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Problems of Party Building — Tasks and Perspectives

Organization Report to the May 1946 Plenum

By FARRELL DOBBS

Comrades:

We have elaborated our fundamental program. We have organized a firm proletarian cadre and we are now entering the first stage of mass recruitment into the party. Our orientation toward broader mass work really began at the 1944 convention. The party based its organizational decisions at that convention on the fruitful results of our CRDC work and on the increasing manifestations of mass unrest which were reflected primarily in the rising resistance to the non-strike pledge.

The party decided at the 1944 convention, as one essential, basic step in broadening the scope of our mass work, to launch a fund drive to collect \$15,000. I believe the slogan was \$1000 for each of the comrades who was in prison. The party membership responded to this decision of the 11th convention, not only by raising the fund within the time period allotted for that task, but by oversubscribing that fund to the extent of almost \$5000.

Thus armed with the material means to lubricate the machinery of the party, the comrades turned toward the second task set by the convention — to use *The Militant* as the spearhead for the expansion of mass work. This action took the form of a subscription campaign. A goal was set of 10,000 new subscribers to *The Militant*. The comrades responded on this campaign just as they did on the financial campaign, came through with the 10,000 subs; then to make sure that the party would be satisfied, they doubled it and for good measure put 3,000 on top of that.

Party Expansion

Parallel with this impressive activity the organizational apparatus, the general work, was stepped up, with the result that the funds that had been raised were soon exhausted and we came to the Plenum in May of 1945 with a financial problem that was explained to you in great detail. We decided it was necessary to retrench financially. We decided to hold in abeyance the further extension of mass work, to concentrate on the consolidation of our gains, and, as pointed out in the trade union report at that time, we decided to concentrate on the building of a left wing in the trade union movement.

We proceeded from the Plenum in May 1945 on the basis of that perspective. But only a couple of months had elapsed before tremendous events intervened making it imperative that we alter our perspective. V-J day inaugurated a new stage of mass action; a tremendous wave of strikes developed; troop demonstrations occurred throughout the world; the masses were seething. The party rose to the occasion, throwing all its forces and resources into the struggle to realize a maximum of benefit for the party out of this mass action.

Thanks to some timely financial aid from a few friends who were inspired both by the wave itself and by the way the party pitched into the action, we were able to step up the tempo of our work a little and take a fuller measure of advantage of the rich opportunities presented to us. This action accentuated the steady process of recruitment and the steady increase in

the rate of recruitment that has been the record of our work over a rather extensive period now. And at the same time we found that no less than 2 of every 3 new members that we were recruiting into the party were industrial workers and in the main employed in the major basic industries.

I want to give you a picture from a little different point of view of what this process of growth has meant organizationally to the party. Let us begin with the new branches that have been established in the year since the May 1945 Plenum. We have a new branch in Baltimore. A new branch has been organized in Lackawanna by the Buffalo comrades. The San Francisco comrades organized a new branch in Oakland. A new branch was organized in the Calumet area of Chicago. A new branch has been carved out of raw material in Tacoma, Washington. Right here in New York City in the past year new branches have been established in Harlem, in the Bronx and Chelsea.

Reinforcement of Branches

In that same period of time we have taken measures along the line of reinforcement of branches. We have reinforced and revitalized the work of the party in Connecticut. The Philadelphia branch has transformed itself in the past year. Pittsburgh has been reinforced and is forging forward. An organizer has been sent to Boston where the comrades have an extremely difficult task, a long, hard task. They are making headway, and the very fact that they had a delegate at the steel convention is a sign of what the future holds in store for the Boston comrades. We have reinforced the Flint branch. As a matter of fact, the Flint branch has really been put on its feet during the course of the strike wave. We have reinforced the St. Louis branch. Likewise Portland and the Los Angeles Local sent reinforcements to San Diego.

And there has been some Trail-Blazing done. Comrades have gone out into fields where we had only a weak toe-hold or virtually nothing at all, and through the process of first getting Militant subscriptions, then following up on these, organizing Militant discussion groups, working on individual contacts, we have laid the foundation for party growth. Trail-Blazing was done in Rochester with impressive results. Our Trail-Blazers built up a subscription list of about 500 steel workers in the Bethlehem area immediately adjacent to Allentown. In Pittsburgh our Trail-Blazers broke the ground for the follow-up organization work that is now making it possible for us to forge slowly but steadily ahead. The comrades who went down to Virginia recently to report on the mine disaster at McCoy told me that in some of the mining communities today, a year after our Trail-Blazers first went to work in these areas, The Militant has authority among many of the mine workers parallel to that of the Mine Workers Journal.

Here in New York City a device is being employed that strikes me as a very excellent one. The New York Local has set up organizing committees to break ground for new branches. One is at work in the Yorkville section, which is populated mainly by German workers. Another committee is working in East Harlem which is populated by Porto Rican and Italian workers, as well as Negro workers. Another organizing committee is operating here in New York on the Lower East Side.

In this same period there has been considerable progress in the establishment of headquarters for the party branches throughout the country. We can state today that it is the rule rather than the exception for the party branches to have a headquarters. I don't think I have to dwell here on the value of a headquarters. That is self-evident. But I do want to make this point — and it is very important — that while we recog-

nize the importance of a headquarters and in every branch we must have as one of our aims the establishment of a headquarters as a base for our operations, I want to caution the comrades against going overboard, against being careless about the kind of rent you obligate yourself to pay. We want as good a headquarters as we can have, but keep your sense of proportion. Don't jeopardize the branch financial structure by assuming a disproportionately large rent bill.

Field Work

We have taken another very important step that symbolizes the kind of giant strides we are taking in reorganizing and reorienting ourselves in our organization work. You remember that Comrade Cannon wrote with considerable feeling in The Struggle for a Proletarian Party that you can't build a revolutionary party from an office. In fact, he said, "To hell with office leadership." Well, we have been working on that problem too, and in the last year we have made quite a little headway on it. Shortly after the May 1945 Plenum we decided that Comrade V. R. Dunne, the National Labor Secretary, should go right out into the heart of the mass production industries where our trade union work is concentrated and work closely with the comrades. And for almost a solid year now Comrade Dunne has done just that, working in the area between Rochester and Buffalo in upstate New York, as far west as Chicago, through the Ohio-Michigan area, and in that general territory. His presence in the field during this year has played a big part in the progress we have made. By being right on the spot to give the comrades assistance, to give them the benefit of his long years of political and trade union experience, he has helped them solve problems that were new to them, but that he had faced many many times in the past. The work of the comrades in the field has been accelerated and made more fruitful by this service. This was a very important demonstration, translating the word into the deed, in saying "To hell with office leadership."

During the GM strike, Comrade E. R. Frank, who has a background of many years of rich experience in the auto-union, went out and camped for weeks in Detroit, right there on the firing line, and helped the comrades in every way he could through the long and difficult days of that fight. And at the same time we sent comrades in various capacities to help write leaflets, to distribute the paper, and to help out in every possible way to give aid to the comrades in the field during the strike. And we sent out bundles of the paper in large quantities to facilitate the work.

You have already heard the reports of the trade union conferences of the steel, auto and railroad fractions, that were held during the past year. These conferences are part and parcel of this whole concept I am describing that began with the decision for Comrade Dunne to go into the field. Our aim is to link the political leadership in the center more closely and directly with the work of the comrades in the field.

In the past year we have had two coast-to-coast tours, one by Comrade Carlson, another by Comrade Wright. And on an increasing scale speakers from the National Office have gone to the branches, not only for ceremonial occasions but also on other occasions, whenever and wherever possible, to try in every way to give a little impetus to the work of the comrades in the branches. And we will continue to do that.

Another practice we have improved upon in the past year is the exchange of speakers between branches. It has had a salutary effect on the work of the branches, both from the point of view of making it possible for the branches to have

a speaker who is new and has a different kind of attraction to the workers, and because it serves as a means for training the comrades as speakers and it gives the comrades a chance to get better acquainted with the whole party. That too is a practice that we want to continue and increase insofar as circumstances permit in the next period.

Radio

We made some headway in the use of the radio as a powerful propaganda medium during the last year, and we learned not only about its value, but also a few tricks about how to get on the radio free of charge. It is something we must write about in the Party Builder and exchange experiences on. I want to cite four different types of utilization of the radio during the past year that the comrades can use as an example.

Here in the New York election we managed to get in a good deal of radio time by virtue of the fact that some of the stations around the city allocated free time — 5 to 15 minutes — to the various candidates, as Comrade Carolyn pointed out in an article in the Party Builder. One of the things we learned in this campaign was that we would have gotten more free radio time if we had had a bigger slate of candidates. That is a lesson we learned in that campaign and will apply in the next.

In Detroit the comrades used the radio for the same general purpose but in a little different way. In the Frankenstein campaign Comrade Burch, the Detroit organizer, went on the radio to state the SWP position. From all the reports we heard, his speeches had rather an electric effect in the campaign and were the first clear voice interjected into the campaign to show what the score was from the class point of view. Comrade Burch spoke on the radio again during the GM strike with the same good results.

In Los Angeles, in addition to utilizing the radio in election campaigns, the comrades hit upon another idea that is worthy of emulation. A Negro paper, *The Sentinel*, in Los Angeles has a regular Sunday morning radio program. When Comrade Wright went through on his tour speaking about the British elections, the comrades took advantage of the interest of the Negro press in this question and arranged for Comrade Wright to be invited as a guest speaker on *The Sentinel's* radio program.

