

PARTY BUILDER

F O R M E M B E R S O N L Y

VOLUME III - NUMBER 1 JANUARY 24, 1948

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By Susan Green

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At the New York City membership meeting on October 5, called for discussion prior to the Active Workers Conference, for the first time comrades talked about the mental malaise and "soul sickness" that everybody admits have crept into our party. Heretofore we have been merely exhorted or exhorting upon the subject. The healthy way is to speak out openly.

Comrade Gates, at the meeting, seemed to imply that comrades are despondent because they hoped to have Socialism in their day, and consequently now suffer a subjective disappointment. By and large, I do not think that is correct. Most of our comrades are in the movement because they believe in Marxism and wish, without setting time limits, to work for its realization. What has discouraged some of us is that we are coming to the end of a historic period, namely, the decline of capitalism, and nowhere in the world is there a workers' government to lead the way to a socialist reconstruction - and, comrades add, nor is there a prospect for it. They feel the historic moment for revolution has passed, in vain. That moment was the collapse of Hitler, when in western Europe there were no governments, no capitalists, but powerful resistance movements with arms in hand. We understand the intermeshing reasons why the revolution did not take place. But now there is, in spite of our SP-CP-to power slogan, fear that the Communist Parties will actually manoeuvre themselves into power, with the possibility of a Stalinist era - if atom bombs and jet missiles do not effect a more radical "solution" of world affairs.

I might also add, as contributing to the general pessimism, that the great colonial upheavals natural to capitalist decline, taking place in this period, have nowhere cemented an international bond between the workers of the imperialist countries and the colonial people. Nor has there been anything but bourgeois colonial leadership with reliance upon the United Nations or the United States.

Therefore, discouragement comes, first, from the feeling that the big moment passed. Now we face the inadequacies in strength and program of the Trotskyist movement. The opposing forces seem overwhelming. There is a helplessness. It resembles that felt by many people not in the revolutionary movement when they realize the imminence of war and human suicide; they react with fatalistic helplessness.

Where the comrades make their mistake is in thinking that the historic period of the decline of capitalism is over. With United States capitalism still to reckon with, how can we close the shutters and call it a day? Certainly the American workers have not yet made their try for revolution. Why should anybody suppose that they will not?

This does not mean writing off the European revolution. Perhaps we must shift our sights to a wider range. Comrade Goldman in his article in the September NEW INTERNATIONAL, wrote: "... whether or not a new order other than socialism will replace capitalism will be decided by the struggle in the United States." While I do not agree with Comrade Goldman's ideas on the Russian monstrosity, I do approve his emphasis on what the workers do in this country. Comrade Judd

returns from Europe, paints for us a picture of an almost total impasse for the European revolution, but underscores the importance to Europe of what the American working class will do. To me it seems also that the outcome of the colonial revolutions depends in large measure on the part to be played by the workers here. And haven't the American workers a responsibility and a role to play against World War III?

Very despondent comrades may say, "Oh, well, now that the European revolution has failed, you are just transferring your hopes to the American revolution." That's not true. Shifting the focus to America has its basis in objective reality, as certainly was the prediction that what happens here will profoundly affect Europe, Russia and the whole world.

Comrades are disheartened by the backwardness of the American workers in domestic and in foreign politics. But backwardness is not a permanent state. Again on the pessimistic side, comrades note how labor bureaucrats are making the patriotic line-up for World War III, preparing to herd the working people to slaughter. Also, workers are being taught by capitalist agencies that Russia is socialism, that therefore socialism is a totalitarian slave state - and many no doubt are influenced. But these developments are not immutable.

The crisis of American capitalism will hit the workers hard. It is true that topshelf capitalist economists have schemes for cushioning future crises. But does the American capitalist class today show any signs of accepting regulation to this end? I don't think so. Again, American capitalism can no longer function on a laissez faire basis. It must militarize itself, at great cost to be born by the people along with the imposition of militaristic restraints. To our advantage on the American scene is that the Communist Party is not the force it is in other countries, and how easy it is today to hold it up to working class scorn. Also to our advantage is that American workers, different from European workers, are not tied to Russia because of its past, and know the score on Stalinism.

To me one of our great problems is to give new purpose and new scope to our propaganda and agitation. We must speak to what is in the minds of the workers, the more progressive ones. Many of them can out-talk any member of our party on the faults of capitalism. But these enlightened workers are afraid of social revolution, afraid that it can lead only to Stalinism, or to a similar form of bureaucratic usurpation. We must break this fear down by our education and propaganda. We must show that bureaucratic degeneration and a new kind of slavery are not inevitable, and we must give the whys and the hows. Only along these lines can we get a response from workers who know all about capitalism, but prefer the devil they know to the devil that may be worse.

