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C O N T E N T S

	<u>Page</u>
LESSONS OF A UNION ELECTION CAMPAIGN By J. Lyons	1
REPORT ON LEFT-WING DEVELOPMENTS IN THE RAILROAD UNIONS	11
LETTER FROM M. GENECCIN, Akron	16
LETTER FROM J. ANDREWS, Akron	17
BRANCH REPORTS ON EDUCATIONAL WORK:	
1. SAN PEDRO	20
2. PHILADELPHIA	21
2a. PHILADELPHIA	23
3. SAN DIEGO	25
4. DETROIT	27
5. CALUMET	28
6. MILWAUKEE	29
7. SAN FRANCISCO	30

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LESSONS OF A UNION ELECTION CAMPAIGN

By J. Lyons

Recently, members of the Calumet Branch of the Chicago Local participated in a union election campaign which proved to be of great interest to the party. Although it was an election for union officers, the character of the fight and the number of workers involved gave it all the aspects of a political campaign. Moreover, the two major opponents in the fight were the Stalinist party and our own party. This alone raised the campaign above the ordinary level of union election campaigns.

In the course of the fight, many tactics were employed which are somewhat new to our party generally. From these tactics we learned many lessons, and we are submitting this article for its educational value to comrades in other localities who, in the future campaigns, may find use for some of the ideas.

The Campaign Strategy

In entering the election campaign the first thing we had to do was to establish our objective. What was our purpose in this election? Was it to engage in an educational campaign in which we could advance some of our programmatic ideas; or was it to actually win the posts? The answers to these questions make all the difference in the world from the standpoint of the kind of campaign to conduct and the kind of strategy to employ. We had decided that our objective was to actually win the posts; consequently, our strategy proceeded from this point of departure.

Our objective having been established, our next step then was to appraise as accurately as possible the voters who would participate. What was their political level? What mood were they in? Were the voters in a mood to fight at that particular time, or were they under the impression that they could merely vote for a good program and advance their interests in that manner? What was their attitude at the moment toward strikes? What particular issue was foremost in their minds?

There was another consideration to be made. This time the election was to be held at the plant gates. This meant that our propaganda would not be what it was in the past when elections were held at the union hall. In past elections, only the advanced activists would bother to go to the union hall to cast a vote. In this election more than just the activists would be involved. Among the voters this time would be the "card members", the conservatives, the scissorbills, the bosses' stooges, old men, young men, "good citizens", pool-hall cowboys, foreign-born workers, native American workers, weaklings, and union militants; in other words, a cross-section of the American working class would be involved in this election. It was necessary to avoid the danger of designing propaganda which would appeal only to the active membership. We had to design a campaign which would reach as many different elements as possible. This was no easy task, but it proved to be an interesting test.

Before we could draft the program, we had to make an equally careful appraisal of our opposition in the fight. Who were they? What political tendency do they follow? What will their program most likely be? We readily identified our opposition as being unquestionably Stalinist, and it was not difficult for us then to determine what their program would most likely be. The task was now to find the weakest spot in the Stalinist line and prepare to attack there.

From our appraisal of the voters we drew the following conclusions:

1. There was among the workers a latent disgust with the OPA for failure to hold down prices.
2. There was a strong feeling among them that the recent general wage increase was gobbled up by rising prices.
3. The workers seemed to be suffering from "Battle fatigue" and were somewhat hostile toward strikes.
4. There was a strong desire for reforms and an equally strong desire to win them without fighting.

Our appraisal of the Stalinist program led us to the conclusion that their weakest point was the lack of a realistic program on the wage-price question. The only thing they could offer was an appeal for an "effective" OPA. We decided, therefore, to build our program around the sliding scale of wages. Our strategy was to trap the Stalinists in a polemic on this question, and then to expose their weakness on the all-important wage issue.

In addition to the sliding scale, we included in the program many demands suggested by the caucus members. Premium pay for weekend work, improved group insurance, better hospital facilities and safety provisions: these were some of the points included. Each was attractive to some section of workers. Where one point may not have been attractive to some worker, another point may have been highly attractive. The finished program made a well rounded document which intended to fulfill the desires of as many as possible.

It was of the utmost importance to us that the campaign follow a dignified programmatic line in order to avoid a number of pitfalls. We could not gain anything by carrying on a fight on minor organizational questions which inevitably degenerate into old fashioned mud-slinging and gossip. Moreover, we had to make a "hit" with our program before our opponents could start a red-baiting campaign. With these considerations in mind, we deliberately left out any mention of OPA in our program. We had anticipated that the Stalinists would grab at this thinking it was a weakness on our part, and then would advance their own program for retention of OPA as a means of holding down prices. This would in turn give us an opportunity to retaliate by exposing their lack of any program on wages, which is still the foremost question in the minds of all workers. In addition, it would give us an opportunity to tell

the story of the failure of OPA to hold down prices, and counterpose the sliding scale of wages to the Stalinist line. This was the strategy that was planned at the beginning of the campaign, and which carried us through the fight victoriously.

Organization of the Campaign

Once the program and the candidates were decided upon, the next step was to change the entire character of the caucus from one of a discussion group into an election machine. All eyes were now turned on the matter of mobilizing votes. All discussion on whether this or that candidate would make the grade, whether or not the program was a good one, etc., was ruled out of order. It was now necessary to hold caucus meetings for two purposes only: namely, to review the work of the day before and to assign the work for the next day.

The importance of the human election machine cannot be overestimated. It is generally the tendency to assume that all that is necessary in connection with program is to have it printed and distributed. This is a tragic mistake. The printed document is only the official appearance of the program. It is "the record" so to speak. The program, however, is really put over by the men who carry it to the workers by word of mouth. This is a matter which requires much attention and conscious direction by the campaign leaders.

Everyone knows how damaging rumors can be in a strike or election campaign, especially if the rumors carry a grain of truth. From many experiences with the effect of such rumors, we learned a very important lesson. A group of men united in purpose can consciously and deliberately carry a single idea into a plant and with correct timing spread it throughout a giant size factory within one eight-hour shift. This is a tactic which we used throughout the campaign. When a leaflet was issued on our wage program, the caucus operators -- the foot troops of the campaign -- were instructed to spread the ideas embodied in the leaflet by word of mouth immediately after the leaflet's appearance. The result was remarkable. The whole plant was discussing the sliding scale of wages before the day had passed.

In addition to spreading positive ideas, the operators had to track down and spike every lie, every rumor, and every slander. Leaflets alone cannot do this work. It was necessary to utilize the human machine. The caucus meetings systematically took reports on all lies, rumors and slanders. The operators were then given a number of answers to carry back in each instance. Besides being armed with mere answers, the operators were also armed with tales (and true ones) about the leading Stalinists. They were instructed to supplement their answers with attacks upon the Stalinists. The result was that the Stalinists were so busy tracking down and attempting to stop the spreading tales about themselves that they had little time to be spreading rumors about our people.

The direction of the operators was left up to one caucus

member who was designated as campaign director. Each operator was trained to accept his assignments like a soldier. Plans could not always be discussed because much of the success depended upon surprise moves. It was difficult to put this idea over to the caucus, but after the first minor successes the confidence began to grow and the operators responded more willingly each time.

