

Can the Workers Write for Our Press?

The Question of Worker Correspondents and Shop Bulletins.

By MARTIN ABERN

ARTICLE I.

THE party, The DAILY WORKER, the language press are trying to build a staff and system of worker correspondents. Those are the rank and file writers from the shops, mills and farms who really make a revolutionary paper live and throb with an understanding and feeling of the needs of the exploited masses. There has been a measure of success. Yet thousands more of shop and field writers are needed. Why don't we get them more quickly? Many comrades reply: We cannot write. Writing is too difficult for common workers. We do not know what to write about. This is not so, comrades. Here are some things which workers contend with in one form or another. They are matters that must be written of.

What The Workers Can Write About.

(1). There is the speed-up system (what have you, Ford workers and others to say of that?) with its driving, grinding, pulverizing methods. There is the piece-work system. Work a little faster; make a little more; out of a job sooner; and more profits for the boss. How about those jobs where the workers' arms and legs work like frenzy, faster than the clock ticks its toll of human blood and nerves?

Then, too, look at the double and triple shift system, human cattle rushing in and out, both when the sun rises and darkness sets in. There is the exhausting night work for millions in steel mills and foundries. Tens of thousands still toil in America for ten, twelve, and more hours each day. Bosses still demand overtime from workers without pay, except, perhaps, for a free lunch handout.

The Issue of Unemployment.

Regularly, some hundreds of thousands of men are laid off during the year, or work only part time. These practices are the rule under the cap-

italist system. They are a harm and a menace to the workers. Such a system and methods demand resistance and organized intelligent opposition to overcome. Tell The DAILY WORKER and other workers' papers about all these things in your own blunt language, men of the shops.

Health and Safety Conditions in the Factories.

(2). Capitalism doesn't take much interest, unless forced by the organized might of the workers, in providing healthy and safe conditions of work and surroundings. Machinery, despite so-called "safety laws," isn't always in order. Machinery is often left in conditions offering great harm and injury to the workers. It costs too much to put in order; human legs, arms, life are cheaper. Mangled bodies fill a basket even as does sawdust. Workers in factories still are compelled to work with poisonous materials of all sorts where life is always in danger. Have the miners, painters, steel mill, chemical workers, nothing to say of these things?

Accidents do happen, it is said. How, if ever, are the toilers compensated, especially thru these most gracious "Workmen's compensation laws"? Does sunlight always pour in thru factory windows for the children working therein? Or is sunshine only for the hundreds of thousands of young men and women and children sweating in the cotton, beet and berry fields? Stockyards workers might tell us a few interesting details of stinking "sanitary" conditions, gross dirt and sickening ventilation, not to mention the work itself. Certainly, the workers can write of these, and offer ways to lead a struggle for improvement.

Violations of Union Agreements.

(3). Union men are acquainted only too well with repeated violations of working agreements, contracts and job regulations. Systematically there is discrimination against those milit-

ants who fight this undermining of union organizations. Honest and class conscious union men are no doubt disgusted with the way in which the union officialdom is following a policy of co-operation with the bosses—of class collaboration instead of class struggle. The coal miners, machinists, clothing workers surely have a few things to say and write about John L. Lewis, "Baltimore & Ohio" Bill Johnston, and "Golden Rule" Hillman. Every union member almost by instinct knows that compulsory arbitration, or any form of arbitration, of strike disputes, job mixups, means concessions to the boss and defeat for the workers. Government by injunction and arbitration is felt by the workers to mean: the pistol and sword are at their throats, what are you going to say and do about that?

Leaving the Unorganized in the Lurch.

(4). Unorganized workers are not unacquainted with the practice in some "union" shops, where the union men get by with a certain contract and the unorganized are left in the lurch, holding the sack. Wage cuts, sometimes called "readjustments in the industry," as in the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, take place regularly. The textile workers could vividly write or tell what that means in their lives. Or sometimes, instead of direct wage cuts, speed-up work is demanded, or better machinery is installed giving greater production at the same nominal pay. Have the workers nothing to say of how to meet this exploitation? How much profit is made from the labor of workers? What is really necessary to live like human beings? How does the advance of the technique of production affect them? Shall machine development be stopped, if it could, or shall all this be controlled for the benefit of the workers?

The System of Industrial Spies

(5). There is hardly a worker who

cannot speak of the blacklist system, the "rustling card," the use of industrial spies, thugs, guards, gunmen, police, soldiers in strikes, lock-outs, etc. Workers, young and old, are well acquainted with the more subtle methods used by the bosses against the workers. For instance: Bosses welfare associations; workers stock companies and schemes; "Be a shareholder in the factory—be a boss yourself." Then the many clubs, sport associations, etc., in the factories, such as the Western Electric, thru which the class instincts and tendencies, become warped in the workers. There are also the fake "joint workers' committees" and outspoken company unions. Worker correspondents have experienced much of these. Have they any solution?

These are only a few of thousands of things which workers can write about, not to say anything of what shop nuclei can do about them. Surely enough to start any worker going. Now go ahead and write! Become worker correspondents! But wait a while. There's lots to write about, it is admitted; only we can't write English or know how to write.

The excuse of not being able or having time to write is a slim excuse indeed. It can be done. If our DAILY WORKER and language press are really to become mass revolutionary organs, there will have to be a wide system of worker correspondents, both in the English and foreign languages. Nor will it be possible for our shop nuclei to issue shop bulletins unless in the factory, the members first, and later also the other workers, will contribute to the shop bulletin. That means a group of worker correspondents in each factory and nucleus. Thus will we reach the workers with the Communist message. But how shall we get our comrades to write? In the next article are some suggestions and ways.

(Article II in next issue)