

## REPORT ON WORK OF THE WORKERS PARTY FROM THE FIRST TO THE SECOND NATIONAL CONVENTION

Our Party was formed in April, 1940, but a few months after the outbreak of the Second World War. It completes a year and a half of a varied life and activity with the war intensified and extended, and with the Roosevelt administration driving for the direct participation of this country in the imperialist struggle. Born during the imperialist war, the Workers Party faces the task of maintaining and building this organization through the war period. At its founding convention the delegates recognized and placed the following major tasks and objectives before the organization:

1. The Workers Party bases itself on the historical and living principles of revolutionary Marxism, exemplified in the modern epoch by the best traditions of Bolshevism, as expounded by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. Upon the theoretical and ideological development of our movement on these principles, and the carrying of these principles into the broad class struggle, lies the future of the Party and the Fourth International movement.
2. During this period particularly, the Workers Party must consistently put forward its revolutionary anti-war program before the widest possible number of workers.
3. For the Party to be able effectively to educate and to organize the workers to accept the revolutionary program of the Party, it is necessary that the Party membership itself be composed in its overwhelming majority of working men and women engaged in the basic industries. The transformation and development of the organization into this kind of a membership, therefore, was a major task set by the first convention.
4. As an organization representing the immediate and ultimate interests of the masses, the Workers Party set its aim systematically to get into the mass organizations of labor - the industrial unions, etc., and to engage systematically and militantly in the struggles of the labor movement against capitalism. Hence, the policy of orientation to the masses.
5. The 1st convention in its Program of Action therefore laid out a series of tasks for work in the mass organizations, the issuance of an agitational, propaganda and theoretical press (Labor Action and The New International, pamphlets, leaflets, etc.) and particularly stressed the need for propaganda and agitational activity against the war, whatever the objective difficulties.

The first Program of Action called generally for the National Committee to take steps for carrying through the National propaganda tours and other public meetings; to devise ways and means for reaching the most oppressed layer of the masses, the Negroes; for recruiting new proletarian forces into the Party; for the development of Branches in basic industrial cities; and similar proposals for a rounded Party activity.

For the past year and a half, the National Committee presents the following condensed report of the life and activities of the organization, together with a Program of work (attached hereto) for the period immediately following the second National Convention. It can be stated that, in the main, the Party membership has endeavored to measure up to the tasks before it. The inadequacies, omissions, and delinquencies are many - ranging from the functioning of the National and Political Committees to the Branches and the individual members. A task of the second National Convention is to examine all the reports, resolutions and data and to arrive at judgements and ways and means for improving our work in all fields of endeavor.

The Party has several hundred members in twenty-seven cities, with functioning Branches in fifteen cities, and from one to four members in the other cities, these latter quite capable of early growth and development into functioning branches.

In the process of integration and consolidation of the Party on sound revolutionary theory and practice, the organization has naturally suffered some losses. This was to be expected with a newly-formed organization to which often unclear elements attach themselves.

Among those who fell by the wayside, giving political, organizational or personal reasons, were two former members of the National Committee, Burnham and Andrews. Also, attempts to assimilate Dwight Macdonald into our organization did not succeed; and Macdonald's false notions about politics and organization in respect to a revolutionary movement finally brought about his resignation.

A small group which espoused the social-democratic and bourgeois-liberal outlook of Sherman also resigned from the organization, and logically joined the Socialist Party, after having failed to gain any support from the leadership or ranks of the Party.

Long efforts on the part of the National Organization to assimilate the group of people around Corbitt in Akron, likewise failed, and these irresponsible people were dropped from the organization. Their gyrations in politics and their utterly undisciplined and uncomradely conduct within the organization made their departure unavoidable. The Trotsky Branch of the Party in Akron continues in a healthy state.

Also here and there individuals dropped out of the organization, giving personal and other reasons as their cause for their vacillation, weakness and lack of courage to remain and to function in the revolutionary ranks.

However, it is also a fact that these few losses were more than compensated for in the number of new worker recruits into the organization, with consequent strengthening of the character of the organization and the extension of activities into important fields.

