

The Shop Nucleus and the Branch

By Martin Abern

In reorganizing the Workers Party from its present territorial branch foundation to the work shop or shop nucleus basis, one of the big problems to solve is the relation of the shop nucleus to the branch. The relations between them will not be of a single or everlasting type.

We have to consider:

1. The relations of the shop nucleus to the present territorial branch, and
2. The relation of the shop nucleus to the shop nucleus branch, or the branch composed of shop nuclei.

The former is the big transitional problem; the latter takes up the relations between the shop nucleus and the branch when the party has been more or less completely reorganized, and somewhat definite relationships and activity have thereby developed.

In America, it must be said, the problem of the shop nuclei organization is more difficult than in other countries, due chiefly to the existence of the many language organizations or federations in our party. The only other country which really approaches America in this particular difficulty is Czechoslovakia. But even there, after many attempts to side-step and evade the reorganization of the party into shop nuclei, the Czechoslovak Communist party is (the Young Communist League of Czechoslovakia already has) now proceeding to organize shop nuclei.

Shop Nuclei Will Aid Work Among Foreign Workers

We must face the issue of the language branch and try to find means of reorganizing the entire Workers Party on the shop nuclei basis, at the same time not hurting the Communist propaganda among the foreign language speaking workers. On the contrary, that must and will be extended when the shop nuclei work is really started and understood. It is very likely that many other practical suggestions and methods will be evolved in making and experimenting with the change and work. However, to begin with, some forms of relation must be set up.

First, Organize the Shop Nucleus.

Assume that a shop nucleus has been formed from a branch or a number of English and language territorial branches. What shall be the connection, then, of the members of the shop nucleus toward their former English or language branch? (Here the relationship to the language branch is mainly considered; the English branch question is much easier of solution). In the shop nucleus, as mentioned in previous articles, the member pays his dues, carries on the economic and political work, and has full power as a party member, that is, with voice and vote on all matters.

The shop nucleus member, however, is not removed entirely from his territorial (or old style) branch. He still remains a member of his former English or language territorial branch.

To be realistic in reorganizing the Workers Party, the most feasible method, at present, is to have the members of the shop nucleus remain also members of their former territorial branches.

What shall be the powers and duties of the member of the shop nucleus in his territorial branch? Does he have the full powers of a party member in the territorial branch? To give him also full powers in the territorial branch would mean that he has more rights than a party member who as yet does not belong to a shop nucleus but only to a branch. It would give him two votes, one in the shop nucleus and one in the territorial branch, on all matters. Therefore, in his territorial branch, the shop nucleus member should be given a voice only on all matters, but not a vote.

The question arises: What about the activity of a shop nucleus member in his territorial branch? Is he responsible in any way to it? Shall he be active in it? Yes; naturally. If the members of the shop nucleus were to lose all contact, during the transitional period, with the language territorial branch, then, in all probability, the language branch activities would cease before the shop nuclei are prop-

erly established. It would be very difficult to carry on propaganda work among the foreign workers. This is especially so because the shop nucleus members are, in most instances, the comrades who were most active in their language branches.

Shop Nucleus Work Effective Because Planned

The shop nucleus meetings will, with few exceptions, (perhaps in some places among the needle trades) be carried on in English. Yet that does not and cannot do away with language propaganda work in the work shop. Members of the shop nucleus, who speak foreign languages, can carry on work in the shop in the languages that the workers understand. For example, in a large shop, clothing, textile, machine, etc., if there are workers employed who speak Italian, Russian, South Slav, Jewish, Lithuanian, English, etc., and if the shop nucleus has comrades speaking these languages, it is expected that each comrade does some part of his shop nucleus work in other languages in order to reach the other workers with our propaganda, literature, etc. The formation of shop nuclei, hence, instead of interfering with the work of the foreign-speaking comrades, helps to broaden and extend their activities. This is plainly so, because the WORK OF THE SHOP NUCLEUS FOR EVERY ACTIVITY IN THE SHOP IS PLANNED AND THEN CARRIED OUT. Since the fundamental problem of the language member in the shop nucleus is the matter of continuing language propaganda activity among the foreign workers, we can already see that the language work will continue and increase in the shop nucleus. We should, however, see what technical or organizational ties there will be between the shop nucleus members and the language territorial branch in the transition period. As a measure, the following is possible.

Shop Nucleus Member Continues Work In Language Territorial Branch.