The literary end of the campaign was planned according to what we call the crescendo plan. We planned our distributions in such a way as to give the effect that the campaign was getting bigger and hotter as the day of the election came closer. Our aim was to reach a climax on the day before the election. Of course, we had to make allowances for polemical literature which could not be planned too far in advance; nevertheless, we planned our non-polemical literature distributions according to the crescendo plan. The result was a gradual increase in the volume of activity right up to the eve of the election. This avoided the danger of a premature climax and a letdown before election day.

The Campaign

The campaign began with the presentation of the program. The program itself was a neat, printed folder. On its front page it carried a name for the slate, "The Unity Ticket." It was presented to the workers by a well organized plant gate distribution with some fifteen men participating. The strategy was to make it appear as though this distribution alone would be the extent of our campaign activity and that nothing more would be done until election day which was nine days away. No one had any suspicion that a full-scale campaign was in store.

Two days later, the Stalinist program and slate appeared. They confined themselves to distributing inside the plant, a very ineffective method of distribution. The result was that their program met with little response among the workers, while on the other hand, the Unity program created widespread discussion not only among the workers, but even in the heretofore silent and seemingly disinterested circles of plant guards, white collar workers and foremen. This was the first time in the ten-year history of the union that program took the spotlight away from the candidates. This was something new, not only for the workers in general, but also for the Stalinists in this union whose politics in recent years had degenerated to the ward-heeling level of the capitalist parties.

Thus, at the close of this first round of the campaign the general impression was that the big guns had been fired. Three days after the appearance of the full Unity program, however, a special leaflet on the Unity wage program appeared. The leaflet analyzed the relationship of steel prices, steel wages and the cost of living. It even demonstrated statistically the increased profits of this particular steel company as a result of the steel price increase granted along with the 18½ cent wage settlement. The sliding scale of wages was dramatically brought to the voter's backyard.

The wage leaflet, like the program, was also presented with a well organized plant-gate distribution. This time a somewhat larger group of men were involved in the distribution, and a bit of slogan-shouting was added for effect. This was on Friday morning, six days before the election.

That evening a caucus meeting was held. Since traditionally no activity was carried on over the weekend in the past, it was assumed by the caucus members that nothing would be done on Saturday or Sunday, but that the campaign would go into full swing on the following Monday. In order to fill in this rather wide gap, and to continue the crescendo effect, the operators were each given a package of stickers bearing the slate of candidates. The plan was to decorate the entire plant with the stickers over the weekend. In addition, various workers distributed among the operators supplies of marking chalk which is widely used in a steel plant (and fortunately, is supplied by the steel companies). The instructions were to mark up the machinery, the crane booms, the locomotives, the box cars, the steel ladles, the buildings, and every available bit of space with the slogan, "Vote the Unity Ticket."

When Monday morning arrived, the workers who had been off over the weekend were amazed upon their return. There were signs and stickers everywhere. No one could miss the Unity slogans. Nothing like this had ever been seen in this plant and it could only be described in Hollywood jargon -- colossal, stupendous, super!

Meanwhile, the Stalinists were caught completely off guard by this unprecedented activity. They appeared Monday morning at the gates in small number with a small unattractive and virtually useless leaflet giving a very brief story of their candidates and their records in office. The same afternoon they returned to catch the afternoon shift, and got the surprise of their lives. The Unity operators were already there in full force with a second edition of the Unity Program, whose popularity by this time was making the Stalinist leaders very nervous. But this was no mere distribution -- it was a demonstration. The Unity operators were now in full glory, talking, shouting, stopping automobile traffic, making noises of all kinds, and demonstrating a spirit of enthusiasm and victory. So many men were involved in the distribution that to the passing workers it appeared as though the leaflets were being showered from the heavens.

The three miserable Stalinists made a half-hearted attempt to compete with the buzzing machine of Unity supporters, but after less than thirty minutes they gave up their hopeless position. One of them was overheard saying, "Let's get out of here. We don't look good." The rest of the afternoon was left to the Unity show which grew noisier with every minute. The Stalinists called their demoralized war council together, and developed the grandiose strategy of recapturing their losses by rushing to the printer and ordering stickers. "Ha, ha, they can't beat us. We've got stickers too." This was the mentality of the disintegrating Stalinist machine.

The next day, Tuesday, the Unity forces were at the gates

again, this time with a leaflet giving short records and biographies of the Unity candidates. Again it was a demonstration as on the day before, and the crescendo effect was being felt by the workers. Besides the leaflets, the operators whipped out tags which they tied to the buttons of the workers going to and from work. The tags bore the words, "Vote Unity" in large letters. The Stalinists failed to observe Unity Tag Day. They confined themselves to inside work plastering up their stickers which had little effect coming so late after the Unity stickers. Anyway, the workers were now being attracted by the latest Unity trick, the tags.

The following morning, Wednesday, was the day before election. The Stalinists appeared at the gates, again in small number, with a leaflet on wages. It attacked the sliding scale as useless, impractical, a "booby trap", etc., etc. It concluded with the Stalinist program for retention of an "effective" OPA. That was just what we had been waiting for. They had finally fallen into our trap.

Not only had we been waiting for this; we already had the answer in print. That afternoon the Unity operators came to the gates for the last demonstration. This time they brought a two-page newspaper carrying a lead article exposing the failure of OPA to hold down prices, the silence of the Stalinists on the wage issue, and an explanation of the sliding scale of wages. The paper carried on its back page a list of 325 names of union men who had signed endorsements of the Unity Ticket. This was a result of the work of the Unity operators. The paper proved to be a fitting climax to the literary phase of the campaign.

On this last day of campaigning, the height of the crescendo was reached by radio spot broadcasts throughout the day and evening and a quarter-page newspaper ad in the most widely read local newspaper. The point of saturation had been reached; any more literature would have been superfluous. The Unity supporters eased off that afternoon, but the Stalinists came in with slanderous attacks for the midnight shift. Their papers were dropped into the gutters by the hundreds. The workers had had enough. They refused to read any more. For them it was all over but the voting.

In the wee hours after midnight, when the taverns had closed, and when the police patrolmen had sneaked to their favorite lunch counters, the Unity Commandos went to work. Armed with tack hammers and 12"x 14" placards bearing the Unity slate, they proceeded to decorate every lamp post on the streets leading to the plant. The whole town was covered. As the sun rose on election day, the town was especially bright because of the placards which had been posted. Even the automobile drivers were startled when the railroad gates went down, and on their ends stood placards screaming "Vote Unity."

The Stalinists thought they had an ace in the hole. They had hired a sound system for election day, and since this had never been used in previous elections they felt that it was a master stroke of strategy on their part. Again, however, the Unity boys were on their toes; for they had not only hired a sound system, they had hired a better one and they came down to the gates earlier and took

the best available spot for mounting it.

The presence of the two sound systems gave us a clear illustration of how this instrument can be used most effectively. Its value, generally, has been highly exaggerated in our opinion. Different situations require different techniques for using a sound system. The Stalinists demonstrated how a sound system should not be used. They made long winded speeches, read off their leaflets, talked, talked and talked. This proved very ineffective since they were talking to workers who were passing by and to workers who were divided in opinion. A speech of any length to a moving audience is absolutely useless.

The Unity operators on the other hand, confined themselves to the campaign slogan, "Vote the Unity Ticket", and to reading off the names and numbers of their candidates. This much could be absorbed by the passing workers. Moreover, it was a very powerful system which was aimed from its vantage point in such a way as to drown out the Stalinist horns. To many it appeared as though the Stalinist system was a spare which was also plugging for the Unity Ticket. In any event, it could not be heard, and nobody wanted to stand around long enough to hear any long speeches. It was too hot, and too many people were shuffling in and out of the polls.

