

PARTY BUILDER

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VOL II - NO 1

February 24, 1947

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TACTICS IN THE NEW YORK RENT CONTROL CAMPAIGN

By Irving Swanson (New York)

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The City Committee of New York in its proposed program for rent control advocated our calling for a rent control law that includes, as part of the law, popular committees with the power to enforce the law. For various reasons which will follow, I am opposed to using this formulation in the current rent campaign. But I would like to make sure that no one thinks I am opposing the tactic of calling for legal committees for any of the usual sectarian reasons but simply because of tactical reasons that apply today, now.

The tactic of projecting popular committees and actions under a legal cover is an old tactic and, indeed, as an example of Bolshevik tactics as opposed to both reformism and ultra-leftism, there is none better. This tactic flows from the necessity to take as our point of departure the fact that there prevail strong illusions among the great majority of people concerning the nature of the state: that the state is the representative of all the people and that, therefore, political activity should be done in and through the state. We solve the problem of getting people to act in their own behalf not by saying, "It's a boss government so you have to do it for yourselves," but by saying, "This question (of prices, for instance) concerns you directly. Who else can better help carry it out, enforce it better than you? You should demand, and be given, power by the state to enforce the state laws." In this way, under a legal cover, we are able to project the idea of people participating directly in political activity rather than merely allowing some indirect representative do it for them, with the consequent evils.

So the C.C. says: Now that we are discussing a law, and the law becomes the center of attention, we should, therefore, carry out the tactic of projecting popular committees of enforcement as part of the law.

However -- like all tactics, it depends on the given concrete political situation as to whether or not to use it. To illustrate: During the recent price control OPA campaign, we did NOT call for the retention of OPA which would include, as part of the law, popular committees of enforcement. Instead, we called for independent popular committees. Now I maintain that every argument used by the CC and its supporters to justify the use of the "legal" formulation during the present rent control campaign holds equally true for the recent price control campaign. Yet we have different tactics for each of the campaigns. Because as soon as we get away from an abstract discussion of the tactic and down to applying it to a concrete political situation, we see that while a tactic may embody a correct approach, a correct method, its use depends above all on the given concrete situation.

The question now arises: why did we not call for "legal" committees in the price control fight? To my knowledge, no one

even thought of raising the demand for popular committees in this way. And the reason for this is, I believe, that the fight for the retention of CPA was what we might call, a last-ditch fight, a fight against decontrol. In the face of a Congress that was clearly exposed before the eyes of all as a tool of Big Business, we had to use slogans applicable to a political atmosphere of a last-ditch fight and not advocate "constructive features" to a law that would have been purely propagandistic. On the contrary, with the prestige of Congress completely riddled, we had to use the formulation of independent popular committees, a call that said to the people, "You have to depend on yourselves."

An additional reason, but connected with the above, is that while people were really steamed up about OPA, OPA was discredited among its biggest supporters. Firstly, because it kept granting price rises to the bosses and, secondly, it was shown incapable over a period of years of enforcing its maximums. This logically demanded that we call for the people to enforce price control themselves, by setting up their own price control committees.

With this example of how a concrete political situation determines a tactic and not the fact that a given tactic embodies in the abstract a correct approach, let us examine how we should (if at all) project the slogan of committees in the rent control fight. The general consensus of opinion seems to be that the fight around rent control will be the same sort as around price control, that is, against decontrol, with the government clearly exposed as the tool of the landlords, real estate interests, and the banks. The mood of hostility toward this Congress (not toward government but toward this Congress), the mood of a last-ditch fight, calls for, in my opinion, slogans urging the formation of independent committees.

But that is not all. An examination of the concrete situation surrounding rent control bring up the question of raising popular committees of enforcement altogether. The CC thinks that price control and rent control are analogous. Such a conception permits the possibility of our making our center of agitation the formation of these committees of enforcement, something that would be utterly wrong. The difference between rent and price control is that whereas price control can only be effective on the basis of an organized consumer mass, rent control is effective, by and large, by the individual, given a statutory rent ceiling, as the facts prove. The reason for this is simple. In price control, because the storekeeper has the commodity in his possession, unless the consumers are organized into a united body, the storekeeper is able to play off one individual against the other. "You want sugar. Our price is 20¢ a pound." In fact, the producers, the first "possessors" do this to the wholesalers. The wholesalers take this attitude to the retailers and the retailers carry on from there. But in rent control, the tenant possesses the commodity, that is the rooms, and he possesses the money that goes toward rent. Give him a legal ceiling and, by and large, he is able to protect himself. Even in the matter of landlord chiseling on services, phone calls to the CPA have been effective since certain services are required by law. So we see that the same objective basis for calling for committees to enforce rent control does not exist as it does for price control,

where experience showed it to be essential. This makes the call for committees of enforcement in the rent control campaign largely propogandistic and, therefore, sterile.

Then, are we for dropping the idea of enforcement committees altogether, even independent ones? Let me first state the program upon which I believe we should try to organize tenant committees and this question will fall into its logical place. Our program should have two main points: 1) To press for a continuation of the national freeze on rents should these be lifted or abolished; to press for a strengthening of the state law that would automatically freeze New York rents should national ceilings be lifted or abolished. 2) Should the congress sell out to the landlords and likewise the State Legislature that this committee organize rent strikes, not permit evictions, etc.

Our program, formulated this way, attempts to get across the idea that the fight for rent control is a tough one because the Congress is controlled by the landlords and banks and that only the most insistent demand by millions will keep rent control for us. And, also, if we do lose as we did in OPA (since we don't have our own Congress, we don't even have a Labor Party), then we are ready to take drastic action in our own behalf, by ourselves. This formulation is good because while it in no way negates against a good "positive" fight for rent control, it nevertheless corresponds to the real situation. The fight is a tough one. Congress will probably sell out to the landlords, and the fight, if there is to be one carried on from there, must be by rent strikes and the like.

Now, within the spirit of this formulation, and on the basis of a concrete need for them to be determined on a local basis, the suggestion will naturally be raised that the tenant committee also concern itself with landlord evasions of the present OPA law and any other law. Won't we press for such a type of activity? Even where individual resistance to landlord chiseling has some effectiveness, won't we try to unify the resistance of the individual on a larger and larger basis? That is all. No sterile propaganda for "legal" committees of enforcement, no making up "better" legislative programs when we are trying to get people to act in order to keep what they have from being taken away from them.

Now at the end of a long article, some comrades may think, "Why all the fuss. As yet we see no evidence that our center of agitation is legal committees of enforcement." I will admit this. Certainly not in Labor Action, our main agitator. Nevertheless, when the CC formulation of our rent control program is defended by such arguments as: 1) A denial of the fact that enforcement committees cannot play the same role in rent as in price control thus showing a subjective fascination for "popular committees;" 2) That we are only a propaganda party, without understanding that the nature of our activity is determined not only by our being a small propaganda party but also by the nature of the activity in which we are participating; 3) That we have to "differentiate" ourselves, thus not understanding that we will accept a program from a man from Mars if it is adequate to meet the problem; then, I believe it is time to try to influence comrades against the

CC proposal. Because the CC formulation will only strengthen such ideas which I believe can be called sectarian.

We must approach the rent control campaign in the spirit of trying to do our best to get the average man in the street into motion. We must not make the mistake of using propaganda slogans on the grounds that we want to raise the level of consciousness of a struggle that has yet to be launched. Rather we should approach the rent campaign with the idea that the activity of the mass is a goal in itself because we understand that only on the basis of the people's experience can we raise more and more advanced slogans. The rent control campaign is mass activity or it is nothing. Our actions and slogans must flow from this idea.

* * *

ON UNION-VETERAN WORK

By Jason Wilson (Detroit)

* * *

January, 1947

Dear Comrade Ferguson:

Your request on behalf of the Chicago comrades engaged in union-veteran work for more information on the subject gives me an opportunity not only to reply, but also to outline the whole question in a manner of educational value to the party, through the PARTY BUILDER.

First, however, much material is available simply by writing to Emil Mazey, Veterans Department, UAW-CIO, 4147 Cass, Detroit 1, Mich. One can obtain an official pamphlet on UAW-CIO policy and structure of veterans committees, as authorized by the last national convention. One can also get on the mailing list of the monthly veterans bulletin which is packed with good information. Even though some of our friends are not in the UAW-CIO, they can obtain this material as CIO members, and attempt to set up similar committees in their local unions.

In many respects, the vets committees function like any other standing committee of the Local Union (education, legislative, etc.). They get the usual quota of letters from the vets department, from veterans organizations, etc. on matters pertaining to veterans problems. The instrument for handling these affairs is the vets committee..

Here is an example of what I mean. Last fall, the UAW-CIO vets department watched closely all developments on the terminal pay question. As soon as forms were available, each local committee grabbed them, and raced against the Legion and the VFW in servicing the vets. Likewise, through the Mazey department, closest tab is kept on all VA rules, changes, legislation, etc., and these are utilized for the benefit of the vets.