Another task before us is to change the nature of our propaganda on international affairs. Vast numbers today feel like straws in the wind of the international situation, helpless, fatalistic. It is no longer good enough for us merely to make sound Marxian analyses of what is happening in the United Nations, of the conflict between the United States and Russia, of the preparations for World War III. Condemning imperialism and calling for a Socialist world are meaningless abstractions to frightened and groping people. We have to teach American workers that they have a deep responsibility in international affairs, that they are in a pivotal position, that in the final count

their actions will shape the future.

The Workers Party is too conservative about this, almost like the labor bureaucrats anent labor politics. Or perhaps I might say that we are today handling international affairs, in the main, as if war were an actuality, and we had to watch our step.

On domestic issues we have our transitional program, and very often we break up our demands, add, subtract, make changes for the situation at hand - so that the workers can put their teeth into them, can see a way for practical action. We should do something like this anent the war in preparation, the European crisis, the Russian-American conflict, the colonial revolts. In the Program of the Workers Party, Article IX For Peace and Freedom, we carry a few principled demands of which we make little use, and which we do not even bring up to date because we still ask "For an end to conscription." We need a better transitional program for the international situation, concrete, so that workers may get a feeling that there is something they can do, that they have a great responsibility, and a great role. By earnest thinking and trying, I believe that something can be worked out so as to fill the gap now yawning between us and the workers who are more disturbed by the international situation than by anything else.

In conclusion: There is revolutionary work to be done in the United States. The success of that work is crucial for the whole world. The Workers Party has a role to perform and at least the possibility for success. We are, therefore, one of the forces shaping history. That is our *raison d'être*. Let us not drag our feet.

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FOR A NATIONAL EXCHANGE OF IDEAS FOR
PARTY SOCIALS

By George Leo Gordon (Buffalo)

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The Buffalo Branch has used an idea from Cleveland to liven up socials with surprising success in a first trial, and suggests that a theater-skit exchange be set up to make material available to all branches.

(The idea, to review, consists of a master of ceremonies who announces the number of characters and description thereof in a topical theater skit, and then accepts votes for the parts in the form of a penny a vote from the audience.) Both the voting and the performance of the skit by the winners produces that form of spontaneous participation and entertainment so often sought after without success in "games." Financially, the idea also produces astounding results.

The branch is forwarding the two skits it used: "Union Label," and "The Discontented Hour," as a start in setting up an exchange, since some branches perhaps have no members with a skit-writing flair, and others cannot produce sure-fire material when needed. An exchange will make the best talent available to all as an additional guarantee of the entertainment's success.

Like all good ideas, this one must be used sparingly. The Buffalo Branch would like the Party Builder to poll all branches on their entertainment ideas and experiences in lifting socials out of the class of a "chore" or "obligations" and into the function aimed at -- a good time.

November, 1947.

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DOLLAR DEMOCRACY -- PAC STYLE

By George Leo Gordon (Buffalo)

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Though our policy on PAC-CIO officially is to use it as a means of building sentiment for an Independent Labor Party, in the case of Buffalo it has objectively resulted in an entirely different policy -- abstentionism, on PAC.

This has a background of substantial reasons mainly centering around the fact that locally the PAC is Stalinized either organizationally or through the weight of its class collaboration propaganda over the years.

Recently, however, a UAW-CIO organizer interested in breaking the narrow and stifling control exercised over PAC by the local labor bureaucracy, came forth with an idea for the '48 campaign which opens up the possibility for PAC participation by those interested in building a labor party.

He proposed that all in plants who contribute a PAC dollar be called to a meeting where THEY, not the tops, will vote on where and how and for whom they want their dollars spent. He also suggests that such meetings elect representatives to a city-wide body of PAC to enable the rank-and-file to bring the pressure of its desires to the top, organizationally.

This idea, of course, could also be utilized by the PAC labor bureaucrat and Stalinist machines to organize more and bigger meetings in order to give its class collaboration a mask of democracy, and thus further entrench it -- IF there is no real sentiment for a break with "friends of labor" in the ranks.

However, 1948 will pose the need for political independence more acutely than ever before in the ranks. This objective element, if there, could swamp bureaucratic machine control, if workers were given a chance to vote thus inside PAC.

November, 1947.

