

# Work in the Trade Unions

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(This article is a continuation of the articles on "Achievements and Immediate Tasks in Organisation" and "Achievements and Tasks in Factory and Trade Union Work" in our issues of May 30th and June 15th.)

**T**HE Communist fractions in the trade unions are not only not receiving proper Party guidance, their methods of work are wrong. The Second International Organisational Conference analysed in detail the question of creating Communist fractions in the trade unions and of their methods of work. It analysed in detail the question of "trade union days" which were practised primarily in Germany. In Germany, for instance, the factory groups met once or twice a month, but the Communist fractions in the trade unions all met on a certain day in every week. (At present we have "trade union days" in Berlin once in three or four weeks, with the same agenda for all trade union fractions.) What did the Communist fractions do on their "trade union days"? They discussed the questions of "Ford or Marx," economic democracy, the general tariff policy, and various other "big" questions. Of course, our comrades must know these questions. But is it proper that Communist textile workers, miners, carpenters, in short, the Communists employed in various trades should discuss these questions separately? These questions concern *all* workers alike. Why can they not be discussed in the factory groups at the general Party meetings or by the Party committees?

## Social-Democratic Workers

The Social-Democratic workers come to the factories and speak about economic democracy and about the general tariff policy of the A.D.G.B., and all members of the Communist Party must therefore know how to answer these questions. But regular "trade union days," when Party members get together in their Communist fractions, are injurious. They distract the factory groups, the Party aggregate meetings and the Party committees from the consideration of trade union questions, with the result that it is very often difficult to discern any difference between the Communists and reformists on trade union questions. Furthermore, they are a source of danger because the Communist fractions in the trade unions discuss at their periodical meetings big questions concerning the general policy of the trade unions, instead of getting together before the meetings, conferences and congresses of the trade unions and considering those questions which are on the agenda at such meetings and conferences, and defining Communist tactics for the said meetings and conferences. It is quite possible that this is the reason why the Communists do not attend trade union meetings and conferences regularly, as has been already indicated.

At the session of March 17th of the Presidium of the Ruhr district committee a comrade rightly remarked during the discussion on the causes of the poor participation of Communists in the work of the trade

unions: "The Communist fractions are still too much engaged in parliamentary work; their work has nothing to do with the practical side of trade unionism."

"Trade union days" must be discontinued, and in their place Communist fractions should meet on the eve of trade union meetings and conferences and discuss the questions which are on the agenda of those meetings and conferences, decide on the tactics of the fraction and what proposals to make and who should speak on behalf of the fraction. The fractions must also draw up their lists of candidates if elections are to take place. In short, the fractions must consider all questions connected with the trade union meetings and conferences.

## The German Communists

The German Communists have already adopted this method in some places, but not everywhere by a long way. So we must admit here that the German comrades have not yet discarded their "trade union days." As far as the other sections are concerned, they have so far done very little in adopting correct methods of work. If the Communist fractions discussed on the eve of the sessions of some of the executives of their trade unions the questions on their agenda, and decided their attitude to those questions, preparing their own resolutions, they could become a powerful factor. Even if their proposals were rejected the Communists would gain an opportunity to agitate for their proposals in the factories.

It is absolutely necessary to make radical changes in trade union methods of work, without which it will be very difficult to make any progress. The central and district Party committees must establish their policy for trade union work, analyse the big trade union questions, and wherever necessary raise some of those questions for discussion in the Party organisation. Communists who work in the trade unions must fulfil the decisions of the Party organs in the trade unions.

The question of leading the Communist fractions in the trade unions is still far from being regulated, in spite of the fact that the First and Second International Organisational Conferences discussed these questions and adopted definite decisions for the guidance of Communist fractions.

The bureaux of the Communist fractions in the trade unions are not formed from among those comrades who actually work in the trade unions. The Party committees place at the head of the Communist fractions good Communists, who, however, do not fully understand trade union work, hence our Communist fractions are occupied with abstract questions, as they have no concrete material by which to solve every-day trade union problems. This situation still exists.

Of course, there are cases when comrades working in the trade unions do much harm to the Party. Our German comrades have supplied us with such examples. Thus, some Party members, working in the trade unions, refused to introduce the Party proposals concerning the election of delegates to the Workers' Con-

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gress at the sessions of their respective trade union managing boards. But the German and Czech comrades report that if the comrades who actually work in the trade unions are at the head of the fractions and lead them, we get good results. Of course, we will still have many difficulties with comrades elected to trade union executives, since they work mostly on their own without getting sufficient guidance from the Party committees. Owing to this fact they deviate in their trade union work, and often do not properly understand the Party decisions on trade union questions. From this, however, it does not follow that they must be removed from the leadership of the fractions. They know exactly how trade union questions are solved, they know on the basis of what material they could easily make their proposals to the trade union managing boards, and how to supply the groups and individual Communists deputed to do trade union work with the necessary material for speeches, etc. The Party committees must therefore take all precautions to ensure that the comrades who work in the trade union executives should have closer connection with the Party. The Party committees must bring pressure to bear on each one individually, so that they carry out the Party policy and instructions. It is no use having comrades on the executives if they do not carry out the Party decisions.