In a word, a Local Union veterans committee functions from one point of view, like a veterans organization. The committee itself is analogous to the leadership of a post of the Legion. Obviously, this is a concrete step in the direction of a Labor Legion. Likewise, it gives our people an excellent opportunity to make contacts with the young, union veterans.

Various medium may be employed to get information, give advice, and service the vets in the shop. Special vets rallies and socials at the hall are a good example. (These attract more people than local union meetings!) Special leaflets in the shops on pertinent subjects of interest to the vets. The techniques are obvious.

Another example of the work of the vets committee. The Michigan State bonus was the result primarily of the UAW-CIO vets committees. If you recall the stories in LABOR ACTION, and the line pursued in speaking at the State Legislature, you know who did the speaking and what effect it had. Far more important, however, than the struggle

For a State bonus is the coming national struggle for a Federal "wage readjustment grant."

Here, basic UAW-CIO policy was adopted at the Michigan vets conference at which our resolution was adopted. (All these resolutions are available at the vets department.) That means that veterans can speak freely and openly for our ideas on this and other questions, as official union policy. The "bread and butter" questions can be given the fullest political treatment and elucidation with ease!

In passing, I must say that our lack of a pamphlet on vets question has been a serious handicap to fruitful party results. A very conservative estimate is that we could have sold at least 1,500 pamphlets at the various big rallies, conferences, meetings, etc. in which we participated. LABOR ACTION sales haven't been pushed hard enough, although some results were obtained.

Another important aspect of union-vets work is the special role of veterans in strikes. The GM strike was a good example. The instrument for solidifying the vets in the shop in the union, and in the strike struggle is the veterans committee. A small example of the significance of this from a situation with which I am well acquainted: A Chrysler local had a dues drive. The entire union leadership saw the need for having special provision for handling the vets problem, and the vets committee handled it. (Vets committee members were put in most prominent spots, handled directly questions concerning vets, and carried on much of the propaganda over the sound trucks.) It is merely a question of time and events before special vets squads in the UAW-CIO arise alongside the flying squads to handle "picket line questions."

In the coming period of evictions, rent strikes, etc., etc. it hardly needs elaboration of the special and unique role that vets committees will be able to play. The point is for our friends to get on the ground floor, to integrate themselves, and to learn how to operate, to pick up experience, and be ready for the days ahead.

The prospects in this field, and the dangers to the union bureaucracy are well recognized by the various political tendencies in the CIO. Murray and company are very much against the whole UAW-CIO idea. The miserable non-entity who heads the national CIO vets department is a muddle-headed AVC'er, who, of course, is against a bonus, and whose real attitude is that the vets should forget they are vets, and that solves the vets problem. Under UAW-CIO pressure, he more frequently keeps his views to himself. The CP is trying to discredit and destroy, if possible, the vets department, as long as Mazey is the director. The Addes-etc. combine cut it to pieces last summer, but nonetheless, through cooperation of local committees, and the hard work of Mazey's administrative assistant, Harold Near, the vets department does a good job.

At the end of January, the national vets conference of the UAW-CIO is to be held. Originally, it was outlined along the lines of the Michigan conference, but the Addes bloc feared such a real conference (at which the CP could only gnash their teeth in the face of the militant program presented) and the Executive Board voted to have regional directors appoint all delegates!

I don't know if the tiny Reuther forces on the Board fought this

bureaucratic move or not. (These are dog days for the Reuther faction.) Nor are other details of the conference available because it takes time to see people and find out the score. Nevertheless, this conference, even in emasculated form, will provide an excellent forum for our program for veterans, if we have any delegates. (LABOR ACTION soon will carry a story on latest developments there.)

The sum total result of all this kind of activity, besides its general political value, is of course, that we participate in the struggles of the young union veterans, and through this find our contacts for the party. Our people seem to have difficulty in getting the knack of contacting through this medium. We have found thus far one young Stalinist whose views are really "semi-Trotskyite" on many questions, and we are going after him. But on this question, it is really the same problem as rooting and integrating oneself in the union movement, and becoming part and parcel of the working class from which the revolutionary cadres must come.

Comradely,

Jason Wilson

LEAVE IT TO THE WOMEN!

By Louise Goldman (Chicago)

* * *

One night several months ago a few women met in the Chicago headquarters to devise ways and means of activizing and drawing closer to the party numerous women comrades and sympathizers. Out of this meeting grew the Women's Educational League. Our success has been such a surprise to us that we decided there must be other branches which could benefit as much as we have, and perhaps more, by organizing a similar group. But a word of caution! At first the men will snicker because of course it's those women again with their eternal sewing circles and gab fests and teas and God-knows-what-all. But never mind. Not only have our men stopped snickering, they are even showing up at our "doings," and what's more, enjoying them.

In four months our membership has grown from 7 to 28, and our recorded list of contacts from 0 to 75. Our specific purposes are to raise money for the party and European relief, and to make sympathizers and perhaps members of our friends. Our incidental purposes are to give women who have families or are otherwise tied down a chance to function as social units, and to raise our educational and cultural levels. Needless to say, the men feel they have no need of the latter, but they get it willy-nilly.

Membership dues are \$.25 per month. Our regular and guaranteed contribution to the party is \$10.00 per month, and this amount will increase as our membership grows. \$50 has been contributed to the Chicago mayoralty campaign. But in addition to the contribution in dollars, we have bought for our new party headquarters such things as dishes, cabinets, linoleum, and so on.

The problem, as usual, is to keep the ball rolling, but it seems that here as elsewhere nothing succeeds like success, and the larger we grow, the greater the resources to tap. To begin with Lydia Beidel gave a lecture on the role of women in society and we invited every woman anyone had ever heard of. We charged \$.25 admission and served coffee and cake for \$.15. The discussion was lively (for once we had a chance to get a word in edgewise, if not all the way) and three weeks later we came back for more. This time Albert Goldman reviewed "Animal Farm," and a few males showed up, plus a few more females. In the meantime we held a Halloween party for 40 children and 20 adults, and one of the members raised \$20 by entertaining in her home.

The next three lectures were given by doctors -- friends of ours who are prominent in their respective fields. Dr. Friedy Heisler spoke on psychiatry, Dr. B. Lichtman on socialized medicine, and Dr. Bruno Bettelheim on the problem child. We have lectures scheduled on art, music and literature. By this time our attendance at lectures is anywhere from 30 to 50, and the men are no longer coming just out of curiosity. One handicap in the smaller branch is that there are not so many people who can be asked to lecture, and it is not a good idea to risk the loss of an audience by one poor lecturer or one poor subject. Better not to hold regular lectures, but rather to wait until a good speaker is available.

Our Christmas Eve affair was held in conjunction with the party. One of the comrades made an automatic record-changer which we raffled off Christmas Eve. \$100 was sent to Europe in the form of food and clothing.

Every two weeks we hold a membership meeting and one of the members gives a book review. A "packing party" is scheduled to sort and wrap bundles of clothing we have collected for European co-thinkers. A bazaar is scheduled to be held on March 8, International Women's Day, and we are busy putting together pinafores, dolls, bags, coin-purses, blouses, jelly, cake and anything that can be sold from a booth. Perhaps this will give you an idea of what can be done.

There may be instances in your branch where the husband is a party member and the wife either disinterested or actually hostile. Or vice versa. This is a common experience and an understandable one. Our experience has shown that it is not a hopeless one. The transition is not so difficult from attending book reviews and wrapping bundles for Europe to attending branch meetings and selling subscriptions to LABOR ACTION. Everyone has friends who will come to lectures of this type, and perhaps even join such a group as ours, who would not otherwise ever come into contact with the party. Many of the sympathizers in our group are just as active, energetic and enthusiastic as the comrades. This is the core of our periphery, and our periphery is growing. It took the women to do it!

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THE BAY AREA BRANCH AND THE OAKLAND
GENERAL STRIKE

By Bob Orozco (San Francisco)

* * *

An understanding of our branch's activity in the AFL "labor holiday" requires two explanations. In the first place, the branch lost two of its leading members in November - one having been the organizer. Thus for a period the branch was left without a single person who had all the basic qualifications of an organizer: political and organizational experience, the free time and the ability to act openly as the party representative. Secondly, seven of the nineteen members live on the San Francisco side of the Bay. Not having a car, the seven comrades were isolated from the branch when the transportation workers walked out.

On Sunday, December 1st, the rumors of a general strike began. Late Monday this had become definite. At this point the Executive Committee, if not the Branch, should have considered a meeting imperative. Actually, an attempt to hold an Executive Committee meeting was made, but this failed to materialize due to various technical reasons which in retrospect seem inexcusable. The inability of the comrades to respond immediately to the sudden development can be attributed partly to a long period of routinism which the branch had been experiencing and partly to the fact that this is the first thing of its kind many comrades had experienced. The strike came as a bombshell and it was hard for one who knew of sudden explosions of working class militancy only from books to realize that there actually was going to be a general strike. As one comrade put it, "Who would have expected a general strike in the sleeping town of Oakland."