A fourth and final example is that of Youngstown, where the comrades went on the radio in replying to an attack made on the party by the Stalinists. They got in some real licks.

Press

We have taken a stride forward in the last year in making *The Militant* a better paper. It is my opinion that fully 90% of the improvement in *The Militant* flows from the fact that we have achieved a higher degree of coordination between the editorial staff and the comrades in the field, that more and more *The Militant* is becoming the collective product of the party. It now has many writers, many contributors, many reporters, many fact-gatherers. *The Militant* reflects more and more the real character and tempo of the class struggle in America. When you sit down and read two or three copies you have a fairly accurate feel of the mood of the working class. In the same connection you will observe that we have sought to achieve close coordination between *The Militant* staff and correspondents in the foreign countries similar to that which we have already achieved in part between *The Militant* staff and the comrades in the branches of the SWP. We propose to schedule early next month a second *Militant* Institute to discuss ways and means of further improving the paper. I urge you

to remember that it is your problem as well as the problem of the editorial staff to make *The Militant* a better paper.

We want to forge steadily forward in the circulation of the paper. But to do this we must recognize a practical problem now confronting us. If we go from campaign to campaign along the line of our 1945 policy, we run into the problem of having too many campaigns too close together. That complicates the whole question of campaign activity. Moreover, it creates an extremely difficult problem in our renewal work, which is a very important part of the whole task of recruitment in the next period. We have this suggestion to offer on the problem of building the circulation of *The Militant* and at the same time giving the necessary attention to renewal work. We propose that each member of the branch be expected to turn in, we will say for a start, two subs to *The Militant* per month. They can be either new or renewal subs. We further propose that the branches have one Red Sunday mobilization per month for the solicitation of *Militant* subscriptions. Comrades who have met their quota could, if they so desire, be excused from the mobilization.

Likewise we have a problem with the FI. The paper has increased steadily in circulation, but the magazine has not at all kept proportion, not at all kept tempo. The hiatus between the circulation of the paper and the magazine has always been great, too great, out of proportion, and it has grown steadily worse in the last period. We must pay close attention to that problem. We should look upon the magazine and paper as twin tools for our mass work. In this connection it is important to bear in mind that the party organizers and the leading party committees in the field have an important responsibility in collaborating with the editors of the magazine, pushing the magazine as a party tool in mass work. This responsibility should on the one hand be that of pushing the circulation of the magazine among the members of the party, among the contacts of the party, the distribution on newsstands, etc. And the second half of this responsibility should be a correspondence between the organizers and party committees in the field and the editors of the magazine to devise ways and means of making the magazine more useful, more effective, to make it serve more closely the needs of the party in the field. Subjects of special value and of special interest to the comrades in the field that deserve and require treatment in the magazine should be called to the attention of the editors. Factual information should be supplied to the editors of the magazine as well as the editors of the paper to facilitate their work.

Books and Pamphlets

In the past year our publications activity has more or less kept pace with the expanding needs of the party. We have printed three books and four pamphlets: *The Resolutions of the 11th Party Convention*; *A Practical Program to Kill Jim Crow*; *Jobs for All*; Volume I of *The First Five Years of the Communist International*; *The Revolution Betrayed*; a second edition of *Maritime*; and the Fontana pamphlet, published by the Los Angeles Local. We have published in the last year a total of 60,000 copies of the books and pamphlets under the titles I have just read to you. Sales of our literature have increased 41% in the last eight months over a similar period for the previous year, again reflecting the increase in the volume of Pioneer distribution.

Just off the press is the pamphlet, *The Death Agony of Capitalism*, the transitional program. I want to call to your attention that this pamphlet is the first of the "Pioneer Pocket Library" editions. We intend to get out a whole series of

publications of this general character that will all appear in this format.

We have scheduled for publication *The Suppressed Testament of Lenin*, which should be off the press in August; *The Permanent Revolution* should be ready in September; Volume 2 of *The First Five Years of the Communist International* next January. We have projected for publication the third reprint of *Socialism on Trial* and a second edition of *The Third International after Lenin*, which is out of print. We propose to print as one book these works by Trotsky on Germany: *What Next*, *The Key* and *The Only Road*. We are planning to reprint *The Problems of the Chinese Revolution* and *Whither England*, by Trotsky.

European Relief

You know of the work that has been launched to provide relief in kind for our comrades abroad through the package campaign. As revolutionists, as internationalists, we understand the great need of the comrades and the great responsibility that we have to give them assistance. The comrades abroad are undernourished, ill-clothed, faced with terrible hardship, their bodies racked by sickness, many of them facing the threat of actual starvation. We must act to preserve them, to nurse them back to health, to enable them to carry on their historic tasks. For that purpose the American Committee for European Workers Relief has been formed. Of necessity we have had to start off with a small National Committee. We are not too popular among the so-called "names" that are generally loaned to committees of this kind. We just have to do the best we can with the forces available. It is entirely possible — as a matter of fact, probable — that in setting up local committees of the American Committee, the comrades will find opportunities to establish a broader committee locally and even line up key individuals for membership on the National Committee. Special attention should be paid to drawing trade-union figures into public participation in the local committees.

Both the relief work and our party-building activities can be facilitated by linking the relief campaign to the recruitment and integration of new members. Every new member, even every contact can be drawn into the relief work. Housewives especially can find a role for themselves in relief activity despite their manifold tasks and responsibilities at home. Political education can and should become an integral part of this work. The very act of international working-class solidarity embodied in this campaign is already a beginning of political education. Properly understood, practically applied, the linking of the relief campaign to the problems of winning and activating new members will pay double dividends.

Finances

I spoke previously about the financial problem that arose from our activities prior to the Plenum last year. Well, the financial problem is still with us at this Plenum and it is getting no better fast. It is a double-barreled problem. We were hit by extra heavy expenses during the strike wave, and at the same time, we were hit by a decrease in income from the party branches. This decrease was caused in large measure by the lay-offs, by wage cuts since V-J day, and by the fact that many of the comrades have been on strike, in some cases for a long period of time and had no income.

Another reason for the decrease is that the branches have been carrying on a little expansion campaign of their own and have developed a habit of not taking so seriously the need of

the National Office for prompt and regular financial assistance from the branches. We have to correct that. We have to get back on the former basis of serious attention by the branches to their financial obligations to the National Office. I have four proposals in this connection:

1. The branches should institute a regime of strict economy, cutting out all unnecessary expenditures.

2. Every effort must be made to fulfill the quotas for the \$15,000 Militant Fund, which is going to be used entirely to sustain *The Militant*, not for expansion of *The Militant*. It is no small chore financially, Comrades, to publish an eight-page paper.

3. The branches should correct the bad situation that has developed on their quotas to the Sustaining Fund. At the May 1945 Plenum we asked you to increase your Sustaining Fund quotas 100%. This May, as of right now, the total quotas of the branches are less than they were when we asked for the increase a year ago. It is true there have been extenuating circumstances, but we must ask you now, as the third step toward helping to correct our financial difficulties, to bring those quotas back into line with the needs of the party.

4. The branches must clear up their outstanding obligations to the National Office. Here is something that will knock your eyes out. The branches, as of the first of May, were in arrears \$2,425 on the Sustaining Fund, even at the reduced quotas; \$1,850 to Pioneer Publishers; \$1,255 to *The Militant*; and \$450 to the FI. As of May 1st, the branches owed the National Office and its departments a total of \$5,980!

I don't know of anything better to say than to ask you, is it not evident on the very face of the report that we cannot operate in the National Office on the basis of the branches permitting these — for us — huge obligations to mount up? We have continued to supply the branches with papers, magazines and literature, despite their failure to pay for much of this material, because it was badly needed for party work during the strike wave. But we have come to a point where we can't do that any more. From now on we can furnish only such quantities of literature as the branches can pay for. And the payments must be sent in promptly, in full. Moreover, the present \$5,980 indebtedness must be paid as quickly as possible. Let us see if we can't get that cleared up by the convention.

Recruitment

We have set still another goal for the convention. In watching the progress of recruitment we have noted these political premises for continuation of our present excellent performance in recruitment: The mood of the masses remains conducive to recruitment. The character and tempo of the class struggle continue on a level and at a pace which makes for recruitment. As has been richly demonstrated in the discussion on the trade union question here today, our transitional program is coming more and more into gear with the current needs of the workers. We have the cadre. We have the important beginnings at least of the organizational facilities. And we have the press and publications to back up the work of recruitment.

As of the first of March we had recruited 560 members since the last party convention. This performance indicates that it will be necessary and fruitful for us to make a careful study of our recruitment potentialities, our work of recruitment, at the next convention, with the idea of setting some goals for the coming period in our march toward a mass party. We felt it would be a good idea to interject in the period prior to the convention a transitional step that would serve to focus the

attention of the party on the problem of recruitment and give us a certain body of experience, thus helping to make our discussion at the convention more fruitful. For that reason we recommended to the comrades that the goal of 1,000 new members between the 11th and 12th party conventions be set. We must recruit an average of 63 new members per month to reach that goal. In March we recruited 52 new members. That is 11 behind schedule. In April we recruited 51 new members—12 behind schedule. As of the first of May we had a total of 663 new recruits, 23 behind schedule. It is our opinion, despite the fact that there has been some lag in March and April, that we can reach that goal if we go at it right.

