

THE FUNCTIONS OF NUCLEI, FRACTIONS AND INDUSTRIAL BRANCHES

By MARTIN ABERN

At the national organization conference held recently in Chicago, examples were brought forward that showed that all of the party members were not yet clear on the differences and role of the party shop or street nucleus, the party fraction in the trade union, language fraternal organizations and industrial branches. Letters come into the national office more or less often showing confusion between shop nuclei and fraction work in the shops.

The shop is one of the basic party units. It consists of all party members working together in the same shop, factory or mill. The street nucleus is the other basic party unit. It consists of all the party members living within a specified residential area. Concentration groups, or a group of comrades brought together from a number of shops close to each other, may be formed, and these also are regular party units.

Nuclei the Basic Political Units of Party.

The party nuclei, either shop, street or concentration groups, are the party units which take up and decide on the carrying out of party campaigns and policies within their sphere. The nuclei receive the dues of the members, assign each member specific tasks to perform. The nuclei discuss and voice opinions at convention periods or at conferences on party issues; the nuclei elect delegates to party conventions, conferences. They are the basic, authorized party units.

Party Fractions Apply Party Policies in Other Organizations.

The party fraction, on the other hand, whether a fraction in a trade union, central labor council, language fraternal organization, workers' club,

co-operative, sport club, etc., is not a basic political unit of the party. The party fraction is organized in all organizations where we have two or more members. It applies party policy in that organization, but cannot decide policies. The regulation party unit, whether the nucleus, section, district or central committee, lays out the party policy and program. When the members who make up a party fraction meet together before the meeting, they discuss how to apply the policy, not what it should be. Every member of a fraction is at the same time a member of a shop or street nucleus and subject to its jurisdiction. A member of any fraction may of course make recommendations on policy and program to any regular party unit, from the nucleus to the central executive committee.

The industrial branch is sometimes confused as a party unit, or desired by some as the basic party unit. At the third national convention of the Workers Party, the convention went on record against the industrial branch as the basic party unit, and accepted the shop and street nuclei (international branch) as we understand them today.

However, what is an industrial branch and why is it objectionable as a party unit? Briefly, it would be made up of the party members working at the same trade or industry, that is, the carpenters, machinists, lathers, clothing workers, irrespective of residence or place of work. If too large a group, then it would be sub-divided for working purposes. Those comrades who are organized into the unions would actually be a party fraction, whose functions are defined above. In that case, too, it would be the party base for the development of a left wing or progressive movement in the unions.

Industrial Branch Would Develop Craft Ideology.

If the industrial branch were the party unit, it would develop a strong tendency to think and act along craft instead of along class and party lines. It would tend to take up the problems of the trade or industry, instead of the party campaigns or policies as such. This would be because of the nature of this form of organization and the material for action and discussion before it.

Some may say, that a shop nucleus could develop a craft or professional and not a class attitude. This is not true. Organized in the shop or factory, the party members or nucleus are surrounded not by craft problems for solution, but by the general conditions of work common to all, by the direct exploitation and oppression by the boss, and, when required, such as in times of strike and generally otherwise by the direct intervention and use by the boss of spies, gunmen, soldiers, etc., by the, in many factories, insidious factory sport clubs and so on. Not a craft or professional spirit is thus developed in such surroundings by the party member or nucleus. Rather, there is developed a general class viewpoint and approach, a political approach.

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