If the Communist Parties remove all Communists from their trade union posts because they do not comprehend the Party trade union policy (although the Party committees have done very little to guide them), and establish fraction executives of people not really active in the trade unions, the work of the fractions will not improve and there will be no progress made in our trade union work. Only those who refuse to carry out our Party policy in the trade unions after the Party committees have made every effort to make them do so should be removed from trade union posts.

**Better Work**

In those trade union organisations where Communists have a majority, they must prove that they *work better* than the reformist trade unions. The trade union organisations under the Communist leadership must work better and give more concrete material for the struggle against the reformists. This is absolutely essential, but so far this is not yet the case in Germany. I should like to quote from a report of the Trade Union Department of the C.C., C.P. of Germany:

“Only in ten instances were we able to organise unemployed demonstrations jointly with the local trade unions. This is a very serious state of affairs considering that 70 local trade unions are headed by Communists.”

This is how the Communist Party of Germany conducts an extensive campaign in favour of the unemployed. It is a fact that only ten trade union councils of those having Communist majorities participated in the demonstrations. The remaining sixty did not participate, and did not carry out the Party instructions.

The Railway Workers' Union in Gleiwitz elected a Social-Democratic president, although all other members of the board are Communists. In Dresden there were

seven Communists and five Social-Democrats elected in one factory committee. The Communists not only elected a Social-Democratic chairman of the factory committee, but of the four delegates elected to the committee of all Dresden enterprises, three were Social-Democrats and only one Communist. In Bauer the comrades of the trade union department of the Party committee report that a Social-Democrat was elected to the control council of the State mines, although the Communists have a majority in the Presidium of the joint committee of all State mines. I have heard of no instance in which the Social-Democrats would elect a Communist chairman or a member of the Presidium if they were in the majority. I purposely cited several examples so that the comrades may not think that they are merely chance cases. These phenomena, as well as the instances in which Party members refused to participate at the elections of officials in the trade unions and factory committees, are not exceptional cases. They prove that not all local organisations of the Communist Party in Germany understand how it is possible and necessary to utilise these basic positions for the extension of Party influence by means of energetic and skilful work.

**Bad Fraction Work**

Why do the fractions work badly? Trade union departments have been organised in all Communist Parties for the purpose of improving the leadership of the trade union fractions, but these departments try to perform the work which the fractions should do, instead of guiding, directing, controlling and instructing the fractions in their work. No matter how large the trade union department may be, it is unable to perform all the work directly. In many countries the industrial departments of the Central Committees are not even connected with the district trade union departments, and the latter have no contact with the local trade union departments. I have before me comrade Zwicker's instructors' report on his investigation of the town committees of the Ruhr. He investigated fifteen Communist trade union fractions in one town, and found that only three of them had close contact with the town trade union department. In all other instances there were either no connections whatever or those that existed were unsatisfactory. The trade union department of the Ruhr District Committee was not connected with all trade union departments of the town committees. Under such conditions the fractions received no instructions, and were left to their own fate. How can the trade union department of a town committee give material to the trade union fractions and establish a policy which the fractions must follow in their work, if it is badly connected with the district trade union department and receives no instructions from it?

The organisation department of the E.C.C.I. recently received a report from an instructor who visited the Ruhr district Party organisation in March, 1927. The instructor reports:

“Yesterday (20-3-27) a delegate conference of Ruhr miners was held in Bochum. Delegates were elected in 60 trade union branches by the committees of those branches. The election re-

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sults were as follows: Only about 10 Communists were elected out of a total of 500 delegates. It stands to reason that the conference attracted the attention of the whole 400,000 miners of the Ruhr district. However, the Ruhr district committee did not know how many or which Communists had been elected. It did not draft any directions for the Communist delegates. Moreover, some of the responsible members of the district committee did not know that such a conference was to take place. The conference discussed the acceptance or rejection of the wage scale proposed by the arbitration court. On learning about the opening of the conference the district committee decided to circulate 500 copies of the Party paper, specifying our demands concerning the questions involved. This was to be its entire activity but willy nilly we had to occupy ourselves with the conference."

