

What Can Shop Nuclei Do? -

By Martin Abern

THE Workers Party has now set itself in earnest to the task of reorganizing and building the Party on the basis of Shop Nuclei. Much has been and will be written concerning the need for this change of the organizational structure of the party. Everyone accepts the necessity for the change; nearly everyone hesitates to start making the change. Yet were the start once made, there can be no doubt, as experiences of the Young Workers League in America and the parties and leagues in other countries show, all would be enthusiastic for actual and practical reorganization.

Let us concern ourselves here with what our present territorial branches do and what shop nuclei do and can do.

Branch Efforts Are Scattered

What does a party branch activity usually consist of? Reports are made by branch officers. Reports are heard of city central committee meetings. Some comrades distribute or sell literature. Every now and then the branch listens to a lecture, in nine cases out of ten on some theoretical subject, to which there can be no objection of course, but which is hardly ever taken up in relation to some immediate work. Comrades discuss the necessity of joining the union and then go home to sleep on the thought. Everybody gives the other lots of advice, good and bad, and generally act upon neither kind.

The members of the branch have no real practical contact with one another. They usually see each other only at monthly or semi-monthly meetings or at general party affairs. They exchange a few words of greeting, express fond hopes and desires for the revolution, curse or laugh at the stupidity of the capitalist class.

It amounts to, "Well, comrade, you go your way, I go mine."

At home they read THE DAILY WORKER and go to bed. Thus a day's work for the revolution has been accomplished. We speak here of the average activity of the party members. We even assume that all of them pay their dues regularly and are in good standing.

There is, of course that small section of the party which is alive, virile and active in the branch and outside of it, in the union, etc.

We do not find among the members thru their branch activities, real discussions on vital problems of the day. No real discussion of how to carry on the work among their fellow workers in the shops or factories. Instead of a direct vital working class thought, we find in the branch what might be called community or neighborhood thought, a sort of middle class rebellion tinged with working class knowledge.

Shop Nuclei Ensures United Action.

But how about the shop nucleus? Where in does it differ from the party territorial branch? Why is it superior? First, what is a shop nucleus? It is the basic unit of the party, made up of party members working in the same shop or factory or mill. What does it mean when the party members are organized in that way? It means that the party members are in close contact with one another EVERY DAY. Further, the party members are in contact with the workers in the shop. But so are they with the workers in the shop when they belong to the branch. But there is a difference. In the shop nucleus the party members are in conscious contact with the workers. They know they are in the shop nucleus in that particular factory with a definite aim in view relative to their fellow workers, and they proceed to carry out a program in the shop.

In our present party branches, comrades tend to hypnotize themselves with all sorts of phrases, prophecies and views about what they think, but do not know, is going on in the world. But organized politically in the shop with a program of action, the members strive to realize in reality what's what in the industrial and political world.

Shop Nucleus Work More Numerous Interesting and Vital

What are the things which party members in the shop nuclei do? First, they must have meetings, of course,

and they can meet almost at any time since they are always together. They can meet together at the noon lunch for instance, and discuss some problem which may come to their mind. They pay their dues thru the secretary of the shop nucleus. They get literature from the shop nucleus literature agent, and they undertake to sell or to distribute it to their fellow workers in the shop.

Conscious of what needs to be done, they recognize in the slogan of the Communist International—"Education thru direct participation in the class struggle" not merely a phrase but a fact arising before them in a thousand different ways in the shop.

The party members look about them in the shop. What is really going on? Are the workers in the shop satisfied with their conditions? Are they thinking about shorter hours, more wages, better conditions? Are they thinking about organizing, if they are unorganized? Are their fellow workers giving any thought to political problems? Do they read anything else besides the capitalist papers? Do they think about anything else besides going home after work to eat, to rest, perhaps to go to a movie, a ball game, a prize fight, a pool room?

These are things which a member of a shop nucleus begins to think about because he with the other party members are organized in the shop.

The shop nucleus members see that, if they want to make any headway among the workers in the shop, they must try to respond to and to gauge and see all the needs and activities of the workers in the shop. The shop nucleus must meet regularly to take up the questions of the day in the shop, the economic questions. Then they must see what they can do to crystallize and carry out the problems in the shops with a view towards their political or Communist development.

The shop nucleus, therefore, works out a practical program for itself as a nucleus, as a party unit, and for the rest of the workers in the shop whom it tries to get to carry out that program.