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STATEMENT OF RESIGNATION

By Allen Baker
 Sylvia Collins
 Joe Leonard
 Chet Marco

* * *

We, the IKD faction, predicted more than a year ago the present crisis in the WP. Today, the crisis is openly recognized. The departure of the Johnsonites reveals the terrible sterility of the internal life all this time. The gloom throughout the ranks at the downfall of unity perspectives reveals that the WP no longer believes that it has reasons for an independent existence.

The recognition of the serious state of the WP has precipitated, no some new thinking, but an empty discussion on perspectives. Shachtman recently formally opened this discussion in a New York City membership meeting, and made it clear that the leadership is completely bankrupt. The discussion on perspectives was over the night it was launched. The WP has only the choice of eventually going home to the SWP or dying where it now stands.

The IKD tendency has presented its point of view. In three major articles ("Political Party or Trade Union Party", and "The Class Concept Substituted for Politics") the critique was made, and in several shorter articles, analyses were made of special problems. There have been debates and discussions in several branches. There have been individual discussions.

We have fulfilled our obligations to our party; we have tried to win the party to our point of view. We did not try to escape responsibility for the years of service which we have given the Movement, but we have indicated that we have come to realize that only a radically different method of political activity could save the Movement or the WP wing of the Movement.

We have been answered. The "Notes for a Re-Statement of Our Position" were adopted without open dissent by the entire plenum (including Johnson, Forest, and Draper). The ranks failed completely to develop any perspective apart from their leaders. Neither our articles or the plenum's provoked any answers or comments from the ranks. Even where a member agreed with us on this or that issue, there was never a willingness to buck the leadership.

There is a time for pleading, and a time for stopping pleading. Further attempts at discussion degrade both the party and us. Even the presentation of a correct orientation cannot interest or revitalize the WP, but could only provide the party with a cover for its emptiness.

Not only the IKD faction, but all those who attempt to awaken the WP are doomed to failure. For example, M. Slater's article "On Sub Drives" not only did not deter useless street hawking of Labor Action but drew as a "spark" the assigned article, "Is the Weariness Worth While?". And Munis and Peralta's "On Guard" made not a ripple among the WP'ers, let alone raise the question of non-participation in the cretin EPC. Only organizational and prestige questions can arouse real interest.

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The WP has no road ahead. All the Labor Party editorials, Active Workers Conference, industrialization and colonization schedules, all the transferring of members hither and yon, all the Labor Action sales -- will come to nothing. The WP is an obstacle to the revolutionary movement; but to fight it, it is sufficient to ignore it.

A democratic party would view our decision to carry out our own ideas as an experiment. If we succeed the whole movement gains. If we fail, then there is evidence of our mistakes. In the microscopic revolutionary movement this experimental approach is the best guarantee of finding solutions to the problems that are holding the movement back. It is not the least of our reasons for disgust with the WP that the WP leadership has lost the little courage it once had for serious, responsible, educating experimentation. The WP has shown that "inclusiveness" as an abstract principle means a disregard for political theory and the substitution for socialist incentive of blind loyalty to the party as such and discipline wielded by people who want to lead without earning prestige.

We see the road and we shall take it. We resign from the WP, not to leave the revolutionary movement, but in order to build it. We predict that the best elements of the WP will be with us again, for they will be those who are honest enough to recognize the hopelessness and sectarianism of their organization and the strides that we shall make.

August 1947

(The above article was submitted late in October, 1947, for the PARTY BULLETIN. It appears here now only in order to avoid further delay; it will be reprinted in the next PARTY BULLETIN.)

TRI-BRANCH CONFERENCE

By Frank Harper (Philadelphia)

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Philadelphia, Jan. 3, 1948

Introduction

An educational conference was held in Philadelphia on the weekend of December 26, 27 and 28, by the Reading, Baltimore and Philadelphia branches. A news story of the conference has appeared in a recent issue of LABOR ACTION. It would be pointless here to reproduce the conference notes taken by Comrade Helen and myself since they deal almost exclusively with the educational content of the several sessions. However, since the conference was not only informative but also very stimulating to all those attending, it will be worthwhile to summarize its organization and content for consideration by other branches.

Organization

The Tri-Branch Educational Conference during the Christmas holiday season was projected by the initial organizational conference of the Baltimore, Philadelphia and Reading branches on August 23 and 24, 1947. Early in December the Philadelphia Branch sent out a formal call (including also the Newark Branch which had expressed interest) which suggested the dates and tentative subjects. The purpose of the conference was primarily to give a fundamental theoretical background to those of the secondary leadership of the three branches. Several exchanges of correspondence and trips by the Philadelphia organizer, Jack Brad, established (to the satisfaction of all participants) the following schedule and speakers.