A report from Upper Silesia says that the district committee learned about the elections in a big factory which employs 1,700 workers after the elections were over, in spite of the fact that the factory is only a few paces from the Party headquarters, and in spite of the fact that a member of the district committee and a member of the trade union department are working in that factory.

**Need for Improvement**

This state of affairs must be overcome. The bad work of the trade union departments is also one of the reasons why Communists work badly in the trade unions and have little influence in them. If the Communist Parties organise their work properly, the overwhelming majority of the Party members will do their work in the trade unions, and if the trade union departments of the E.C.'s support them in the work the Communists will be able to compete with the reformists, and the trade union membership will follow the Communists. But if the methods of trade union work are not changed workers will not follow the Communist Parties, and when it comes to elections they will vote for those who really work in the trade unions, *i.e.*, the reformists, as the workers do not see, or very rarely see, Communists' working in the trade unions. That is also why the workers follow the Social-Democrats in spite of the fact that the latter betray them every day.

In those countries where the class trade union movement is split up and there are red trade unions affiliated to the R.I.L.U. (France, Czecho-Slovakia, Holland), the Communists either do no work in the reformist trade unions whatever (France, Holland) or do so inadequately (Czecho-Slovakia). When the red trade unions were organised in France almost all Communists left the Amsterdam trade unions and joined the red unions. In Czecho-Slovakia, as I have already pointed out, 9,101, out of a total of 45,575, Party members belong to the Czech and German Amsterdam trade unions, which have a total membership of 574,006. The red trade unions, which embrace 201,035 members, have 35,653 Communists in their midst. Side by side with the Amsterdam and red trade unions there are in a number of

countries (Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Holland, Poland, Belgium, Italy) Catholic and Christian trade unions, organising hundreds of thousands of workers. The Communist Parties, however, do not work in those unions whatever.

In Germany the Catholic and Christian trade unions have about 700,000 members. In Belgium the Christian trade unions had in 1925, 150,000 members, and 17 branches of the Dutch Catholic trade unions had at the beginning of 1927, 90,530 members. The Christian and Christian Socialist, Czech and German trade unions of Czecho-Slovakia have 134,054 members; add to these the National Socialist trade unions, with a membership of 307,296, there are only 821 Communists in all these non-class trade unions in Czecho-Slovakia, while in the other countries there are not even that many. Besides, the Catholic and other Christian parties have their own trade unions and also their youth, women and peasant organisations. They have their own daily papers with a large circulation, and they receive a tremendous number of votes during elections. The Catholic "Centre Party" of Germany received at the last parliamentary elections in December, 1924, 4,118,000 votes, many of which were workers' votes.

**Countering the Right**

The influence which the Christian, National Socialist and Catholic Parties have on the working men and women can be destroyed, or at least reduced, if the Communists would join their trade unions and carry on proper work in them, because the leaders of the Catholic and similar trade unions do not defend the interests of the trade union membership. In some organisations of the Catholic Centre in Germany the workers organised a workers' opposition. In the report of the Ruhr district organisation on March 17th, 1927, which I have already quoted before, we read the following:

"The comrades admit that the reports of the delegates of the Catholic Centre who returned from the U.S.S.R. had great success among the workers of their organisations. It has now become possible for the Communists to attend the meetings of the Catholic Centre and to address them."

The Communist Parties of those countries where there are non-class trade unions must begin at once systematic work in those unions, side by side with the more intensive activities in the Amsterdam trade unions.

**Fascist Unions**

I think it opportune to say a few words about the Fascist trade unions in Italy. In Italy the broad masses of workers are forced to join the Fascist trade unions, as trade union dues to these organisations are obligatory and are deducted from the workers' pay against their will; furthermore, there is no work to be got if the workers do not belong to the Fascist trade unions. The Communist Party of Italy must therefore do all in its power to strengthen its positions in the Fascist trade union organisations. It is pointed out with full justice that the Fascist trade unions are not democratic organisations; their secretaries are not elected but appointed

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by the Fascist authorities, general trade union membership meetings are not held, etc., nevertheless, the Communist Party can and should work in these organisations. Communists can say to the workers: "You workers belong to the Fascist trade unions; they deduct trade union dues from your pay, but they never take you into account, they decide all trade union questions without you; the Fascists speak on your behalf, they lengthen your working day and cut your wages, although you have not authorised them to do so—demand, therefore, that your trade unions should be organised democratically, demand that trade union meetings should be held, adopt resolutions demanding that trade union secretaries be elected, etc." The Italian workers are accustomed to democratic forms of trade union organisation. Here are hidden the opportunities which the Communist Party can and must utilise. This is one of the means which gives the Communist Party the opportunity to undermine the Fascist trade unions.