However, by Monday night very tentative plans had been made for the distribution of a leaflet and the sale of LABOR ACTION at the AFL mass meeting. We had only one party member on the Oakland side who participated in the strike, the other members being CIO or non-union. This comrade took the initiative in getting out the leaflet. In cutting the stencil we had to rely on a party sympathizer, which ordinarily is bad enough, but in this case could have been fatal. Also, we had a very limited supply of paper on hand and with the transportation tie-up the situation was rather difficult.

Tuesday night, the mass meeting was held at the Oakland Auditorium. The SLP in its characteristically sectarian way, distributed its pamphlet "What Means This Strike?" The SWP handed out old copies of THE MILITANT. It is fairly certain that the CP had neither leaflets nor its paper at the meeting. The WP sold 49 LABOR ACTIONS, all on hand on the Oakland side of the Bay, and distributed 700 leaflets. The leaflet (reprinted in LABOR ACTION, December 9) included an announcement of a public meeting for the following Sunday, at which Hal Draper spoke. To get a clear idea of what we missed out on, it must be remembered that there were some 20,000 workers at the Auditorium that night. Our salesmen and distributors were swamped. Here was an opportunity to get our viewpoint to thousands and not hundreds of militant workers, who were anxious to know what the score was. Thus, while in relation to the other parties, we were way ahead in having a leaflet on the specific situation, in

relation to what was actually possible, we fell far short. However, in this evaluation, the general position of the branch must be kept in mind and therefore most of the comrades felt that we did pretty well.

During the strike there were mass picket lines in downtown Oakland around the two struck stores. Militant and class-conscious workers were there by the thousands for two consecutive days. Yet we failed to distribute or sell literature there due to the lack of forces, particularly the absence of a full-time organizer. To top this off, our headquarters was located only a few blocks from the mass picket lines. Yet the headquarters remained completely closed throughout the strike. We could have used the place to serve coffee to the strikers or even to hold an impromptu meeting. The headquarters were newly acquired by the branch and we had evidently not come to regard it as the center of all of our activity.

The Executive Committee met on Wednesday night. We scheduled a leaflet distribution at the CIO meeting which was to be held the following night. By the time the Executive Committee meeting was over it had become clear that the AFL bureaucracy was going to call off the strike, which they did the next morning. The CIO mass meeting was then cancelled and we were only left with the problem of when to hold our public meeting on the strike. All the plans and publicity had been made for Draper's speech on "Henry Wallace's Program" for the following Sunday and therefore our meeting on the strike was put off for one week, though this undoubtedly meant that some of the interest in the strike would have waned by that time. However, this would give us an additional week for publicizing the meeting by distributions of a leaflet at AFL union meetings. It must be added that the Draper forum, though well attended, had no workers who had come as a result of the leaflet distributed during the general strike. At the "General Strike" forum, which was not so well attended, two AFL members came as a result of the leaflet distribution. It is impossible to tell from these results whether we were correct in delaying our forum on the strike or not.

At the branch meeting a discussion was held of the strike and of our activity, at which a good deal of healthy self-criticism was made which added up to what has been presented here. The comrades received an integrated report of the strike from those whose activity had been in different spheres: AFL, CIO and San Francisco side. For most of the comrades, the strike was the most intense class struggle experience that they had gone through. The suddenness of the whole thing, the high degree of militancy displayed by sections of the workers whom we had never given a second thought, the tremendous power of the workers contrasted with the impotence of the city government and its police -- all this made the strike a most educational and inspirational experience. It can be said with certainty that the Bay Area branch is now much better equipped and would be by far more responsive if any similar situation occurred in the future. All party branches must maintain a high degree of alertness in order to be able to take advantage of the high points of the class struggle for the building of the Party.

December, 1946.

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REPORT ON SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA BRANCH FOR
JANUARY 1947 AND PROSPECTS FOR FEBRUARY 1947

By Larry O'Connor

* * *

I. Membership and Morale

At the end of January the branch had 21 active members, one inactive whose membership is in question, and one in a special status. Of these, four are in an industrial concentration (UAW), four are scattered in various industries (Longshore, RR, Machinists, Waitresses) Three are students. One is a housewife without other occupation. Nine are white-collar workers, three of them more or less active in their clerical workers unions.

Eight members are active in the AVC. Three additional members are eligible to AVC but are not active, one of them by branch decision and the other two for no good reason.

One member was recruited during the month. She is a skilled stenographer by trade and will soon take a job as such.

Seven of the members live in San Francisco, and the rest in the East Bay Area. Of the seven, one works in the East Bay and is making every effort to move over here. Except for a class, and our best literature sale (Longshore Union), all activity is in the East Bay. One AVC member is now active in a San Francisco Chapter and the two who have not joined the AVC are also in San Francisco.

Morale of the branch is, in general, very high. Almost all members are active and learning. To a great extent those few members who do not pull their weight in the organization do not do so due to fault of the organization (i.e. the organizer) in not finding suitable activity for them and planning it well enough in advance. This situation is being corrected constantly, and should be eliminated completely with the new organizational procedure which will be outlined below.

San Francisco is the chief problem of the branch right now, its greatest weakness. Almost all comrades there are very new to the movement -- not a single politico old timer. There has been some personal friction and mutual criticism among the comrades there due to some extent to conflicting personalities, but mainly due to the lack of a real base of operations in the labor movement and the community. The problem can be solved chiefly through greater political education and above all through developing real political work on that side which will involve and absorb the comrades. With the composition of the membership this is no easy job. It must be our perspective in the next six months to shift one or two experienced people to that side of the bay, if possible to live there, if not to work with the people there.

The low industrial composition of the branch is a matter of serious concern. It was discussed in branch meeting last night, and some misunderstandings as to the importance of this were cleared up. The last three recruits have been non-proletarian. Of the com-

rades scheduled for recruitment during the next six weeks, four are non-proletarian and only one is proletarian.

The fact is that the branch is completely oriented towards workers and veterans. The last three members who joined, approached us - we did not ask them to join. The four non-industrial workers whom we intend to recruit in the next period are people who have either been close to the movement for a long time, or who have come close to us through purely personal relations in recent months. We are pushing the proletarianization of present members, but actually there seems little prospect of achieving anything much in that direction soon. The boys in the UAW are really getting established for the first time, with the result that we hope to recruit one very fine worker during the next six weeks, and have one other very fine militant in mind before May 1st. From the report on forums and socials below, it will become evident that workers are beginning to come around to our functions. Recruitment possibilities among these are there, but may not pan out for several months yet.

Given the composition of the branch, one of our chief concerns has to be with making very active members of our non-industrial. We are constantly striving to raise the level of education and activity for these people so that they may become real revolutionists. Along these lines we hope not only to expand the work and influence of the branch among workers through literature sales and other activities, but also to "revolutionize" the people concerned sufficiently that they themselves understand the necessity and desirability of going into industry. The Executive Committee does not believe that direct pressure methods at this time would achieve anything but defections of people who can be useful and can be trained and educated.

II. Branch Activities

A. Forums

The forums, conducted in our headquarters, are growing in attendance. Further, attendance, aside from branch members, is mainly proletarian, with 5-10 Negro longshore and railroad workers attending more or less regularly and repeatedly. The two forums conducted during the month were on the anti-labor drive and on the general subject of Stalinism. The first, conducted by Comrade Barton, was rather poorly attended. The second, conducted by myself, was attended by around 35 people, which is rather close to the capacity of the hall. Collections gross \$6-\$10, and we serve coffee-and: after each forum. This gives us a chance to talk to the people who attended, rather than having them go out for coffee and in restaurants. Initial results: two Negro longshoremen (one ex-CP) approached our LABOR ACTION salesman in front of their union meeting for subs.

B. Social

Our first social at the headquarters was held during January. For us, it was a howling political success. Previous socials had been held in a private home in Berkeley, and attracted large crowds of campus Bohemians, bearded anarchists, etc. We made a lot of money (as many as 85-95 people attended), but political results were very close to zero.

We were frankly worried about our first social at the headquar-

ters, as we knew the campus crowd would not come, and were fearful that few others would. Some 45-50 people attended. Of these at least 15-20 were proletarian trade unionists, most of them Negroes. The important thing is that, as stated above, 5-10 of these Negroes came to our next forum, two or three of them bringing their wives and girl friends. I am sure the comrades in New York realize the problem of Negroes who come to socials and not to political meetings. When they come to political meetings, and bring their wives, that means that the social did just what it was supposed to do. The headquarters looked neat, though not sufficiently political as we have not been able to get our artistic comrades to make posters for the walls. Contacts were made, literature and subs sold. We are going to have socials every month (previously, six weeks to two months in between). We expect them to get better and better.

C. Education

Our Educational Director informs me that he has reported to the Education Department on our classes. Their attendance is not what it should be. I wish to report mainly on one branch educational (after the business meeting). On January 24th the branch educational was given over to a Three L Memorial. It is the first time we have done anything of this kind for many years here. Unfortunately, few if any sympathizers attended. The speeches were excellent, stressing mainly the relevance of the work of the great leaders of the past to our situation. It was a real educational event, and points the road to similar discussions on the work of other great leaders. Our branch has not gone much for "inspirational" talks. But as we recruit new members, as the morale of the organization rises, as its work begins to show real effect, such meetings take on a "natural" quality which they might well have lacked in the past. We have not been and won't become a "rah,rah" outfit like the SWP. But a real enthusiasm which flows from the realities of the progress of the organization should be encouraged and given expression. If things keep moving here as they are now moving, we may even start singing again!

