

How to Start a Shop Nucleus

By MARTIN ABERN

To begin with, one cannot set down a hard and fast rule for taking the first steps in organizing a Shop Nucleus, the political unit of the Party made up of Party members working in the same shop, factory, mill, etc. The ways are many; there is not an arbitrary figure to the number required to establish a Shop Nucleus. Even one Party member can constitute himself as a Shop Nucleus, and by carrying on a systematic activity build a larger group of Party members around him. But that is a matter which can be dealt with another time in connection with problems growing out of it. There are some first steps toward Shop Nucleus organization which are common in virtually every instance.

There Must Be a Correct Industrial Registration

Where do the Party comrades work? That must be known accurately before anything can be done to organize politically in the shop. A 100 per cent correct industrial registration of the Party is hence wanted and required. The Party is now taking an industrial registration nationally. The Branch Secretary or Industrial Organizer must therefore make sure that every member is registered, especially—that is the most important—as to place of work of each comrade. Very likely, the Branch will find that among its own members there are comrades working together in the same shop. The Branch, however, is asked at present to send in its complete industrial registration to the City Central Committee, the District and National Organizations, for which the necessary blanks have been provided.

With the industrial registration of all the Branches in its hands, the City Organization proceeds to classify the membership of the Branches. Much information will be got. Among that will be the knowledge of where the Party members work, whether alone in a shop or together with other comrades who belong to various Party territorial Branches.

Let us take an example which will occur hundreds of times and which will therefore be the starting point innumerable toward Shop Nucleus organization.

The City Organization, having classified the industrial registration, finds that in the, let us say, Allen Machinery company are working Party comrades who belong to: English Branch—three members; Lithuanian Branch—two members; Jewish Branch—one member; South Slav Branch—two members—eight Party members in the same shop. The classification will occur in divers ways in the industries. What will be the first duty of the City Organization, the four Branches spoken of, and the eight members?

The Common Interests of the Comrades Unite Them For Activity

The City Organization informs the Branches and members of the above findings. A meeting of the comrades from the four Branches is called. There are a number of interests, obviously, they have in common but which they now take note of; for it is the obvious, very often, which is most important and to which the attention of people must be called. What are some of the things in common of the comrades?

a. The comrades of the English, Jewish, Lithuanian and South Slav

Branches belong to the same political party, the Workers (Communist) Party, and so have like political attitudes.

b. The comrades work in the same shop, Allen Machinery Co., and have the same economic and job problems in the shop to meet and to solve.

c. The comrades are surrounded in the shop by the same other workers upon whom our comrades have to work with a common political and economic program.

There are more identical problems which can be noted, but these will do for our purpose. The question occurs: with these factors in common to start with, is it not logical that the Party members should be organized as a political unit in the shop to carry on a steady, common and systematic program for communism among their fellow shop-mates? Plainly so. Far more logical, sensible, practicable and communist than these Party members should be organized as a Shop Nucleus with definitive work to do.

That is true, comrade, and good, but we don't speak English very well, and that makes the work and organization of a Shop Nucleus so difficult, is an objection which is at once heard. That objection is more evasion than anything else. It is a difficulty cured by contact of the members with one another and with a program in the shop to carry out. The boss manages to get along with the workers of various languages together in the same shop. In fact, too well and profitably. Party members, as well as the other workers, have to get along, despite the alleged language barriers, with the boss. Certainly Party members have far more in common with

each other and can more easily find ways to get along together. The language objection is sophistic and must be overruled therefore. Taking it for granted, therefore, that the comrades of the various Branches, found to be working in the same machine shop, are ready and willing to be organized as a Shop Nucleus, what is the next step? To outline briefly, for the many functions and problems should be dealt with in detail separately.

Shop Nucleus, Not The Branch, Is The Authoritative Political Unit.

It is possible, in a degree, for comrades working together in a shop to carry on work of a political and economic character, which is akin to the work a Shop Nucleus would carry on. We have in mind a group of comrades from various Branches who work together in the same shop. They spread propaganda thru literature, etc.; they formulate and try to carry out certain shop demands; they do some common work in the shop in relation to the present election campaign of the Party. But—it is not a Shop Nucleus and does not do the work it might if it were a bonafide Shop Nucleus instead of just a shop fraction. It is not authoritative; the members of the various Branches regard their Branches as the leading body. That brings forward a fundamental problem of the Shop Nucleus.

The Shop Nucleus must be, and is, the leading and authoritative political unit of the Party. It is the basic unit. The comrades of the English, Lithuanian, Jewish and South Slav Branches mentioned as example, meeting together, elect a Shop Nucleus Secretary, and Industrial Organizer, Litera-

ture Agent and other officers.