Lessons of the Campaign

One of the most instructive lessons learned from this campaign was the technique of presenting the program to the workers. Heretofore, our great weakness was that of merely putting our program into print, and depending upon the printed matter to do the job. We learned from many other campaigns that this is far from enough. What must be done is to stimulate discussion of the program. That is where the human machine comes into play. The operators proceed as though they were ordinary workers who were attracted by the printed matter. They stimulate the discussion. They present the various points to each worker in his own language. They fill in whatever the printed literature leaves out. In reality, the printed literature merely provides "the line" for the operators who carry it to the workers. The printed matter plays the role of the brain, while the human machine plays the role of the limbs which actually do the physical work.

Here are some examples of how the Unity machine actually operated. If an operator encountered a high-paid, conservative American-born worker he would pick out the point in the program dealing with improved insurance and then proceed with a long discourse on insurance benefits. If he encountered a militant, he discussed the points on making the company live up to the contract provisions. If he met a Negro worker, he centered his discussion on the point of abolishing discrimination. With a worker who is known to be insistent in his demands for improved safety equipment, he discussed the program's safety plank. Thus, each individual worker was given the impression that the point discussed by the operator was the main point in the program, and in most instances, that individual was well satisfied with the program.

Another important lesson in presenting the program is that of being realistic about the program. We must develop the art of feeling the worker's pulse. We must know what points to advance and time them correctly so that they will actually take hold among the workers. It is interesting to note that six weeks before the campaign opened, we were not so sure that we would advance the sliding scale of wages as a programmatic point. The rapid flow of events within that six-week period, however, made the decision for us. We learned from the operators what the workers were saying and thinking, and by the time we were ready to present the program, the question of wages and prices had unmistakably become the foremost issue in the minds of the workers. Two months before, it would have been a purely academic point.

It is likewise necessary to keep in mind at all times the objective of the campaign. Our objective was to win the posts; therefore, we were extremely careful not to advance points which would frighten and drive away any considerable section of the workers. Had we been in for educational purposes, our objective would have been to mobilize the advanced sections of the workers. In this case, we would probably have advanced many far reaching programmatic points at the expense of possibly losing the support of the more backward elements. Since our objective was to win, we could not afford this risk; consequently, we advanced those points which would mobilize the widest possible sections of workers.

A second important lesson was the importance of correctly appraising the enemy. At all times throughout the campaign, one very important question was raised in the discussion in the party fraction: "What will the Stalinists do next?" At no time did we take them for granted or ignore them altogether. We proceeded from the worst possible assumptions, and prepared accordingly. When the campaign finally drew to a close, it was clear that we had overestimated our enemy, but nothing was lost by it. What few moves they did make we had anticipated, and in every case, we beat them to the draw. This is what put our campaign on the offensive, and put our enemies in a defeatist frame of mind, the worst possible kind of attitude in any campaign. On the other hand, the Stalinists had underestimated us by far. As a result, they were caught completely off guard and received blow after blow from which they were unable to recover. From this we can again draw the important conclusion: it is a thousand times better to overestimate an enemy than to underestimate him.

In a campaign of this sort, as in a military campaign, it is good strategy to pick the battlefield rather than leave it to the enemy or to chance. We knew that the Stalinists could not stand up under a programmatic fight, but we also knew that it is difficult to drag them into such a fight. They prefer to conduct a campaign around individuals, on gossip, on organizational questions, and on slander. Had we decided to fight on these grounds, we would have been thoroughly defeated. We had to maneuver them into a fight on program.

Starting from this point of departure, we began to examine

the Stalinist program for its weakest point. We found that weak spot in their lack of any wage program for the workers, and their readiness to defend the OPA. This, we decided, should be the battleground, and we proceeded to attack with the sliding scale of wages.

The first appearance of our program was not taken seriously by the Stalinists, but as the operators began to pound the sliding scale of wages, interest grew among the workers. Several days later a special leaflet on this point alone appeared, and the operators increased their speed. In the face of no program on wages on the part of the Stalinists, the sliding scale of wages monopolized the discussions among the workers in the plant. All gossip, all organizational questions, all petty issues fell by the wayside as the Unity wage program roared by. Finally, the Stalinists had to quickly revise their strategy and come out with an attack on our wage program but alas, only on the last day of the campaign. This was a poor time for them to revise their strategy, and even then the Unity counter-attack was already prepared and was delivered only eight hours later. Nevertheless, the almost impossible was accomplished. The Stalinists were pulled out of their fox-holes, and dragged out into the open in a fight on program where they proved themselves unable to fight. Our strategy had proved correct. We picked the battleground and trapped the enemy into accepting it.

Throughout the whole campaign there was one item which clearly distinguished us from our enemies. Everything that we did had the appearance of systematic organization. Nothing was haphazard, nothing was left to chance. Every detail was covered; every action was organized. All literature was printed because we have learned that mimeographed work, no matter how well done, lacks the authority of printed work. The American worker is impressed by what he calls "class". Printed material alongside of mimeographed work is to him the difference between a sparkling, stream-lined automobile and a Model T. In the same sense, the radio spot broadcasts and the newspaper ad appeared to be "big time stuff", "classy", etc. This lent much authority to our propaganda, and in itself, reflected well-organized and business-like campaign direction. The total effect of these seemingly unimportant considerations was that of giving the impression that our side was the official leadership, while the Stalinists appeared to be irresponsible malcontents who were trying to muscle their way into office. In reality, the Stalinists had held office for four years, but they lost this advantage by failing to grasp the importance of these idiosyncracies of the American workers.

The Unity campaign was unique in that it was strictly a slate campaign from beginning to end. That is one reason why the slate was given a name (Unity Ticket). All literature and all discussion was directed to push the entire slate. The whole campaign was dominated by one slogan, "Vote the Unity Ticket." This served to bind the caucus more closely together and encourage teamwork. Every candidate had a stake in the fate of the ticket. A candidate found it difficult to talk about himself; consequently, he could not avoid talking about --- program! That is exactly what we wanted.

In the meanwhile, the Stalinists spent all their time talking about their candidate for president, and the other candidates were left to shift for themselves. In the final tally, the Unity ticket took nine out of twelve offices, missing the presidency by a hair, and losing two minor offices. Three of the most powerful Stalinists were wiped out, and one of them was decisively defeated by a heretofore virtually unknown opponent. The Unity candidates all ran close together in the tallying, while the Stalinist candidate for president ran far ahead of his slate. As a result, there is now a strong undercurrent among the supporters of the Stalinists. Their leader is looked upon as a prima-donna who took care of himself and left his support out in the cold. On the other hand, the Unity morale has been strengthened and teamwork has completely replaced the prima-donna spirit of bygone years.

The strategy of pushing the entire slate has proved four things:

1. It is possible to mobilize a strictly slate vote.
2. It serves to direct the campaign toward program and away from individuals.
3. It leads the candidates and the caucus away from the leadership of one individual, and turns it in the direction of closely knit teamwork.
4. People with little standing as individuals can be elected in a slate campaign.

The Role of the Fraction

The campaign was by far the best organized venture that any steel local in this area has ever seen. It was the most unique, the most highly spirited, and in view of the kind of opposition, the most successful campaign ever conducted hereabouts. In the forefront of it all stood the party fraction. It was the fraction which provided the direction, the spirit and the bulk of the work. Out of it all the party fraction has taught the workers many lessons, and has itself learned even more.

