "Editor and Publisher," is still another source of technical information on journalistic practices and newly developed techniques.

In going from a 6-page to an 8-page paper and at the same time striving to lighten up and brighten up the paper, the problem of makeup presents several difficulties. A general pattern for the 8-page makeup might be worked out along the following lines:

Classify the copy according to general subjects; party, international, national political, trade union, minorities, labor defense, educational features, etc. Apportion a specific section of the inside pages for material on each of these general subjects; page 2 as the party page, international news on page 3, etc. When a story is jumped from page one, put the jump in the inside section allocated to the general heading under which the story falls. Thus the reader on turning to the inside page will find other articles, columns, cartoons, pictures and short features, all dealing with the same general subject as the page-one story he has just read.

Stories on the widest possible range of subjects should be included on page one, and there should be as many items as possible on the page. Makeup for the editorial page should be along the lines of the layout in the March 10 issue of the paper. About 20 items are necessary to make this page ideal for the reader to browse through a wide range of subjects.

More and better educational features will be possible in the 8-page paper. The memorial articles which have already become an established feature in the paper should be more carefully planned and more attractively presented. Reprinting in serial form the socialist and labor novels of the past has been proposed as an additional educational feature for the 8-page paper. The following novels have been suggested for consideration: *The Jungle*, by Lewis; *The Iron Hell*, by London; *Pelle the Conqueror*, by Nexo; *Mother*, by Gorky; *Looking Backward*, by Bellamy; *The Bomb*, by Harris; *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, by Kropotkin; *The Gladiators*, by Koestler; *Victor Hugo*, by Josephson; *The Death Ship*, by Traven; *Comrade Yetta*; and *Yerney's Justice*.

The educational features should be planned well in advance, copy prepared, pictures and sketches arranged, the layout planned, and the heads and captions written. Every one of these features can be a tailor-made job.

One of the most effective methods of writing features is to hang the article on a current news peg. For example, during the presidential election campaign last year, the Texas democrats hinted that they might not cast the Texas electoral votes for Roosevelt, even if he carried the state. Since they would have been acting within the provisions of the Constitution had they made good their threat, this episode provided an excellent basis for an educational article on the anti-democratic character of the Constitution.

A more recent example of how this device could be applied is found in the story on page 6 of the March 3 *Militant* under the heading, "MILLIONAIRES' AMENDMENT" TO LIMIT TAXES ON RICH. The story describes the furtive attempt by Big Business to slip over a Constitutional amendment limiting federal income, gift and inheritance taxes to 25 percent maximum. Here is a natural for an educational feature on the income tax question, describing how the working class

fought to impose an income tax on the profit-bloated capitalists; how the Supreme Court defended the capitalists; the circumstances surrounding the adoption of the sixteenth amendment to the Constitution, authorizing an income tax; how the income tax has since been converted into an instrument for taxing the workers; and now the present attempt of Big Business, glutted with profits from the Second World War, to sneak through another gigantic tax steal by amending the Constitution. Such an article should be written with burning indignation! History presented in this form has life, motion, significant meaning; it makes a vivid, lasting impression on the reader.

A sadly neglected department of the paper is the advertising of party activities and party publications. Some progress has been made in this direction during the past year, especially in brightening up the ads, but much remains to be done. Whenever a problem of space arises in the paper, the ads are usually subordinated to other copy. We ought to reverse this procedure. More ads are needed in the paper, and they should be planned just as carefully as the other material. We should appoint an advertising manager to take charge of this important department.

Closer coordination of the paper and the magazine is necessary to make them supplementary in the most complete sense. This problem requires a great deal of thought; it is not an easy one to solve. But there is one practical step that we can take right away: we can push the magazine continually in the paper. It is not enough merely to publish reviews of the magazine; nor are ads sufficient, although the magazine should have an ad, a different ad, in every issue of the paper. The magazine should be quoted liberally in news stories, editorials, columns, wherever and whenever we can find a plausible device for a quotation. Articles in the magazine should be recommended to the readers of The Militant. The columnists can do this quite often; for instance, "Labor Party Outlook" in the February issue of the magazine could be plugged editorially in The Militant; "Civil War in Greece" could be boosted in International Notes; "The Campaign to Conscript Labor" could be recommended to the readers of Trade Union Notes, etc. Frequently the daily papers carry a news story which begins as follows: "Tomorrow the London Times will say editorially that . . ." We might apply this device in the paper something like this: "The magazine, Fourth International, in its forthcoming April issue will say . . . Those interested in reading the complete text of this extremely important article may get the Fourth International by . . ." We should do everything we can along these lines to make The Militant readers F.I. conscious and to whet their curiosity about the magazine.