Schedule of Subjects

Friday, December 26, 8:30 P.M. - A pre-conference round table discussion on "Science, Technology and Socialism" lead by Walter Grey, a professional engineer and a Marxist.

Saturday, December 27, 10:00 A.M. - Formal opening of the conference followed by a "socialized discussion" led by Hal Draper of the National Committee on the subject of "Historical Materialism." Chairman - Frank, Phila.

Saturday, December 27, 2:00 P.M. - Discussion on the "Organizational Principles of the Workers Party" led by Hal Draper. Chairman - Maurice, Baltimore.

Saturday evening there was a house party given by the Philadelphia Branch.

Sunday, December 28, 10:00 A.M. - A lecture on "War and Post War American Economy" by Abe Kimbay (New York Local). Chairman - Irving, Phila.

Sunday, December 28, 2:00 P.M. - Lecture by Abe Kimbay on the "Nature of Russian Imperialism." Chairman - Vince, Reading.

Attendance

Formal participation by the Reading, Baltimore and Philadelphia Branches.

Reading Branch	- 3	members
Baltimore "	- 5	"
Philadelphia "	- 11	"

also 3 members of Newark Branch and 2 from Pittsburgh attended. In addition, an average of 6 sympathizers from Philadelphia attended each session.

Formal Business

The Conference approved the proposal of the Philadelphia Branch that the Steering Committee consists of the Arrangements Committee (Irving, Alex, Helen and Frank - all of Philadelphia) plus one each from Reading and Baltimore (these later were Vincent and Maurice).

The Conference also accepted responsibility of making a serious effort to establish a summer camp for the Party somewhere in the tri-branch area.

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START YOUR OWN "MARXIST BOOK CLUB"

By Gerald McDermott (West Virginia)

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This brief note describes an educational technique developed by the Executive Committee of the Cleveland Branch. The writer is not a member of the branch and claims no credit for the idea, but believes a report on the method will be of interest and use to other branches.

Revolutionists need to not only study Marxist literature but to keep reasonably informed of the best of bourgeois scholarship, journalism and factual literature of the day. An understanding of the origin and growth of Marxist theory dictates such intellectual interest. Certainly we all recognize this; the party press continually seeks and brings to our attention such books. But how to make these books easily available?

The Cleveland plan is simple. Each month, one comrade buys either the best of the new books or (new good books of general interest being scarce these days) a useful book not current but still available. Under this system, a comrade in the ordinary branch buys a book only every twelve or fifteen months or so, a very slight outlay.

Under the direction of the educational director, the book is passed from comrade to comrade, each keeping it for a month. Before long, a dozen otherwise neglected books are in circulation in the branch.

Each month, the book to be bought is democratically chosen by the branch from among suggestions made by the individual comrades and the educational director. Someone then volunteers to buy it.

The advantages of this over using public libraries are obvious. The book is permanently in the hands of the branch. It can be referred to after one has read it because it is always easily accessible. Since other comrades read it, fruitful discussion is possible.

Books of recent and relatively recent appearance might include some of the following: "No Peace for Asia," by Isaacs; "I Chose Freedom," by Kravchenko; "The Many and the Few," by Kraus (a history of the UAW); "The League of Frightened Philistines," by Farrell; "To the Bitter End," by Gisevius; "The Other Kingdom," by Rousset; "Literature and Art," by Marx and Engels; and so on. The selection would vary with the educational level, interests, type of work, and even geographical location of the branch. A maritime branch would have special interests; a branch doing considerable Negro contacting, likewise; a west coast branch perhaps more interest in Asiatic and Pacific problems, and so on.

DISCUSSION OF PARTY LIFE

By James Simons (Newark)

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For a complex of reasons, some of which are historical, others deriving from our particular political and programmatic origins, and still further others having to do with our relative isolation, the consequent character of our recruits and activity and the nature of certain traditions that were selected out and unduly emphasized, our internal party life and intra-party relations are, for the most part, characterized by qualities of coldness, aloofness and in many cases outright boorishness. This is not true in all cases, at all times, nor does it apply to all comrades. Without going further into an explanation of the sources of this situation, and I know that that is only a minor sin connected with the writing of this article. I feel that this situation ought to be drawn to the attention of the party members and I hope that by doing so, something will be contributed to remedying the situation.