One thing stands out with greater importance than the episodic victory in the election: it is the victory of our party over the Stalinist party. In the last analysis, these were the main forces in the two camps. We have proved to ourselves and to the whole Party that the Stalinists can be defeated before the working class. The winning of several posts is but an episode, but the collision of programs, and the victory of our program is a successful experiment of the most profound significance. It is this phase of the victory which has inspired the fraction, removed the doubts of our sympathizers, and renewed the confidence of the branch members. It has convinced all of us of the invincibility of the Party program, and has heightened our devotion to the program and to the Party. We are confident that the next years will produce many victories on a far wider scale as the workers more and more begin to understand the meaning of our Party and its program.

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REPORT ON LEFT-WING DEVELOPMENTS IN THE
RAILROAD UNIONS

The experiences of the railroad strike of May 1946 and the lessons which the railroad workers learned in that strike have brought about a transformation in the consciousness of the railroad worker. Rank and file, left-wing movements have developed within the railroad organizations presenting our party with opportunities and openings never before presented to us in the railroad field.

With our small forces we have been able to play a role in this movement and that role can be expanded in the future.

The purpose of this report is to give the facts and background of the new upsurge in the rail labor field and to suggest ways in which we can have more participation in this movement.

The railroad strike of May 1946 brought to the railroad workers a sharp and unforgettable realization both of their organizational weakness and of their tremendous power. They saw their strike crushed through the vacillation and strike-breaking actions of the top railroad labor bureaucrats. They saw themselves thwarted in a struggle for wages and working conditions already long enjoyed by CIO and AFL workers. They also saw the hysteria of the bourgeoisie and the capitalist state in the face of the united action of the railroad workers.

It was this May strike which brought to a head and crystallized the disorganized ferment and dissatisfaction existing within the railroad unions. The past nine months have seen genuine left-wing groupings formed within some of the brotherhoods and a determined struggle launched by rank and file leaders of the railroad unions for some of the elementary demands which are taken for granted by the great industrial unions of the CIO. (We shall discuss these movements in greater detail later on). These struggles are being organized around the demands for more democratic structure in the railroad unions, for the elimination of dual unionism and of the craft union set-up whereby railroad workers are represented by 21 standard unions. In the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, a big, progressive caucus fought for affiliation with the CIO. The Consolidation Committee of Enginemen aims exclusively to merge the two brotherhoods where dual unionism has been the most harmful.

Thus, the railroad workers today are in motion, struggling for aims long since attained by the workers of other industries, thrust into battle by the very historical backwardness which held them down for so many years.

The American bourgeoisie has long recognized the vital importance of the railroad industry to their rule. During the first World War this was the only industry seized and placed under government control and operation. It was also the first industry to be placed under government arbitration by the Railway Labor Act of 1924. The fact that this industry is vital to the American economy was brought

home to everyone with full force when nearly half a million railroad workers on all major systems brought trains to a halt on the nation's railroads. The bourgeoisie and their government were thoroughly alarmed by the immediate paralysis of their industrial system. They launched a vicious and hysterical attack upon the American railroad workers' leaders whom they had praised so long as "labor statesmen."

At the time of the first World War, the railroad workers were among the highest paid of American workers. This position was won through struggle by the great strikes of 1877-1897-1920-1922. The eight-hour day law was passed by Congress under the threat of a general strike of railroad workers in 1916.

The militancy and strategic strength of the railroad workers frightened the bourgeois government into taking action against this vanguard section of American labor. With the connivance of the railway labor leaders they passed the Railway Labor Act in 1924. This act provided for cooling-off periods, fact-finding committees, mediation and arbitration of labor disputes on American railroads.

From that time on, rail labor has steadily fallen from the high position which had been won by great struggles. Weakened by the blight of dual and craft unionism and the big-business psychology of their leaders, the railroad workers played no role in the great struggles of the '30s. Consequently they have benefited little by the great advances made by the industrial workers through the rise of the CIO. They have seen themselves fall from a coveted position at the top of the list of American workers to 27th place among the workers of this country in wages and working conditions (by industries). Now, under the pressure of inflation and the lessons of their recent strike, the railroad workers are experiencing a rebirth of militancy.

Consolidation Committee of Enginemen

The most important progressive movement in the railroad industry today is the Consolidation Committee of Enginemen. This committee, formed at the time of the last strike, was initiated for the express purpose of consolidating two brotherhoods, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen, into a single organization. These two brotherhoods are dual organizations with identical jurisdiction, each spending millions of dollars annually in attempts to steal members from one another. In the past, every move by one organization for the betterment of wages and working conditions has been thwarted by the other. In the strike of May, 1946, the president of the BLF & E called upon his membership to scab on the BLE workers. This strike and its lessons gave a big impetus to the CC of E. It enabled progressives in both enginemen's organizations to organize a broad membership caucus to fight for the elimination of dual-unionism.

The Consolidation Committee has grown rapidly since last May. It embraces today many thousands of workers from both enginemen's organizations, organized around the key issue of consolidation. It is now a formally constituted caucus drawing members only from these two organizations and with local units in many of the important railroad terminals in this country. These members pay a regular

contribution of \$1 a month. It is growing rapidly. It has a progressive, militant leadership and a thoroughly democratic structure officially constituted at a National Conference of the organization held in Chicago in mid-February. The organization publishes a monthly paper, "The Consolidator", an aggressive tabloid expressing the militant mood and aspirations of the progressive railroad workers associated with the CC of E.

National Conference

The National Conference of the CC of E in Chicago was attended by scores of delegates elected by their districts and representing the thousands of enginemen who owe allegiance to this movement. They came from every part of the country to Chicago at their own expense for this three-day gathering where policies were adopted and officers elected. The body of delegates had an average of 26-28 years in engine service on the American railroads. They were all leaders of their unions in their home districts.

Perspectives

The Consolidation Committee of Enginemen plans to carry its fight for consolidation into the B of LE convention to be held in March and the BLF & E convention to be held in July. This will be the first test of strength between the aroused rank and file and the autocrats who head the rail brotherhoods. However, regardless of the outcome of this test, these progressive enginemen have no intention of abandoning the struggle. There is a growing realization among many of the leaders of the CC of E that this is a long, hard fight and they have a great determination to see it through to the end. There is a growing mood among the progressive railroad workers that regardless of the outcome of these two conventions they will not tolerate the dictatorship of the case-hardened dual-union bureaucrats any longer.

It is only possible for us at this time to speak in very general terms about the prospects and future of this movement. However, we do feel confident that the railroad workers have taken a great step forward in the development of a left wing not only in the rail labor movement but in the labor movement of the country as a whole. This progressive accomplishment cannot be negated, whatever the future outcome of the CC of E.

Other Developments

Following the railroad strike of last May, a progressive pro-CIO movement was initiated in the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen. The BRT is one of the largest of the brotherhoods, has one of the most bureaucratic and reactionary leaderships, but has in it some of the youngest and most militant of the railroad workers. This movement immediately struck a responsive chord among thousands of trainmen throughout the country. In November 1946, at the Miami convention of the BRT, the prospects looked good that the trainmen would go into the CIO. This move was defeated at the Miami convention in spite of the fact that a caucus of nearly 500 out of 1000

convention delegates was formed to push for CIO affiliation. President Whitney, previously committed to affiliation, capitulated to the pressure of his bureaucracy and reversed himself. This caucus has been partially maintained since the convention and there is still pro-CIO ferment in the ranks of the BRT. This progressive caucus will probably again make itself felt in the affairs of the BRT and the impact of the CC of E and its development will have a tendency to give impetus to this movement.