**Dividing the Work**

The question of dividing the work among the Party members, and particularly among the active Party members in the sections of the Communist International, is of vital importance. From the material which the organisation department received from the sections it is clear that the Party members are over-burdened, and that, therefore, the work of the comrades in some of the mass organisations is conducted badly. Party members must belong to numerous organisations in order to carry out the Party policy in them, and in order to lead those organisations along class lines. We have figures concerning Party membership in the various proletarian organisations only from Czecho-Slovakia, which, however, are also incomplete. Of the 92,691 Party members about which the C.C. of the Communist Party of Czecho-Slovakia has any statistical data we have the following figures:

In the trade unions	...	...	...	...	45,575
„ I.R.A.	...	...	...	...	23,670
„ Co-operatives	...	...	...	...	27,320
Working men's sport organisations	...	...	...	...	16,160
Atheist organisations	...	...	...	...	12,002
Poor peasant organisations	...	...	...	...	1,886
War invalid organisations	...	...	...	...	2,382
Tenant leagues	...	...	...	...	2,294
Fire brigades	...	...	...	...	6,394
Others	...	...	...	...	2,050

**Overwork**

All these organisations have their meetings and sessions, and in so far as the same Party members belong to several of them, they are over-burdened with meetings. This is particularly the case with the more active members. In the printed report of the Berlin Brandenburg District Committee covering the period from July 1st to December 31st, 1926, we find the following figures concerning the meetings and sessions of the Communist trade union fractions:

Central "trade union days"	...	...	...	...	146
Fraction meetings	...	...	...	...	40
Fraction executives	...	...	...	...	185
Craft fractions	...	...	...	...	213
District fraction meetings	...	...	...	...	352
Fraction trade union sections	...	...	...	...	39
Trade union department of the district committee	...	...	...	...	6
Secretaries of fraction executives, together with heads of trade union departments of local committees	...	...	...	...	6
Heads of trade union departments of ward (section) committees	...	...	...	...	3
Communist members of local trade union managing boards	...	...	...	...	3
Fractions of local trade union councils	...	...	...	...	4
Communist trade union officials	...	...	...	...	1
State employees	...	...	...	...	2
Communist railway workers	...	...	...	...	1
Miners (42 Communists were present)	...	...	...	...	2

These figures refer to the meetings and sessions of the Communist fractions in the trade unions, and many of those who participated at these meetings had to also attend the trade union meetings. Many Party members belonging to other organisations had to attend the meetings of the fractions and the general membership meetings of those organisations as well. This takes up all the Party members' free time.

**Worst of All**

Worst of all is the fact that this is approved by and embodied in the plans of the local organisations. These organisations think that if a Party member has less than 30 meetings a month, according to the plan, then it is not a Bolshevik plan. As a matter of fact, when a worker joins the Party, he must attend some meeting or other every day. He comes home late every evening and is not free even on Sunday. The Communist Parties erect a Chinese wall between themselves and the workers, as the latter, even if they do sympathise with the Party, do not want to take such burdens on themselves.

What should the Communist Parties do in order to improve the situation? They must establish such a system that the comrades should have some free time at their disposal, so that they may be able to read, etc. It stands to reason that all members, without exception, must belong to the trade unions and actively participate in their work, but as far as such organisations, as, for instance, the Red ex-Soldiers' League, is concerned, the Party must so organise its activities that only a part of the membership should work in them. The others may carry on their work in the co-operatives, sport organisations, etc. The work must be so distributed

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that no individual comrade should have too many obligations. This is necessary in order to draw in greater numbers of Party members into the active work of the Party. The situation now is such that all Party members must belong to the mass organisations without their work being divided up and without receiving any instructions as to who should carry on continuous work in one organisation and who in the other. The result is that every comrade thinks that there are many Communists in every given organisation, and that there is no reason for him to attend meetings if they can do without him, and whenever the presence of the Party members at some organisation meeting is absolutely necessary we find that either no one or very few turn up, which prevents the adoption of necessary resolutions.

**What is to be Done?**

What, then, is to be done in order properly to organise Communist work in the trade unions?

In my opinion, the following measures must be put into effect:

1. All Communists must join the trade unions of their given trades and form fractions in them.

2. The Communist fractions must be under leadership of comrades who work in the trade union movement.

3. The Communist fractions in the trade unions must deal chiefly with those questions which concern their trade unions.

The meetings of the Communist fractions should, as a rule, be held before the meetings, conferences and congresses of their trade unions.

