

BY SAM DARCY

INTRODUCTION OF LIGHTER FEATURES.

IN the matter of introducing lighter features, we today, face the same danger that faced us when we were confronted with the problem of shop nuclei; that is, a two year discussion, most of which was fruitless. If we are to carry out the V. C. I. decision and the decision of our own national executive committee in regard to this then we must immediately proceed to concretize and make more clear what we mean by it.

When we speak of introducing lighter features we do not mean an extension of purely social activities. Quite the contrary, in a large sense we are today carrying on, on too great a scale, social activity, such as dances, entertainments, etc., which begins to involve the need for organization, including the selling of tickets, the mobilization of committees, etc. Rather than extend this phase of work, the introduction of lighter features should lessen it.

Novels of Class Struggle.

There are certain cultural needs of the young workers which the League has not learned to satisfy. Let us take a concrete example; novels, particularly those involving adventure and the "pioneer" spirit, are probably more widely read in the United States than in any other country throughout the world. Where is there the American young worker, who has not devoured the works of Alstahler, Henty, Tomlinson and other writers who wrote of the pioneer days of the wars for independence, for the freedom of the slaves, and the pioneering in the Northwest. There are many writers today who have written novels of the class struggle which capture the spirit of youth which makes them love those bourgeois writers and turns their spirit and minds into champions of the class struggle. When you first meet a young worker and suggest to him the elementary theoretical works such as the "A. B. C. of Communism" there is little chance that you can arouse him to a desire to enter our movement, particularly since the American youth have all their lives been filled with ideas concerning adventure, pioneering, etc., and who cannot see their economic condition as a matter for theoretical study.

For these American young workers we must find other books of a simpler, more spirited character with which to approach them. To them we must learn to recommend a large list of fiction which has a good deal of propaganda in it, such as the writings of Jack London, Upton Sinclair, Zola, and a dozen others that might be named. In these columns, for the succeeding month, we intend to publish "minute" reviews of such books and it is important that every League member learn the books thoroughly, both for their own enjoyment and for recommendation to those whom we are trying to win to our cause. But the introduction of lighter features does not end with the extended use of novels as propaganda means for our organization. The mere academic study of economic problems and the solution thereto will never bring large masses of young workers to us.

Historical Events.

Side by side with this, we must recognize that the young workers of this country have instilled in them a certain tradition which makes it most difficult for us to approach them directly with our program. There is, first of all, the fact that around our government today there is built a tradition of long struggles for progress such as, already mentioned, the war for independence, the Civil War, and the war which was supposed to be for the freedom of colonial peoples but which really was a war of the worst imperialist character, the Spanish-American War, not to speak of the many other events which are played up in our histories.

The modern bourgeoisie have taken for themselves these traditions of revolution and progress and have used them as a screen to hide a most reactionary and Tory government such as represented in the republican and democratic administrations. This spirit of revolution and progress as

exemplified in the events already mentioned, does not rightfully belong to the bourgeoisie. The revolting working-class today, is looked upon much in the same way as the Rebels of '76, and the Emancipators of '61, were looked upon. This tradition of '76 and '61 therefore belongs to the militant working class today. How can we best take this tradition away from the boss class? First, we must develop an extensive system of teaching those who are in or close to our movement and the general working class, the real significance of events as recorded in American history.

How can we best do this? Indoor classes and discussions will help. Our comrades should stress as the subjects of their educational meetings, not on topics of important happenings in other countries but rather on topics of important happenings in the United States. For example, today we have the Sesqui-Centennial Celebration in Philadelphia. A comrade should prepare a talk on the significance of the celebration. One hundred fifty years ago, the Declaration of Independence was signed. In Philadelphia, there are hundreds of historical spots including that much played-up relic, the cracked Liberty Bell. Rather than ignoring this celebration, our comrades should arrange excursions to it, to visit the Liberty Bell, and the other points of historic interest and right at the spot, should take object lessons as to the true significance of these things.

Some Landmarks.

The national executive committee will make it a policy from now on to continually issue bulletins along this line. We might mention a dozen places throughout the country just to give examples of what we mean. In Boston, there is the scene of the Boston Tea Party, there are old halls that were used for revolutionary meetings, and throughout the district there are the battlefields of the Revolution of '76. In New York, there is the Statue of Liberty and the whole downtown section where Wall Street now stands, which is full of such spots as for example, Trinity Church which began as a place where the early settlers worshipped their gods in sincere but blind faith and today is a corporation of several million dollars which extorts rents from poor workers living in the slums for the support of fat church dignitaries. In Chicago, there are the scenes of the Haymarket riots, and throughout the country such similar landmarks. Everywhere, our comrades should arrange excursions to these landmarks and utilize these excursions for educational purposes.

Our organization should also strive to introduce into its inner life, a greater spirit of youth. The tradition of marching in small groups to open air meetings and singing along the way, that of putting into our organization the same spirit of youthful comradeship that makes neighborhood clubs so attractive and often draws young workers into gangs, should be constantly striven for. For this purpose our comrades should utilize every facility available. Summer outings, hikes, street demonstrations, group singing and discussion in public parks during the summer, these and other things similar should prove effective in this work.

These few suggestions are steps towards concretizing the introduction of lighter features. Our comrades should practice them. Not merely discuss them in committees, but actually utilize these methods in working out a program of activities for the coming months. From time to time in these columns we will strive to have such material as will help our comrades everywhere in carrying out the decision to introduce lighter features. We will be glad to print articles from functionaries upon their first experiences after the attempt along this line was made. They will prove of great value to our comrades. The introduction of lighter features is really a step towards giving our organization an inner life that a youth organization needs and to take away from it the heaviness and "seriousness" of the outlook of our older comrades.