In some terminals, "Area Councils of Railroad Workers" have been formed. These councils cut across craft lines and attempt to unite all railroad workers from all crafts for progressive actions on a local scale. The railroad council movement indicates the deep-going unrest within the railroad organizations and are sign-posts for future development.

The CIO has made some progress in the railroad industry by demanding and winning collective bargaining elections in isolated spots. But they have shown no serious concern and have no consistent plan for work in this industry.

District 50 of the United Mine Workers has been pecking away for some years, securing many individual members and occasionally whole groups of disgruntled railroad workers. They, too, have failed to do any serious planning on a nation-wide basis.

Other developments indicating the unrest among railroad workers have been the organization on a local scale of such organizations as the Operating Railway Employees of the USA, primarily in Chicago. These organizations represent virtually nobody and have won for only limited periods of time the allegiance of a few score of rail workers in terminals here and there.

Communist Party in the Railroad Industry

The Communist Party has started an organization called the Committee of Twenty-One for Unity. This was started as a Stalinist move to divert and block the Consolidation Committee of Enginemen. This movement has had some momentary successes in a few localities, but by its very character and if for no other reasons than practical considerations cannot succeed in achieving any real success.

As far as we are able to ascertain, the CP has no real forces in the railroad industry and their line and tactics do not provide them with the basis of securing any forces or influence. It will suffice to point out that their present line is to push a new wage movement and urge the leaders of the 21 standard crafts to unite in this next wage fight. Inasmuch as it is impossible for these leaders to unite for this purpose and impossible for the CP or anyone else to force such unity, the CP gives a left cover to the rail labor bureaucrats and this fact is realized by the best militants.

So far as we are aware, neither the CP, SP, nor any other political organization or tendency (with the exception of the SWP) has any forces or plays any significant role in the rail labor field.

The facts of the present situation in the railroad movement indicate good possibilities for the development of a genuine left-wing. The CC of E and the progressive caucus in the BRT are the most promising movements at this time. Though their demands are modest and their aims limited, the dynamics of the class struggle and the dialectical development of this movement will force them to struggle for broader aims and to do battle on great social issues facing the labor movement today.

What this Movement Can Mean for Us

Despite our modest forces in the railroad field, we have been able to play a role in the development of the left-wing movement. Our comrades participated in the pre-CIO caucus in the BRT. Our comrades in the CC of E have been able to play an important role there. We have helped in determining its program and policies and have taken part in the building of this organization. Our comrades have made some contacts in all parts of the country with progressive rail unionists.

This movement holds out for us today a good opportunity to participate in the building of a genuine trade-union left-wing. In some localities this work has already started and is being carried on in the way which is most practicable at present. This is being done through contact which our trade unionists have with railroad workers. We must exercise great caution in carrying out this work. It would be a mistake to make an open party approach to these workers. However, very good results can be obtained for the party through a trade union approach to the railroad enginemen with whom our comrades are already associated.

Toledo, Ohio
February 15, 1947

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LETTER FROM M. GENEVIN, Akron

January 11, 1947

Dear Comrade:

At its last meeting the Socialist Youth Club changed its charter in line with the recommendation you sent.

The group is developing here against all kinds of obstacles and opposition. In the school where the strike took place last fall and where the club has most of its members, a campaign of intimidation has been conducted for weeks. Led by the principal and the teachers and some of the parents, the campaign has been directed against individual students who are known to be members of the club. The principal has called club members into his office and grilled them for as long as three hours at a time. In addition, he has telephoned parents and confiscated literature.

In the face of this a few youngsters have had to drop out. However, every one of these without exception so far as we know, wants to belong to the club and promises to come back when things take another turn. The bulk of the members have refused to be scared off and among them we have a fine nucleus of young Trotskyists. I would say offhand that this nucleus numbers about ten.

The experience we have had here plus the wave of highschool strikes that have occurred in many parts of the country have led us to an exhaustive discussion of the whole question of the party's attitude towards the youth.

Andrews and I had a long talk with Ted a couple of weeks ago when he was down here from Cleveland. The youth that is stirring today, that is utilizing the strike weapon after the fashion of the union movement is different from the youth of the 1930's. Today there are 15 million organized workers. Their sons and daughters are pro-labor. In the 1930's the party attracted for the most part the intellectualized, petty bourgeois or declassed college students. Today, these are not coming near us in any appreciable numbers. Instead, we are attracting a different element younger, more proletarian and unspoiled by the garbage of college "education." We believe that the party should make some efforts to organize this stratum of the youth.

Of course, we quickly agreed that we do not want a repetition of the kind of youth organization that we used to have. In fact, we felt that we did not want any kind of national youth organization. However, we think that the branches can and should establish youth organizations in the form that some of them have now.

It would not take a great deal of effort for almost any branch to make contact with high-school students and interest them in forming a socialist club. We have members with children of high school age who could do some work in this field. The strikes in

many parts of the country indicate that these students, many of whom also work after school and more of them who are sons and daughters of union members, are receptive to our ideas. Without sacrificing other more important tasks, I think our branches should devote some time to this question.

A good, healthy youth club can be of considerable help to any branch. We have found that to be true here in Akron. Our youngsters do a lot of work for the party in addition to conducting their own affairs, educational work and activity.

We have the feeling that by getting to the best elements among the high-school youth before they have been miseducated, we have a chance to train future party members under excellent conditions.

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LETTER FROM J. ANDREWS, Akron

January 19, 1947

Dear Comrade:

I read your note to Milt, in which you comment upon his remarks to you in a recent letter on the question of the youth. You also say that you plan a bulletin on the problem, relating experiences of various youth groups, and urging party branches to move into this field.

I thoroughly agree that this is necessary. However, I believe that something more than a review of our current experiences in the youth field is necessary to properly motivate an energetic activity of all party branches in this important work.

First of all, from what I know of it, and my knowledge is naturally very skimpy, our work in the youth field is very scattered and uneven, and has its longest experience since the foundation of the SWP in Los Angeles and New York. It is my opinion that these two localities do not offer us the best view of the kind of youth work our party has in store for it. The Akron experience is quite new, but significant in that it represents youth work in a thoroughly proletarian branch and working class milieu. But this experience is only beginning.

I have come to certain general conclusions about youth work. drawing my conclusions from our past experience, our long period of inaction in this field and from the new developments. My conclusions can be listed as follows:

1. The party suffers from bad memories of the youth organization which plagued us during our days as a petty bourgeois

propaganda circle. There is widespread fear of vanguardism, which characterized the old youth. Due to the unhappy past many comrades are extremely pessimistic about youth work in general, and tend to dismiss it as an invitation to a headache. This feeling, based on a party of the past, fails to recognize both the change in general conditions in the class struggle as well as the transformation of the party as such.

2. Trotsky's call to the Fourth International to build militant and colorful youth movements characterized by discipline and participation in every mass action, in the spirit of the young guards of the working class, could no more be applied to the petty bourgeois party than a party without firm bases in the labor movement could transform the transition program into life.

To build a militant young guard which will fight in the front lines of every party and working class action, a proletarian party of action is first necessary.

