

Opportunities for Shop Nuclei Work

By ARNE SWABECK.

WITH the present rapid reorganization of the Workers (Communist) Party to the shop nuclei basis through the main industrial centers, the question of the functioning of these units becomes one demanding immediate attention. A practical question and yet quite a problem indeed.

Leaving the street nuclei units aside for the present the problem could perhaps be formulated as follows:

1. How can shop nuclei become the basic political party units capable of mobilizing the working masses for demonstrations, election campaigns and for greater and more decisive political struggles?

2. How can shop nuclei become expressive of the everyday needs of the workers in the shops, become a living part of their fight for better conditions, win their confidence and furnish organized, conscious leadership to attain our definite objects?

3. How can the party based on the shop nuclei form of organization more effectively penetrate deeper into the organized masses within the unions and win them for the revolutionary struggle against capitalism?

These are some very important parts of Bolshevization made many times more difficult due to the numerically small size of our party. In many trade unions the party has not yet succeeded in approaching a real penetration or raised the issues which will win the workers. Millions of unorganized workers subjected to the in-

creasing pressure of capitalist exploitation have not yet recognized the need of uniting against this pressure, not to speak of rallying to the standard of the Communist Party.

Leadership Must Start From Practical Basis.

The undeveloped condition of the huge American industrial army makes particularly imperative that the party should first of all become a much more active participant in solving the problems of the everyday life of the workers and fight for their simple economic needs as they appear within their place of work. A few suggestions how to make a beginning in this sphere may not be amiss.

1. **The Speed-up System and Long Hours of Work.**

This obtains in most industrial enterprises whether workers are employed at individual tasks at the machine or in gangs. Production is so standardized that workers are compelled to make the same motions day by day; the standard of individual production being ever increased, cunning devices applied, clockworks installed to increase the speed of the motions and in addition foremen driving the workers to the point of exhaustion. Where a shift system exists, sometimes even double shifts, no extra pay for night work. In steel mills usually no time is allotted for lunch, the workers being compelled to swallow a sandwich during spells. Such conditions are naturally injurious to the health of the workers.

Yet when work is slack the speed does not diminish and seldom are

the hours reduced but the workers are put on part time employment while the industrial reserve army waits at the gates for a job. The profits of the employers are thus kept intact while only the workers suffer. Still very often workers are compelled to pay cash to some foreman or agent to get such miserable jobs. In many of Pennsylvania's steel mills a particular type of grafter is "in with" the plant officials supplying workers, "green-horns" or "foreigners," who cannot use English very well, at so much per head, paid by the workers.

Here is a field for shop nuclei members by individual propaganda, factory papers, etc., to show the workers what is wrong, point out the needs of reducing hours which also helps to give jobs to unemployed, get rid of slave driving bosses, show how to organize to attain it and extend the solidarity of the workers by properly approaching the whole problem of the unemployed. In this manner the political side of the problem is brought forward.

2. **Health and Safety Conditions.**

In this respect improvements are needed in every industry. Improvements which can only be secured through the workers fighting for it. From the very simplest needs of ventilation in factories to safety devices on dangerous machinery the nuclei members must lead the fight for improvements. In many factories poisonous material is not guarded against. In coal mines many lives are lost for lack of measures against explosions. In steel mills and many metal manufacturing

plants heat exposures are dangerous and intolerable during the long working hours, the hammering and deafening screeches when white hot steel hits the rolls or the cold saw bites into steel plates, become a strain on the workers. In one mill, visited by the writer, a nail making department, called the "nuthouse," endless rows of machines hammered with lightning speed, each chopping off 300 nails per minute.

Accidents are daily occurrences in large plants due to lack of safety devices on heavy dangerous machinery. Compensations are sometimes nil, always insufficient and as a rule difficult to obtain due to a network of red tape and graft of petty politicians. A fight led by nuclei members to show this up in its true light and help the victims actually to obtain compensations will not only expose the capitalist industrial and political system in all its corruption, but also gain the confidence of the workers and assist to organize the political struggle for improvements.

The substitute for real safety devices, resorted to by big industrial corporations in giving "safety lectures" is primarily another means to increase workers' efficiency and thus increase exploitation on the job.

It need hardly be mentioned that the practice of child labor and excessive youth exploitation, wherever it exists, becomes the basis to broaden the activities on the political field in the fight for its complete abolition. There is no better place to start than in the shop.

(To be continued.)