In the overwhelming majority of cases the comrade sitting next to us in a branch or at a meeting or at a social is a person with whom we have more in common than we have with millions of other persons in the world. He or she shares with us a common set of views on a multitude of social, political and historical matters. In addition, he or she is jointly engaged with us in a common effort to construct a revolutionary party, which effort, in this day and age, marks that comrade out as someone special, someone quite distinctive. It means, no less, that this person possesses great courage, perseverance, idealism and a great capacity to sacrifice his time, his energy and his dough. Besides all of this, the comrade with whom we work probably has many things in common with our own view of man; probably reads and appreciates many of the same books, poets, etc. that we do; probably has a set of principles quite similar to our own, and believes in a way of life that is close to our own.

Despite all these shared qualities and interests, many of our relations with this comrade, many of our attitudes and actions towards him proceed as though the above were not the case. Surely this is the most interesting paradox. I wish to address myself to some of the most glaring examples of this peculiarly contradictory behavior, not so that all will fall on all in loving embrace, but rather that conduct more in keeping with ALL of the facts about one's comrades will result, and thus a situation minimized in the party, which I believe is now harmful to the party's further progress.

Very often a comrade will work his head off in cleaning the headquarters; in preparing and running off a leaflet; in preparing a report or an educational, etc. He is finished with his task and reports same to the organizer or to the comrade in charge. Simple acknowledgment for the accomplished task, not fulsome praise or glowing gratitude, but just simple acknowledgment is much appreciated, and the comrade goes his way feeling warm and good about what he has done. In most cases his report of completion is greeted with stony silence, or something left undone or something not done quite to a "T" is drawn to his attention in a voice charged with irritation and a tired exasperation. Also present in the "critique" is the over-

tone that suggests that the organizer had a priori knowledge that the comrade would not do the job properly, that he or she is pitifully stupid, and one could have expected and did expect, for that matter, this sooooo-simple, so elementary task not to be done correctly. Such treatment makes it extremely difficult to obtain the comrade for another assignment.

Often in our party one hears the hysterical denunciation, the polemical annihilation of someone who presents a point of view which is not similar to one's own; or presents an aspect of Marxist theory or history not exactly in accord with what has been written. The polemic starts out, almost invariably, with the phrase, "You are wrong; quite the opposite is the case.... etc. etc." Now, usually, "quite the opposite" is NOT the case, but somehow this has become a habit, and it leads to the most devastating attacks, ferocious argument, and soon what is at stake is not clarification or persuasion but rather the protection of the egos involved. This is a terrible waste of time, an exhausting experience, and one which engenders antagonisms that do not disappear overnight. People in general do not like to be made fools of. This is true even of revolutionary socialists. An attempt to do so, and that is what inevitably these polemical joustings degenerate, whether it succeeds or fails constitutes awful waste and results in the fact that both are convinced that the other is a triple-fool, a moron, close to if not actually an idiot, and someone to whom one never speaks unless one has to, and when one does it is always with an air of icy superiority and condescension. The "other" comrade has probably read a book or two; maybe even given a class in his time; even might have a year or two of experience, and, Saints preserve us, might be trying out an original idea, or putting an old idea into newer terminology. He has a bit of intellectual integrity, is actually trying to understand and articulate to the best of his ability, yet these discussions go on as though he were without a brain in his head, an ounce of integrity, and always holds a view "exactly the opposite....." This kind of procedure must stop, for while the older comrades may have gotten to like it, a sort of masochistic joy, it plays havoc with the new comrade.

Picture the situation: John is a new member. He reads a couple of things on Marxism, and suddenly the whole world begins to have order and meaning to him. He begins to re-sort his ideas and judgments; he is going through that hard and difficult internal revolution in the course of adjusting to the party. He asks a question at a meeting, or he asks it privately; or he hears a question asked, a doubt raised, a point interjected for the sake of clarification, and then he witnesses a display of verbal pyrotechnics, with smoke curling in the air, as people start "pulverizing" and "polemicizing." If he ever opens his mouth again it will only be because he has great courage, great need or is anxious to develop his own hide into a thickness necessary to be able to complete successfully with the "old timers." One must armor oneself for the coming onslaught, and thus you have the tendency beginning almost from the day the comrade enters the movement which, if he stays, makes it almost impossible to absorb new views, for the thick hide is there, the ego is always involved, and a resistance and durability has been created that is almost impervious.