One of the problems is to put recruitment on a campaign basis. On this point I want to call to your attention a letter on recruitment from Comrade George Clarke that likewise appears in this issue of the Party Builder. I recommend that you read it carefully. I thought he stated quite well the essence of the problem. The central point of the letter, which is the central point of the problem and the point we have been discussing here at the Plenum, is the emphasis on party actions as a means to increase the proportion of new members; to engage in agitational campaigns for limited ends; to participate in class actions wherever and whenever they develop; to seize upon available issues with a realistic policy of struggle in behalf of the workers' interests, thus popularizing the party among the workers and drawing many of them into our ranks.

Party Actions

Foremost among these actions is our participation in the strike wave. The character of our participation in the strike wave, our gains in membership during this action, are a direct result of our long, diligent, steady, unremitting work to penetrate into the mass movement. We begin now in larger measure to realize the fruits of that work.

Another example of party action is the Patterson case—the miner in western Pennsylvania who was railroaded to federal prison under the vicious Smith-Connally Law. The party and *The Militant* were the one and only force in the entire American labor movement that really took up and fought the Patterson case. This was an important part of the foundation for our recruiting activities.

Branches from one end of the country to the other have participated in anti-Smith demonstrations and by that action have found a medium for recruitment. In our activities in support of the struggles of the Negro people we have found another vehicle for recruitment. The Fontana case initiated by the Los Angeles Local of the party, the Ferguson case taken up by the New York Local, the White City campaign led by the Chicago Local—all these actions have demonstrated that we are learning to fight realistically in behalf of the most oppressed sections of the population and thereby to win their adherence to our ranks. And not least important at all in the work we have done among the Negro people has been the big contribution of Comrade Charles Jackson, as a writer, as a speaker and as a party worker. We invited Comrade Jackson to be present here at the Plenum. Unfortunately, he was unable to attend.

We have made direct gains in party membership from all these action campaigns. But we haven't yet learned to get the full value from these actions. Therein lies the second part of the problem of achieving the fullest and most effective recruitment activity. We need continually to emphasize the importance of recruitment. We need constantly to study our experiences and our problems in connection with the recruitment of new members and the integration of new members into

the party. We must put recruitment at the top of the agenda for all party committees and for all trade union fractions.

We must be less stiff, less formal, less exacting in determining whether or not a worker-applicant shall be accepted into the party. We should take the attitude that any worker who expresses sympathy for the party and is willing to join should be admitted to membership in the party. There should be no hesitation in recruiting workers into the party, though they may appear to be unschooled in our Marxist program, although they can't yet give the answers to all the basic questions. The education of these workers can best take place inside the party; we must recognize that and proceed accordingly.

Stalinists

In still another field we have made gains in recruitment. Since November 1944 we have recruited 73 new members from the Communist Party and its periphery. We are finding an increasing receptivity to our ideas among the rank and file members of the CP.

At the same time there has been a vicious reaction against us by the Stalinist leadership of the CP. Months ago they launched a literary campaign against us and they are now converting this into attacks upon our comrades. In the past week our *Militant* distributors have been subjected to physical attack from the Stalinists here in New York, in Buffalo, in Pittsburgh and in San Francisco. You can see the Stalinist offensive is beginning to take on the aspects of a planned, stepped-up campaign of gangster attacks against our comrades. Our movement was created in struggle against Stalinism and after 18 years of fighting against them, we don't propose to let them drive us off the streets now. We propose to expose their gangster methods within the labor movement and to defend ourselves against them with every possible means at our disposal. At the same time we shall continue and we shall step up our recruitment activity among the CP rank and file and thereby we will hit them simultaneously both from within and from without.

Growing Pains

We are having problems of growing pains in the branches and they are not centered in one spot. They are becoming quite general throughout the party and the pains are taking different forms. Now what is behind this problem? We are in a period of transition from a propaganda group to a party of action. We have a new type of membership developing. We are moving toward a new type of activity. There are many problems that we have to solve for the first time and we don't have any quick answers to them immediately at hand. We are more and more every day now under the impulsion to act like a mass party without yet having the material means and the personnel necessary really to act like a mass party. We are in that extremely difficult stage of transition between the propaganda circle and the party of action. And it is only natural, it is only human, that in trying to resolve that problem the comrades, failing to recognize the essential character of the phenomenon, will frequently conclude that the organizer or some committee is not performing properly, that a gear is out of mesh somewhere. Occasionally a fault does lie in this direction because no human being is perfect. But the very fact that these organizational difficulties are becoming more general, more widespread in the party is conclusive evidence that it is not basically a problem of the imperfections of individuals or committees. We are having growing pains. We must adjust ourselves to a new stage of activity.

It is wrong for us to attempt arbitrarily and mechanically to apply in our growing party methods developed when we were hammering out the cadre. It is equally wrong to look immediately for faults in individuals if things don't work when we apply those methods. Party activity and educational work must be adjusted to meet the needs of the changing composition of the party. Until we recognize those needs we are going to grope and stumble and stub our toes in trying to solve the organizational problems.

Now consider this important fact. Of the new members we have taken in since the convention in November 1944, four out of five have no previous political education. There is the first key to our problem. Few of them have any idea what a revolutionary party expects of its members. In many instances their organizational experience, at least by comparison with that of trained revolutionists, is quite primitive. There are many workers who consider themselves members of our party merely because they read *The Militant* or because they voted for us in an election campaign. Dozens of comrades have told me of workers who considered themselves members on this basis. At the New Years Eve party here in New York last year I had a personal experience that reflected this fact. There were two men there whom nobody knew. I introduced myself and engaged them in conversation. "You're just the guy we wanted to see," they said. "We voted for you for mayor. We came down to see how our party is getting along."

When you recognize how widespread this attitude is among workers, then you begin to understand what a long step it is for them when they formally join the party. Many think that surely you are satisfied when they come down and sign an application blank and start paying dues; they don't understand what more you could want. When a comrade talks to a worker in his home, when he talks to a worker in the union, or on the job, he usually evaluates correctly the level of understanding, the limitations of this worker, and governs himself accordingly. But far too often, once the worker shows up in the party headquarters, once he is seen at branch meetings, there is a tendency to lump him in abstractly with all other party members. If he is a party member, it is often assumed that he ought to know the score without troubling to remember or find out whether he has been in the party one month or forty years. "Why didn't he show up for the mobilization?" "Why didn't he carry out his assignment?" "Why did he act without consultation?" "He's a party member; he should know better." There is a tendency to forget when you see a worker around the party headquarters that he may not have advanced very far from that worker you had correctly sized up when you talked with him on the job or in his home or in the union. And the quicker we recognize that unfortunate tendency the better we will do our job of integrating new members.

Integration

Every new member coming into the party must have something to do. He must not be neglected. He must not be left to shift for himself. Moreover, his assignment must be something he can do, and insofar as it is possible, it should be something he likes to do. Don't demand more from a new worker-member than he can give, and even more important, don't demand more than he is ready to give at his present stage of development. And don't be in a hurry to drop him from the party rolls if he doesn't prove up in short order, if he can't expound the full party program in three months, or if he doesn't show up very often in the first period of his membership.

Now this presents a problem of administration, a very im-

portant problem, and every organizer is going to have a lot of trouble until he comes to grips with it on a realistic basis. What are you confronted with as a party organizer? You have the responsibility of getting the party work done and at the same time educating the comrades. But the natural human tendency is to follow the course of least resistance, especially when one is under pressure. Therefore, the organizer often tends to single out individuals and give them assignments according to what he thinks they can do right now, without much thought of combining education with work assignments. Generally the individual is kept right on the given assignment for quite a period of time, unless he is unable to handle it. From this practice has grown a tendency in our party to quickly type comrades for certain kinds of work and then bury them in it. It often takes a lot of doing, sometimes a major crisis, for the individual to break out of the straitjacket into which he has been typed and get a little different, a somewhat broader experience. That practice, from the point of view of organization, is opportunism at its worst. To serve the expediency of getting an immediate job done, you deprive yourself of the utilization of the service of this comrade in other capacities where he may have talents and abilities you don't know about yet. Perhaps he could help you solve other problems that are harassing you. Certainly you are depriving him of the inspiration and enthusiasm and spirit that he gets from a broadening horizon, from an increasing consciousness of his greater ability to serve the cause to which he has dedicated his life.

But still you have a job to be done and you can't have everybody farmed out as apprentices who are learning. So the trick is to find a balance, to be able to combine the practical utilization of the comrade for a task he can handle with an apprentice assignment for him on some other work. This comes under the heading of education in action. And to the extent that you learn to balance off these two types of activity, to that extent, it has been my experience, will you take a long step in the direction of breaking up organizational log-jams.

A second helpful device is the teaming up of teachers and students in party work. The terms "teacher" and "student" of course immediately recall the classroom; but it goes far beyond that. When you have an experienced political comrade in a trade union he is a teacher. Those around him are students, in addition to being co-members of the fraction. And most often some of the worker-members of the fractions are teachers of this teacher from one point of view, whether he recognizes it or not at the moment. When you send a group of comrades out to solicit *Militant* subscriptions, comrades who have done it before are teachers and those who haven't are students. And if a comrade who has been, let us say, ten years in the party but who has not recently done the leg work of *Militant* subbing—if he were to go out on a sub campaign with a worker who has been in the party only six months but who has been doing sub work—then to a considerable degree the newer member would be the teacher and the comrade with ten years in the party would be the student on that particular project. When you begin to think of it that way, you will see immediately how important it is, both from the point of view of getting work done and of facilitating the education of the comrades, to try in every way in your practical work to team up teachers and students.