The local committees, district committees and central committees of the Communist Parties (through their trade union departments) decide on the policy which must be adopted by the Communist fractions at the meetings, sessions, conferences and congresses of trade unions; they must call together the Communist fraction executives and functionaries of the respective trade unions before the trade union congresses and conferences in order to discuss the most important questions and elaborate the necessary material on the basis of which the comrades should act at those sessions, conferences and congresses.

**Special Meetings**

4. Special meetings of the Communist trade union fractions called periodically and simultaneously (trade union days), with a uniform agenda to discuss questions of general interest to all trade unions and the entire Party, are inexpedient and injurious.

Such questions should be discussed at the Party organisations and committees (factory group meetings, local aggregate and district meetings, etc.), and only after these questions have been discussed by the central or district committees.

5. The local trade union organisations (trade union branches and Trades Councils) in which the Communists form the majority must become the basis for good trade union work in the given trade union throughout the district and the whole country. In order to be able to

perform the functions here enumerated it is necessary to establish good contact between the Communist fractions within each union.

The respective Party committees must devote serious attention and render the greatest possible support to the Communist fractions which have majorities in the trade union organs.

6. Firm contact must be established between the trade union department of the C.C. and the trade union departments of the district committees, and between the latter and the trade union departments of the town committees.

The trade union departments of the Party committees lead, control and direct the work of the fractions in the trade unions, without, however, themselves performing that work for them.

7. The factory groups must take every measure to win the trade union delegates in the enterprises regardless as to the tendency of the trade union (Amsterdam, Catholic, Christian, National Socialist, etc.) to which they belong. The Communists must actively perform the every-day detailed work of the trade union delegates in order to satisfy the demands of the workers; they must not restrict their activities to criticising the trade union bureaucracy.

**Persistent Work**

Only through sincere, persistent and skilful daily work can the Communist trade union delegates win the confidence of the workers in the factories. If we carry out correct trade union work in the factories the reformists will not be able to expel active Communists from the trade unions for their trade union work as they have done hitherto.

The groups, the Party committees and local committees must render energetic support to trade union Communist delegates.

8. The Communists must organise their fractions in the red trade unions not only in the managing boards and Presidiums, but in all branches of the organisation, just as in the other trade unions. Paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 above apply also to the red trade unions.

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9. In those countries where there are red trade unions (Czecho-Slovakia, France, Holland, etc.), and where Communist work in other trade union organisations (reformist, Christian, Catholic and National Socialists) is weak, it is necessary that the Party members should be shifted by the Party committees to the latter trade unions, even if they must withdraw them from the red trade unions.

10. The Communist Parties of the capitalist countries must recruit members not only for the red, but also for the reformist trade unions. The more members they have in the unions, the greater their influence in the respective unions.

11. The groups, locals, section and district committees must divide their work between the Party members in such a manner that some members should not be over-burdened while others are free altogether; the latter distribution of Party duties undoubtedly interferes with the proper organisation of Communist work in the mass organisations, including also the trade unions.

In taking the measures enumerated above, with the purpose of improving Communist work in the trade unions, the sections of the C.I. will be able to prevent the reformist trade union leaders from betraying the workers, including joint agreements with the employers, or during strikes, and in this manner they will free the working masses from the influence of the Social-Democratic, Catholic, Christian, National Socialist and Fascist parties.

The sections of the C.I. scored great successes in

1925 in transforming their organisations, which resembled Social-Democratic organisations, into capable fighting bodies. The first four months of 1927 have shown that the Communist Parties are proceeding along the same lines. If we remember that part of comrade Lenin's speech at the fourth Congress of the Comintern, in which he referred to the organisation resolution, written with his direct participation and adopted by the third Congress of the C.I.—comrade Lenin considered that resolution very important—it will become clear what achievements we already have in the sections of the C.I. in spite of the still prevailing shortcomings which I have pointed out in these articles. Comrade Lenin said that the foreign comrades must understand "what we wrote about the organisational structure of the Communist Parties and what the foreign comrades signed without reading and understanding. This must become their foremost task. This resolution must be carried into effect."

Comrade Lenin anticipated that this would not be an easy matter, and that successes in this sphere would not be attained all at once. He pointed this out in the same speech by saying: "This cannot be done overnight, that is impossible."

It cannot be maintained that all Communist Parties have already adopted Bolshevik methods of organisation, but beginning with the fifth Congress of the C.I. they have really been definitely engaged in bringing into effect those organisational principles about which Lenin spoke at the fourth congress.

We can now definitely say that the organisational principles of the Bolshevik Party, which was under Lenin's leadership, have been found absolutely applicable in all the Communist Parties in capitalist countries.

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