There is another tradition that has often caused me to wonder. The branch or public meeting is over and all are going out for coffee. Two gangs separate themselves, and three or four comrades or contacts

are not invited. Everyone is leaving and these three or four stand around humiliated, hurt, looking exactly like the forlorn college student waiting to be pledged by some, by any fraternity or sorority. Usually this happens to new comrades, or comrades new to the branch. People are going home, by car, by street car, by bus. Time after time I have seen comrades standing around on pins and needles just dying to be invited to "go along," but the invitation never comes. While this holds for the new comrade, or the comrade recently transferred in, it holds a thousand-fold for the contact who comes to a meeting, "out of the blue" so to speak. All I can say is, God help the new contact or sympathizer who appears out of nowhere and attends some party function for our party members will not. An elemental hospitality, a simple desire to make the "stranger" feel at home and welcome would move most people into a greeting of some sort, some kind of consideration and politeness. But not a revolutionary socialist. They can look through, around and over the contact. By doing so our comrades make a terrible mistake, for perhaps the most important method of consolidating a tie between the new contact and the party in the whole first period of his association with the party are such things as cordiality and comradely welcome. Our comrades are too busy exchanging gossip with the comrade they saw only yesterday and who they will see again three days hence. He is forced to wonder, sometimes just why the party holds affairs, meetings, educational.....

Undoubtedly some quaint sage said once that there is an art to listening. Yet one has to look far and wide in our party in order to find a good listener. Conversation, according to my understanding, is a reciprocal process involving at a minimum two people. Yet, for the most part, our comrades act as though this were not the case. Most of our people feel that they, and only they, must talk. All they want is an audience. Most people resent that. As a consequence there goes on a terrible tug-of-war for conversational control. While this is painful and wasteful between comrades, it is positively catastrophic in respect to contacts. The contact is visited or visits us. He gets out three words, even before his coat is off, and then the torrent is let loose, and it can go on for 20 or 30 minutes, and even longer. Another word or two, and again the sluice gates are opened and the poor guy is deluged with words. Hardy soul he if he asks for a repeat performance. Our comrades are smart; they know a lot. But try though they may they will never get it all out in one visit; and even if they were able to do so, the contact will never absorb it. All that he will remember is that the comrade was a gas-bag. To listen carefully, with interest, and then to speak on the point, and briefly, is such a simple thing. Yet, alas, it seems so hard for the Marxist. Essentially it reveals that when most of us talk we are more concerned with satisfying some subjective need than with accomplishing some objective task. One of the marks of the good recruiter and the good organizer is his ability to listen. By listening he gets to know the other person, and, in addition, demonstrates a fundamental respect for him. One would think that a prerequisite for visiting a contact would be that we have such respect for him. If we haven't, we shouldn't see him. If we have, we should and we should listen. Unless we treat the contact with respect, we can never establish the kind of relationship with him necessary to draw him into the party.

For the most part branch meetings have been terribly dull. People speak almost invariably with great solemnity. Yet a quip, a

joke, a slight laugh or, heaven forbid, a good hearty guffaw occurring in the meeting would certainly lighten the air and make it livable for the ordinary mortal. Humor and wit can be cultivated. Not all of us are gifted. Yet we all have our moment, and if we recognize the very real place that humor can have in our meetings, and assign it its rightful and proper place, our meetings and reports will benefit. If only our comrades will relax a bit and let the meetings take a more normal and natural course and less act in such a way that an atmosphere is created that is over serious, bordering on the devout. We are not masters of strategy, we don't have the last word on every problem and unless we drop the mask of omniscience and dedication, people will continue to regard us as peculiar and alien. The searchlight of history is not always turned on each branch and on every speaker. Sometimes, sad to report, it is off!

Our branches sometimes spend two hours or more on business. This is nothing short of fantasy. What are we actually talking about? We are arranging for the activity of some 15 or 20 people for the next seven days. God, or somebody, better help us if we can't acquire more of a sense of proportion. A capitalist runs his business involving thousands of men and millions of dollars by meeting with his aides once a week or less. Yet we spend two whole hours on trivia, or haggling over matters that could be settled in one-third the time. Why does everything have to be so absolutely perfect? Supposing you don't agree? Is it important enough to warrant a discussion involving 20 minutes, multiplied by the number of people present. So what if the Branch does do something which you consider slightly wrong in this or that respect. Will it cause a catastrophe? Is the action contemplated, if done not in accord with my opinion, irremediable, and will the party and the branch go down in history as having committed some terrible act or some crime. Won't it be forgotten as soon as it happens? I ask all the comrades who read this to look back over the past and ask themselves seriously and honestly, of all the disputes that they provoked and insisted on settling then and there at the branch meeting, how many of them were really worth all the fuss and noise? Suppose that the Executive Committee decision had gone through, would something so terrible have happened? Most of us have to admit that we have wasted eons of time. We simply must acquire a sense of proportion and learn to proceed briskly and in a business-like fashion. If we don't, we will be treated as we deserve - as people who can't even arrange their own business with efficiency. This is not an impossible task, and could be really accomplished provided there was a will by all to do so.