In general, you should attempt to boost the new comrades ahead along the lines I have indicated, to give them opportunities to test out their talents, to get a new and richer body of experience. It is important, however, to bear in mind that you can commit a grievous error by carrying this to excess. If you push a comrade too fast, if you give him a task that he

is not able to carry out and then fail to come quickly to his aid, you may impair his self-confidence. You must keep a sense of balance in this problem. Don't type a comrade and keep him so typed until by some miracle he is liberated. Give him an opportunity to broaden his experience, to learn in action. But don't push him to a point where you may impair his self-confidence.

Branch Meetings

Now we turn to another pressing problem in recruiting and assimilating new members—that is the question of conducting branch meetings. There is still too much of a tendency in the branches to wear out the members with the reading of minutes and communications. This problem is becoming worse because the volume of communications is becoming greater. We get a lot of beefs from the field about the quantity of communications coming out from the National Office. It is true there are many letters and reports. The expansion of our activity, the sheer weight and volume of the work, necessitates the establishment of departments in the National Office. We have found it necessary to empower the department heads to send communications to branches on their own initiative in order to carry out their work. We are working now on a plan to cut down the volume of correspondence. But that would provide only a partial solution. What is necessary in addition is for the branches to devise more efficient methods in handling letters and reports. The correspondence should be studied by the Executive Committee or by the comrades assigned to various branch posts. Digests of the correspondence and recommendations on the action to be taken should be prepared in advance and the material presented in the branch meeting accordingly. Strive by this and other means to make the branch meetings lively, to make them productive and educational. Try to make every branch meeting an inspiration to the members because that is one of the very important keys to attracting and holding the worker-recruits coming into the party. Make them feel they are coming to one of the finest meetings they can attend so that they will look forward to it.

Part and parcel of this problem is the attitude of the branch organizers and the leading comrades generally toward the worker-recruit. Politically, the trained party organizer has a big edge over the average worker-recruit. He can teach him much from that point of view. But don't forget, Comrades, and underline this, that the average worker embodies a practical experience that can further enrich the political knowledge and organizational ability of the party organizer. And don't forget the tremendous ingenuity of the working class, as it has been so richly demonstrated in the strike struggles in this country. When you get a worker into the party you don't just get an abstract "worker"; you get the embodiment in human form of a part of the whole rich tradition of the working class. That is the way to look at every worker who comes into the party. Don't forget that to one degree or another, he is bringing with him the experience and the richly demonstrated ingenuity of the great working class. It is yours to take and use if you only know how. There is a great deal that the worker-recruit coming into the party must be taught by the organizer and by the leading party comrades, but don't forget there is a great deal that you can learn from him, and it is very important that you remember this at all times.

Married Couples

Another difficulty that looms large today has to do with the recruitment and integration of married couples. When only the husband or the wife is recruited into the party, half of the

work remains undone. Married couples live together for better or for worse, remember, and the question is posed immediately: What will his or her mate do? Also join the party? That is the best variant, one to be hoped for and the one to work toward. Will the mate be indifferent to the party? That sometimes happens. Will the mate try to break the new comrade away from the party? That frequently happens. There are a number of variants to this question and it is a problem the new member cannot escape. The party must always be aware of this problem. But let me warn you, let me urge you, don't rush indelicately into this situation. Just be sensitive to the problem, be sympathetic and be diplomatically helpful.

When both the husband and wife are in the party, how can they be helped to be active if they have children to care for. First in this connection, always bear in mind that children too are potential party material. Don't be satisfied with just the father and mother. What about the children? We have, for example, here in the Harlem Branch in New York a case recently of a father and a son joining the party together. What can we do to help overcome the handicaps that confront party members who have small children? We can and should make it a party problem. We should not leave it to the comrade parents to just do the best they can. That often means they must be more or less inactive. One couple in an Ohio branch, who have seven children, didn't know what else to do so they brought all seven children to the branch meeting. The comrades say it was a somewhat different meeting. But it struck me how really correct these comrades were in bringing their problem to the party. Now the branch will certainly be induced to help them find a way to be more active. It is another example worthy of emulation.

Party Builder

How can we get the fullest value out of all the many rich experiences in the party? We have a party that extends from coast to coast. In every branch the comrades are grappling with today's problems. In one way and another they are hammering out the answers. But how are we going to make the experience of each branch available to the entire party? We can't do it completely in *The Militant*; letters are not adequate; so for that purpose we devised an instrument known as the Party Builder.

I want to say a word about the importance of the Party Builder. It is my opinion that the comrades generally have not yet come to appreciate the Party Builder. Many do not seem to understand its potentialities, its function, what a good and useful purpose it can serve. If the comrades in all the branches will approach the problem of the publication of the Party Builder in the same light that they are now approaching the problem of the collective production of *The Militant*, we will then really have something. We will then have an organ whereby we can make every experience in the party the property of the entire party. If the comrades everywhere will develop the habit of reporting their experiences to the Party Builder, thus giving the whole party the benefit of each and every one of these experiences, we are going to march forward just that much faster and will make that many fewer mistakes. Isn't it ridiculous for a fraction or branch here in New York, another in Detroit, a third in Chicago, to be grappling with the same problem, making perhaps the same mistakes, and finally without consultation or collaboration hammering out the answer the hard way? Just think how helpful it would be if each fraction and each branch made it a practice to acquaint the party with both the good ideas they have developed and the mistakes ex-

perience has taught them to guard against. That's exactly what the Party Builder is for.

Education

We must turn also attentively and seriously to the problem of education. We had the experiences last year of the Michigan School and the California School, summer vacation schools, both of which were very successful. In these schools the comrades get not only an education, but also an opportunity to drink in the spirit of the party, to get a better feel of the party, to get to know many members of the party as personalities. They find a favorable atmosphere for study and the opportunity is presented there for the comrades to study both elementary and advanced courses.

This year the comrades should make it a point to bring more contacts to the camp. Our experience last year proved that the camp is an excellent place to cinch up recruitment of these contacts into the party.

We propose to the Plenum that in the field of education we take a decisive organizational step of the kind we took in the field of organization, in trade union work, a year ago when Comrade Dunne went out into the field. In this connection we propose to make the post of National Education Director a major organizational assignment. We ask the Plenum to appoint Comrade William F. Warde as National Education Director. In that capacity he will be in charge of the Michigan camp, and the Trotsky School. He will work out, in consultation with the branches, a rounded plan to improve branch educationals and class work in the branches. He will also work toward the organization of intermediate classes in the districts, and the development of a system of circuit tours for educational work.

Election Campaigns

Another field of activity where we can facilitate recruitment and step up the tempo of our political work generally is the parliamentary field. We propose that every party branch adopt the perspective of running candidates for public office wherever and whenever circumstances make it possible. Watch for and seek out opportunities for parliamentary campaigns for all offices, an office of any kind that will give us a vehicle for a campaign, and carry out systematic political propaganda through this vehicle.

You should attempt, insofar as circumstances permit, to groom certain comrades to be candidates for public office. Groom them in several senses: not only in the sense of assigning them to a study of political campaigning, but of assigning them to public activity that will prepare them for this role: appearing before legislative committees, making statements in the name of the party, becoming known in the community, having something to say on this or that grievance of the workers, etc. By this combined process, the comrades selected can best be prepared and trained to run for office.

Three campaigns are already decided on for this year with others possible. Comrade Breitman is running for U.S. senator from New Jersey. Joining him this time are Comrade Kohlman running for governor; and Comrades Bohanan and Phillips running for the House of Representatives. Comrade Carlson is warming up for a battle in Minnesota. Here in New York we

are planning a campaign which is going to be the biggest, most important and most significant campaign we have yet undertaken in the history of our party. A decision has been made by the New York Local and tentatively approved by the Buffalo comrades to run a state-wide campaign in the New York election this year. That is at the same time a tremendous task and a big opportunity.

The requirements for getting on the ballot in a state campaign are not simple. First of all you have to have 12,000 signatures on the petitions to be placed on the ballot. It is not enough to get 12,000 signatures. There are 62 counties in this state, and you have to have a minimum of 50 signatures from each county. That is a big task. And we have only from July 27 to September 2 to get the signatures. We think we can swing it.

Once we have achieved that and get into the campaign, then we have these three factors pitching in our favor:

1. It appears there will be no labor party candidates for the major offices in the state elections.

2. The campaign in New York will concentrate sharply and pointedly on the big political issues of the day. It will be a sort of testing ground between the Republican and Democratic parties, looking toward the next presidential campaign.

3. In a state-wide campaign, with a large slate of candidates, we will have an opportunity to get free radio time on a scale never before possible for us.

A fourth point comes to mind—this is going to be just what the doctor ordered for Buffalo and Rochester, two branches whose activities have been concentrated primarily on trade union work. They will have an opportunity to participate in a political campaign with the help of the New York Local and the National Office.

We view the campaign projected here in New York State as something even more than I have mentioned. It is our opinion that we should orient toward a presidential campaign in 1948. We should begin to think about it now, begin to prepare for it. The launching of the New York campaign may be considered as a first step toward that perspective. It is a big job for us to undertake a presidential campaign in 1948. There are great obstacles in the way. It is also a big job to run a state campaign in New York in 1946 under the handicaps I enumerated to you. So let us view this campaign in New York State as the proving ground to demonstrate that in 1948 we will be able to break through on a nation-wide scale and run a candidate for president.