Should the girls in the National Biscuit Company be in dissatisfied mood because of the dirty aprons they have to work with, the shop nucleus begins to carry on an agitation for clean aprons. Small, true, but step into a shop any day and find out what little things workers think about. Is the food in the cafeteria in the Hart, Schaffner and Marx firm poor? Is Ward's scab bread being used in the so-called union cafeteria? The shop nucleus members begin discussing how to compel the cafeteria to get better food, to get union-made bread there. Is half an hour lunch time too short a time in which to gulp down the meager lunch? The shop nucleus takes up the issue of an hour for lunch time. Is there a possibility of a wage cut in the Pullman or Hege-wisch car shops? The shop nucleus members begin to raise a protest, to discuss the standard of living today; how to organize the men against the wage cut; how a union could perhaps prevent that. Is there an election campaign on? The shop nucleus members make sure to distribute among the shop mates leaflets, to start a discussion on the candidate or to try to take up a collection to help

our campaign. A machine shop nucleus in Chicago is doing the latter.

These are the small things, it can perhaps be said: it is true, but they are the living issues which arouse workers and which organize them for concrete issues of the day and develops their thought for greater, for political problems.

Party Thinks In Terms of Shop and Struggle.

What the shop nuclei activity does for our party members is that it changes their attitude towards the class struggle.

Not in a fundamental political sense, that is, but it makes our members face the realities of the every day practical world. It destroys any dilletante attitude toward the struggle and makes them, instead, apply political knowledge to concrete economic conditions and use their Communist understanding to develop their fellows workers politically.

There are so many things that can be pointed out which a shop nucleus does, but which a party branch cannot very well do.

There is the work to establish shop committees, to help organize the union, to make a conscious effort to develop politically. The activities and duties of the members in a shop nucleus are so numerous that pages could be written on each. But it is important to begin with, to point out only some of the immediate activities mentioned hitherto, to indicate the possibilities of shop nucleus work.

The small attempt at factory campaigns by the Young Workers League and Workers Party in Chicago at the Western Electric, International Harvester, Hegewisch and other places is only a slight indication of the propaganda and organization for communism that is possible. But if results of a good character can be shown when such factory campaigns, etc. are directed by the party from outside the factory, how much more effective would these and other campaigns be if the party membership in these factories were organized as political units within them to carry out such a campaign with preparations beforehand within the factory, and with a knowledge of what are the conditions therein and what the worker's think and want?

There is the question of wall newspapers or bulletins written in ink or pencil, if need be, and pasted in the factory somewhere for the workers in the shop.

It is very true that it is difficult at first to organize and to work politically in the shop; for these is the tendency to take up the shop and immediate problems and forget the main thing, the political development; however, in the work, all class strug-

gle activities find, in one way or the other, political expression.

A manual cannot very well be given to a party member as to how to conduct themselves in a shop. Only general outlines can be given, but experience will show the shop nucleus how to round out its activities politically. First start the job of organizing the shop nucleus; being to lead the workers in the shop ideologically economically and politically, and you will begin to get and retain confidence of the other workers. You will learn to measure the political maturity of the workers and how to develop that further. The work is hard and there will be direct rebuffs from the workers and perhaps even worse, but that is another matter. The safety of the party is, in short, in political organization in the shops, but that is a discussion for another time.

To close, then, the party is serious in its efforts to reorganize the party, and the membership should give its support to the necessary change. There can be no question of this resulting in building and developing our party. Our slogan must be:

Every member an agitator!

Every member of the party a member of a shop nucleus!

Every factory a shop nucleus of the Workers Party!

WHEELER'S 'LABOR' PARTY

(Continued from Page 1.)

the masses are preparing to resist the attempt of MacDonald to sell them out to the capitalists.

This, dear senator, is the real truth. What you really favor in America is not the British Labor Party as it exists at present, but the sort of a capitalist liberal party which MacDonald is trying to build. Why, the senator wouldn't even consent to call his future party a Labor Party! The reporter asked:

"What would you call it?"

"Liberal party would be suitable, or Progressive party would do."

A Liberal or Progressive party. A party of people who have "ideals," that is, money. A party of bankers, merchants and manufacturers, that is the sort of a party that Wheeler and LaFollette stand for.

Now, what sort of a party do the socialists stand for?

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Stir the Shops!

The very best place to carry on a working class campaign is in the shops and factories where the workers gather to earn their living. It is there that minds are open to the measures, parties and candidates that stand for concrete solutions of the problems of bread and butter facing the working class. It is in the shops that the workers will see most clearly, for example, the difference between Foster, the union organizer and fighter for the workers, and LaFollette, the lawyer and fighter for the middle class. (Editorial Daily Worker.)

THE ABOVE "HITS THE NAIL" on the head. Nothing could be added to that. It's up to you reader, to do everything physically possible to place

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