Recruitment of new members has taken place in many cities, but the cities and Branches have generally failed to report in exact figures the number of recruits, and whether these recruits have been integrated into the work of the organization. New Branches were organized during this period in Baltimore, Kansas City, Buffalo, Columbus.

Transfers from one city to another have been numerous and in instances have adversely affected the functioning of the Branch from which those members were transferred, although adding to the life of the Branches to which they were transferred. Cleveland is the most important that requires mention. Here, because the most active members found it necessary to go to other cities, the Branch is now in a weakened state. Our Program of Action calls for particular attention there, in order to revive a functioning unit. A total of eight of the original membership of twelve are not longer in Cleveland.

Also, many of our most active members have been drafted into the Armed forces from various cities, and in instances this definitely affected the functioning of a given Branch. Our experience demonstrates that lack of at least one qualified and leading member in a Branch makes it difficult for the Branch to develop; and conversely, one well qualified member is often able to direct a group of relatively inexperienced members so that the Branch functions well. Through unavoidable transfers - for reasons of change of jobs and so forth - units such as Kansas City require to be rebuilt to functioning size and activity.

Outstanding among the new Branches is Buffalo, built from literally a membership of one to 15, nearly all of whose members are occupied in basic industry and in their respective unions.

In all its efforts the National Organization has had in mind the necessity to transform the social composition of the membership from largely non proletarian occupations to that of men and women working in basic industries. In a large measure, this improvement was actually achieved through members changing their occupations to that of industrial workers, and by some recruitment of industrial workers into the organization. This was particularly achieved in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, Akron, Buffalo and in smaller proportions in other cities. This was the result of deliberate policy by the National Organization which, in various ways, the local organizations carried into effect. Much certainly remains to be done. But this the National Organization believes, is on the road toward the proletarianization of the Party.

It follows thereby, also, that the participation of our members in the industrial and trade unions and in the labor struggles has been accelerated and achieved to a gratifying degree; to what extent and in what concrete manner will be presented in the report and Resolution on Trade Union work by the Trade Union Department. The good basis and forces for the organization of a Party unit among the lumber workers in California is important, particularly in that these workers are entirely new elements.

The first National Convention and also the two subsequent plenums concerned themselves with ways and means for the development and creation of Branches in the main industrial centers. This has been accomplished to a small degree, but the major need of building strong units of the Party in the industrial centers such as Detroit, Pittsburgh and Cleveland still needs to be accomplished. This is the immediate task for tomorrow.

However, such colonization as the Organization was able to carry thru has definitely proved beneficial. Several members were sent to Lynn in order that better advantage could be taken of our important base in the trade union movement in that area. The Buffalo Branch was organized through colonization of Party and Youth members and today is a Branch functioning in various fields of work and has recruited several new members. This report does not deal with concentration efforts in respect to given industries or plants.

Another important development in the life of the Party is that pertaining to Negro work. After considerable effort, a functioning Negro Department has been established, and as the detailed report of the Negro Department will show, Negro work is being carried on seriously in many cities, particularly in Chicago (in an Unemployed organization and an important Negro Forum); New York (in Harlem, in connection with the bus workers' strike, the March to Washington campaign); Philadelphia; Akron; Los Angeles; Buffalo (through its connection with a leading Negro worker in a basic industry); St. Louis (via the share-croppers); Washington in recent weeks.

Particularly worthy of mention is the excellent work of the St. Louis organization in helping to initiate important work in Southeast Mo. among the share-croppers. Latterly, a special impetus was given to the Negro work through the Tour by comrade Johnson of the main centers in New York state, Illinois, Missouri, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

The National Organization made serious efforts to carry on propaganda and agitation work against the imperialist war. This was largely done through three National tours (two by Shachtman and one by Coolidge). These National tours represent a real achievement for an organization of our size and is indicative of the serious attitude of the Party as a whole.

The establishment of our newspaper, Labor Action, was an elementary pre-requisite for carrying thru the political and organizational tasks of the Party. But the maintenance of Labor Action as a weekly thru-out the entire period without skipping a single issue was a tremendous organizational and financial achievement by the membership as a whole, from the leading bodies to the ranks. But its future - its development in calibre and the extension of its circulation far beyond the present figures - that now is a problem which our Convention and the membership must consider and resolve.