III. Program of Action and Prospects for February

A. The Political Campaigns.

The work of the branch with regard to wages, prices, housing and the Labor Party as conducted in trade unions and AVC fraction will be reported to the proper authorities.

As stated some weeks ago, the branch decided to try to begin neighborhood work on the rent situation. The comrades who live in working class districts agreed to go out and canvass people in their neighborhood as to the possibilities of forming committees in the event OPA lifts the ceilings.

After several weeks, we found two things: Not too many of our comrades live in rental areas. Here even in workers and lower middle-class areas there is a high percentage of home ownership. Many people who rent, rent a room or small apartment in private homes. This obviously makes organization very difficult.

Further, it develops that the comrades are not accustomed to this type of house to house work (though most of them are accustomed to peddling LABOR ACTION subs in this manner). In short, in three

weeks only two comrades went out together on the canvass. The branch has decided to accept the situation. All comrades are instructed to be constantly alert for the development of any neighborhood committees, etc., and to jump into them as soon as formed. Two or three comrades who have no activities in outside organizations, and who have not been in the party long enough and lack all organizational activity are to continue canvassing, more as a matter of training than anything else. We will stand ready to help and guide them if and when anything develops.

In the meantime, the branch issued the attached letter to about 50 veterans, labor and political organizations in the area. We do not expect much response, but it should get the name of the organization before the memberships of the organizations. The unions and AVC chapters where we have members might possibly be induced to respond favorably.

We are on the alert for any conferences on housing, rent, anti-labor legislation, etc. We will try to sell the paper at such conferences and, if possible, to get a party spokesman into them.

On the labor party, we are raising the importance of labor candidates in the municipal elections here. We found that we have no one with the residential qualifications to run in Oakland. If the SWP runs candidates, we anticipate we will support them. Aside from this, all we can do is agitate in the mass organizations where we have members, and to issue statements on the election in our Monthly News Letter and through LABOR ACTION.

B. Recruitment.

As stated above, the branch has set itself a quota of five new members in the next six weeks. This will include the period of Comrade Shachtman's tour. These are real prospects, not just "something to shoot at." Some of the people involved have been in the movement at one time or another (two of them), but recruiting them is not just getting back something we had before. It is possible only because of the real signs of life shown by the branch. One worker in the UAW is very good. I cannot predict that we will be able to do as well in the last six weeks of the program of action in this respect as in the first... but then I am a pessimist from way back.

C. The Press.

It is absolutely certain that we will increase our bundles of both the LABOR ACTION and THE NEW INTERNATIONAL during the next six weeks, with further increases in the offing. We are only waiting to establish with certainty the time and place of meetings of good unions to increase the bundles.

D. The Monthly News Letter

I am enclosing a copy. It should speak for itself. We found that we were spending too much time and money on mailings for every forum and social. We feel that such a news letter can do valuable political work for the organization as well as advertising its activities. Further, it forces us to actually plan all public activities a month in advance so we can advertise them in the letter. This in itself has a good effect on the branch.

E. Plan for Committee Organization of the Branch

At the last meeting the branch accepted a proposal of the Executive Committee for a reorganization of the methods of work.

Briefly, the proposal is as follows: We propose to establish four committees: Education, Literature, Socials and Headquarters, and Contact and Recruitment. The branch membership will be divided among these committees on a volunteer basis, with an effort to get approximately equal membership on each committee. Each committee will be in complete charge of the planning as well as supervision of the execution of the work in its field. Though the members of each committee will have to take on most of the burden of work in the field of the committee to which they belong, they will, of course, have the right to call on the branch membership as a whole to help in carrying out the work.

For example: Literature. It will be the duty of the committee to constantly push the expansion of literature and sub sales. To arrange for the sales at union and factory gates, branch socials and forums, etc. However, not only the members of this committee will sell literature. All other members of the branch, regardless of the committee to which they belong, will carry on sales (that is, all members who can), but under the supervision and direction of the committee.

On Branch meeting nights, the committees will convene in different corners of the headquarters at 8:00 P.M., and conduct their meetings. At 8:30 or 8:45 the branch will meet in plenary session, with very brief reports from the chairmen of each committee. The organizer and Executive Committee will have the job of coordinating the work of the committees and compromising the claims of the different committees on the time of the individual members of the branch. It will also be able to devote most of its attention to the political problems of the branch, to the job of directing the party so that it can really intervene in the life of the community, rather than being snowed under by constant technical details.

The major purposes of this proposal are two: First and most important, to actively engage every branch member in thinking about, planning and carrying out at least one phase of party work. At present, all plans are made in the Executive Committee, and most branch members merely accept assignments. Expression of the membership in the planning of branch work is mainly negative: i.e. objection to this or that proposal of the executive committee rather than active thinking about the problems of the organization and bringing proposals to the Executive. We hope by this means to give every member a functional role in planning as well as execution, and to be able to devote branch discussions mainly to political problems. Second: We hope to greatly reduce the time spent in meetings on technical details of work.

This is an experiment. At the meeting at which it was decided to proceed on this new basis, two comrades objected on the grounds that it would limit discussion of all matters of branch concern within the branch, and that in any event the way to make people active is to get them to really feel the fight for socialism as their fight. The majority are strongly for the idea, understanding that it will be experimental and subject to development or abolition as we see how it works.

The committees will be open for reassignment every three months. We will make an effort to prevent people from staying on the same committee indefinitely, so that in due course everyone will gain experience and interest in all phases of the work.

The general activities (Forums etc.) for February you can gather from the Monthly Letter. In branch educationals we are taking up (a) discussion of the Plenum resolution on Stalinism in the unions, and (b) a general discussion of the conception of party membership; duties and obligations of membership; a general discussion of the relations of the individual member to the organization and its work. The Executive Committee and Branch agreed that this would be a very good discussion for our new members, and for the morale of the organization and its understanding of its nature as a fighting work community of comrades dedicated to a cause.

During the last two weeks of the month there will be no branch educationals, as all time will be spent on planning Max's tour. Also, the branch will be mobilized for work at the State Convention of the AVC in San Jose.

February 1, 1947.

COMPLETE EXCHANGE OF CORRESPONDENCE
BETWEEN DAVE JEFFRIES-FELIX MORROW
AND WORKERS PARTY

* * *

December 26, 1946.

Max Shachtman, National Secretary
Workers Party
4 Court Square
Long Island City, N. Y.

Dear Comrade Shachtman:

With this letter we submit an application for membership in the Workers Party to your Political Committee. Will you please let us know as soon as action is taken on this application?

Fraternally,

Dave Jeffries
Felix Morrow

- - -

January 9, 1947.

Felix Morrow
Dave Jeffries
New York, New York

Dear Comrades:

The Political Committee has received and discussed the application you made for membership in the Workers Party. With your concurrence we are ready to act upon it immediately and to welcome you as regular members of the Workers Party.

The Political Committee was empowered by the last regular plenary meeting of the National Committee to act with full authority of the latter on the matter of the application for membership in our Party submitted orally at this plenum by Comrade Morrow, in his name and in the name of Comrade Jeffries. The opinion of the full National Committee, which is shared by the Political Committee, was that both comrades making applications should be immediately admitted without conditions of any kind, and that they should be given all the rights and undertake all the obligations of all other Party members, plus those special rights which they would enjoy in view of our decision that Party membership for all members of the Socialist Workers Party who join the Workers Party shall be set back to the date of their affiliation with the Trotskyist movement. The Political Committee is ready to act immediately upon this basis.

In the course of the discussion of this question at our plenum, as you know, Comrade Morrow took the position that on his part, and presumably also on the part of Comrade Jeffries, there was a condition attached to the application for membership in our Party.

This condition related to the appeal made by you comrades to the Extraordinary Party Committee for reinstatement into the Socialist Workers Party, and your declared intention to pursue this appeal. Comrade Morrow declared that the application for membership was made on the condition that the Workers Party, after he joined it, would not exercise its right to decide whether or not the appeal for reinstatement into the Socialist Workers Party should be pursued or on how it should be pursued, that is, that on this score, you comrades would not be subject to the same discipline that applies to all other members of our Party.

Your present letter in which you make formal application for membership makes no reference whatsoever to this condition for membership which was orally emphasized by Comrade Morrow at our plenum. We are therefore ready to assume, unless you correct us, that this condition has been withdrawn and that you comrades are prepared upon joining our Party to enjoy the full and unconditional rights of membership and to assume equal obligations with all other Party members.