3. Without a workers party of action the youth group can only serve in social activities, literary activities, and mirror the circle life of the party in all respects. This attracts not the young proletarians, but the young intellectuals. Thus, with the possible exception of Minneapolis, where the youth participated directly in the labor movement (this participation made possible by the character of our Minneapolis branch), the youth groups of the old days were petty bourgeois in character, and developed vanguardist tendencies, revisionism, theoretical flippancy and irresponsibility, Bohemianism, etc., etc. Here and there we trained a Bolshevik out of youth work, . . . but this was admittedly the exception. The reason for this does not lie in youth work IN GENERAL, but in youth work of a certain type of party at a specific stage in its development, with above-described relations to the mass movement. It would be non-Marxist to draw from these relations conclusions about youth work TODAY.

4. A workers party of action has every right to believe it can attract proletarian youth and do successful youth work. A party such as we are rapidly becoming now can expect to provide a healthy milieu for the youth. With our roots in the factories and in the unions, we can attract the sons and daughters of workers and engage them in struggle as auxiliaries to both the unions and the party. They will have the discipline of proletarians, and the political stability characteristic of a working class composition.

5. Not only the character of the party but the character of the whole labor movement changes the picture. In cities of heavy proletarian weight, the unions are now firmly established, while only a few years ago they were only in the process of building. The experiences of the great class struggles of the CIO had not been absorbed, and the confidence and self-assurance of the workers was not established as it is now. The sons and daughters of the 15 millions of organized workers reflect the experience of their parents. In the high-schools everywhere they defend the union which brought them some assurance of bread and butter, against

reactionary teachers who try to propogandize against labor. This is a universal experience in high-schools up and down the country. The wave of high-school strikes in a variety of issues is, by and large, a teen-age imitation of the struggle of the parents in the unions.

This is a subject that requires considerable thought and study. The transformation of the youth in America under the impact of changing relationship of forces in the class struggle is something we should by no means ignore. It should at the very least, be a factor which encourages us to work among the youth, and make clear our aim to tie the sympathies of the youth with labor in general, and to do this through the formation of a party youth group in every branch and the building of youth auxiliaries of one type or another (eg. Minneapolis Youth Section, #544) in those unions where we have influence.

6. On the subject of vanguardism, I believe that first of all we need not fear to move into youth work for fear that tendencies will develop for autonomous youth organization on a national scale with its own officers, publications, etc. We should launch our youth work with the perspective firmly in mind of developing a youth as the fighting young guard of the party, and NOT WITH THE PERSPECTIVE of encouraging or working toward a completely autonomous youth. It should be an auxiliary arm of the party, and a working class youth will want nothing more than that, provided of course there is plenty of democracy and discussion, and great attention paid to education. BUT IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW IN ADVANCE WHAT YOU ARE WORKING TOWARD. Otherwise, we leave the question open. We must consciously instil in the party and in the youth the concept of a Young Trotskyist Guard, and not of a young edition of the party with a complete apparatus of its own and independent organizational operation. THIS LATTER KIND OF ORGANIZATION IS NEITHER NECESSARY NOR DESIRABLE NOR WILL A STRONG DEMAND FOR IT ARISE IN THE NEW YOUTH IN THE NEW PARTY.

These points above need a great deal of elaboration. I hope that the comrades at the center will think these things over, and come forth with a thoroughly rounded motivation for youth work, as well as an organizational perspective that is sound.

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BRANCH REPORTS ON EDUCATIONAL WORK

The National Education Department has received a number of reports from branches throughout the country on their educational experiences and activities. We are publishing herewith, for the information of the comrades, some of the most interesting and informative.

Wm. F. Warde,
National Education Director

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1. SAN PEDRO

Regarding our membership meetings, I must first explain that the entire membership meets once in two weeks, and during the alternating weeks we are split up into three units: one in metropolitan San Pedro, another in Western Terrace Housing project and a third in Channel Heights project.

The unit educationals are of a more popular and current nature, as a greater number of contacts are able to attend. Examples of recent unit educational topics are: The Lesson to be Learned from the Coal Strike; The program of the SWP; Is America heading towards Dictatorship?

Membership and contact participation in the discussion is stressed at the unit meetings.

At our combined meeting we have fewer outsiders and the discussion is on a higher level. Our last four topics ran as follows: Background to the French Referendum (a lecture); a short presentation of the Minority position in the French referendum followed by general discussion; U.S. Imperialism in South America (lecture); The Palestine Situation (lecture).

Our policy, as laid down by our Executive Board, is to increase the type of educational where group participation is possible, particularly around local or national issues, so that the membership will go through the experience of collectively evolving a party position.

Now regarding classes. Our membership falls roughly into three groups: those who have been in the party five years or more; those who have been with us approximately one year and have gone through the basic training course; and new members.

For the new members we have provided a class which is scheduled to begin one week after New Year's. This will be a Basic Training class, based either on Outline provided by the National Office or a collective reading and discussion of Socialism

on Trial. The latter method I found to be extremely effective. To this class we will also invite our best contacts.

For the group that has gone through the basic training course we have a class now running, based upon the document, The Death Agony of Capitalism. This involves collective reading, explanation of terms, words and basic ideas. The members of the class are highly pleased.

For the old-timers we have nothing as yet, but we are thinking about their needs. A suggestion has been made that a group be formed to meet bi-weekly to receive assignments in reading programmatic material and to review the past assignment. This would amount to individual study but with a common guide, and individual conferences with the instructor to explain unclear passages.

We expect these classes to run for three months at most, till the end of March. At that time we plan to have two classes for all members on the following subjects: 1 - History of American Labor. 2 - Stalinism.

In the coming period I hope to interest our members in general reading of a working class nature. Part of the task will be to collect a small library, to give short book reviews, etc. Several of the books I have in mind: Ten Days that Shook the World by Reed; American City; Sinclair's Jungle; Bill Haywood's Book, etc.

L. Scott,
December 26, 1946

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2. PHILADELPHIA

We have no educational director as such; instead the educational work is under the direction of the Executive Committee. The reason for this is that the rapid development of the branch presented us with a multiplicity of problems so that specific responsibilities have not as yet been definitely allocated.

However, the branch has done considerable educational work. Our main activity in that field has been through our Friday night forum, which has met continuously since June 1945. We carried the forum through two summers, plus the normal fall and winter activities. The forum has been both a means of general agitation and a means of educating our membership. We have had to improvise as we went along to make up for our lack of speakers and personnel to carry on the work. Some of the methods we have used to develop new people are panel discussions and mass meetings at which comrade prepare short talks. Since the convention we are orienting our

forum in the direction of taking up specific issues of a national and local character. The last three forums were organized as follows:

The subjects discussed were The Miners' Struggle, The Local Guild Strike against the Stern publications in which we took occasion to present the role of the press, and this week we will deal with the situation in the local mental hospital, Byberry. We have obtained a speaker for this forum from the Mental Health Foundation, a national organization which is investigating conditions in hospitals throughout the country.

For each of these forums we utilized the following means of publicity -- letters sent to the AFL and CIO bodies, plus the unions concerned in the field, asking them to send representatives to the forum. Notices to the newspapers, mailings to our contacts and subscribers, and distributions.

Response came at the Miners' meeting from a representative of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers for the Eastern Pennsylvania Division, who spoke at the meeting and declared himself in favor of united labor action for the miners. Also a reporter from the local press was present and the meeting received a write-up in the press.