The shop nucleus member, as pointed out before, has full powers in his shop nucleus and carries on his main activities there. In the language territorial branch, he is subject to carrying on propaganda work assigned to him, such as raising funds for the language press, educational activity, etc. All the members of the shop nucleus must regularly and continuously participate in the work of the territorial branch: visit its meetings, work in the educational groups, classes, and carry thru the various tasks of the branch. A transitional relationship in thus actively entered into between the shop nucleus and the language or English territorial branch.

Participating, as he does, in the territorial branch, while primarily active in the shop nucleus, the matter of the powers of shop nucleus members in the territorial branch must be settled. The following, on the basis of activities of the members, can be satisfactory to all.

The shop nucleus member shall have voice and vote on all Federation organizational matters, that is, on press, internal Federation problems, such as means of conducting the work among the foreign workers. But the shop nucleus member has voice only in the territorial branch on Party political matters, such as the right to send delegates to higher bodies, the C. C. C., conventions, political issues in the Party and so on. Those latter and other rights he has in the shop nucleus. It can be said, then, inversely, that the Federation or language branch still has power over the shop nucleus member on Federation matters, but not on direct Party organizational and political matters.

It follows too, that even as there are active relations between the members of the shop nucleus with the branch, there is need also of committee relations between the shop nucleus and the branch in order to outline and co-ordinate the work. A few points which are accepted are:

1. The shop nucleus, during the transition period, is subordinated to the existing (old style) territorial branch;

2. The shop nucleus executive committee meets regularly with the territorial branch executive committee;

3. The shop nucleus members participate in the arrangements and work of the branch;

4. There shall be representatives of the shop nucleus on the branch (old style) executive committee and vice versa. This necessary for working purposes, even tho the shop nucleus members are already attached to various branches. Every effort and chance must be given to the shop nucleus members to influence the work in the territorial branch. Other transition steps will be found, but carrying out these will help toward that end.

AUTOMATISM IN EDUCATION

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do we manage so successfully to weed out non-conformists—that is, persons who can, and do, think for themselves—and to weed in meek conformists? The answer is amazingly simple. No matter what excellence a candidate may attain in the written examination; no matter what excellence he may achieve in the oral test (as far as knowledge can epitomize excellence); no matter how deep and sincere his love of teaching; we reserve the precious right to mar his destiny and his natural ambition, if we find his personality "deficient."

Inasmuch as personality is as various, as changing, as indeterminate a concept as goodness or wickedness itself, we arrogate to ourselves a marvelous prerogative; as a court of last resort (plaintiff, judge and jury, sitting like a holy trinity), we interpret personality arbitrarily to fit in with our ideal of the meek conformist.

Hence (within the limits of examiner's omniscience) we weed out unconventional persons, unique individualities, eccentric thinkers, frank talkers, dissentients in general; and we weed in quietists, kow-towers, conventionally dressed and conventionally mannered and conventionally subordinate personalities. We make mistakes, to be sure. However, we can easily rectify our misjudgments by later and recurrent checks upon "personality." If a lion in sheep's garb is hunted down, or a thinker in gentleman's dress, it is easy to oust

Funds Available for Propaganda Among Foreign Workers.

On the matter of finances the shop nucleus secretary collects the dues from the members, keeps a record of those members who belong to a language branch and reports same to the higher bodies. The national office takes care that the federations are reimbursed. This is in order not to hinder language propaganda activity. However, this is not a permanent situation. It is only put forward as a temporary, transitory remedy. In another article the matter of the kind of language activity and organization which will remain during and after the shop nuclei-form of organization is established can be taken up.

him by marking his personality down.

The constant aim throughout is to reduce our vast educational system to a smooth-working mechanism. Obedience, quietism, conventionality, agreement, are the guarantors of "efficiency."

Automatism in education (the greatest mechanical efficiency with the least human friction) is the ideal. The personality test is the imminent threat to oust non-conformists. Why marvel that the educational system of America turns out countless "educated" persons whose one ambition in life is to advance not one step farther than their socially myopic "superiors"?

Education deliberately hampers originality—deliberately!

A great secret transpires. The examiner, who is coerced by his position of super-dignity to assume the pose of omniscience and to play the clairvoyant to a credulous public (he is supposed to read your soul or personality within seven minutes or so, depending upon his vision), is really in no need of ample knowledge or wisdom or insight.

His mask is shockingly simple. He must be of all sweet accord with his superior, and prove his loyalty by weeding out non-conformists. That task is not onerous. Thinking is minimal; obedience maximal. The machine works beautifully.

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