At the plenum of the National Committee, in connection with the oral application for membership made by Comrade Morrow, a discussion also took place, unfortunately in the absence of Comrade Morrow who was invited to remain but who was compelled to leave the session due to a prior appointment, on the perspective which an authorized representative of the IKD announced to us at a pre-plenum meeting of the Political Committee. This announcement was aimed to make clear to us that some comrades of the IKD and those in the American movement associated with them intend to establish a third revolutionary organization, outside of both the Workers Party and the Socialist Workers Party and in opposition to both of them. It is not the purpose of this letter to discuss this plan. It is only necessary to say that our National Committee has condemned any such plan as a criminal, irresponsible and adventurist attempt to further split the revolutionary movement by creating a new and impotent sect. It goes without saying that our Party is determined to combat any such plan, no matter how trivial it may be. The names of both you comrades have been identified with this light-hearted "perspective." It is hardly necessary to point out that it would not be a responsible act, nor would it make sense from any point of view, for anyone to join the Workers Party with the determining purpose of splitting from it within a short and more or less pre-established time in order to form a new sect.

From your application for membership and the fact that it states no special conditions for membership in our Party, we are ready to assume, unless you correct us, that you have nothing in common with such an irresponsible "perspective," that you reject it, that you do not visualize your participation in the Workers Party merely as a "stage" in the process of forming another organization, as an "experience" through which it is necessary to go in order to demonstrate the need of another organization, but rather as a serious and welcome decision to participate in the building of our Party as a revolutionary Socialist organization.

We draw the same conclusions from your application with regard to all other special conditions that have been or may be demanded of our Party.....

On the basis of the above considerations, the Political Committee is authorized by the National Committee to discuss with you at a joint meeting the final details of approving your application and facilitating your assignments to work in the appropriate Party units. A telephone call to the undersigned will suffice to arrange the date of this joint meeting.

Fraternally yours,

Max Shachtman
National Chairman

(NOTE: The Party has received no reply to this letter from either Comrade Morrow or Comrade Jeffries, nor an acknowledgment of receipt. - Editor.)

* * *

LETTER ON THE LOS ANGELES ELECTION
CAMPAIGN

* * *

January 31, 1947

Dear Comrade Gould:

When I wrote you last, I had my fingers crossed (it was just before the start of our petition drive) but I've uncrossed them now. This petition business hasn't been a drive, it's been a blitz. It has exceeded all expectations. Last week, I mildly suggested at the branch meeting that it was theoretically possible for us to get our thousand signatures, even by house-to-house canvassing, in one week (instead of the 2-1/2 weeks allowed) and they told me I was dreaming--BUT that's just what we've done.

We started Monday at the beginning of this week (the first day possible), have had mobilizations from 5:30 to 8:30 every evening since then, and tomorrow (Saturday) we start at 11 in the morning and go through until every line is filled up. At this moment (Friday night) we already have 735 and it will be a cinch to get 270 or so tomorrow. Even during the week (on Tuesday) we got 250 that one evening, because we had the biggest turnout that evening, the regular branch meeting having been called off. Tomorrow there will be an even bigger turnout, it will be during the day when it is easier and we will be able to work longer if necessary. SO---it's in the bag... 1000 in six days, by house-to-house canvassing. (This method, by the way, means that the percentage of valid signatures is very high, at least 90% at the lowest, and since only 500 valid signatures are required, it's a foregone conclusion. As compared with the New York street-corner method, the house-to-house routine also means much more from the point of view of propoganda and gaining contacts -- we've already netted several good contacts thusly.)

Best of all, (and also, of course, the reason for the above progress) is the fact that the branch members' turnout for the work has been better than excellent. Naturally, I couldn't be sure of it till this week, but it seems we really got them hepped up. And of course our success will be an added shot in the arm to keep the fires burning -- especially since the speed of the work means that they will not get worn out on the petition phase. (I remember, in the New York campaigns, the membership was so exhausted by the grinding toil of piling up signatures that when that was done the propoganda phase of the election campaign inevitably suffered. That's the advantage of having to get only 1000 names instead of 14,000!)

On Tuesday we got 10 unbound copies of the pamphlet to use in getting the names, and on Thursday, the 2000 pamphlets came from the binder. We've been selling them only yesterday and tonight (while getting the signatures) -- and with the comrades instructed not to let selling the pamphlet slow up the pace of signature getting. Even so, we've already sold, in the course of this, about 100 -- that is, that many sold themselves without any emphasis. It will go like hotcakes, I'm sure.

I'm sending you (under separate cover) 25 copies of the pamphlet to send out to branches (including the New York branches). That

ought to be enough. I want to direct your attention to the illustrations in the pamphlet. They were done by one of the comrades here, Elly, and I think they are excellent. The New York election pamphlet illustrations can't hold a candle to them -- tell that to Bern and hit him over the head if he mutters something about "local pride."

While I'm on the subject, I'd also like to point out that this pamphlet is the only one I've ever seen where the author's home is mapped on the cover. If you'll look just above and between the "RO" in JIM CROW on the cover, you will notice a heavy dot -- that is where I live. A unique distinction for a pamphlet, certainly..... More seriously, the area shown on the cover below "Harold Draper" is the area we're working in -- it's the main Negro district in Los Angeles included within the 7th Councilmanic district. (So most of the people who buy the pamphlet will be able to find themselves on the cover too! Local color, all over the place....)

February 15 is the date when nominating petitions have to be in. We will file, of course, this Monday (February 4). From then till February 15, we will concentrate on spreading the pamphlet around the district (with election material inserted) and preparing for the month and a half of electioneering, etc. from February 15 to April 1. I will write in more detail about that phase. Our first piece of direct election propoganda will be ready beginning this Monday. (It should have been ready at the beginning of this week, but as I think I wrote, a comrade is doing the job on a small multilith and he has been encountering technical trouble till yesterday. It's costing us about \$7 as against about the \$40 it would cost if done in a commercial shop, and in only one color at that.) I will send you samples of the folder, of course, as soon as it is off the press -- also of the special letter-head and press-release stationery.

We took a \$100 loan from a sympathizer to pay for the pamphlet, to be paid back from the proceeds of the pamphlet. The \$144 filing fee is being covered through contributions plus advance payments of pledges by a couple of members. We are going to hit everybody in sight for contributions to the campaign, especially with the pamphlet and four-page fold out so we have something to show, but at least the two sums (\$110 for the pamphlet and \$144 for the fee) are covered. I must repeat that the National Office donation of 100% of the pledges for the period is the biggest analgesic and warmly appreciated.

February 4, 1947.

Haven't been able to get back to this letter till today. We spent practically all day Saturday finishing up the petitioning; then three of us spent all day Sunday working up the precinct numbers for all the signatures, followed by an executive committee meeting all evening, after which Anne and I worked until 2 a.m. cleaning up the petition sheets for handing in. First thing in the morning Monday we filed the petitions (being the first in the district to do so, out of 13 candidates who had filed intentions); next two weeks is concentration on pamphlet sales. At the branch meeting tonight we are coming in with assignments for covering a stream of meetings in and around the district, and on Sunday, a mobilization to hit a few churches first at 11 a.m. and then house-to-house. --Lots more on plans, as I said before, but some day I'll write more. This morning, I rented a hall for an election eve rally on March 30 -- there's only

one good place in the district to hold such a meeting and I wanted to be sure to get it; it's right smack in the middle of the Negro section of District 7 and on the main stem.

.....

Comradely yours,

Hal Draper

* * *

REPORTS TO DETROIT BRANCH CONFERENCE
JANUARY 19, 1947.

* * *

Report by Ben Hall, Organizer

Preface:

In our discussions of the branch work at our regular weekly meetings (or in the past at our monthly meetings), we are generally concerned with the day to day aspects of our activities. A report and discussion on the past six months work of the branch should enable us to have a little broader perspective and to eliminate those factors which were or are purely temporary, accidental or unimportant.

Summary Introduction:

An accurate balance sheet of the state of the branch at the present time as compared with its position six months ago is the following:

Six months ago we had just completed a preconvention discussion which in intensity, duration and scope approached a typical preconvention discussion in the party center. While this discussion was necessary and extremely effective in the education of the members of the party, it had as an inevitable concomitant the turning of the branch inward. Our situation at that time was an onerous one. Our membership had declined immediately before and after the convention. The number of party contacts was close to the zero point. As a result of layoffs and job shifts our comrades in the shops were either new on the job or without any roots in their unions. A serious situation existed in the relations between the branch and many of its former Negro members and contacts. We had to switch over to a new dues system at a time when we ourselves as individuals and as a branch were in financial difficulties and we had to change over from free distribution to sales of our press.

From every aspect, we are today in a far stronger and more advantageous position. This point must be emphasized because of various references in national reports, which were based on what we can now see were temporary and passing factors, to Detroit as "a weak spot" in the party.

In this period our membership has risen in numbers and in quality; the attempts of an expelled member to poison the minds of our Negro contacts against us were defeated; shop contacts and others are beginning again to attend our social affairs, forums and meetings. Finances have been regularized. Literature sales and THE NEW INTERNATIONAL subscriptions have been systematized and increased. We participated with some success, if only modestly, in two campaigns.

The weakest phases of our work have been and are the following: (1) a lack of a well-integrated and carefully planned program of party education, (2) the failure to systematize the sale of LABOR ACTION, (3) a continuing financial problem, (4) an inability to bring a substantial number of non-party members to party meetings.