At the Guild strike meeting, the strike committee was contacted and agreed to send down a representative to address the forum, and to insert a notice in the daily strike bulletin for our meeting. No one showed up from the Guild, but we received a phone call from them apologizing for not having had any one down. Their excuse was that they were inexperienced and the persons designated to come down had somehow gotten lost in the shuffle.

On the coming forum on the hospital situation, we look forward to the possibility of follow-up actions in which we can involve the audience, such as protests, delegations to the local authorities, etc. In addition to the agitational value of the meeting, the educational aspects will not be neglected, since we plan to utilize the occasion of the disclosures of the horrible conditions in the hospitals to present the need for socialized medical aid.

I present the activities around the forum in detail so that you may have a rounded picture of what this activity takes on.

In addition to the forum, we have had a number of classes in the last year and a half. Beginning with the summer of 1945, we ran (1) a class on the fundamentals of Trotskyism; (2) Lenin's State and Revolution; (3) another class on fundamentals last fall; (4) classes on Plekhanov's pamphlets, The Materialist Conception of History and The Role of the Individual in History. We are planning classes to start some time in January in parliamentary procedure, public speaking, and Marxian economics.

I believe that the National Education Department can give the branches a great deal of help in preparing outlines on the various subjects which the comrades designated as instructors can utilize. Comrades are asking what happened to the plans for visual aids and correspondence courses.

Max Geldman,
December 18, 1946

* * *

2a. PHILADELPHIA

The problem that bothers me is how to provide the obvious need for education in a branch of our size, with many people and with a limited number of capable and responsible people to carry on basic political activity. The branch activists should have the opportunity to study and develop. The new members should be given some basic education. But we seem to move in a vicious circle. . . the more formal education organized, the less time there is for necessary party work.

As I described in our last communication, education here has been carried on through branch educationals, forums and some classes. In my opinion, that is about all that we can do in the present stage of our development. But evidently this does not satisfy a good section of the membership. It adds up to on the one hand, to impatience on the part of the newer members, with the relatively slow process of their learning and training in the movement, and on the other hand, to the formal approach of the older members, who see in classes the answer to all our problems.

I would appreciate your comments on the matters raised. I recognize, of course, there are no formulas that can be applied that will solve all our educational problems. The basic task is our development into a party of action. I have a feeling that the emphasis placed on classes by some of our comrades, is in part a resistance to moving away from activities that occupy so much of our attention at the time when we had no other activity to concern us.

As a result of the local discussion on our educational needs I have a proposal for a basic training course. I have long felt that our old course is out of date. What is needed is an introductory course that will help the worker who joins the party understand the program, structure and functioning of the party from its international relations to the national set-up, to specific branch activities. I have observed comrades in the party for a year or more, capable of making reports on complex questions, utterly incapable of such a simple task as chairing a branch meeting.

The course I propose would be for six weeks duration. It is primarily a class to introduce the new member to the party.

The first session would deal WITH THE STRUCTURE OF THE PARTY: our international relations, the party convention, the election of the National Committee, the Control Commission, the Political Committee, the party departments, such as The Militant, Fourth International, Pioneer Publishers, etc., the internal bulletins, factions, the role of the branch organizer, the local Executive Committee, the relation of the branch to the National Office.

The second session would take up RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF MEMBERS IN THE PARTY: this session would begin with an explanation of the difference between formal organizational democracy and democratic centralism; go into such questions as discipline, loyalty, rights of members, the building of a combat party. Half of this session should be devoted to rules of parliamentary procedure. It should be pointed out that rules of order are essential in every organization; that the party at its large gatherings such as conventions, national or district, follows 'Roberts' rules of order. Party units, however, modify these rules to permit adequate discussion without burdening members with the study of fine points of parliamentary law. Motions are made and seconded and the motion receiving majority vote prevails. From this session on, every member of the class should be given the opportunity to preside as chairman of the class. Practice and meeting procedure should continue throughout the following sessions at the discretion of the instructor.

Sessions 3, 4 and 5 -- THE PARTY PROGRAM: the basic concepts of socialism, explanation of terms used in our literature, such as bourgeoisie, proletariat, dictatorship of the proletariat, revolution, bolshevik, menshevik, imperialism, Marxism, Leninism, Trotskyism, Stalinism, reformism; differences between our party and the SP and CP, the great teachers of the movement -- Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

Session 6 -- APPLICATION OF THE PARTY PROGRAM: the work of the party units. Here the chairman or directors of the branch committees could explain the nature of their work in the fields of literature, subscriptions, renewals, socials, factions, etc. Invite the new members to participate in the work. The organizer could conclude with a statement of immediate tasks.

I offer the above not as a solution to the question of education for the new members, but as an introduction to the party for the many workers who come to us with no organizational background or experience.

Max Goldman,
December 27, 1946

3. THE SAN DIEGO EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

A major problem facing the party today is the question of education. It has always been a problem but now with recruitment stepped up and new layers of raw workers joining the party, the question has become more acute. A new member joins the party because he wants to fight for Socialism. He develops a loyalty to the party. He gets to know the program of the party. He wants to learn about Socialism, to better be able to fight for it. All too often, he is given a stack of pamphlets to read. Even our simplest pamphlets are difficult laborious readings. The fact that these pamphlets are hard reading, is no criticism of the authors, because as yet there has been no solution as to how to transform the highly complex science our movement represents, into simple texts. Then again, the new member is invited to participate in a class. The class turns out to be a monologue on the part of the well intentioned instructor, or at best, a discussion on the part of the more advanced comrades. As a result, the new member figures he is hopelessly backward, because he cannot understand what is being said and drops away from the class.

Here in San Diego, we were faced with the same situation. In a larger branch there are many activities to keep a new member active. In the smaller branches, where activity is limited, it is difficult to hold a new member unless he knows what he is fighting for. After following the old methods of education, we attempted something new.

We based ourselves on the fact that bad or good, the educational system that the members were raised under when they went to school was at least something they understood. They know that school starts at a certain time, that certain homework had to be done. They know the pleasure of a teacher's praise or the shame of a teacher's admonition. The student knows what his text will be, that paper and pencil will be available and there is a desk waiting for him when he gets to his room. He knows that from time to time, he will be given a final examination to see what he has learned. He has even experienced watching the best student receive a prize for his efforts. In a word, we keep the FORM the student understands, but change the CONTENT from bourgeois teachings to Socialist education.

How to convert a headquarters into a schoolroom offered many problems. But with a little effort it can be solved. Bridge tables become excellent desks (we found a sufficient number at Good Will industries at 50 cents a piece) and can be folded up and stowed away until the next class. Despite the inflation, pencils and paper can be bought without throwing the party into bankruptcy. Each student is required to buy a copy of the text to be studied, but the text should always be available at the class. We also find that a coffee pot is an excellent investment. During the recess

period hot coffee stimulates the student and generally, he contributes more than the coffee costs.

The class is a two hour class, 8 to 10 PM. To give the student a straight two hour shot of the text is tiring so the class is broken up into two sections with a short recess in between. The first hour is used for biographies of leaders of the revolutionary movement. This lasts about 20 minutes. The number of new people who know little or nothing of the great thinkers and leaders of our movement is high. Secondly, at each class the students are given five definitions of Marxist terms in relation to the text being studied. Starting out with such terms as bourgeois and proletariat up to now, where such terms as polemic, absolutism and dialectics are given. The student is required to copy these words and memorize them. This is followed by a 20 minute book review by one of the students, either on a book of their own choice, or on one given by the instructor. The remainder of the hour is used for a review of the previous week's study.

