
New Activity Under New Form

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Much has been written about the new forms under which our party will function after the reorganization, and the general acquiescence and agreement upon these new forms has made the task of reorganization much easier than was expected. Comrades from whom ideological if not organizational opposition might have been looked for have taken in the main a thoroughly Bolshevik attitude, few and far between, and isolated almost entirely in the German and Finnish federations, are the voices that raise themselves against this far-reaching change in our basic organizational form.

But there is more than a change of form involved in our party reorganization. Form is of basic importance, but only as a means toward an end. This is no derogation, that the means be correct and adequate is the first requirement toward ever reaching the goal. But in providing the means we must not lose sight for a moment of the immediate end, in this case an energetic unending campaign of Bolshevik mass *activity* in which our party shall use the full ability and energy of every member in the penetration of the masses, and their mobilization for struggle under our leadership.



It is clear that the old territorial form of organization is the heritage of the social democracy, that its political basis is one of exclusive reliance upon the bourgeois democratic processes as the limit of working class activity. But we must also consider the direct result of this form of organization in the stultifying of the everyday activity of any working masses so organized — the tendency toward ingrown

sectarianism, to concentration upon the most petty details of club activity as a substitute for revolutionary action among the masses.

The general agreement upon the need to change to the new forms should be utilized to lay out immediately some of the new tasks, new functions, and new methods of the new basic organizational units. Unless this is done there is grave danger, especially among the more institutionalized elements of our party, that an attempt will be made to continue the sterile clubroom gymnastics that now take up so much of our time. Under Menshevik control the Soviets and the Duma remained dual debating societies while the tsarist state administrators, reinforced by their democratic prototypes, continued "business as usual." Such is not to be the role of the nucleus; we are changing our basic unit in order to effect a change in our work, our methods, and our achievements. There will be, there must be, new activity under the new form, and we cannot allow it to develop entirely instinctively and unaided. Our organization corps must be ever alert to guide our firing line in the shop, mine, and mill in its everyday work in the everyday struggle. Particularly at the beginning must every experience be analyzed and its fruits made available to all, especially must the first, faltering steps be set in the right direction so that our members will develop that confidence and enthusiasm for the new forms that are essential to our party's growth in numbers and influence.



Time and space prevent any detailed consideration of new methods of work at this time, no doubt many articles will follow on the subject. Almost the only concrete instruction on work heretofore issued to our nuclei has been that regarding factory or shop newspapers — "wall papers" or bulletins. An excellent measure, but much less of an activity in itself than an evidence of other activity on the part of the nucleus and its member. The participation in every current of labor unrest, the discovery of grievances and exploitation of them to sharpen the mettle of the workers and increase Communist prestige, the infiltration of every social grouping of the workers of the shop, not only the union but the social and benevolent clubs and in their absence even the ephemeral social, athletic and other "ganging" that expresses the workers' gregarious instinct despite the capitalists' disorganizing efforts. Methods of getting out and distributing legal and

illegal shop bulletins must be taught. There is great pessimism in many comrades' minds now on "getting caught." To brand this as cowardice is absolutely wrong, we don't want our member to get caught, we don't want them fired, because outside the shop they are as helpless as outside the union; therefore we must tell them in detail not only what to do but how to do it, and we must learn from their actual experiences the best ways and means for carrying on this work.



This pessimism expresses itself also in the form of the assumption that we must lose the major part of our membership in the process of reorganization. That we will lose some is undeniable, and also unavoidable. Elements, weak, unassimilated and unassimilable, will drop out. But by far the largest part of our proletarian elements will not only remain but will be heartened by the change to increase their strength. It would be a mistake to judge the problem of reorganization solely from the viewpoint of Manhattan or Chicago. The metropolis is important, in times of stress its control is vital, but American industry is not confined there, nor is the American proletariat. And precisely in the "sticks" where some profess the greatest pessimism on reorganization, the change will come far less as a matter of form, and far more as the matter of activity.

Let us consider District 9 [Minneapolis], the stronghold of the very Finnish comrades among whom the most skepticism is expressed regarding reorganization. In that district of the 60-odd towns in which we have any organization, in over 50 there are only a single branch (Finnish or South Slavic [Yugoslav]) — hence the immediate problem of reorganizing into an international branch does not exist. Furthermore, the overwhelming mass of these towns contain each but a single industry, chiefly mining or farming, and often but a single establishment, so that the problem of the shop nucleus reorganization is less one of new forms than of new activity. A capable reorganizer in this district should lose but few and materially increase the activity and improve the political consciousness of this membership.

At the last convention [4th: Chicago — Aug. 21-30, 1925] this discussion of "backward elements" was made a rather bitter jest, but that such elements do exist, and often through little fault of their own, is undeniable. It was brought out in the District 9 convention that most of the small branches of the iron Range had not seen an

English-speaking organizer, teacher, or lecturer for a year, two years, or even three years. And the plea of the Finnish comrades that the district office, or at least an effective sub-district office be moved to the center of 90% of the district membership, rather than to that of the 10% in the metropolis 200 miles away, fell on death ears. If the reorganization brings into this district able, tactful, conscientious re-organizers it will do more to build our party in this vital section than years of vegetation under the old system. The reorganization will broaden these local units beyond language lines, [something] the old form and its resultant activity would never have done. In a town with even a good Finnish local a fine lone rebel Slav or German or American remains unorganized — the new form will end this. Furthermore attention will finally be given to these units in farming sections and thus begin for the first time Communist agricultural activity by American Communist farmers.

A few months more will see our party re-formed. For these new forms, the fruit of worldwide revolutionary experience, we must immediately map out the new activities that will definitely line up our party with the other powerful Communist sections to whom this work is bread and blood of very existence. No pessimism on loss of old members should be tolerated. Whom will we lose? Those elements that would be Communists anywhere save at the place of industry? They are no material for our revolution, which must come from the workshop. Those who “belong” for reasons of social or lingual gregariousness? Our “worker clubs” will give this, perhaps better than now, under communist leadership, and no longer possible for non-Communists’ decision of our party affairs. Party membership is no cheap thing, it is the accolade of the revolutionist. Ours shall be reorganized in new form, it shall fight with new weapons and go forward to new achievements.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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