Some additional points about the paper are mentioned briefly in the three mimeographed pages entitled, "Notes on the 8-page Militant."

What we need now is a thorough-going discussion of the paper so that we may have the benefit of everyone's suggestions and criticisms.

#####

A LETTER TO THE MILITANT INSTITUTE

By M. Stein

A most inopportune case of grippe prevents me from attending today's press institute. I regret that I am unable to participate in the discussion of the 8-page Militant. But I am confident that this will not be the only meeting of its kind. I believe that such press institutes should be held periodically. From time to time it is necessary to break away from the manifold daily tasks connected with the issuance of the paper, to break away from the daily editorial routine, and to take stock -- that is, get an over-all picture of the press and its problems. It is necessary to check ourselves to see if we are making the best use of the press. Thus we generalize our experiences and bring the element of consciousness into the planning for a bigger and better Militant.

For the future we should devise the means of broadening these institutes to provide for the participation of our out-of-town contributors and for participation of the rank and file. The comrades who have been selling the subs and who have gone back to the new subscribers for renewals have, I am sure, a lot to contribute in a discussion on the press.

This time we will do the next best thing. I believe we should issue a digest of this discussion in the Party Builder and invite the party membership to make their contributions in subsequent issues of the Builder. The capitalist press maintains a liason between the editorial and the advertising departments. The editorial department will not print anything that would hurt the advertising. We have a different liason. We have hundreds of our wonderful rank and file comrades who are in touch with our thousands of readers. They meet them in their homes; they meet them and they talk to them when they procure the subs and then, again, when they come after renewals. These comrades of ours must become an integral part of the nerve system of our press. They can transmit the feelings, the sentiments and the reactions of our worker-readers to the center, which will, in turn, make the center more sensitive towards the needs of the field workers and the worker-readers. We must always be mindful of the need of continually improving the close coordination between the hundreds of Militant agents in the field and the editorial staff in the center. The future press institutes should be planned with that view in mind.

We have brought some notable improvements into the paper over the past period. For this we have received lavish praise. But the task we have before us today in discussing the press is to be critical. The more critical we are here, the more praiseworthy the paper will be, the more bouquets we will receive from the field.

If I were asked to give one reason why we managed to improve the paper, I would say that it was due to the excellent staff work, to the comradely cooperation of all the staff members. I have always been a great believer in collective staff work. From my experiences in the last year I have become a fanatic on the subject. Staff work

was the secret of our success. While two comrades -- William Warde and E. R. Frank -- edited the paper most of the time, there were issues that were edited also by others -- notably, Comrade Wright and Comrade Graves. By and large, it would be difficult to distinguish between the issues edited by one or another comrade because the paper is a truly collective product of the staff.

Lenin referred to this staff work as an orchestra. He said: "We must have an enormous orchestra; we must acquire experience in order to be able to distribute properly the various roles; to give one a sentimental violin, to another the stern double bass, and to a third the conductor's baton." It is this type of orchestra that we must always strive for. We must see to it that there is no return to the old virtuoso type of publishing a paper, which we remember only too well; that we do not permit a primadonna attitude -- the "I write as I please" attitude -- to creep into our press on the part of some contributors. This too we remember only too well.

One point is abundantly clear and should be the point of departure in our discussion; the Militant is no longer a cadre organ, but a mass paper. It is along this course that all the improvements have to be made, on the course of making it a bigger and better mass paper. My criticism of the paper would be that, while the new columnists and our cartoonist have helped us popularize our paper, it is not yet a popular paper in the coverage of news and features. What I mean concretely is that we still write too much for self-expression and do not visualize sufficiently the audience and its level of development.

Altogether too often we are content with denouncing somebody as somebody's puppet or a traitor or a bureaucrat -- something that is entirely correct in and of itself and which needs no explanation for our own comrades, but which comes as a shock to our new readers. We must patiently explain and never fall into the easy groove of mere denunciation. For example, when we write about the meeting of the labor fakers in London, it is not enough to merely say that this is a meeting of puppets, but it is our job to prove by facts, by quotations out of their own mouths, by comparing the speeches they make with the speeches their masters make, that they are no more than puppets. It is necessary, furthermore, to point out what a wonderful thing it would be if this were a really representative conference of the working classes of all countries, because this is the only way peace could be achieved -- by the working class making the peace -- and so on and so forth. In other words, we cannot content ourselves with mere denunciation when dealing with a meeting of this kind, but we must use it as a peg for education.

