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# Right Danger and Radicalization

by Alfred Wagenknecht

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For a month my unit has been discussing the Right danger. The four meetings held lasted until nearly midnight. The members of the adjourned unit meetings in the section headquarters gathered around to listen. A number of comrades in my unit argued as follows: The workers are not as radicalized as much as we think they are. We tried to sell them *Daily Workers* in the shops we covered and many would not even take them free. The Party may be too much to the left. We do not yet understand the psychology of the workers. There may be radicalization in other countries, there may be revolutionary upsurges in India and China, but American workers are slower, they are still too well off. There is very little unemployment in France, so France must be an exception and maybe the United States is also. Our principal task should be to build a Left Wing in the AF of L and in the Muste groups. Every time we tried to do shop gate work we met difficulties, the workers did not listen; they are not rushing to join the revolutionary unions and the Party.

Several unit meetings ago, the unit buro brought in a resolution which overestimated the power of American Imperialism, said it was being drawn into the world crisis, and oriented the unit towards street corner meetings and away from shop gate meetings.

Today I was assigned to shop gate meetings in the same several buildings where other unit comrades had been before. On the basis of which some of them evolved a platform of insurmountable difficulties. Five comrades had been assigned

and only three appeared. The section headquarters was locked and remained locked. We could not get our leaflets. Two comrades from another unit were sitting on the steps waiting to get in. They told us that eight comrades had been assigned to go to the Westinghouse Electric neighborhood. The other six never appeared. These two had leaflets for the Madison Square Garden party convention rally [June 20, 1930]. We had none. We had a small bundle of *Daily Workers* which I took along (none were ordered in advance) and the other comrades had no *Daily Workers*. All inexcusable shortcomings.

We decided to form one shock troop to invade the territory assigned by my unit. In this territory there is a big print shop, a big shop that makes army, navy, and police uniforms, and a shoe factory. It had been reported in our unit that the workers in the shoe factory were a backward element and might as well be left alone. Without flag or stand we held three short curb meetings, two of 5 minutes each, one of 10 minutes. At the first two we had a total of about 25 workers. At the last one about 35 workers gathered around us. A dame from the Daughters of the American Revolution invited us all to go back to our own countries, and engaged me in a rapid fire argument until one worker said, "we'll give you a revolution here," whereupon she fled from the street.

The speeches were sloganized. "Another big crash in Wall Street. Read all about it in *The Daily Worker*. A sign of the big capitalist crisis. Seven million workers out of jobs. You may be

next. What are you going to do about it? You get low wages and speed-up. You've got to organize at once. Join the revolutionary unions of the Trade Union Unity League. Employed and unemployed workers must get together and fight together. Organize unemployed councils. The bosses are trying to save their necks by preparing another world war and fighting the Soviet Union, where the workers are in power. Read *The Daily Worker* carefully. Learn what the Communist Party stands for. It's your Party. The Party the bosses talk against and fight against, you should join. Come to the meeting advertised on the leaflet, etc."

The workers were very interested. Did they refuse to take the leaflets and *Daily Workers*? On the contrary, they grabbed for them. We got five contacts from the shoe factory of "backward" workers — two Puerto Ricans, one Negro, one Mexican, one Italian; all young workers about 20 years of age. They said their wages were \$12 a week. They were laid off half of each week. They readily gave their names and addresses. And a comrade is now sitting on the section headquarters steps getting information from them for a shop paper. We told the workers we would be there again. They'll wait for us. We must not disappoint them.

I watched the four comrades with me intently. I noticed they were a little backward. They did not talk to the workers enough. They did not fraternize with them. They did not assume positions of leadership. They did not give the workers to understand that we were on their side for every demand they had to make. They did not have enough confidence in their tasks. They expected the workers to make the first approach, whereas it is the Party that goes to the factory gates to establish its leadership.

By this one concrete achievement we will prove to the members in my unit that their plat-

form of "insurmountable difficulties" is wrong, that their "Right" wing tendencies have been proven to be incorrect. From this experience we must draw lessons. We must drill comrades in how to do factory-gate work. We must teach them to make slogan speeches. We must insist that they talk to the workers and get contacts. We must develop revolutionary imagination, spirit; form experienced shock troops for the larger factories; concentrate adequate comrades until results are obtained; study the factory and the workers so as to circumvent obstacles and difficulties with the police and bosses; know exactly when the workers go to work, come from work, have their lunch period; find out all about working conditions in the factory, number of departments, how to get leaflets and *Daily Workers* inside the shop.

Instant training of Party members for this work is necessary. Groups engaged in factory-gate meetings must be in charge of a trained comrade who can give directions with almost military precision. District 2 [New York City] just had its District Convention. Sixty comrades spoke about "Right" dangers and shortcomings. Not a comrade gave a graphic picture of an experience, an achievement obtained by factory-gate contact with workers. The Party suffers from indigestion because Party members are not at factory gates. We must cite "Right" dangers and shortcomings, but with this must go correction, actual application to factory work and, what is very important, a system of reporting methods for organizing this work, doing this work. These experiences and achievements must be listed in the press, in bulletins, in all meetings.

This is what I wanted to talk about and elaborate upon at our District Convention, but there were too many other speakers and I could not get the floor.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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