I have attempted here tonight to describe our main activities and achievements in the last year, to cite the trends and the central aims in our work, and to state the main problems now confronting us. Foremost among these problems in the fullest utilization of our steadily improving opportunities to recruit and to integrate hundreds and then thousands of new members into the party.

This report is presented as part of the pre-convention discussion. It should be studied and discussed in all the party branches. We invite contributions to the Party Builder by all comrades who have any comments to make on this report or any other aspect of the party organization problems.

Letter from George Clarke

Dear Comrade Dobbs:

In reading your communication (April 13) to the branches on the recruitment campaign, an idea occurred to me which may be useful in focussing attention on what appears to be one of the difficulties in the campaign. Perhaps as a consequence also this may help to accelerate the rhythm of recruitment.

Your letter urges that recruitment be put on a "campaign basis" but it does not indicate the nature of this campaign. As far as most available information indicates, recruitment derives primarily from propaganda activity: personal contact work, classes, forums, socials and the sub drive. This activity will always constitute the central core in recruiting work. On the other hand, however, so long as membership comes primarily from this source, recruiting is and will necessarily be circumscribed and limited. It is only when the party becomes involved in agitational campaigns for limited ends or in working-class actions that the proportion of new recruits can be increased.

It isn't necessary to artificially contrive such campaigns, as was often done in the period following the organization of the SWP and prior to the split. Issues arise in the process of the class struggle and with a realistic policy we seize the occasion for a "campaign." In the past several months we have been involved in several such campaigns: the anti-Smith campaign, particularly in Los Angeles; the Ferguson Case in New York; the GM and steel strikes, to mention but a few. The party branches, in the respective localities, have concentrated their activities. The Militant focussed its attention on them. What have the concrete results been in the form of recruitment? Why were they not better? How can they be improved? It

seems to me that a discussion and answer to such questions as these would help to speed up recruitment.

For example: In January, during the height of the GM strike, four auto workers scattered over four cities were recruited; in February while the strike was still on, no auto workers are listed as having been recruited; in March, in the immediate aftermath of the strike, there were three new auto worker members scattered over three cities who joined. We did somewhat better in steel: ten in January in seven cities; two in February in Seattle and Los Angeles and six in March. (I do not have the figures handy for December, although I don't suppose it seriously changes the picture.) Now, of course, these results are good in relation to our past performances and to the present size of our party. But they are not good enough in relation to the tasks before us or even for the attainment of the quota set for the convention.

I would therefore make two suggestions: 1. That the branches be requested to write up their experiences in contacting and recruiting during and after agitational campaigns, mass actions and strikes for the Party Builder. 2. That a special place be reserved on each monthly recruiting report for membership gained in agitational campaigns. The fact that such statistics won't always be very encouraging shouldn't be a deterrent to their publication. On the contrary, the constant reiteration of this point, i.e., that bulk recruitment must come from agitation and action, will make the membership keenly alert to this necessity and lead to the dropping and changing of some old methods and the devising of new ones.

April 15, 1946

Flint Branch Recruitment and Integration

By JERRY KIRK

In the course of the General Motors strike the Flint branch almost doubled its membership. A good majority of the comrades are members of the party less than six months. These comrades were recruited primarily because of our activities in the strike in which they immediately participated as conscious representatives of the party.

Our principal medium for recruitment was a loose discussion semi-caucus group to which we invited leading militants of the GM locals. For twelve weeks leading comrades of the party in the area and from the Detroit branch came to Flint to analyze the strike and to indicate the necessary steps for future activity. There was no obligation on the militants to accept our program, in part or as a whole. However we felt confident that the continued presence of these workers at our meetings would condition their actions in the locals. Those invited understood they were attending a meeting under auspices of the party. We did not attempt to hold mass meetings. The purpose of the meetings, to discuss the broad strategy of the strike and at the same time consider some of the tactical problems, was thus retained.

The meetings were called by word of mouth and by telephone. No mailings were sent out. An average of twenty-five people attended our meetings. Total number of people who attended at least one meeting or more would be in the neighborhood of sixty. Many of these workers were on the leading strike committees of the local.

In addition to the weekly discussion meeting we held our regular branch meeting. Toward the conclusion of the strike we dissolved the discussion meeting and concentrated all of our attention on the branch meetings. Like all new branches we have had the problem of integration of new members. In the strike we were forced to accomplish this over night. The main instrument for this was our union fractions.

Of a fraction of eleven comrades at one plant only two had been in the party over six months. None of them had any experience in speaking at union meetings. This fraction from the very beginning became very influential in the union. We accomplished this by careful consideration of the tasks confronting us at each meeting and the assignment of at least one function to each comrade in the fraction. The leading comrades were assigned to making speeches, others were asked to make motions, nominations, etc. Speeches of the comrades were gone over in detail in the fraction and we considered all possible arguments of our opponents.

In this way we attempted to meet all contingencies, continually reminding comrades of the necessity to make spot decisions if something new cropped up on the floor of the meeting.

The fraction was tied in closely with the branch in that they realized they were carrying through one part of the program. Our fraction at another plant, on a smaller scale, went through the same process.

With the end of the strike we are concentrating on developing our leading unionists as speakers. They are assigned topics for branch discussions. One of the more experienced comrades aids them in drawing up their talks, indicating the political lessons. In this way we have increased rapidly the number of speakers in the branch.

The newer comrades are being enrolled in a class on the ABCs of Socialism.

With all the different aspects of branch activity today this confronts us with difficulties daily. We have so many departments of activities and few people to lead the work. This is another way, however, to integrate new comrades. By giving a new comrade responsibility and some helping advice he or she is drawn closer into the party. After a period of time these new comrades will be able to carry on the work by themselves. (The comrade in charge of *The Militant* has been in the party for six months while the comrade in charge of our social committee less than six months.)

While the branch was in the process of formation, comrades will recall, a red-baiting attack was launched against us in the local press. For a period of two weeks it was the main topic of discussion in the union halls and on the picket lines.

Our main task was to expose the purpose of the attack and clearly indicate to the workers throughout the city that these

methods are alien to the union movement, could only be to the advantage of the General Motors Corporation. We further intended to utilize the scare to present our program to the public through the press.

We were successful in getting a group of unionists to issue a statement along the general lines that we suggested to them. The leaders of other locals released statements on their own initiative. The similarity of all the releases gave the impression of a concentrated campaign of the union movement against the red-baiters.

The party succeeded in getting a statement in the press which was widely reprinted.

The main lesson we learned from this experience is to strike while the iron is hot. We must issue our statements to the press as quickly as possible and we must approach the union leaders before they have time to cool off.

When we obtain a headquarters in Flint many of our present difficulties will be overcome. As it is it proves to be a great obstacle in our work.

For the next six months we are preparing a renewal drive for subscriptions to *The Militant*. We are sure that around this campaign we will succeed in obtaining many new recruits to the party with the objective of doubling the party membership in Flint prior to the coming Convention.

April 1946

Report from Toledo

By M. WALKER

Inasmuch as we had a discussion at the Plenum of the general problem of readjusting branch life and activity to meet the needs of the party in this transition stage in the life of our party, I shall report briefly on some of the things that the Toledo Branch has already tried and some of the things that we have to suggest to achieve maximum speed and ease in integrating new members into our party.

When a new member joins the party and his application is accepted he is notified by a letter from the recording secretary and asked to appear before the next meeting of the Executive Committee of the branch. At this meeting the new member is given a talk by the organizer and by the trade union director of the branch on the rights and duties of party members. Also, if possible, he is immediately given an assignment commensurate with his ability and experience.

Twice a month we send out a Branch News Letter which informs every member of the meetings and tasks for the two week period following and outlines the main political task of the branch. This letter should be inspirational in tone and content. (It is easy to fall into routinism with this sort of thing.) We are contemplating changing this into a branch "house organ," making it as attractive as possible in content and in form.

We are attempting to adapt educational classes to the convenience and needs of the new members. So far we have only arranged classes of small groups at times convenient to the comrades and have adopted a seminar form of discussion class in preference to the usual classroom method. We are contemplating various visual mediums of education but most of these

are out of our reach. We have prepared one chart on the history of Stalinism. (This has been photostated and sent into the National Office.)

It has been our experience that it is easier to get members to fraction meetings than to any other, and in line with that we have assigned more responsibility to the fractions for the integration and education of the new members in addition to directing the union and political work of the fraction members in the shop.

The influx of many new members into the branch has forced us to grapple with problems with which we had no previous experience. This will also be true of other branches and we will be interested to read about how other branches are meeting this problem. In this way, through the exchange of experiences, the party as a whole will accomplish the turn from the life of a propaganda group to a mass party more quickly and with greater ease.

Finally, we do not believe that one important aspect of this turn can be achieved on a local basis. In the field of education we need facilities for visual and oral education which cannot be supplied by branches. It will be the job of the National Education Department to provide, as soon as possible, films, recordings, charts, graphs and other equipment which will greatly speed up the educational process with new members.

Also it would be of great value to the branches if the party could issue a small pamphlet explaining the set-up of the party, the rights and duties of a party member, a brief outline of our political objectives, and what it means to be a party member.

Growth of the San Francisco Branch

By BOB CHESTER

The San Francisco Branch has begun recruiting at a steady pace. This fact, above all others, indicates the change that has taken place in the last two years.