Special Problems:

LABOR ACTION:

It is impossible to give any figures on the circulation of LABOR ACTION because sales have been unsystematized and sporadic. On several occasions we have had surprisingly successful sales but these were irregular and unusual. However, the possibility of selling our present bundle order of 100 copies per week and even raising it has been demonstrated. The Executive Committee placed one of its members in charge of LABOR ACTION sales in the hope that by so doing we would effect an improvement but so far with no outstanding results.

A contributing difficulty was the need to become accustomed to selling the paper but the basic factor in the lagging LABOR ACTION sales has been a failure to properly appreciate the LABOR ACTION, the party's paper, as an instrument of party work IN ITS OWN RIGHT. In the many discussions we had on LABOR ACTION sales in the Executive Committee and at the branch, this was reflected in two ways: first in a tendency to relegate LABOR ACTION sales so far down on the list of party activities that in practice it was subordinated to and sacrificed for most other phases of work; and second, in a tendency by some comrades to refuse LABOR ACTION assignments unless most everybody was assigned to the same work. (This was reported many times to the branch in an appeal for "cooperation" with the LABOR ACTION agent.)

After many disputes and discussions on who could be made available for selling the paper, in actual practice we found that the greater part of the branch membership is able to do this kind of work when necessary.

The press must not be considered merely as a supplement to or an aid to our other "important" work but as a vital and independent phase of party endeavor and must be so organized. It is worthwhile to recall that the party press which is the ORIGINAL form of political life and party propaganda still remains the chief instrument for the propagation of our ideas and must of necessity be so at a period when the main tasks of the party are propagandistic (reread Convention resolution on the "Role of the Party").

Negro Work:

This can be subdivided into three points:

(1) For several months the branch attempted to organize a "United Workers Movement" which would be modeled upon the once-existing Buffalo organization of the same name and which would function in close collaboration with the party, fighting against discrimination. However, this attempt failed. The main reason for the failure was the absence of a group of Negro party members and union militants adequate in numbers, in experience and in devotion to the party to act as the leadership. This lack made it possible for Butler (since expelled from the party, but a member at the time) by a series of disloyal actions and slanders to place the branch in a very difficult position for carrying on Negro work. Shortly after Butler's expulsion, one of our Negro members resigned. We were left with only one Negro member of the branch and it seemed almost as

though we had to start over from the very beginning.

To make matters worse, one of our white comrades employed a Jim Crow remark in personal discussions and had to be suspended from the party.

However, in the past six months we have almost completely eradicated the effects of this series of difficulties. The comrade who resigned has rejoined and is now a probationary member. By excellent shop work and personal contacting, the branch has established or reestablished close relations with a large number of Negro contacts, one of whom has joined; a second has applied for membership; and others are prospects for membership.

But for a whole period of time, the attention of the Executive Committee was consumed by this problem and a special branch discussion was held on "Problems of Negro Work."

(2) NAACP. One comrade assigned to join. Little results. Difficult assignment because of the nature of the NAACP.

(3) FEPC campaign: (Dealt with under "Campaigns").

The essence and aim of the branch's Negro work today can be stated very simply: to contact, recruit and train militant Negro proletarians who can provide leadership for carrying on Negro work in the broader sense.

Finances:

Coincidentally with the institution of the new dues system, we suffered a drop in income as a result of recurrent layoffs and experienced a heavy increase in expenditures caused by: (1) the new obligation to finance the local organizer and (2) an increase in the rent of our headquarters from \$50 to \$75 per month. At the same time, we found it impossible to utilize our headquarters to raise money because of certain inescapable provisions of the city's building laws. The net effect of this series of coincidents was to plunge the branch into a serious financial crisis which occurred simultaneously with a similar crisis in the finances of the national organization. While the local crisis in finances is overcome, the financial problem continues as evidenced by the inability of the branch to afford any more than the most basic needs of its existence with nothing left over for "luxuries." The branch grappled with the financial crisis as follows:

(1) The local sustaining fund was systematized. (2) The local organizer was financed in part by the National Office. (3) Money was raised at a series of house parties and "Open House" affairs (the latter had an indifferent success). (4) Efforts were undertaken to get contributions from party contacts but failed to net any appreciable amount. (5) Rent payments were reduced. The building which housed our headquarters was sold by its owners and we were compelled to vacate. We took two small offices and made arrangements to hold our weekly meetings at the Civic Center. The net savings in rent of about \$30 enabled us to put in a much needed telephone. (6) Several of our new members paid regularly and generously to the party.

While for the next three months we will continue to meet at the Civic Center, we must have as a steady objective to obtain a real party headquarters which can serve as a party center. However, in view of the state of our finances, we must have a reasonable guarantee that this center will be self-sustaining and not an expense which drains off all our available finances.

Membership, Recruits, Contacts

The branch's membership has shown the following change:

At the time of convention, May 1946	30	members
Out:		
1 student dropped		
1 worker resigned		
1 " expelled		
4 transfers to New York	<u>7</u>	"
Total of continuous membership in this period.....	23	"
In:		
New recruits - 4 workers		
Rejoined 2 (1 worker and 1 student)		
Transfers in 2	<u>8</u>	"
Present membership (December 27, 1946)	31	members
Net gain to party	3	"

Of the six people who joined or rejoined the party, only one came from shop work. The others were recruited as a result of general party activity. However, 5 of the 6 are workers and union members. One is a former member of the SWP and well known in his union.

Prospects for recruitment in the near future: 4 as follows - 2 general party contacts and 2 shop contacts.

The branch held one educational session on the subject of "Problems of Recruitment" and following the conference we will hold a continuation of this under the heading of "Techniques of Recruitment."

The branch now has a mailing list of about 100 names of people who come to meetings every now and then, who have subscribed or re-subscribed to LABOR ACTION on their own initiative, or who in some way have indicated an interest in the party over and above the casual interest displayed by the ordinary subscriber. This list has been handled entirely through the local office, usually by the organizer, via mail and telephone. One member was recruited in this way. This type of routine contacting should be continued but to insure its regularity and systematization it should be handled by a special contact director. On one occasion the branch meeting was cancelled in order to permit concentrated contacting for the public meeting which replaced the branch meeting for that night. The results were indifferent and hardly merited the effort expended. The contact director and a committee working under him may attempt similar activity in the future in connection with a well advertised public meeting. Carefully planned personal visiting should supplement the letters and phone calls mentioned above.

During this whole period our public meetings have been rather poorly attended. In the past few weeks there has been an improvement.

Educational Work

One of the chief defects of our work in the past period has been the lack of a well rounded and integrated educational program. Few of the classes what we decided upon were actually organized. Only two classes were carried through to completion: one on Marxian Economics and one in the "Fight for Socialism." Aside from these ventures our branch meetings were the exclusive arena for educating.

In part this was a result of our failure to establish a functioning educational department or committee but more than this, it was due to our preoccupation with various organizational tasks, in particular the raising of funds at a series of socials which served no educational or propogandistic function for the party.

The future educational plans of the branch should center around the following points: (1) branch meetings, (2) Saturday night get-togethers where some party problem is posed for discussion, (3) formal classes, (4) special meetings to discuss party resolutions.

Branch meetings should rightly serve an important educational function. We have been attempting to combine our branch meetings with public forums so that party contacts and prospects may get to know more about us. However, although it is correct to invite contacts and sympathizers to our branch meetings, we have been compelled to deform the branch meetings in an effort to give them a "popular" appeal. We have not established clearly the nature of our branch meetings: The whole evening of the branch meeting should be set aside for the PARTY MEMBERS. The reports and discussions should turn about the organizational and political problems that the members new and old, are concerned with. These meetings are NOT for people who have merely a casual interest in politics, or in the party, although we do not necessarily exclude them from attending. The important thing is that we do not ADJUST our meetings to them. Non-party members who are considered to be serious contacts or prospects for membership are to be welcomed and even urged to attend.

Public forums should be organized apart from branch meetings. We should abandon all efforts to hold forums weekly and substitute instead periodic, well-advertised public meetings on popular subjects.

Executive Committee and Branch Meetings

The Executive Committee for the past four months has been functioning under a series of rules adopted by the branch which are soon to be formalized as by-laws. These rules provide a means whereby the branch can devote itself to serious problems or fruitful educational discussions by eliminating unnecessary details. Because we have succeeded in eliminating useless "business" from the branch meeting, any failure to organize a well thought-out program becomes glaringly apparent. This is all to the good. However, while our by-laws make it POSSIBLE to hold good meetings, they do not make it INEVITABLE. The Executive Committee must decide on the agenda for branch meetings with scrupulous care. In many cases it did not do so with disheartening results at the branch; but where this has

happened, it has NOT resulted from any tendency on the part of the Executive Committee to replace the branch but rather from a failure to organize the branch meeting correctly. The corrective is to be found not in any change in the relation of the Executive Committee to the branch but in a more careful application of decisions already adopted.