There is another point I wish to stress. I believe there is not enough fight in the paper. This too I wish to illustrate by an example. I listened over the radio to Walter Winchell last Sunday. This man, who made a profession of key-hole peeping, eves-dropping and scandal-mongering, turned his snoot away from the filthy rich long enough to besmirch the coal miners. It is our job to jump into such a fight and swing with everything we have; dig up all we can about the individual, his earnings, his investments and his generally low character, and assail him for attacking the hard-working miners who risk their lives every day of the week for a miserable wage. Everybody

enjoys a good fight and the workers are particularly eager if somebody champions their cause and does it skillfully.

Right now we have underway a concerted attack of the auto barons against the UAW-CIO. This is another fight we must get into and swing hard. Dig up all the possible facts on profits, on the salaries of the individuals attacking the UAW, etc., etc. Make the argument for the union as the union bureaucrats most certainly cannot. By this method of struggle, by the paper appearing all the time as the best champion of the workers' interests, we will gain many new readers and our readers will become real partisans of the paper.

Similarly, in dealing with the broader political questions; for example, the Yalta conference. Our political analysis must be weighed in such a way that a worker reading such an article will not see in it an abstract analysis of a remote event, but will see in it a discussion of a problem concerning his very life and fortune -- as, indeed, such events do.

The problem of our paper is inseparable from the problem of the American revolution. It is the problem of presenting our advanced ideas to a working class that is politically backward, of presenting these ideas in such a way that they are comprehensible, attractive and inspiring.

March 11, 1945.

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LENIN AND TROTSKY ON WORKER CORRESPONDENCE

By J. G. Wright

I want to limit my remarks to one of the main shortcomings of our paper, and that is -- it is still too much of an "office paper." We have pulled up considerably in getting The Militant to reflect the field and, therefore, to reflect the actual conditions of the working class. But that is not enough. The tasks of the next period impose upon us the need of completely overcoming this deficiency as quickly as possible. The proposals presented by Comrade Dobbs, especially the point dealing with the field correspondents and the systematic manner in which we are to cope with this shortcoming, I think will help us tremendously. As a matter of fact, these proposals really hit at the nub of the problem.

In this connection, I thought it would be fruitful to see just how our masters approached this particular aspect of the party press. I went over the writings of Lenin and of Trotsky with this in mind. I knew, as all of us know, that Lenin and the Bolsheviki placed great stress on the need of field correspondents and of field correspondence in general. But it takes a birds' eye view to make one realize what enormous stress was placed on this, especially by Lenin. In his writings there is the equivalent of a good-size pamphlet on the subject, beginning even before the formation of the Bolshevik movement itself. The question of field correspondents and worker correspondence, was raised by Lenin prior to his actual proposals on the organization of the paper -- that is, the Iskra. As far back as 1899, he wrote that the "one condition of success" of the projected paper -- that is how flatly Lenin put it -- "was the securing of the regular inflow of correspondence and materials from all parts of Russia." (Collected Works, Third Russian edition, Vol. 2, pp. 501-502).

He reiterated this formally in the declaration of the editorial board of the Iskra and the theoretical organ Zarya in September 1900.

The entire correspondence of Lenin has as one of its key-notes the need of workers to become correspondents, the need of professional revolutionists to train workers for this task, and, above all, to "get workers to send in materials and correspondence" and for the press to reflect this.

Lenin's earliest letters (1895) to the Plekhanov group abroad show that he not only preached but practiced this. He took particular care to supply the "Emancipation of Labor Group" with worker correspondence, which he proudly itemized each time in his letters.

Again in 1900 writing to Nogin, one of the builders of the Bolshevik party, in reply to the latter's inquiry as to what tasks he should undertake, Lenin stresses as point 3 the establishment of regular worker correspondence. (The first two points list getting the literature into Russia from abroad and disseminating it in the country.)

In 1904 -- on the eve of the first Russian revolution, that of 1905 -- in a letter to a Georgian Bolshevik, Lenin repeats his request for worker correspondence and then adds the following comment; "If you do not henceforth keep sending in this material every week, we shall break all relations with you." (Vol. 28, page 283.) And Lenin did not say this jocularly. He was dead serious.

Here is another citation from a 1905 letter;

"Acutely needed is correspondence from workers, but there is little of it. It is necessary that tens and hundreds of workers write directly and immediately for Vpered (Forward, Bolshevik organ of that period)."

In February 1905 he writes to warn the Bolshevik Gussev that the whole cause remains endangered until "you have acquired scores of new young and loyal friends of Vpered who are able to carry on, keep up communications and send in correspondence, if you yourself are no longer there." Lenin then goes on to urge Gussev to fulfill his duty as a professional revolutionist by training young workers, especially worker-correspondents. (Vol. 28, page 454.)