The war period had hit the branch severely. Through the draft and transfer of comrades it lost what little base it had had in the shoreside industries. On top of that, most of its maritime members, who composed the major proletarian section, shifted to other ports. The branch remained with a very small periphery and not much opportunity to build one.

The problem was how to break out of this isolation. Owing to the predominant commercial nature of the area, the job was more difficult than in an industrial one. Industries, outside of the waterfront, are mainly of the consumer goods type and are more dispersed than basic industry. The job of reaching workers is more difficult than in most cities. There are few areas that can be called "workers' areas." A longshoreman, a clerk, an independent craftsman or small businessman, a white collar worker and an AFL craft unionist can be found on almost every block, outside of the upper middle-class sections.

It was in an attempt to break out of this isolation that San Francisco initiated its sub drives in 1943. There is no need to dwell on the tremendous impetus given us by this work; every branch has had a similar experience. If there is any single factor that opened up a new field for us and has enabled us to move forward it is the sub drives. At least half of our recruits this past year made their contact with the party through The Militant. We are, in my opinion, just beginning to reap the benefits of it.

We began to see results of these sub drives during our CRDC campaign when we began to get readers down to socials. These affairs, beside being of financial benefit to the campaign, afforded us a fertile ground for making contacts—even more so, at that time, than forums and classes.

In 1944, while we had begun to feel less isolated, we were not able to achieve any significant scale of recruiting. Our total for the year was five—three seamen, one professional and one student. However our contact list had considerably expanded and possibilities of recruiting had begun to appear.

In 1945 we recruited 18 comrades, at the following rate: February—one; March—one; April—one; May—two; August—two; October—four; November—one; December—six. The prospects are that in the coming year we will be able to maintain the gradually increasing rate. Most important, the composition is, in the great majority, proletarian. Of the eighteen, five were seamen, two AFL craft unionists, three shipyard workers and three longshoremen and warehousemen. Three had been in other political organizations. Six, or one-third, were Negro.

All the comrades have become recruitment conscious. Until recently recruiting was handled as one of the regular duties of all members, but now we are beginning to introduce a greater measure of specialization. In its elections last December the branch took steps to adjust its organization to the needs of expansion by establishing committees rather than individuals to carry on the work in each field. The strongest and largest committee set up was the contact committee, composed of responsible activist members with good representation from the Executive Committee. This committee devotes itself to careful coverage of the mailing list and contacts and to careful follow-up work on good prospects.

But recruiting is only half the job. The other half is integra-

tion. Both of these are facilitated by well organized branch activity and education. At our branch elections we established other committees to take up the various phases of branch life—educational, social, membership.

We give careful attention to our branch meetings, make them short and businesslike, with adequate time for an educational and discussion. Visitors are invariably impressed. We had one case where the wife of a recruit who was interested in the party, but was undecided about joining, attended the meeting at which he was admitted. Before the meeting was over she had signed her application.

Our high point in recruiting came as the aftermath of our concentrated activity in the anti-fascist campaign. This was our first opportunity to play a role in large-scale actions. The fast changing situations necessitated devoting the full branch meetings to discussion and preparation for action. Contacts who attended these meetings were impressed by our method of handling discussion, arriving at conclusions and the way we carried them into action.

Socials play an important political role in both contacting and recruiting. Our socials, held about once a month, are well planned, usually with organized entertainment, decorations, etc. They are invariably successful, not only financially (they provide an indispensable part of the branch income), but also socially. We have had comrades remark that they consider attending socials not a duty but a real pleasure. What is more important, many contacts who have seen only our serious side are pleased and often surprised to find that we are normal people when we let our hair down. Several applications have been obtained at socials.

We are now paying increasing attention to educational work. New members are required to take the revised, expanded basic training course worked out by the education committee. We are approaching the question of supervised reading for intermediate members and a study course on the First Five Years for the older ones. Our hope is to eventually have an integrated series of courses that will take new people through all the fundamentals of Marxism. We pay extra attention to encouraging new people to give branch educationals. Usually a topic is chosen for a first educational out of the comrade's own experience. A member of the education committee advises and aids in the preparation. After breaking the ice more political topics are assigned.

There is, in my opinion, no single avenue or shortcut to recruiting. Each recruit represents a quantity of crystallized labor. What is necessary above all, to attract and hold contacts, is a full all-sided healthy branch life. Workers who come in our direction are looking for a way out of the impasse into which capitalism has thrust them. They are attracted by our clear explanations, by our confidence in our ability to achieve the solution, by our serious and efficient approach to the problems at hand, by our eagerness to teach them everything we know and give them a worthwhile purpose in life.

This last year of recruiting has given the San Francisco Branch new fields of work. We are in the process of establishing a branch in the East Bay, an objective that has long been on our agenda. We are beginning to play a modest role in the trade unions. Advancement in these fields will lead to greater recruiting and enable us to play an ever more effective role in the area.

Recruitment and Initial Stages of Integration

By HERB CAPPY

As in our experience in Santa Monica, where we recruited new and raw elements, Rose and I feel that the essential need of our new members here in Tacoma is education. In Santa Monica, we found the stiff formal lines of the basic training course did not work out too well. In reality, it is based on reading material that is too tough for the new enthusiastic worker with perhaps 8th grade school formal education. The thoughts and words even in Comrade Cannon's testimony in the "Trial" pamphlet are quite intricate and complex and "advanced."

The lack of any simple and agitational material being put out by the National Educational Department compelled us to experiment with several patterns and finally we have evolved a general outline which seems to be eminently successful in developing new people.

The real test of our ideas is our ability to not only interest people and make them sympathetic enough to join — but one's ability to hold them in the party and develop them by stages, starting with the level we first find them at. It was our educational method, I believe, which won and held our recruits in Santa Monica — and, I hope, will hold this group. I shall go somewhat into detail on this. I hope at some later date to send to the N. O. written outlines of our study course series. Time prohibits that now.

To each contact that we visited I posed the question of a group of us getting together for ten weeks to study and train ourselves.

"Ten weeks," we said, "Let's start a real working man's organization; investigate conditions in our own country and across the world and find out if the socialist ideas can stand up as the scientific truth. Ten weeks in which we go into the following:

"1. Capitalism — What makes it tick and how long can it go on.

"2. Native American fascist organizations — How the spearhead of dictatorship is preparing.

"3. The atomic bomb and war — Will American capitalism destroy the world?

"4. What is a party — Is the SWP the organization for us? What is its record in the struggle against the bosses, against war, against fascism?

American History Through the Eyes of a Socialist

"5. 1776 — Whose heritage, capitalist or working class?

"6. The rise of capitalism in the U. S.

"7. 1861 — The industrial revolution, the bloody struggle for political power.

"8. Turn of the century — the rise of imperialism — American capitalism reaches its death stage.

History of Unions in the U. S.

"9. A — American unions before the CIO.

"10. B — The age of industrial unionism — the need for a revolutionary political program and party in the unions."

You will notice the first four sessions are largely agitational in nature. There is no prescribed reading material. I open the four sessions with a fifteen to twenty-minute talk, as simple and colorful as possible. As soon as one person asks a question or makes a comment, I turn to others in the group and ask

them their answer to that question or comment on the statement.

Rather than play "big shot" and authoritatively answer each question, I induce all of the people to think the question out, or statement out, for themselves.

I have been amazed a thousand times over at the talkative sessions that ensue. Sometimes the group stumbles and fumbles around and around, wanders far from the point — BUT THEY TALK! From the beginning, the aim is to teach them to think on their feet, accept nothing for granted.

Rose and I have learned immeasurably from this method. Barriers fall and stiffness fades from the atmosphere. Often we intervene because it is necessary to stop several people from speaking at once. There is no formal chairman at the first four sessions — "democracy" soon becomes a natural conduct for the group as they learn to wait politely until a person is through before they speak.

(Just as they speak "round robin," so we hold our meetings in round robin succession at the homes of all of the members. Coffee and cake are served at the conclusion. Each person is charged 10c and the fund is used to buy books for a library. The books we buy first are "America's Sixty Families," "How the Great American Fortunes Were Made," "Oil Imperialism," and several of Upton Sinclair's: "Profits of Religion," "Brass Check," "The Goslings," and similar "expose" material.)

These books are well read.

At the end of the first four sessions, we will find someone or some couple has read one of these books. We suggest he, she, or they jointly tell us what the book was all about — no formal report, just what was in the book and what thoughts result from reading it. Rose and I then visit "he, she, or they" before the night of their talk, engage them in conversation on the book and without being made obviously aware of it, we suggest they make some notes on their remarks. Actually they prepare an outline, and a speaker is being born.

We give no formal classes in the traditional, age-old wearisome style of "class in public speaking" or class in "how to prepare a speech." Such methods are fine in a later stage of organization; but in the process of recruitment and initial integration, their very express formality generally leaves people cold. I have seen such ventures flop even in older branches of the party in New York and Los Angeles.

On the other hand, our experience with the proletarian types that Rose and I recruited in the aircraft industry in Los Angeles revealed to us the advantages of the informal or indirect method of "training through guidance" rather than formal direction through stereotyped procedures.

It was even my experience that leading comrades in Los Angeles violently disputed the types of reading matter that I listed above as "first" readings for new recruits. We were chastened for selecting material "not published by the party!" The opinion was shouted at me that the first pamphlet to give to a new worker is the Communist Manifesto. Upton Sinclair, Jack London and similar authors were referred to as "tripe," "obsolete" and oh, much worse adjectives.

