

July 23, 1943

TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE CLUB:

For your information and as part of the preparations for the coming Plenum, I am enclosing to you a copy of interesting excerpts from a letter just received from Lund:

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"In my mind the most important problem facing us now is the organizational question. I have given it much thought and am preparing a memorandum to the nc on two major and one minor aspects of it. (Again I have it in note form but no time to write it up). The coming get-together (by the way, when will it be?) must devote 50% of its time to organization, if it is the usual two-day affair. If the national question or inner nc problems eclipse it, it will be a stunning reminder that despite all we say we have not yet really grown out of our sectarian diapers.

"Does the office receive accurate reports on recruiting? Are people coming in? Where? From what source? Are we holding them? Could the nc get a report on this?

"What happened to the organization bulletin that was discussed at the conference? I believe a serious bulletin on the day to day organization problems of the people in the front line of the work would be a good antidote to the heavy emphasis on the national question and an immense aid to those doing the work. I know I would give my right arm for a report on the experiences in Los Angeles, etc., on bringing people in and keeping them. Proposal (or proposition): if I began with a report on local problems would the office promise to get it out as a bulletin with an invitation to other organizers to contribute? (I mean within a reasonable time like a week or two).

"I have come to the conclusion that no one in the leadership who is not periodically involved in some phase of "on-the-scene" work is competent to discuss the party's real organization problems. Just as the local person is apt to get a distorted view of things because his nose is constantly up against the problem and too close to recognize it in all its ramifications, so a leading person who only depends on reports and second hand impressions sees blurred visions instead of the sharply detailed outline of objects. I believe Dave is more aware of this than anyone else and his visits to workers homes and presence at gate distributions give him an understanding of problems that has a realism impossible to achieve in any other way. I feel my contributions at present are far more pertinent and important than any I could have made while on the pc and not directly involved in front line work. Even the local organizer of ny is removed from the real problems. I have yet to come from a distribution, a progressive union group discussion, a house-to-house canvass, a visit to a contact without dozens of ideas buzzing in my head as to our weaknesses and how we could remedy them.

"Among other ideas that has made a strong impression on me is the need of pamphlets, pamphlets, and more pamphlets. Not that the pc people don't completely agree and are ready to vote for it three times a day. But I am afraid it is like a general staff that agrees that a certain type of anti-tank gun is necessary but does little to rush it there until after it has been on the scene and had the enemy tanks come rolling over them personally.

"I have visited dozens of shipyard workers in their homes in the last weeks, both Negro and white. They have been young and old, of some political background and without. On the basis of their questions and discussions I have drawn up a list of simple agitation-pamphlets, each a special weapon designed to do a special job or of current importance because of the issue. But these must be rolled out 1, 2, 3, and not left to sort of slide along on their own inertia, as seems to be the case with my pamphlet (written in the end of March, re-written by May 1st after weeks of editorial reading, revised proofs returned by the third week in June and the pamphlet is not out yet and apparently yet weeks off since no notice has appeared in the paper. It should be heralded with advance publicity and ads, advance orders, a review by a well-known "by line" to la people, a campaign undertaken to sell so and so many by such and such a date, local quotas, printed blurb mailed to every subscriber, etc. That is the way to popularize and put over a pamphlet in a campaign.

"Of course, the length of my pamphlet makes it a somewhat different problem. But 16 page and 32 page pamphlets should be rolled out like hot cakes.

"Maybe I am asking the impossible. Maybe some technical obstacles confront us that are at present insoluble. But I refuse to believe that this is the whole answer. I still believe people in the office little recognize the urgency of these weapons.

"My suggested pamphlets are the following:

1. "How a Fascist Thinks"

"A different approach is necessary to fascism. We must analyse the mind of the average dupe of demagogy and prejudice. We have usually confined ourselves to pointing out the evils of fascism. But hardly 10% of the fascist followers will understand that the American brand follows the groove of Hitler.

2. "What Race Prejudice Costs Labor"

"A pamphlet on the Negro primarily, devoted to the white worker. Our average Negro literature is devoted to the Negro. The above is more demanded by the events and will, incidentally, win us greater support among Negro workers than attempts to describe to them how they are mistreated.