The New International, theoretical organ of the Party, which was started as a 16 page magazine, with all the obvious deficiencies of a 16 page organ, has in recent months been published as a 32 page organ, with consequent improvement in content, but with no improvement in circulation. The further improvement in the theoretical calibre of The New International can unquestionably be accomplished in the coming months; but a considerable increase in the circulation of the magazine is imperative. It is necessary here to emphasize that The New International is our most important medium for the ideological and theoretical development of our membership - both adult and youth, as well as of its general readers - but which particularly neither the Party nor Youth membership have taken advantage of. This must be regarded as a definite defect, with undoubted negative consequences for the organi-

zation politically, unless there is a sharp improvement in the theoretical equipment of the membership.

In this connection the Political Resolution properly point out that the failure to establish a functioning National Educational Department is perhaps the outstanding failure of the organization in the past year and which most immediately requires remedying.

In connection with the press, it is unquestioned that Labor Action has shown steady improvement in the development of a paper along agitational lines, capable of circulation among the broad masses of working men and women. But in the coming period, changes in the character of the paper in the direction of carrying more articles of a more rounded political and educational character will be needed.

In the circulation of Labor Action there has been an improvement by a few thousand copies from the early months of Labor Action. In round figures some 6,000 copies are now published regularly, with frequent additional and large special orders. But its regular circulation can be increased by several thousand more without undue strain whatsoever on the membership. The establishment of a uniform 1¢ paper is directed toward this end.

Several cities have endeavored to carry out systematic factory sale and distribution of the press, either at the factory gates or in a factory residential area. These cities have been New York, Philadelphia, Buffalo and St. Louis in the share-croppers' region. Other cities which have endeavored, over periods of time, to circulate the press more widely among workers in various basic industries or lines have been Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Lynn and Akron, - Chicago largely among the Negroes and Lynn among trade union elements.

A few pamphlets have been issued, which have already been previously cited in Plenum reports or the Press; but on the whole the National Organization has failed to issue the required pamphlets of an agitational and likewise of a more fundamental character on various issues. On the other hand, the membership, almost without exception, have failed to order and to sell and distribute our penny pamphlets to the amount that is both necessary and possible. St. Louis has been an exception in this respect, and on occasions Los Angeles has disposed of considerable quantities.

The National Office has endeavored to maintain the closest relations with the Branches outside of New York, and to offer suggestions, advice and proposals through the medium of systematic correspondence, Information Bulletins, and by direct contact between representatives of the National Office and the Branches. A gratifying feature is, the fact that the Branches, with a couple of exceptions, correspond regularly and frequently with the National Office in respect to their problems. The National Office has had its Organization Secretary and other members of the National Committee visit the cities from time to time for short and long stays to take up political and organizational problems. These general and particular methods must continue but with the further improvement suggested by the Program of Action and Supplementary Resolution on organization; namely, the utilization of members of the Political Committee for a considerable period to time (two-three months) in a given locality.

The functioning of the Political Committee has by no means been what is needed and must be. Naturally, this at times inadequate functioning of the Political Committee is not observed by the members, but unquestionably it affects the work. This problem of internal functioning is quite capable of being resolved in a positive manner.

It is necessary, however, to point out to the membership that our National Organization has to function under some difficulties that no other revolutionary organization in the United States has had to contend with. Specifically we refer to the fact that the National Office staff (National Office and editorial personnel, etc.) is the smallest in size of any organization with such an activity or Program of work (Press, tours, etc.). The tasks that fall upon this limited staff are so varied and many that inevitably many are not accomplished which need to be, and which, if the National Organization had more forces to work with, would easily be carried through. For instance, during the entire year and a half of the Party's life, we have not yet been able to finance a full-time manager for the Business Department of Labor Action and The New International - a pre-requisite for the development of the circulation of our press. The Program of work and Supplementary Resolution concern themselves with proposals for achieving a larger staff to carry out the extended and growing work of the Party. What will be done is largely for the membership to decide by its response on the financial aspects. Also, it must be pointed out that the Organization has an insufficient number of qualified persons, both for National and Local work. In several instances, however, the necessary personnel is available, but the financial means to maintain them on full-time labor is lacking. It must be emphasized again and again and again that a revolutionary organization cannot develop - and the Workers Party will be no exception - unless it can train and develop a large and ever-growing number of full-time workers. This deficiency of full-time workers in our organization is a tremendous handicap, both for maintaining and developing our work in the organization field, trade union work, Negro activity, political educational work, speakers, etc..