It is my opinion that the function of the branch organizer is not to do the branch work but to see that it is done. He is supposed to be a coordinator, an integrater of other people's activity. Yet in branch after branch I have found that the branch organizer does not see regularly each comrade, for an evening, and in some cases never sees the members at their respective homes or at his. This I consider to be a real error and unless overcome will continue to contribute to our difficulties. By spending some two or three hours with each comrade, the organizer gets a feel of how the comrade is fitting into the party, gets to know what he is thinking about, learns of his beefs, both real and imaginary. The organizer in spending some two or three informal hours with the comrade strengthens whatever tie or bond already exists, is able to help educate and guide the party member. There is practically no other place where this can be done. This party gets to know the organizer, is able to

lay problems before him which he would not do under other circumstances. The member gets a bigger view of the problems of the branch and the party because undoubtedly they will discuss such matters. There are dozens of other items which could be listed. However, the listing of them would only be superfluous; enough has been established to prove the validity of such procedure. It is interesting to observe that Comrade Shachtman, who is certainly not the best organizational man in the party, always when on tour spends the overwhelming bulk of his time visiting with the individual comrades. This is true for most of the leading comrades while on tour. The value of such practices is immense even if one has a branch of 52 members and can only see each comrade once a year on the above basis. I am certain that if the organizers were to only try this out for three months, they would see results that would more than justify their effort and time.

I would like to discuss the matter of establishment of the uncle-nephew system of integrating new comrades. Our party has an elaborate system of ideas, a complex and extensive system of traditions and customs. To absorb all this takes time. The ordinary person who joins our party finds all of the ideas new, and most of the traditions alien. He needs guidance, aid and support during the first year of his party life. There are things that need explaining, which he or she is too shy to ask just anybody. But if he has someone, preferably the one who recruits him, to turn to it makes this extremely profound adjustment easier. The Executive Committee should be responsible for the establishment of an "uncle" for each new member and should check up from time to time on whether the comrade so assigned is fulfilling his job. Not to do so means that the tasks of holding new recruits will remain difficult. We must stop the procedure of working our heads of recruiting X, seeing him once or twice a week, and then, when he finally signs up, heaving a sigh of relief and never seeing him again. Foolishly and naively, the contact-before-he-becomes-a-member labors under the illusion that some kind of personal interest in him has been kindled in the man or woman who recruited him. It is a serious blow for the contact to discover that now that he is a member, no one, including his friend the recruiter, has any time for him.

Much of what is said in the previous paragraph and in others would not be necessary if we had a large party of action, for these matters would straighten themselves out, and would most likely be solved and smoothed out in the long-run. However, we don't have such a party, and it will be some time before we do. It is foolish to act as if we have already achieved fully what remains a perspective. We must act in accordance with the necessities with which we are confronted - we are a small propaganda group recruiting by ones and twos with a program which for the most part must remain on paper. Common sense dictates that we arrange our habits and practices so that we maximize our efforts, hold our recruits. Man does not live by politics alone.

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LET OUR VOICE BE HEARD

By Paul Bern

Subscriptions are the first sensitive barometer by which the branches can measure the success of their activities. The organization of a new branch in Pittsburgh is immediately reflected in a number of subscriptions coming in, independently of even direct branch solicitation. The recent reestablishment of a regular branch in Reading also immediately resulted in several subs coming in after a rather lengthy lull.

The rest of the Party is still to carry out the realistic program adopted at the Active Workers Conference or to begin to achieve the very modest subscription quotas set. It is true that the Party has lost the habit of getting subs and also that such a program as outlined at the Active Workers Conference needed time for planning and execution.

Some of the branches have responded at least with a discussion of their plans. We are still to hear from most of them. It is our largest branches which have maintained the greatest silence. We still have to hear from Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, New York City and Seattle.