At a later period -- 1912 -- one of his severest criticisms of the Bolshevik legal organ Pravda in Petrograd (Stalin was one of the editors) was its neglect of worker correspondence. (Vol. 29, page 80.)

In December 1910, writing in memory of Babushkin, one of the heroic early figures of Bolshevism, who fell victim to Czarist executioners in the period of reaction after the 1905 defeat, Lenin singled out Babushkin's work in supplying the press with workers' correspondence;

"So long as Ivan Vassilievich Babushkin retained his freedom, there was no lack in Iskra of genuine worker correspondence." And Lenin then lists twenty issues of Iskra containing material sent by and through this worker Bolshevik. As a matter of fact, Lenin's extensive correspondence with Babushkin has this as one of its main themes.

Similar data can be almost indefinitely extended. Let me conclude by a "Letter to Comrades" written in December 1904 when the Bolsheviks were confronted with the question of issuing their own organ owing to the capture of Iskra by the Mensheviks. In this letter Lenin criticizes the "new" or Menshevik Iskra for its complete neglect of workers' correspondence. His keynote is that the new Bolshevik organ must be made "not only in words but in reality. . . the organ of the entire majority, the organ of the mass of the Russian workers."

There is only one way of achieving this;

"Let everyone who considers this organ his own and who is keenly aware of the duty of a Social Democrat (that is what the Marxists called themselves at the time), let him renounce once and for all the bourgeois habit of thinking and acting as people do about the legal newspapers, namely: it is their business, you see, to write, while

our business is to read. In the Social-Democratic press, all the Social Democrats must participate. We ask all to send in correspondence, above all the workers."

It ought to be pointed out that Lenin addressed these words to workers under Czarism; where illiteracy reigned. Many workers learned the alphabet only on joining the movement. To continue:

"We ask all to send in correspondence, above all the workers. Let there be the greatest possible opportunity for workers to write for our paper, write about everything, absolutely everything, and write as much as possible about their day-to-day lives, their interests and their jobs. Without this material the Social-Democratic organ is not worth a great and it wouldn't merit the name of a Social-Democratic organ."

Let me here further point out that in addition to the handicap of illiteracy there was the fact that the correspondence Lenin asked for had to go through not simply the mails, as here, but through the screen of the Czar's secret police and rigid censorship, to say nothing of it having to go abroad. But to return to Lenin:

"Of course not everyone has the ability and desire to write, but . . . don't say you can't write, say instead that you don't want to write. For if anyone really wants to write there are always to be found in any small circle, even the tiniest, in the most second-rate group -- and the second-rate groups are of especial interest for they often engage in the most important although not readily noticeable work -- even in these groups one could always find a comrade or two capable of writing (Vol. 6, pp. 374-376).

The approach is quite clear. The attitude after the Russian workers seized power remained the same. As a matter of fact, both the Russian party as well as the Communist International, actually adopted resolutions and theses on the question of the worker correspondents and their relation to the press.

The ideas of Trotsky on this subject parallel and coincide with those of Lenin. When he edited papers he constantly pressed for exactly the same thing. In some respects, Trotsky even put more stress on the key character of this activity and the need for training of cadres of worker correspondents. In the period following the Third Congress of the Communist International, the Old Man wrote in a document addressed to the French party that in his opinion, and especially under the conditions in France, in view of the particular organizational deficiencies of the French workers and their inclination toward anarchistic forms -- the network of field correspondents in every proletarian district could very well serve as one of the direct vehicles of the revolutionary mobilization of the masses. This idea of Trotsky may perhaps have some application in our own work. In any case, I think it is quite clear, from the material presented here, buttressed by our own experience, that in dealing with this task of having the paper reflect the field and having a trained cadre of field correspondents, we are dealing not with a purely technical demand or deficiency, but with one of the most important tasks confronting us in the next period.