Campaigns

Many comrades misunderstood or misinterpreted the aims of the party's national campaign on Prices and Housing which took place during this period. This was especially the case in Detroit where all activity took place BEFORE the arrival of directives from the National Office and coincided with the big actions of the UAW. After the UAW had mobilized tens of thousands at the prices demonstration at Cadillac Square and hundreds in picket lines during the "buyers strikes", it was impossible for us to organize any significant independent activity of our own. During the UAW actions we organized mass distributions of LABOR ACTION and our people were active in their local unions. One member became chairman of a local "Flying Squadron on Rents."

Some of us felt that the national plans were far too ambitious and unrealistic. However, it was never intended that every branch follow every directive listed by the National Office. The primary aim of the national campaign was to alert the whole party to the possibilities of participating in the class struggle and of leading groups of workers, however small. By so alerting the membership, which can easily become attuned to isolation and "adjusted" to an inability to lead workers, the party would be prepared to take advantage of every possibility that MIGHT arise depending on the particular conditions in each locality. Every branch was to draw out of the National Plan those ideas which best suited its own position and several branches were able to score successes in just that manner.

The Detroit branch, among others, merited the warning implied in the proposals for a national campaign. Two incidents show that we tended to become so reconciled to our own inability to lead workers that we overlooked possibilities that simply stared us in the face. (1) One of our new members was very active in a fight by a group of UAW women against layoffs out of line of seniority. (2) A few of our women comrades participated in the campaign of DSR women for reinstatement. These matters were handled in a purely routine fashion without any attempt by the leading members of the branch to give leadership and direction to this activity. The Executive Committee did not have a single serious discussion on these points. It is quite true that no matter what we had done, the branch may not have made any gains, but we MAY have done so and in any case the experience would have been invaluable.

The branch did give a great deal of time and attention to the campaign for a Michigan FEPC law. Reports on our activity have appeared in LABOR ACTION and have been made at previous branch meetings.

The chief shortcomings of the campaign were (1) a failure to carry out our objective of getting a group of non-party members to work under our direction and leadership during the campaign, (2) not enough use of the campaign in the shops to gain party contacts and sympathizers.

During the course of the campaign we received publicity in all the local Negro papers; we issued a special party statement; and we published an Open Letter addressed to the UAW calling for a March on Lansing.

For the future: we will seek to participate in the UAW campaign to keep down rents.

Work in Shops and in Non-Party Organizations
(Brief because the conference takes this up as a special point)

There are five plants in which there are two or more comrades working. But in only two of these is real coordinated fraction work possible. In both these places it is essential that we begin to have regular fraction meetings to discuss our problems and to arrive at clearly defined decisions. We have had fraction meetings in both places but not with proper regularity.

The big task of the branch has always been to get rooted in the shops. Layoffs, job changes, and department transfers have hindered our work. For many months in the past period the branch had public meetings and social affairs, including one attended by 100 people, which were noted by a total absence of shop contacts. In the last month or two, there has been an encouraging improvement. One new member was recruited from one of our shops. But the job that must be done is only begun.

Veterans work:

We have 8 veterans. Seven are active in shop veterans work and the eighth in a college AVC chapter. There will be a special veterans meeting held with Comrade Gould and the matter will be reported at a future branch meeting.

Women:

It has become almost impossible at the present time for our women to get into CIO shops and it is difficult to predict when they might be able to do so. The following proposals:

- (1) All women who work at white collar jobs join a union in their field, preferably the Office Workers Union.
- (2) Wherever possible we send women who cannot get into shops into mass organizations or similar groups: tenants groups, discussion groups, union classes, forums at Negro YMCA.
- (3) Explore the possibilities of breaking into some other field (example: restaurant union).

Emphasis in our future work along these lines:

- (1) A well-rounded educational program.
- (2) Alert to all possibilities of participating in campaigns, particularly one on rents. To get into mass organizations of all kinds, into discussion groups, etc.
- (3) Continued emphasis in shop work on gaining recruits and

contacts to the party, on gaining a strata of industrial workers who read our press, attend our meetings.

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Report by J. Wilson

(Adopted by the Detroit Branch Conference with but one dissenting vote.)

In order to have a sound basis for evaluating our shop work notably at X, it is well to remind ourselves what our problems and our perspectives were last summer. Such a retrospective analysis should help place things in their proper proportion.

The problem many comrades felt most acutely last summer was our relative isolation from and in the labor movement, due to the unavoidable dislocations flowing from the end of the war, and due to the inevitable preoccupation with the pre-convention discussion. A third major contributor to this isolation was the collapse of activities with Negro workers, a problem dealt with in the report on branch activities.

We set, therefore, as our major task the breaking from this isolation. In the trade union report I made in the post-convention discussion, the following measures were outlined to accomplish this aim: (1) We must root ourselves in the UAW-CIO shops; (2) We must concentrate our scattered forces insofar as possible and concentrate our activities to more fruitful advantage; (3) We must become the active left-wing of the Reuther caucus. In the Reuther caucus or caucuses in local unions, we would do this by our persistent hammering home on the GM program plus the Labor Party. Even though, for example, at X the entire fraction had not passed its probation period in the plant, this was necessary.

Carrying out these measures was indispensable to obtaining contacts, building an influence and periphery, developing leadership in the shop and local union, and thus attracting the militants around and to us.

What success and failure did we have in achieving this goal? Again, the work at X can best be understood by taking it as part of the picture of our activities in the shop as a whole. At that time our big concentration was at Y where we had four of our most qualified people in a small shop. We lost two of that fraction because one returned to his old job in another plant, and another was discharged. A recent recruit has added to that fraction. The only other fraction, X, lost three people, two of them going to New York and one returning to his old job which we wanted to make another concentration point because we had an experienced and well-known militant already in that shop. Two inexperienced and new comrades from New York came to X and the fraction had 5 members again. Our other comrades worked isolated as individuals in various shops. We recruited two workers from Y, as a result of long previous association and activity. Our Z "fraction" assumed possibilities, but collapsed when the leading comrade got himself fired through his carelessness. Another blow we suffered was the lay-off of all women comrades, and their inability to obtain jobs in the auto shops.

The vagaries of employment in the auto industry reached such a high point that most of our comrades either received permanent or temporary lay-offs. Our X fraction, for example, was hanging on for grim life last fall, two of us having been given permanent lay-offs, and another comrade retaining a job by going on second shift. At present, two of the comrades at X are still working in their old departments, one for about 7 months, one for a year. Two of us are in new departments in a different plant, and the remaining comrade is now back in his old department after a three month absence.

Thus, an objective factor - the economic chaos in auto - reflected in the lay-offs and shifts of our people, retarded our efforts to root ourselves in UAW-CIO shops. Party work in the shops continued in a diffuse, sporadic and individualistic manner. This major obstacle was partly overcome at X by other tactics we used to root ourselves in the local union, mainly its veterans work, but more on this point later.

Inevitable, therefore, was a certain amount of looseness in coordinating shop and union work with branch activity. Part of this failure was the responsibility of the entire executive committee, because the problem was not fully appreciated or understood. The branch proceeded far too much in its activity, and more exactly, in its judgment of shop work, especially at X, AS IF we had already accomplished our last summer's perspective.

In reality, only now are we in the position, generally, and at X which many people assumed mistakenly that we were at a few months ago.

Even now, it is necessary to issue a word of caution. Half the branch is still out of industry with little prospects that those comrades available for industrialization can get jobs. Outside of X, and to a smaller extent Y, systematic fraction work is not possible. Our people at FH and F6, and elsewhere still must work as isolated individuals. Here it is required to once again reaffirm a concept of shop work. It is far better to have ten comrades scattered in the auto shops in Detroit, than none at all in the shops. But the qualitative value of concentration of these ten comrades in two fractions is of infinitely superior weight, and this concept must be our guiding post for the future. Concentration of forces brings great advantages which we badly need.

In the context of the scattered character of our industrialization of the comrades, the fact that we do have one fraction of 5 at X, gives it greater weight, but not of the decisive character which has led to the false estimate that "everything depends on X. We are lost if it fails." This attitude has contributed to an unhealthy sensitivity about, and in the X fraction. As a laboratory for testing systematic fraction work, X today is extremely important. It does carry great weight and responsibility. But, normal healthy relations between the fraction and the branch depends on eliminating this "sensitivity," thus providing for coordination of branch and shop activity in a manner calculated to bring the most fruitful results.

About 3 months ago, a rounded out X fraction report was adopted in the fraction, following a lengthy discussion. (Since then, one comrade more or less has disassociated himself from it.) What was

the essence of this report. In terms of perspective it was exactly what I had outlined in the trade union report, and which had been accepted and unanimously by the branch. We lost no time in the shop in becoming known as ardent advocates of the GM program plus the Labor Party. We participated immediately in shop grievance struggles, including brief walkouts. Inevitably we were invited to attend the Reuther caucus there. We also joined and soon assumed leadership in the veterans committee. We did this, incidentally, long after prominent union veterans already in that work insisted we do so. We resisted a "hasty advance." We maneuvered our way in to being sent to summer school (4 of us) at the suggestion of the branch because previous attendance there had brought fruitful contacts. (One of our best militants were recruited in Detroit previously through contact at the summer camp.) At X our best contact was a shop steward I met there. (Since another article I sent to the PARTY BUILDER on vets work covers that field, I skip a report on that here.)