Then, the comrades must pay their dues through the Shop Nucleus Secretary. It becomes and is thereby the leading and main political unit of the Party, and recognizes itself and acts as such. The allegiance, if that term can be used, of the members of the Shop Nucleus is not to the territorial English or language branches to which they formerly belonged. It is to the Shop Nucleus. The Shop Nucleus thereafter as an authorized body meets regularly to lay out a program of action for itself—a program of politics, economic and trade union work, educational, lectures, literature distribution, individual work of the members, time and place of meetings, etc. all of which must be dealt with in special articles.

Shop Nucleus Activity Once Started Will Do Away With So-Called Difficulties.

This article tries to touch some of the technical sides to getting started toward Shop Nuclei. The members of the Shop Nucleus, meeting together regularly, in daily contact with one another, with a program of work in the shop will soon find that any language difficulties, if real, will disappear. The heart and work of the members will not be in their former Branches, English or language, but in their Shop Nucleus where they are united on the basis of their daily struggle needs and on the ultimate program of Communism. Shop Nucleus organization will mean a better and clearer understanding of the labor movement and working class problems in America and will produce better Party members for the cause of Communism.

Impressions of the LaFollette Meeting

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thirteen minutes, it was due to the frantic cheer-leading from the speakers' platform, assisted by section cheer leaders who were everywhere.

I tell you, comrades, there is nothing to it. It isn't even much of a fraud—it's a bluff, and they are suckers indeed who fall for it. At that, I don't know if that particular audience of some thirteen thousand, fell for it. They simply didn't care, they were not concerned, there was nothing at stake for them one way or another. By the way the audience received the various speakers and responded to various telling phrases you could see what elements it was composed of. La Guardia got a big and noisy hand, and when he assured the people that the progressives, far from intending to break down the constitution, wish to maintain it and carry out faithfully its provisions, there was a hefty applause of relief and reassurance. Norman Thomas' applause about gaged the socialist contents of the

hall, and of that old guard there must have been some two or three thousand. LaFollette's reference to high telephone rates struck a sore spot, also his denunciation of high electric bills. There wasn't a doubt that the bulk of the audience would go home into apartments with all modern improvements. It was that kind of a crowd.

Was it La Guardia or was it the chairman who referred to Coolidge's aides as "our republican friends?" Without a sneer, mind you, without a humorous quirk. It was beautiful, that "republican friends!" It was the very bull's eye of the progressives' campaign spirit. It's as between friends, fair competitors, honest opponents, drummers in the same line, gentlemen all. And then that happy epitome of La Guardia's: "All intelligent republicans and all intelligent democrats are and ought to be in the progressive movement!"

LaFollette's prepared address was in every respect harmonious with the

audience, the spirit of the affair, and the tenor of the preliminary shadow-boxing with "privilege." Frankly, I gave old Bob more credit for substance. The amount of bunk, piffle, drivel, twaddle and rebashed tommyrot must have dismayed even the faithful, even Hillquit's proselytes. You've read the speech and you know what I mean. That "government by the people" motif was too cheap even for LaFollette. The vulgar tricks of talking abstract "democracy" which has ever been the means of the old-type politicians to make a lot of hollow noise without saying anything in particular, was the very backbone of LaFollette's address.

Comrades, if this gathering is a fair sample, the whole thing is bunk, and there is no such thing as a LaFollette stampede within the ranks of labor, and there is no new delusion that has beclouded the primal issue of the class struggle.

I say this because there is a possibility of some of us having been taken in by the noisy press agents of this disgusting hodge-podge. The thing cannot live because it is still born, the delusion cannot persist because there is nothing but low-grade piffle to sustain it.

It is significant that even the jacked-up spirit of the evening did not suffice to keep the audience attentive to and interested in LaFollette's oration. After the idle curiosity was gratified, the crowd became restless and toward the middle of the address there was to be seen a stream flowing exitward. The stream kept swelling until toward the end of the "big act" the galleries were empty and the people on the floor were milling, sick with boredom. Old Bob is a dull speaker and the whole thing was so damned dull, one wished one were in the movies looking at a pie-throwing comedy.

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RUSSIAN DELEGATION TO THE BRITISH TRADE UNION CONGRESS



FRATERNAL DELEGATES.—A group of Russian Trade Union visitors to the Trades Union Congress, with Mr. Ben Tillett, M. P. In the back row on the right are Mr. G. Hicks and Mr. R. Coppock, the builders' leaders. Comrade Tomski is in the centre of the front row.

A Party of Leninism

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party that Vladimir Ilyitch Lenin made of the Russian Communist Party, into a party capable of leading the massed millions of the working class into struggle against the capitalist system, for the seizure of power and the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship. And at the present moment let us say, all together: "We are determined that we shall have a Party of Leninism."