Rose and I felt differently. We felt that a common error all of us make is that we have been immersed in the movement so many years we tend to lose the first fresh wave of enthusiasm that carried us into the movement. We tend to forget how miraculous and great the first surge of understanding that was brought to us seemed at that distant time when the evils of

capitalism were revealed to us for the first time. We wanted to hear more and more about how lousy this rotten capitalist system is. We wanted it torn to shreds in one expose after another. Our interest was at white heat — and so is that of the worker, not the academic handful who reach the party after they have “read everything.”

Any amateur psychologist can tell you that the moment to mould people is in their infant stage. Recognize their level of understanding and proceed from there. Make your material live for them and a desire and hunger is aroused for more.

From there we proceed with this group to demonstrate that Marxism alone can analyze the history of their own country — the United States. Whatever nationalist feelings are still in the average new recruit — and only a pseudo-Marxist fool will deny it to himself — are dispelled considerably by the second four sessions of the study group. The violent and ruthless evolution of the class struggle is nowhere more manifest than here in “our own” country. Class feeling and class pride are born in a study of American history. For this we introduce a serious text: Simmons’ pamphlet: **Class Struggle in American History**.

The average new recruit has not too much time to read — particularly if he is a unionist. Four weeks to read one little pamphlet. But I’ll warrant that they’ll read it, digest it, and, thereby, be miles along in their education.

The last two sessions find the trade unionists in particular, and all new members, vastly better able to understand the tortuous course of the working-class to evolve towards a mass class struggle organization.

From that point, the group will enter a 4 or 8 week course on the “Evolution of Mankind”, (materialistic conception of history). Here we broaden the horizon of the group to see the development of classes from their origin. By now, “reports” in round robin manner are an easy affair to arrange. The classes in a 4 week course are:

1. Primitive communism.
2. Slaveholding systems.
3. Feudalism.
4. Capitalism.

Reading material: **Proletarian Lessons** by John Keracher (the simplest booklet I know of on this score). **How the Gods were Made. Wage, Labor and Capital**.

From that point on we travel along more traditional lines, or what should be more traditional lines. By this time the group has absorbed many definitions and terms that would have overwhelmed them at the beginning: bourgeoisie, proletariat, state, materialistic, idealistic, etc., etc.

Perhaps most important of all (and, oh brother, how we learned this from the struggle against the petty-bourgeois minority in 1939-40) from the very beginning we tell them

that the method we are pursuing is the “dialectic” method of viewing everything as a process. We demonstrate from our first conversation how capitalist politicians and their philosophers see capitalism as a status quo whereas we probe its origin, witness its maturity and foresee its decay and elimination and replacement by a higher order in the process of the evolution of mankind.

In two weeks I have already discussed in our terms (with several of this group who show the most promise) “thesis, antithesis, synthesis,” change of quantitative into qualitative, “evolution and revolution,” etc., etc. No session, “agitational” or otherwise, goes by that we don’t hammer this point home. We kid about it over coffee and cake; the word is strange but it takes hold and these people amaze us with dozens of parallels in their shop, union and life experiences.

I can recall offhand discussions on toolmaking, machinery, lumber mills, medicine, dentistry, disease, poverty, religion, where the sudden revelation that when one is given a method to see with, all things about us prove the Marxist method of viewing things “dialectically,” puts those things in their proper place. It clears up in their minds why everything around them functions as it does.

Thus, you see, we have found, that viewing our “education” problem dialectically, we try to lead our recruits through a logical development of ideas instead of organizing “formal” classes along “formal” established lines. So much for the general procedures we have and will employ. Needless to say, we do not insist on this as a rigid pattern. For we have given classes on the “History of the SWP,” “State and Revolution,” “Marxian Economics,” etc. I hope I have conveyed the idea that we are here concerned with the problem of recruitment and initial stages of integration.

At our branch meetings we further this process by putting on the agenda 15 to 30 minutes for a “shop report.” Often this is not a shop report at all. Some member will recount an incident or repeat some question or argument that a fellow-worker put forth that he could not cope with. We then go around the room and each one tries to cope with and work out a brief, concise and potent answer. This is a very lively feature of the meeting.

We elect a new chairman every four weeks. If a parliamentary question of procedure, voting, etc., comes up, we stop the meeting, refer to a copy of Roberts rules of order. Thus, we feel, our trade union comrades will learn to handle themselves in their unions as well as in party meetings. This, too, is part of our education.

Our branch meetings begin at 7:30, conclude at 9:30. From 9:30 to 10:00 coffee, cake and chatting. This does not always operate exactly, of course — but we try to make it the norm.

Some Problems of Branch Organization

By RICHARD KIRK

The coming period of great party expansion will bring forward some problems of branch organization which we should anticipate. I have in mind particularly the expanding of the work of small branches. This will occur in two ways. First, in expanding of existing organizations in the larger cities in the building of new branches. Second, in building or expanding the party organization in cities where at present we have either nothing at all or only a rudimentary form of party organization. This type of organization work should be systematized to a greater degree than we have heretofore been able to do, drawing from past experience.

The following are certain observations and conclusions to which I have come as a result of my experience with small and moderate size branches.

By and large, an inexperienced organizer or any worker joining the organization is guided pretty largely by the official rules and regulations as set down in constitutions and by-laws. The Constitution of the party calls for the formation of branches of five members or more. This may have been an adequate statement of the membership requirements of a branch of the Trotskyist movement of many years ago. But today a group of seven workers who attempt to administer the affairs of a full-

fledged branch of the party, find themselves snowed under. Their energy is exhausted in the effort to maintain a formal branch organization, and the group becomes paralyzed. The attempt to get new members has to be postponed, and eventually is forgotten. The branch gets into a rut of trying to hold itself together at the cost of its organizational work. It loses contact with outside sources of contact, becomes ingrown and festers.

I believe that organizers, particularly of new and small branches, will be considerably aided by being able to separate two types of organizational functions which can be designated as organizational and administrative.

Administrative requirements of a branch of the party are somewhat the following:

1. Participating in the general work of the national organization, its internal discussions, national conventions, discussing and acting upon the communications of the National Office and its subordinate institutions.

2. Carrying on disciplined relations with the mass organizations.

3. Division of labor among the members.

4. Formally maintaining the structure of the party.

5. Party finances.

The other phase of party work: that which is aimed at and leads to the extension of the influence of the party and recruiting new members I would call the organizational work proper. For such small groups this means almost exclusively contact work, circulation of the press and general propaganda such as meetings, etc.

Now a group of seven workers clearly has nothing, or very little, to administer. As the group approaches 12-15 members the need begins to be seen for the installation of certain administrative functions: regularly elected officers, perhaps a de-

partment or two and participation in the national organization.

I do not claim that every and all groups will or have experienced this exact metamorphosis but I believe that it is as close as you can come. I do know that generally speaking before reaching the size of 12-15 members the burden of branch administration is insupportable and tends to engulf the branch, resulting in frustration.

A skilled and experienced organizer, or even inexperienced people under constant and immediate guidance, can keep an adequate balance of these factors as they are conscious of them. However the tendency has been in many cases, and probably will continue, for a worker to go ahead as the book says and as the communications come in.

This general problem has been a serious stumbling block in nearly all of the small branches that I have been able to study, which over a period of years have been numerous and probably representative.

I would like to see an official change in the requirements for a branch. I would then propose that we establish an intermediate form of party organization which might be used prior to setting up a formal branch, with special relations with the National Office.

I would suggest that we might use for this purpose such a form as an SWP Club or Group, Militant Club, or possibly an Organizing Committee. I believe that it may be desirable to give such groups a semi-official status in the party. There is always a strong demand in such a group to establish definite and formal relations with the party.

Provision should be made to assure the party rights of members in such groups by giving them voting rights as members-at-large and/or fraternal representation at conventions. In some cases there might be no cause to use such guarantees, such as in the expansion of already existing branches where party members might retain rights in a parent party branch.

New York Public Speaking Class

By ABE DAVIS

A few remarks on the public speaking class in New York, conducted by Bill Morgan. This class is of benefit to those of us who are unable to speak freely to an audience. It stems from the early days of our youth. Sometimes the early-day laziness overcomes us. We are inclined to sit back and let others do the talking. Because of this many points have slipped at branch meetings and elsewhere. There were many opportunities for all of us to speak at these particular times. I have seen many of our comrades do a lot of talking but nothing more. What about those of us who do much but talk very little? Nobody is to blame for such a condition. There are many times when I begin to speak, I bring out the main points first and I become speechless even now. It is not an easy problem to overcome.

The most important thing I learned at the class is not to be afraid to go before an audience of branch members. An amusing incident occurred relating to this. At this time I was to give a Militant review before the branch. At the same time I was very busy with my literature work. In the middle of this I was nominated to be chairman for the meeting. In my haste I moved to close nominations! I was astounded because I had to do three things in one night. The speaking class taught me not to fear an audience. The branch understood my predicament but it was very amusing. I carried it through to the best of my ability. Those of us in the party who have the same faults will gain from these experiences to help many present and future party members. Above all I urge all comrades to take advantage of the public speaking class.

Report on Work in Buffalo CIO Veterans Committees

By L. H. and BILL GRAY

Work among the veterans in Buffalo was begun by the CIO Council last December when a four-man veteran committee was set up. This committee which included an ex-Stalinist veteran who was anxious to do veterans work had no real powers or functions. The ex-Stalinist soon realized that a new set-up was necessary and at a subsequent Council meeting succeeded in

convincing the delegates that a new committee with some authority was needed. He was given permission to go ahead with his plan.

