

Shop Organization and Shop Activity

By WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

In the very center of the recent CC Plenum stood the question of a greatly sharpened Party orientation to the factories. Concretely, this expressed itself by the great stress laid upon the building of shop nuclei, the development of the Party activities generally with the shop as the base and especially the extension and intensification of trade union organization and struggles in the shop.

This great emphasis on shop activity, amounting to a real turn in the work of the Party, is indeed timely. It is part of the general development of the Party from its previous agitational stage to one of mass struggle. It is entirely in line with the central emphasis which our Plenum 9 months ago placed upon the question of partial demands of the workers which is the very starting point of all real shop work and of mass struggle generally in the United States.

For years the Comintern has been urging upon us the fundamental necessity of building the Party upon the shop nucleus basis and of centering all its main activities around the shops; the Profintern has followed a similar course regarding our trade union work; and from Plenum to Plenum and Convention to Convention of our Party, we have adopted resolutions to this general effect. But very little has been done, to put all these good directions and resolutions into effect. In fact there are manifest tendencies to accept the street nucleus as our basic organization form, and to think of shop organization and activities only in terms of trade unionism; that is, of six committees, grievance committees, shop branches, etc., and their immediate fight for partial, economic demands, instead of in terms which are based on the Party organizationally (shop nuclei) and its whole revolutionary program.

The famous reorganization of the Party of several years ago did no more than to produce a lot of talk about the shop nucleus and to shift our Party from a language to a street (or residential district) nucleus basis. When our recent Plenum went into session we had (aside from the new mine nuclei) not more than 10 per cent of the Party membership organized in shop nuclei and these nuclei were quite inert and showed a tendency to decline.

This is an impossible situation which must be

available, and every worker and farmer must be mobilized for this enormous fight.

As for New York state and Roosevelt's fake "unemployment" plan we must demand: That the whole \$20,000,000 appropriated by the New York Legislature be used for cash payments to the distressed unemployed! That the \$20,000,000 should be only a beginning of the gains of the workers thru their struggles and that a fund of a hundred million dollars be set up, thru heavy taxation on the incomes of wealthy persons and corporations, for immediate unemployment relief! Cash payments of \$15 a week for each unemployed worker and \$3 for each dependent. That the \$20,000,000 fund and the larger one to be raised, be turned over to the unemployed councils for administration and distribution, so as to avoid the major part of this fund going into the pockets of the "commissionaires" and the contractors as graft, and not to degrade the unemployed to the position of beggars.

These are some of the immediate demands around which to develop a gigantic struggle right here in New York. We can annex some of these demands, for the New York Unemployed Councils have a whole set of additional demands at the same time we must fight against the masses of the White House who intend to refuse any federal unemployment relief on the basis of such fake plans as Roosevelt's: the bosses in Washington who will pretend that "the states are taking care of their own needy."

This struggle must be developed at once. The master class was forced to make some concessions because of our struggle—now is the time to develop our struggle to a higher stage, to wrest from them real concessions—a system of unemployment and social insurance as proposed by the Unemployed Councils, the T.U.U.L. and the Communist Party.

spreadily remedied. For a long time we have pointed out the serious danger of the wide tendency in the Party to lag behind the masses in the developing struggles. A major cause of this lagging behind is due to the fact that our Party is not yet organized upon the shop basis. It is an A. B. C. of Communist organization that for our Party to be the real leader of the masses, it must base its organization and life directly upon the shops. Shop nuclei are much superior to street nuclei for developing mass struggle. This is true not only with regard to strikes, but also unemployment work, anti-war work, Negro work, election campaigns, the fight against the social fascists, and all the other major activities of the Party. While it is true that we must build street nuclei wherever our forces for the time being are too weak to build shop nuclei, but our Party must and will be fundamentally built on the shop nucleus basis.

A decisive turn of the Party towards the shops is now tactically necessary for its further growth and development. Great strikes and other mass struggles now stand before the American working class faced as it is by the deepening crisis, wage cuts, mass unemployment, increasing terrorism, etc. If our Party is to play a leading role in the coming fierce mass battles, it must proceed vigorously to strengthen its position in the shops, especially in the basic and war industries. The same is, of course, true with regard to the Young Communist League.

The mine strike teaches us clear lessons in this respect. When this great struggle began we had in the mine fields, in spite of the great radicalization of the workers, only a few scattered fragments of Party organization. These collapsed under the big tasks at the outset of strike. If we had a real Party base, and it could easily have been so, we could have organized three times as large a strike, controlled it much more firmly, and generally developed to a far greater degree the leading role and organization of the Party. But we had to build the Party from the ground up in the struggle, which constituted a great handicap. In the future we must not wait till these big strike storms burst about our heads before we start Party building. We must now take time by the forelock by systematically developing our shop nuclei in the key and basic industries. The whole Party and the YCL must be orientated upon this task.