The second hour opens immediately with a quiz on the assigned chapter. Students take paper and put their names on it. All papers are turned in. Then they are given ten questions of true and false and ten multiple choice.

After the quiz, we immediately seek the correct answer from the students. Lively and many times heated discussion follows. Even the most backward members feel perfectly at ease to give their point of view. Then, for the final answers, we check with the text for the answer in dispute.

Here are some examples of true and false taken from State and Revolution:

Marxists are opposed to all authoritarian states.
The Anarchists teach that the state can be abolished in 24 hours.
We are not for the Workers State, but for the Peoples' State

Our multiple choice for example, from the Communist Manifesto

1 --- Feudal Socialism was the position of

- A - working class
- B - capitalist class
- C - aristocracy

2 -- Revolution means

- A - no change
- B - a fundamental change
- C - going backward

3 -- The Communist Manifesto was written for the

- A - League for the Just
- B - Liberty League
- C - Communist League

At the quarterly examination, every student passed a 50 question exam, plus two essay type questions, with flying colors.

Contacts are now beginning to come to the class and find it as interesting as do the party members.

The method we have adopted is by no means a cure-all for the party's educational problems, but we believe that it may be a step in solving the problem of preparing our Bolshevik Party for the future struggles to come.

Al Burke,

* * *

4. DETROIT

Now about our general educational program. In our branch educationals we are finding it necessary to break away from the formal type of educational which the Party has used so widely in the past. This is dictated by (1) our type of activity, i.e. greater mass activity (2) our future perspectives and (3) the type of elements we are now recruiting and have been recruiting in the past period. Not only is it a question of making our meetings more attractive, more vital, but it has become an organizational necessity. We have approached the problem by attempting to have fuller reports and discussion of the various phases of our work here. The more political comrades can then make the proper generalizations and additions. For example, one of our fractions had an interesting experience on the question of arbitration. One of our comrades using this local experience as a springboard gave an educational on arbitration. Another time one of our comrades had mistakenly refused to contribute a dollar to the PAC when approached by a union brother. This provided subject for an educational on the PAC and political action in general.

The miners' strike gave us excellent opportunity to discuss the nature of the state, without dealing in abstractions. This point I find particularly pertinent. We have a number of our newer people still with illusions on the nature of the state, and especially the role of the Roosevelt administration. In short, what we are attempting to do is utilize the personal experiences of our comrades to educate them to the fundamentals of Marxism. In a recent series of discussions and a debate on the sliding scale in which our comrades played a leading role, this point was well made. Our comrades were urged to attend. Many of them before the debate did not fully comprehend the sliding scale and favored the straight wage increase. The debate cleared all these doubts. At the following branch meeting we discussed some of the points made by the opposition and thus managed to delve into Marxist economics

A second phase of our educational work is our Saturday night open house and discussion. This has just very recently been initiated. It calls for an hour's discussion with the remainder of the evening devoted to social activity. A comrade is in charge of the discussion. He will say a few words, casting out some ideas, on a topic of current interest. With that the discussion is begun. We intend to utilize The Militant as much as possible in these discussions.

Approximately once a month we hope to hold a large public meeting with a sale of tickets. Speakers for these meetings will be our most capable comrades in the area.

In closing, I'd like to add that probably our greatest problem in Detroit is one of integration or rather having the Party take on form and substance for our comrades and sympathizers. For example, to many of our Negro comrades in Detroit the Party is merely one of many organizations to which they belong. To change this and draw them closer is to educate to a Marxist interpretation of society. This is best done in life itself. This is why we have felt it so important utilizing the daily experiences, the current things, to educate and draw our generalizations from.

Jack Gaynor,
December 21, 1946

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5. CALUMET

Formal classes have not been the answer to our educational tasks here. Shiftwork, intensive trade union activity, different levels of development of our comrades, lack of enough capable trained comrades, and no full-time functionary has hampered our educational tasks.

Our best results in educating our newer comrades is by the use of assignments and lectures.

Our lectures are based on our activities and major current events. The understanding of our comrades of the party line on the Soviet Union is an example of our methods of correlating our activity with our educational tasks.

One of our local trade unions passed a resolution demanding the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Iran. We opposed the resolution on the floor (we were beaten) but from this a discussion and educational were held at the branch meeting. In this educational we covered our analysis of the Soviet State, our defense of the Soviet Union, the method our party uses to come to its positions.

Much of our educational work is done in open meetings for contacts. In this manner, we have discussed many basic works and our party's program and line.

Educational activities of our branch are usually an integral part of our function as party members and not as a separate activity.

The newer comrades are directed to the best order of reading basic works of Marxism and are helped in grasping their significance, by the discussions in our branch about our activities and program.

In my estimation the greatest lack of the party in its educational activity, is the lack of a basic primary work on our method, the dialectic. The lack of the understanding of dialectic methods hampers our comrades in formulating their positions on tactics or events that occur in their activities. Such has been my own difficulty. Understanding a decision or a program is of importance, but to be able to know how to arrive correctly at a decision is more important.

Comrade Charles
December 15, 1946

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6. MILWAUKEE

At present, the Milwaukee branch is conducting two major educational projects: a class in Marxist philosophy, and a public speaking class.

The aim of the philosophy course is to introduce members of the branch and interested sympathizers to dialectical materialism.

A total of 18 have signed up for the complete course, while six persons have attended one or two lectures. The highest attendance at any one lecture was twenty persons.

Reference material is available to all members of the class (this is gathered from members' libraries, the branch library, and the city public library). The instructors and the class secretary make an effort to interest each student in outside reading on the lecture topics.

The class is being coordinated with the F.I. drive. An outstanding success has resulted from this effort, for a total of six new F.I. subs have been obtained from non-members enrolled in the class.

To date the class has stimulated a group of new members to become interested in Marxist theory and has brought several sympathizers closer to the party.

The public speaking class was organized after a repeated demand by a group of members. Its purpose is to develop the speaking ability of rank and file comrades to a point where they can speak effectively in mass organizations, and eventually develop some of them into public spokesmen for the party.

All members of the branch participate in the class which is held at the close of the weekly business meeting. One member is assigned to speak each week. He is aided by the Educational Director in selecting his topic and organizing his talk. Material for the talks is drawn largely from The Militant. This also shows other members how to use The Militant in every-day political activity.

At the conclusion of each speech a constructive criticism is given by the organizer. Other members of the class hand written criticisms to the speaker.

Occasionally an extemporaneous talk is assigned one of the more experienced comrades. This is subjected to merciless criticism.

Only four of these classes have been held to date. Therefore it is too early to judge the success of the project, but members of the branch are very enthusiastic.

R. Henderson,
February 28, 1947

7. SAN FRANCISCO

We are in the process of new branch elections when we will try to reorganize our work and set up an educational department.

During this past year we were able to accomplish a fair amount of work in this field. We revised the basic training course, expanding it considerably. However only one class was held on this topic. We successfully completed one class on economics. A class on fascism failed. More recently we conducted an excellent class on public speaking and parliamentary law.

The highlight of the past years work was a study course on Empirio-criticism which was held at the comrades' homes and which managed to complete the book. All the comrades feel that they got a lot out of this course and are interested in continuing this method. The topic will probably be The First Five Years of the Communist International, using both the Old Man's book and the volume of Lenin's Selected Works.

R. Chester