The first meeting was held on December 21. Seven vets were present including some Stalinists. Four local unions were represented. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss ways

and means of organizing vets around the trade union movement. While there was some talk of organizing committees in the locals the main orientation was toward legislative work, petitions, letters to Congressmen, etc. Officers were elected but never functioned.

A meeting of union and non-union vets was called for early January. About 75 people from 8 locals attended. The main business of the meeting was to prepare a picket line at the State Employment Office to demand unemployment insurance for vets on strike. A resolution on housing was adopted. At this meeting for the first time we had party members present. One of our comrades made specific proposals to set up local vet committees. His proposals were accepted but nothing was done to carry them out.

The demonstration at the unemployment office was made up of 12 veterans including one of ours. It received considerable publicity both in this country and in service papers in Guam and Tokyo. The next two meetings saw the CIO Vets Committee at its lowest point. At one of them a long-winded speech by a Stalinist hack on a second-rate issue repelled many of the worker-vets present and some never attended again. It was apparent that the idea of organizing vets in the unions chiefly around legislation, petitions and letters to Congressmen was not working out. Yet every meeting saw new faces testifying to the interest of the veterans in an organization of their own as part of the trade union movement. It was also becoming clear that the CIO Vets Committee which had no base in the locals could not come to grips with the real problems that were bothering the vets in the plants.

About this time we contacted the ex-Stalinist on the Committee and began a series of discussions on political questions with him. In addition we took up the veterans problem and succeeded in laying a basis for joint work in this field along the lines of concentrating upon building vets committees in the locals.

The Stalinists gave no real aid with the veteran work as they were not interested in this type of activity and were not too pleased with the turn it was taking as more and more of our suggestions were bearing fruit. All of this naturally pushed the ex-Stalinist on the Committee further in our direction and has undoubtedly aided us in the political discussions that we are conducting with him.

With the active participation of our comrades the work among the veterans began to take definite shape around the building of committees in the locals. Literature dealing with the need for such committees was sent to local unions. All connections with veterans in different shops were followed up, officials of several locals were approached, members of the CIO Committee participated in picket lines of locals on strike and thus laid the foundation for further vet work.

In one of the local unions where our comrades are influential a vets committee was set up around the end of January. This was the first one to function, although one set up earlier in another local union which remained dormant for a time is again coming to life. During the next two months about ten committees were organized in as many different locals. Four were set up in locals on strike during the recent wave of strikes. Representatives from the CIO Vets Committee participated to one extent or another in the formation and development of all the local groups.

Each local vets group elects representatives to the central body. Attendance at the CIO vets central body is irregular. The work of coordinating the activity of the local vet groups is carried out mainly by the ex-Stalinist together with us.

The vets in the locals are at this stage interested almost

exclusively in plant problems and see the central body now as a source of advice and assistance and feel, as yet, no real need for regular and continuous participation on their part. At a later stage when more interest develops on vet issues outside of the locals the central body will perhaps assume a greater importance for them.

For us it is a very important medium through which we are able, under the official cover of the CIO Council, to reach out and contact the best veterans in all the locals, to advance our program and concept of veterans work. In addition we have built up a sizable organization of approximately 15 vet groups in as many locals. The ex-Stalinist and one of our party members are the recognized leaders. Through the active vets we are beginning to gain contacts in local unions where we had none previously. This is particularly true of Stalinist-controlled locals. Vets who find it difficult for various reasons to get cooperation from union officials bring their union problems to the vet leaders. This offers many possibilities for the future, both in the trade union field and in party work.

Issues agitating the vets in the shops are as follows: First is the question of wages and jobs given the returned serviceman. While he is supposed to get back the same job at the same wage plus any additional increases made during his absence, most companies follow a deliberate policy of cheating the vet out of these increases by one means or another. These issues are usually the ones around which the local committees are organized. They are formed with the consent or participation, or both, of local officials together with representatives from the central vets body.

Another big issue is super-seniority. The central vets committee has spent a great deal of time explaining its anti-union character to the vet groups and has met with considerable success. CIO literature on this subject has been of assistance. The campaign to explain super-seniority brought the cooperation of local officials who were experiencing difficulties with vets over this question.

The vet committees set up in the four locals on strike were organized as much around the idea of solidarity of workers and veterans against the boss as around vet grievances as such. While some other locals set up veterans committees during the strike wave without direct connection with or participation by the CIO Committee, in no case did these vet groups really function in the strike or afterwards.

In most cases the formative stage of the vets groups is characterized by a tendency to bypass the local union grievance and bargaining machinery and deal directly with the company. Even where, as in one local, a group of vets were about to approach management on their own, no difficulty has been experienced in convincing them to proceed through the regular union channels. This work has won the cooperation of the unions. Further it has impressed them with the importance of vets work, and has shown them that they can rely upon the central body for help in these matters. As a result real efforts are being made to handle vet matters and in several plants important as well as routine grievances have been settled. The veterans, seeing an effort made to take care of their grievances, have become more union conscious.

The growing awareness of the importance of veterans problems is finding its reflection in contract negotiations. At General Drop Forge UAW-CIO, the vets committee, through the union, has succeeded in supplanting a company vet counsellor with a union vet counsellor, who on company time and property, greets the vet returning to work, takes care of his job and wage problems and, of course, paves the way for his entry into the union and vets group. Another local is negotiating a similar

arrangement. Other locals are raising issues to be included in contracts now under negotiation, such as elimination of super-seniority, and the ending of certain discriminatory practices against ex-servicemen.

In several locals vets active in the committees have been elected to union posts. In these cases the veterans were unionists before their entry into the armed forces. In other locals a large section and even a majority of the membership is composed of vets and this trend is still continuing as more workers are returning from the armed forces, and displacing workers with less seniority. All these are signs of the increasingly important role the veterans are playing in the unions already and will play in the future.

While the work of organizing new vets groups in additional locals continues, and the problems that arise are being handled through the CIO central body, the possibility is now at hand to conduct additional veterans activity on an area scale around local, statewide and national issues. This presents us with an opportunity to raise broader issues that will hold the vets' interest and makes it possible for us to approach the unemployed and non-union vets, showing them how the trade union movement can fight for their needs.

With the sizable base of 15 vets groups supported by their locals and the CIO Council, the favorable publicity the work has received and the prestige the committee has won, it is now proposed to hold a mass meeting around the housing problem, violation of vets' rights by the employers and unemployment. Plans for this meeting include special distributions of leaflets at the state insurance office to attract the attention of the 14,000 unemployed vets in this city. Indications are that the meeting will be a successful one.

This is the first venture in this direction since the work has been under our influence. Now that we have established a solid foundation in the locals, we will give more attention to such activity.

As yet we have not drawn up a rounded program. We did not think it wise to do so up to now. In the early days of the Committee, the Stalinists were talking in terms of legislative activity, visits to Albany, letter-writing and petition campaigns, etc. We decided that it would be best to concentrate on the method of doing vets work, i.e., starting with the vets in the locals, the place where we had the best contact with them, in order to begin the work of building a vets movement in the trade unions. We wanted to show the Communist Party members, who were watching us, that the Trotskyists could build rather than merely discuss general programs which were correct but had no means to be applied.

Of course we have not ignored the question of program. Most of the points that will be contained in the program now

being drawn up have been discussed to one extent or another, and have been raised in the vet meetings and dealt with in the publicity material issued by the central body. The mass meeting will give us an opportunity to draw up in resolution form some of these points such as housing, unemployment, etc.

Other phases of the work and possibilities include establishing connections with union veteran groups in nearby areas such as Lockport and other centers in the Niagara Frontier where some vet activity has been reported. We are also trying to develop connections with unionists in the other veteran organizations.

It is perhaps advisable to say a word on finances. Up to now the committee has depended upon the CIO Council for financial aid. The Council has limited funds and the Committee has to look elsewhere for aid. This is a touchy question as any suggestion that the vets pay "dues" would leave the Committee open to attack. Now, however, the vets themselves are suggesting that the locals involved make contributions to the central body and that the locals give financial support to their own vet group activities.

As work among the vets progressed we expected the Stalinists to attack the Vets Committee in the Council and to sabotage its work. But this has not materialized to any extent as yet. In part this is due to the inability of the CP machine to control some of its rank and file members who have differences of their own with the party. In addition, many rank and file CPers favor real vet work.

The present Vet Committee leadership is firmly in the saddle. Its prestige is high and it has a real accomplishment to its credit. This is recognized not only by the CIO movement locally but by a considerable number of CP trade unionists and rank and filers. The OP's labelling of the ex-Stalinist on the committee as a "Trotskyite" has served to advertise our important part in building the vets committee. They complain that the ex-Stalinist is "sitting in the lap of the Buffalo SWP organizer." Our veteran work in addition to the CIO demonstration against G. L. K. Smith last February, which everyone knows was organized by us, has raised our prestige and is making it increasingly difficult for the Stalinist leadership to brand us as working class enemies.

Party work among the veterans is clearly bound up with the whole CP situation. It is closely connected with our trade union activity and provides a means of reaching the best and most conscious vets. We are preparing to take full advantage of this situation, so rich in possibilities for the party, in line with the recruiting campaign now under way.

Work among the veterans is an important lever that will help to raise our party to the threshold of a mass movement.