A crying and outrageous deficiency in respect to the Press is the low number of subscriptions both to Labor Action and The New International. It is truly regrettable (and there are only one or two exceptions in the smaller cities) that subscriptions to our Press in the various cities must be listed among the unmentionables. Yet it has been sufficiently demonstrated that where members will seriously set themselves to the task of obtaining subscriptions - which also means direct contact with the most developed elements - subscriptions can be obtained for both publications. Proof of this can be cited from other organizations who are certainly in no better position than our members to obtain additional hundreds of subscriptions. This problem is among the more important ones requiring improvement and which must engage the attention of every member.

It can be said that more and more local units are learning to rely on their own abilities and efforts to develop their work. Many cities have from time to time issued local literature (e.g. Lynn on the Housing situation). Many, perhaps most of the Branches, have likewise carried on important activity of one kind or another, such as Branch educational meetings, public meetings and so on. But a woeful

lack on the part of most cities, except Los Angeles, (New York and Chicago are the most inexcusably flagrant) is the failure to submit regular reports of their work and activities to Labor Action, which should carry such material regularly.

May Day meetings were held by many cities last year. Trotsky Memorial Meetings were held on the occasion of the assassination of our comrade Trotsky, and this year several cities held Memorial meetings, under Party and Youth auspices. But only Akron and Los Angeles sent in a story to Labor Action. These are apparently small things, but necessary in the life of an organization.

Our Party naturally aims to carry on general national campaigns but it would be mere words to speak today of being a campaign Party, although campaigns in a limited sense can be carried on in this or that locality. The objective situation precludes intensive national campaigns, but particularly of an organizational and agitational character. Such activity as is possible has largely a propaganda character, as for instance the three National Anti-War tours. However, local campaigns of a limited duration are possible, the best example of which is the local election campaign in New York a year ago, with comrade Shachtman as the candidate for Congress in the Bronx; and today, for example, the election petition campaign being conducted to place Shachtman on the ballot for Mayor.

Internal Bulletins have been issued regularly for discussion and educational purposes in the organization. In addition, the Information Bulletins have served the purpose of acquainting the membership with the proposals and recommendations of the Political Committee and the National Organization to the Branch in their daily work.

The financial problem is the key to the solution of many of the problems or difficulties listed above. While, as the Political Resolution points out, there has been an improvement in the manner in which finances are handled and considered, nevertheless a large part of the membership still does not carry out its financial obligation to the organization. As a result the National Organization is in constant difficulty to carry out its tasks, particularly the issuance of the Press. The burden is being borne too heavily by the handful of functionaries who, meagerly paid as they are now, often have to give up their small wage in order that Labor Action or the New International may come out. For the past two-three months, in fact, the few functionaries have literally made possible the issuance of our press because they have gone without wages - and that means without the means of subsistence. Such a condition, if continued, can only lead to a further deprivation of forces, since there is a limit to which the functionaries can carry on without wages.

Our need is to add more qualified forces to our small staff, and not to permit their release to go to work for a capitalist employer. The political and organizational work of the Party will suffer drastically unless the membership really comes to realize that genuine financial sacrifice must go hand in hand with adherence to the program and principles of the Party. The financial question will receive special consideration at the convention in the proposals contained in the Program of Action.

Our Party has endeavored to carry out its International obligations. Particularly may be mentioned the tours to all the oriental countries by comrade - and by comrade - to the Latin-American countries. Also recently the Party raised a fund for aid to the French movement. A certain amount of refugee work has been carried on and several hundred dollars raised to aid refugees to get out of Europe or to get them food.

The Program of Action sets forth those activities upon which major emphasis must be given in the next period. The Program of Action and Supplementary Resolution are on the one hand a proposed expansion of certain kinds of work which have been carried on in the past period; but many new proposals are set forth, growing out of the previous work, but which are imperative for the further development and expansion of the Party.

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Report submitted to the second National Convention of the Workers Party.