

Organizational Problems

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CHAPTER II.

Shop Nucleus Function.

(Continued)

SHOP nuclei must become expressive of the everyday needs of the workers in the shops, becoming a living part of their fights for better conditions, win their confidence and furnish organized, conscious leadership to attain our definite objects. Shop nuclei should establish contact with the workers in the shops, help enroll them into the trade unions, mobilize them for mass demonstrations, election campaigns, and for greater and more decisive political struggles.

There are many special opportunities for shop nuclei to do effective work. The fact that they are organized units functioning in daily contact with masses of workers and in intimate contact with their problems makes for greater possibilities. The means at the disposal of shop nuclei are, first through individual propaganda by the members to their fellow workers, next through shop organizations, strikes and also through social and union connections. The most effective instrument of expression of the shop nucleus is the shop bulletin.

Some Experiences Gained.

The reorganization of our Party, now that the technicalities of transferring the members to the new units has been about completed, is showing its real problems. These are the problems of properly organized function.

Our main difficulty is still a small party in a large industrial country with the members scattered in many different shops. In this connection our experiences have shown the inadvisability of maintaining shop nuclei below the number of about seven members actually working within the shop. Particularly due to the existing language difficulties it has also been found necessary in many cases to attach additional comrades to the shop nuclei, comrades fitted for certain necessary work who can help build the unit and also comrades who can help overcome the language difficulties. Such attachments should be made, however, as far as possible from among members working in shops within the same industry.

The maintenance of shop nuclei below the required number should be permitted only in shops with great possibilities or with comrades well qualified to take care of the work.

Shop Nucleus Economic Work.

The economic work of the shop nucleus is its participation in organization of the daily struggles of the workers. Struggles for better wages, shorter hours, elimination of piece work and speed-up system, for sanitary conditions, proper safety devices, compensation for accidents and unemployment, against slave driving foremen, against victimization of workers, black list systems, spies and special police in the shops, against the bosses so-called welfare associations, bosses shop committees or company unions, against violation of working agreements where such exist, and for the organization of the workers into workers' shop committees and trade unions.

When these issues are properly taken up and suitable slogans advanced and presented concretely according to the conditions in the shops they will help gain influence for our units and gain the confidence of the workers. To also give these issues their proper political connection must not be overlooked. We must always remember that shop nuclei are political units. The struggle around these issues should be connected directly with our Party campaigns. While the individual members carry out their specific tasks, the nucleus acts as a unit in these activities.

Party Campaigns in the Shops.

One of our most important present Party slogans is the one of organization of the unorganized. This is also the one most easily grasped by the workers in the shops; it is concrete and fits their needs. While this slogan is being put forth by our units, the needs for organization should be

explained, using the experiences of every instance of severe exploitation because of the workers being unorganized. Concrete demands should be formulated as the slogans for organization. Demands, however, which meet their needs and appear sufficiently reasonable to make possible the convincing of the workers that they can be obtained through struggle. Such would be the very simple ones relating to wages, hours, and working conditions. Next the actual steps should be taken first to prepare the workers to become fit material for organization. We should endeavor to get the existing unions interested in helping to organize, but at the same time fight against the system pursued by many unions of organizing certain crafts only. After that our units should proceed, when conditions become ripe, to set up the necessary organization machinery by forming committees in the shops representing the various departments and all of the crafts. The question of a possible strike must always be considered in connection with any campaign for organization of the unorganized workers in the shops.

Naturally the work of shop nuclei are of a different nature within light industries and heavy industries and particularly is this true with regards to our campaign for organization of the unorganized. Within the light industries it is often necessary to work on the basis of the marked craft divisions existing and directly through the trade unions. In the heavy industries on the other hand which is practically entirely unorganized it is hardly possible to do effective organization work except on an industrial basis. Within organized industries generally speaking our campaigns also take a different character as our work there is to a great extent carried on through the unions.

Our slogan for a Labor Party can be made an effective one in the shops and should be connected with all the struggles obtaining. Many experiences can be used to expose the deal given to the workers by the capitalist parties. During election campaigns in particular the needs of the workers in the shops should be made the issues of the campaign and independent political action by the workers proposed. For the actual establishment of a Labor Party, the unions must become the main organizational basis. The Labor Ticket and labor demands can always be emphasized and when such can be put forward, support of the workers in the shops secured.

The campaign for protection of foreign born workers has a direct bearing on the conditions of the working class as a whole and can arouse wide-spread support. The anti-alien bills are bills against the workers and if enacted will become a blacklist system of the employers and their government and should be so emphasized. In the shops national and racial discriminations also exist. The only effective means of combat is complete class solidarity and that is the basis of our campaign.

Our campaigns for our Party press is a constant one and should be brought into the shops. To get the full benefit of this campaign, shop nuclei should always have regular correspondence to Party papers. A reporter should be selected for that purpose, but other comrades should supply the material and when the stories appear, the Party paper should be sold in front of the shop. In this manner the Party press becomes the mouth-piece and the champion of the workers in the shop and becomes an integral part of all our activities.

In all of our campaigns, wherever possible, factory gate meetings should be arranged during noon-hour addressed by Party Speakers with Party literature to be at hand. It is, of course, preferable that these meetings take up concretely the issues of the workers in the particular shop.

(To be continued).

Politicians of Illinois