From Comrade Larry O'Connor, organizer of the San Francisco Bay Area Branch, we have received a letter summarizing some of the difficulties (probably encountered by most of the branches) in achieving its quotas. We quote from it as follows:

"Your proposal to the Active Workers Conference and Plenum on subs sounded very reasonable and intelligent to all. Perhaps it sounded more reasonable than realism would permit, because everyone was relieved not to be faced with the prospects of sub drives of the usual kind, which all of us have learned are not worth the effort in the long run. On subsequent thought on the matter, however, I think we were not too realistic. Each member will be able to get a sub a month to LABOR ACTION only when each member is functioning in such a way that he or she has considerable contact with the outside world.... But for a very large proportion of the membership here, and I am sure nationally, the matter of getting into such organizations and making good contacts there is still a matter of the future...."

"All I am trying to indicate is that the goals of the sub drive will be reached only insofar as the goal of getting everyone functioning in spheres outside the party is reached....."

All that Comrade O'Connor says is very true. That is why the "Addenda to the Program of Action on the Press" (see PARTY BUILDER, VOL II. - No. 5) so closely related our press work with all the work of the Party. But, we are not starting a brand new organization. We do have comrades in TRADE UNIONS and in some mass organizations. Thus far we haven't gotten any subs from these fractions or comrades. Also, it would be a good idea for our comrades to remember that they know friends and contacts of the Party. Our comrades must become missionaries of the Party. And getting a sub to LABOR ACTION and THE

NEW INTERNATIONAL is their first step in that direction.

Certainly if all comrades will apply themselves the modest goals of one sub per member each month for LABOR ACTION and one sub per member every three months for THE NEW INTERNATIONAL are realizable, even now, when we are first beginning to carry out the Program of Action.

* * *

Thus far, nothing has been done by the branches. Yes, NOTHING! of the 104 LABOR ACTION subs received in December, ONLY 36 WERE SENT IN BY THE BRANCHES. Of the 19 NEW INTERNATIONAL subs received in December, only 8 WERE SENT IN BY THE BRANCHES. All of the rest of the subs were sent directly to the press office by individuals as renewals or new subs. This has been the picture for many, many months. IN OTHER WORDS, THE BRANCHES OF THE PARTY HAVE DONE PRACTICALLY NOTHING TO INCREASE THE REGULAR CIRCULATION OF THE PRESS.

With some planning and drive the branches certainly can increase the number of readers of our press. Study the attached chart. Be shamed and get to work!

LABOR ACTION and THE NEW INTERNATIONAL is our voice. Let our voice be heard!

PLEASE POST

WORKERS PARTY
P R E S S D E P A R T M E N T

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Branch	LABOR ACTION			The NEW INTERNATIONAL		
	December, 1947 Subs Obtained	(Nov.)* Monthly Quota	---	December, 1947 Subs Obtained	(Nov.)* Monthly Quota	---
Alton	0	(7)	10	0	(0)	4
Baltimore	2	(0)	3	0	(0)	2
Buffalo	7	(3)	19	2	(0)	6
Boston	2	(1)	3	0	(0)	1
Cleveland	1	(5)	12	0	(0)	5
Chicago	15	(6)	32	4	(2)	15
Detroit	9	(6)	21	2	(1)	13
Los Angeles	7	(6)	26	0	(0)	9
New York	25	(30)	125	3	(5)	36
Newark	5	(6)	11	0	(2)	4
Philadelphia	4	(15)	15	0	(2)	5
San Francisco-Oakland	7	(6)	28	2	(3)	13
Streator	0	(1)	2	0	(0)	
Seattle	1	(2)	15	0	(0)	4
West Va.	5	(1)	10	1	(0)	1
Youngstown	0	(0)	5	0	(0)	1
Louisville	0	(2)	1	0	(0)	1
Minnesota	1	(0)	1	0	(0)	1
Oregon	0	(0)	1	0	(0)	
New York State	0	(1)	1	0	(0)	
Mixed Calif.	3	(1)	1	1	(0)	
Mixed Mich.	0	(1)				
Mixed New Jersey	0	(1)				
Pittsburg	0	(2)	2	0	(0)	1
Reading	5	(0)	4	0	(0)	1
St. Louis	1	(0)	4	0	(0)	1
Wash.	0	(1)	1	0	(0)	
Mixed States	4	(3)	11	4	(1)	6
TOTALS	104**	(103)	374	19***	(13)	128

***OF the 19 NEW INTERNATIONAL SUBS RECEIVED in December only 3 were sent in by the Branches. (Nov.)* This column repeats the report for November, 1947.
** OF the 104 LABOR ACTION subs received in December only 36 were sent in by the Branches. The rest were sent directly to the Press Office as renewals or new subs.