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SUGGESTIONS FOR THE 8-PAGE MILITANT

Presented at the Militant Institute in New York on
March 11, 1945

Short Features

Run photographs of the columnists. (Warde)

Feature a cartoon character who makes witty, pointed, humorous remarks each week. (Laura)

One-minute biographies, together with pictures or caricatures, of people frequently mentioned in the paper, both good people and scoundrels. (De Mila - Ruth C - Marvel)

A brief, page-one feature giving the gist of the principal subject matter covered in the issue. (De Mila)

Pick out one or two striking facts in longer articles and feature them in boxes. (Ruth C)

Illustrate our slogans with more line cuts instead of type fillers. (Reba)

Columns

Column by Grace Carlson. (Warde)

An editorial-type column on the left side of page one. Take up any burning problem of the day, attempt to integrate and sum up news events; write the column in a fast-moving human style. (ER Frank)

A column along the lines of the combined features, "The New York Press", "The Press in the Nation", "In the Columns" and "Magazine Digest", published in the New York Post. (Locke)

A column like "In the Wind", published in the Nation, listing capitalist swindles, particularly stupid remarks of capitalist agents, etc. (Preis)

Women's column. (Locke - Tony)

Column of personalities. (Warde)

Educational Features

A series on America's Sixty Families, family by family, to personalize more our agitation against the monopolists. (Stuart)

A series on the history of U. S. imperialism and on the labor spy racket. (Ruth J)

A weekly educational feature on some great social problem, sketching the background with plenty of facts. (Grant)

Educational features on "What is Marxism?" "What is Socialism?", etc., stating fundamentals briefly in simple language. (George C)

Getting Information

Ask all party speakers to write down and send in questions asked by the audience. (Tony)

Ask for letters from the field describing what the workers are saying and thinking and suggesting subjects to be treated in the Militant. (Ruth J)

Ask the branches to send in reports of party activity for publication on the party page. (Ruth J).

Ask comrades to turn over to the Militant-F.I. Reference Library notes, clippings, bibliographies and other material gathered in preparing articles and talks for branch educationals, forums, etc. (Marvel)

Tone

More humor is needed in the paper. (E. Stein - Tony)

The paper should contain more sentiment, more emotion, more plain, blunt anger. (Chris)

The paper is too austere and grim. More anger, passion, feeling, emotion, humor is needed. (E. R. Frank)

Editorial Policy

Shorter articles are needed. (Tony)

There should be more news, less analysis in "International Notes". (Chris)

More page-one material on living costs, taxes, wages and profits is needed to help the sub getters. (Grant)

Every labor struggle should be covered to show, even if only in one paragraph, that we are for the workers in the fight. Do the same on racial discrimination. An analysis of the issues involved is not always necessary, but we should at least give a brief, favorable report of the facts. Simple, plain, accurate, vivid, succinct reporting of facts is in itself a powerful propaganda instrument. (Preis)

Try to publish all letters from new readers, even if only two lines to acknowledge receipt of the letter. (Reba)

It is not the best policy to end news stories with our slogans. The slogans should be woven into our analysis of current problems. (C. Thomas)

Stalinism should be constantly explained in the paper.
(George C)

More attention should now be paid to the Jewish question.
(Tony)

We might experiment with the idea of a campaign of inquiry on issues especially bothering the workers, presenting background articles, interviews, letters from workers, our program, etc. (Stuart)

The paper is too anonymous. Leading party figures are not brought forward as personalities. (Warde)

General

Get a breakdown on new readers at the end of the sub drive.
(Grant)

Prepare a style book on makeup. (Ruth J)

Build up a library of pictures of revolutionary figures.
(Reba)

The press and educational departments should collaborate in building the Militant-F.I. Reference Library and in organizing classes in journalism. (Carsten)

We should begin thinking about modernizing our equipment.
(Reba)

Branch organizers should have a press specialist as a helper.
(Dick)

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SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR THE PRESS

By Martin

1. That merciless caricature in last week's paper of some fathead pounding the air would make an excellent standing illustration for a weekly paragraph or so, ironically reporting the alleged remarks of "Senator Mushroom" or some such character.

2. Included in the historical information which we must make available to our new readers who have no political background is the history of the persecutions suffered by the men and the movements which preceded us. You will remember that we did this once before in the old Labor Defender. The young generation of the present day is still further removed from the memory of the old events than were the young communists whom we enlightened in the 20's. But it is all the more important for us to show them the continuity of the movement, and also to do honor to the pioneers who endured persecution to make our present movement possible. We should also "recognize" their persecutors who set the pattern for their own successors.

3. A new anthology of revolutionary poetry. Begin now to accumulate the material by starting a "Poets' Corner" in the Militant. Here are the best sources to begin with: Sinclair's "Cry for Justice"; Graham's "Anthology of Revolutionary Poetry" (an anarchist publication); Chaplin's "Prison Poems"; files of the old revolutionary papers -- The International Socialist Review, The Labor Defender and the Masses and Liberator especially; William Ellery Leonard's works. The "Poets' Corner" will make a good addition to the paper. Poetry is out of style with the sophisticates but the people have always loved it and always will. We aim to publish a paper for the people.

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