

PROBLEMS IN SHOP NUCLEI WORK

By SAM DARCY.

No. 1.—Shop Bulletins and Their Distribution

FROM the bulletins received at the National Office one becomes convinced that the title for this discussion should be "What Shop Bulletins Should Not Contain."

In some bulletins there is the danger of the use of phrases which are peculiar to our internal discussion and which the average young worker does not understand. Then the bulletins are generally too "dry." There should be popular poems. Not the free verse or the highly technical poetry but what are known as "ditties." On the occasion of an order to work overtime next Monday night which the workers resented one bulletin contained the following which is good:

There are very few workers with
brain so dead

Who never to themselves have
said

"I'd a hell of a lot rather go to bed
Than to work on the night of
Monday.

And there are plenty of bosses with
soul so small

Who saw to the worker "You've
got a gall

Not to be working away at all
On so lovely a day as Sunday."

It might also contain jokes of such a character as to deliver a message. For example:

Sign of Lunacy.

A visitor to an insane asylum saw a guard in charge of about a hundred inmates who were out for exercise. The visitor inquired of the guard if he was not afraid of being attacked by one of the lunatics.

"No; I can lick any of them," the guard answered.

"Yes, but suppose they all attacked you?"

"No chance of that," said the guard. "Crazy people never organize."

In addition to these it should also contain many very short items about the conditions in the shop, a few on the Y. W. C. L., and occasionally one on some concrete current political problem.

No. 2.—On Getting Fired

FROM New York, and the east clear to the Pacific we have received reports about the "martyrdom" of comrades while carrying on propaganda in the shops. In Baltimore for example:

Our comrades began a campaign to organize the young workers in an umbrella factory. The campaign was carried on with a bang—too much bang. The result was that our organizers were quickly found out, and those of our comrades who worked in the factory got fired. This is martyrdom, but it lost contact in the shop for us. It is the danger of exposing ourselves to the boss before we are ready and the resulting failure of our work and the needless sacrifice.

How shall our comrades work and yet avoid these dangers? Firstly—one very important thing must be established—a shop campaign is not a special thing of the moment. There must be weeks and sometimes several months' preparation.

The first thing to do in undertaking such a struggle is to establish good contact—either thru comrades who work in the shop or thru non-Communist young workers who are convinced to the point that they enter our movement. Without contact inside the shop organizational benefit can never be derived from campaigns. Then should come a period of quiet, very often underground agitation among the workers, with the purpose of arousing them to their needs. When a few workers agree on the program to be followed

At election time one on the candidates, etc. Then satirical cartoons should be used.

The biggest problem in shop bulletins is to make them so simple that the most uneducated worker will understand them. The average mental age of a young worker of twenty is about fifteen or sixteen—due the training that capitalism has given him or her—and the bulletins must be written in a manner that is understandable to that age.

On the question of distribution: one comrade reports that after distributing a bulletin for several weeks the boss began to watch for the person who was doing it. One day the comrade put one up in the lavatory when he was alone. When he went out the foreman went in. The same day the comrade was fired. The lavatory had been watched before he went in.

Another comrade reports that after distributing the bulletin for several issues he found to his surprise that the workers were beginning to feel apathetic to it. He was told to tell some workers who he was sure would not "squeal" to the boss of what he was doing and ask them to write things for the bulletin and help him get it out. Soon a conspiracy developed thruout the shop and the workers began to work with him on the paper and chuckle with him on the effect the paper was having on the foreman and the bossess. This made the workers more receptive to what the comrade had been telling them previously and the result was a better spirit of class interest against the boss.

In brief the important to remember are to write the bulletins in popular fashion, to draw in other young workers in putting it out, and not to get caught distributing them if there is any chance of losing your job as a result of it.

then a meeting should be called. Care should always be taken that no hisspittle of the boss who is liable to "squeal" is taken in on what is being done. At the meeting the discussion should consist of the demands to be set up and the means of getting the other workers into the fight. From then on these meetings are to be held whenever they are needed always with additional workers if possible. It should be agreed upon however before the fight is brought into the open is that there should be absolute joint action on the part of everybody—especially against any possible discriminations that a boss always practices. Otherwise the boss may grant the demands—then fire the leaders of the strike and again go back to the level before the fight. This of course may not be necessary where the shop is organized but even there if there are reactionary officials great care must be taken on this point.

Thruout all this one thing must be kept in mind that the working class gains only a little in winning this strike. The important gain is the bringing of the best elements brought to the surface during the struggle into the nucleus of the Y. W. C. L. This is a permanent gain and an advancement in the class struggle. Every moment therefore that the fight is going on the League nucleus or concentration group must by personal agitation in some cases—by leaflets in other cases—build the prestige of the League and make organization gains for it.