In shop and union work we said the following: The period of being known mainly as consistent supporters of the GM program and the Labor Party was to end, and the next stage of advancement was required. It was necessary to become more closely identified as "Labor Action men," as "WP sympathizers." (This stage roughly coincided with the conclusion of the "probationary period" in the shop.) How was this advancement to be made? Two methods were outlined. Potential contacts, and contacts would be given party literature, namely LABOR ACTION. For this, we assigned one comrade to make it his major concentration. This was done under our concept of the necessity and value of a division of labor in fraction work. In retrospect, it is my view that the failure of some comrades to understand the need for a division of labor in fraction work, which provoked misunderstanding about the X fraction. Some comrades thought, and perhaps still think, that whether you have one or five or ten people in a shop, they all do essentially the same work. This is wrong, for it fails to take advantage of the qualitative difference between organized fraction work and the activity of a sole individual in a plant.

Let me give some examples to illustrate this point. An isolated individual concentrates mainly on a department contact, in getting subs, etc. When you have a fraction, the Workers Party must assume a greater responsibility, because the working class needs and demands it. It would be irresponsible for the WP, with qualified comrades in X, not to participate in veterans work. No one can demand, for example, that the WP try to lead the workers in X for the WP lacks the forces, the influence, the experience and the "seniority" to do so. But a minimum responsibility is required. UAW-CIO policy must be considered, for example, by the X fraction. It must, in its own small, feeble way, fight against "company security" in the union contract. In a word, it must participate in the struggles of the workers in the shop. This is not "union work." This is party work, carrying out the party program into the living class struggle.

In the context of the concrete situation at X, these general observations on party work, fraction work, in the union assume a decisive character. Besides, they illustrate exactly how the fraction comrades can become known as "WP sympathizers," under circumstances most favorable for the party! In the union elections coming up in this key local union, our job would be to advance the party program,

to rally forces around it within the general frame-work of the Reuther caucus, as party policy demands, and then, to take advantage of the inevitable attack of our Stalinist opponents. Adoption of the essentials of our program by militants would bring the charge that this was a "Trotskyist program." It was "Labor Action stuff." If in the course of the pre-election period we had proven ourselves to the militants, if our spade work gave us a sizable "credit," then we would be in a strategic position to explain "Trotskyism," in terms of the actual experiences and ideas the workers had in which we had jointly participated.

In view of the bitter experiences the auto workers have had with "factionalism," for ten years, especially in Detroit, and in a prominent Local Union like X, it would be fatal to pursue any course of action which would provide the Stalinists with a "kernel of truth," in their vicious attacks against us. "Those guys are just here to spread factionalism. They are just using the local union to gain power. They are just people with a special axe to grind." Acceptance of these demagogic and false ideas would create a wall of suspicion between us and the very militants we want to convince.

Such a campaign is being conducted against us. But it hasn't taken hold because we functioned in a responsible manner, because no one can prove by a single illustration that anything we did or do is "factional" in the sense the workers say when they refer to the Stalinists. In our prognosis of three months ago, we hoped with luck to be able to participate in a rank and file caucus of a loose "Reuther" type. We got a lucky break in this respect. Recently the shop committee and a big section of the chief stewards formed a nebulous caucus, united mainly on opposition to the Stalinist bloc now in power in the local union. This shop caucus consisted really of a bloc of Thomas and Reuther supporters. We joined it, and wrote the program for it. The seven point program includes (1) higher wages without price increases, (2) escalator clause, (3) anti-discrimination, (4) turn PAC into independent political action, the foregoing being obviously a compromise after we pressed for direct commitment to Labor Party. Participation in this caucus follows from our policy both in auto and in general on the matter of fighting against Stalinis. Against our caucus is arrayed a combination of Stalinists, reactionaries (who also exist in our camp) three red-baiters - the most dangerous red-baiter is a power in the CP caucus - and Jim Crow elements, who also exist in our caucus.

Every effort of the Stalinist bloc to break up the caucus in which we participate has failed. By hammering on program, we have tended to make a fusion of the Thomas and Reuther forces, into the framework of the Reuther caucus. Our responsible attitude and role in sealing this fusion, our forcing programmatic statements on the part of the candidates along our direction has had its effect. The demagogy of our opponents has not caught fire. We have not been acting as people "sent into the local with an axe to grind," as our enemies claim.

Thus the attack on "Labor Action guys," "Trotskyists," etc. take place in a particular way. We can and do reply in terms of the militants' own experience. We have a common ground for discussion. Curiosity about LABOR ACTION can be easily satisfied. Copies are available. A few contacts will be sold tickets to the Shachtman

meeting.

Our fraction has arrived at the stage we outlined three months ago. The main job ahead is to capitalize on our work, while at the same time continuing it. But we do not want to give the least impression of false optimism, or the so-called rosy picture. Our best contact, for example, wilted a little under the recent barrage of the enemy.

We must be isolated in the local and shop if the Stalinists can possibly accomplish it. For this happens to be a key local in the UAW-CIO. The bitter factional struggle in the union reaches fever pitch in this local. In this situation our Achilles heel remains our newness.... and how that is used in the shop against us. What saves us is our "credit," plus the fact that the Reuther caucus leaders consider us valuable allies. "The Reuther caucus consists of Socialists, Trotskyists and ACTU," is the way the matter is put by them.

Only participation in the struggle will decide if we gain in terms of winning party sympathizers and members, or if we become isolated to such an extent that militants shy away from us. We repeat: In the context of this situation - and this is true generally in every union and shop - it is an absolute necessity to build up a "credit" as union militants. Our position today proves the value of the credit we build. Criticism of our course of action flows primarily from a failure to understand this vital point, and to understand that one does not build up credit overnight in a powerful and experienced union movement like the UAW-CIO. The whole fraction is still less than a year old!

Now, let us turn to the criticisms voiced at various times against the functioning of the X fraction, and its individual members.

There is first the personal criticisms: this or that comrade did not do this or that well! A should have done better on that task. B was slow in doing this. Let us not get detracted from the main question: Was the general perspective of the fraction and its tactic to achieve that perspective correct. The best way to do this is to accept the personal criticisms. We made mistakes, we shall, being of common clay, make more of them, some not so serious, some serious. It cannot be otherwise. But unless the personal criticisms can be proven to have affected decisively the work of the fraction, they should take second place in our discussion.

Let us turn, rather, to the two political criticisms made:

(1) The fraction spends too much time maneuvering. This was raised in the executive committee as a major criticism. We asked them, and repeat now: Give us examples. Name one instance. It cannot be done because we did not maneuver. Yes, last summer we did maneuver to get to summer school. But everyone agreed that was correct and necessary. But since then? Only in the past three weeks have we "maneuvered" in the pre-election caucuses. Here, however, the executive committee unanimously agrees our course is correct.

Now that we are maneuvering, no one questions seriously our course. But when we were not maneuvering, the assertion is made that we "maneuvered too much." It just can't stand up.

We have been maneuvering in the past two weeks with top Reuther leaders to assure us a delegate to the veterans conference, in view of the bureaucratic method adopted to chose delegates. Again, no one on the executive committee questions the value of this maneuver, if it obtains us a spokesman at the vets conference.

More accurately, it can be said that perhaps we took too long to "fish our way around the local," to reconnoiter, to sound out all leading committeemen, stewards, prominent militants, etc. on their political views. We do not think so. We are functioning in one of the most political locals in the UAW-CIO. We had to learn the score in order to know best how to proceed.

The second criticism is that the tempo of the development of our work at X was too slow, in the narrow party sense. The fraction had a conservative approach. It is true, as I have said many times, that we were using a "conservative approach," at X. That does not settle the question. It just poses it. The question remains, was it correct to be "conservative" in the context of the concrete situation, in relation to our new forces, in relation to our "vulnerability," because of the known "radical past" of two leading comrades, in view of the sharp factional situation in the local union. The fraction explained these problems three months ago to the executive committee. Everyone, including the critics of the fraction, are in the main satisfied with the position, the perspective and the work of the fraction NOW.

The fraction asks this question, if we accomplished what we set out to accomplish, to get ourselves in our position of influence, contacts, roots, etc.-we have, and we did it in the time we said it would take - how could our pace have been too slow? If you reach a point at the time you estimate it will take to get there, and if everyone is satisfied with you reaching that point at that time, then certainly the "marching gait" was correct. "The conservative gait" was not conservative, it was just about right. Impatience is not an answer. Study our whole problem and we think you will agree.

ADDENDA

In view of the fact that some question was raised of the activity of the X fraction in the State FEPC campaign, we want to report that every fraction member obtained signatures for the petitions in the shop and union, in substantial numbers. - But more important, the Fraction not only got the whole caucus to pledge itself in this fight, but adopted a genuine plank against discrimination as part of its election program; the point being that a "real FEPC" fight means above all a persistent fight in the shop against discrimination of all forms, and this the fraction has done so well that even the Stalinists admit grudgingly that we are the best fighters against Jim Crow.

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