So far as our present Party membership is concerned, it is not so much a matter of reorganizing the existing street nuclei into shop nuclei, as it is of building shop nuclei out of and with the support of the street nuclei. We are long past the stage (1925-27 period) where some thought we had reorganized the Party onto a shop nucleus basis six weeks time. The building of shop nuclei out of street nuclei, indeed the building of shop nuclei generally is a difficult task requiring the close attention of the Party leadership. It must not be done schematically in this initial stage would it be well for each district committee to make the most intimate study of a single nucleus in a given plant, so that the basic lessons learned there may be carefully applied elsewhere.

Our task is more than one of simply reorganizing street nuclei into shop nuclei. We must especially branch out into the industries, recruiting new nuclei in many plants and industries, where we have no reorganized Party. This will require a skillful mobilization of our contacts in proletarian fraternal organizations, the readers of our language press, etc. It also necessitates the working out of concentration points by the respective districts. Such Party concentration work in the industries must, of course, dovetail with the concentration programs of the revolutionary unions.

In establishing contacts to begin shop activity the question of work among the unemployed, and especially the part time workers, is of the greatest importance. Mass movements among these workers can readily be set into motion and these furnish a bridge to the masses in the shops.

The Party can be built in the shops on the basis of struggle. Party shop nuclei must be born out of the furtherance of the Party campaigns, and Party nuclei can live only by carrying on a program of struggle. Here the trade union work assumes basic importance. Every

So! Besides being the biggest landlord that robs the peasants, the Church not only has millions in cash (while millions of the poor go ragged and hungry!), but also the Church holds big blocks of shares in "subways, railroads and utilities"!

Incidentally, you see that between August 21 and Sept. 1, the "solid blow" supposed struck by the government dominated by the "socialists"—has turned out to be an agreement with the Church that the government will use its tax-collecting—and that means its police power—to help the Church rob the masses!

When you hear that the Spanish workers are deserting the "socialists," going over to the Communists and are fighting the "socialist"—capitalist republic, remember these reasons for it.

District, Section and Unit Literature Agents

See that you are supplied at once with the following literature for current campaigns:

For SOLIDARITY DAY—September 7	
Work or Wages, by Grace M. Burnham	.10
Social Insurance, by Grace M. Burnham	.10
History of May Day, by Alexander Trachtenberg	.10
Race Hatred on Trial	.10
Graft and Gangsters, by Harry Gannec	.10
Lynching Negro Children in Southern Courts, by Joseph North	.10
Little Brothers of the Big Labor Fakers by William Z. Foster	.10
The Frame Up System, by Vern Smith	.10
Tom Mooney Betrayed by Labor Leaders	.10
For INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY—Sept. 8	
Youth In Industry, by Grace Hutchins	.10
No Jobs Today, by Phil Bard	.05
Life In the U. S. Army, by Walter Trumbull	.10
For the UNEMPLOYMENT CAMPAIGN	
Fight Against Hunger	.05
Out of a Job, by Earl Browder	.05
20,000,000 Unemployed	.10
50,000,000 Unemployed	.05

Also Work or Wages and Social Insurance For the ELECTION CAMPAIGN	
Why Every Worker Should Join the Communist Party	.05
The Heritage of Gene Debs, by Alexander Trachtenberg	.10
American Working Women and the Class Struggle	.05
Revolutionary Struggle Against War vs. Pacifism, by Alex Bittelma	.05
Also your local Election Platforms, "Out of a Job", "Fight Against Hunger", "Graft and Gangsters", "Race Hatred on Trial", "Lynching Negro Children In Southern Courts", "Work or Wages", "Social Insurance".	

nucleus must definitely set forth with the policy of building united front grievance committees, of working out the workers' economic demands, and of developing the trade union organization (shop branches, etc.) and struggle in support of these demands.

This question must not be mechanically put as if first we must build the Party nuclei and then the revolutionary union. Both must go ahead simultaneously. In certain cases of sudden strike movements, especially in view of the Party's weak base in the factories, the union must sometimes set up its beginnings of organization before the Party does, as in the miners' strike. But we must not make the serious error of relying upon this. The Party must at once begin to build its nuclei and to develop its program of struggle in the key plants in the various districts. In shop organization and activity it must lead, not lag behind, the TUUL unions.

More shop activity is vital to our Party in every respect. Thousands of our old Party members, convinced revolutionists, who have been recruited mostly by agitational means, will by shop work, be drawn into real struggle. And as for the hundreds (yes, thousands) of new Party members, who are coming in primarily because of the Party's militant struggle for partial demands in strikes, unemployment campaigns and Negro work, will, by shop work, find it much more possible to remain in the Party and to become real Communists. Shop work is a broad way to the Americanization of the Party. The recent CC Plenum, especially because of the heavy emphasis upon shop activity, will stand out as a milestone in the life of our Party.