3. "What if Hitler Wins"

"The last barrier in winning someone over to our program is the

above question. We must answer it by an examination of the relationship of capitalism, war, fascism, democracy, and how we propose to defend ourselves against fascist aggression, either at home or invasion from abroad. How the fall of France could have been averted the Warsaw defense by the workers organizations, etc. We are not indifferent to fascist victories in the war, but only we have a program that can really fight fascism.

4. "The Communist Party -- Defenders of Capitalism"

"The average worker, despite everything else he sees or reads about the CP (CI dissolution, Hague, etc) still conceives of the CP as a radical anti-capitalist party. Their record of scabbing, speed-ups, company collaboration, the speeches of Browder and his book must be cited and analysed to reveal the real role of the cp.

5. "The Truth About Stalin's Russia -- As Told by Three of Its Friends"

"Russia is a terrific problem to the worker who turns to the left. He has the most confused notions. In the recent period, Russian stock has gone up tremendously. Everything we say is met by the question: 'But how can I believe you. So and so was there and writes so and so about it.' I propose we take Davies, Willkie, and Ingersoll as our evidence in a small pamphlet making our salient points and analyses about Russia. If other official Soviet sources or Stalinist stooges can be cited, all the better. The importance of such a pamphlet must not be underestimated.

6. "Thumbnail Biographies of the Men Who Lead the War -- Facts Every Worker Should Know.

"Brief biographical sketches of Hitler, Roosevelt, Mussolini, Emperor of Japan, Stalin, Chiang-kai-Shek, Churchill, Giraud, De Gaulle, Haakon, Wilhemina, King of Greece, Vargas, etc., etc. It would be advisable to limit it merely to strictest presentation of facts and quotations without political comment. At the end of it append a biography of the greatest figure to arise from World War I -- V.I. Lenin, what he did and why he was greatest figure (he stopped the war).

7. "Incentive Pay -- The New Piecework System"

"Every worker is interested because he is affected by it. A 16-page pamphlet on this question put out immediately would enjoy a tremendous sale and great popularity.

"Now there are doubtless many other titles that could be suggested. But I am not here suggesting titles, as it were, simply because they sound good. I am suggesting what I felt a painful need for in dozens of discussions. Maybe someone around the office will regard this as a curious assortment. I can't help it. This is what came up again and again in discussions with workers. With special types of workers? No, with a cross section of the types house to house and union work will bring to light.

"And, of course, my pamphlet. Its value weighed most conservatively, is going to prove a "big berth" to our front line men who have to destroy the enemy's ideas in the minds of workers. When can we have it? I have already missed dozens of opportunities where it would have exactly filled the bill.

"By the way, if each issue in the NI carried an article like the one on incentive pay, I guarantee that the old millstone around our necks -- NI distribution -- will be solved. I feel justified, for the first time, in going up to the new LA reader and selling him a copy of the magazine. I sold one last night to a worker who is confronted with an incentive proposal in his yard and was just looking around for something to explain it to him.

"I meant to write for weeks on a criticism of the issue of the paper calling for the repeal of the S-C bill. I think if you re-read the lead article on the bill you will find the following criticisms justified. First, there was no attempt to be exact as to the legal structure of the bill. That is, what it proposed for government owned plants, what it proposed for war plants with government contracts, the 30-day notice to strike clause and how it worked, etc. In other words, the reader wanted an explanation on a factual basis of the meaning of the different terms. I know, of course, what happened. Our editors depended on the daily press reports on the bill but never bothered to secure a copy of the final bill itself. This could be secured at the library if having the government printing office mail a copy would take too long. Or have some friend in Washington secure one and airmail it. People reading our paper want to know the exact details and must be given them in an important measure like this.

"Secondly, I think the story tended to exaggerate the reactionary powers of the bill. It could plausibly be stretched to cover some of the things said in the article but I very much doubt that it will in application. We should have pointed out that even the application of the vague and confusing provisions of the bill will depend on the degree of opposition labor rallies against it.

"Thirdly, I believe the tone and exaggerations had the effect of adding to the scare of the workers sought by the capitalist press. We should have had a more militant and hopeful note. "They can't throw the whole working class in jail, etc." "The S-C act doesn't solve the wage and price question which is the real agitator for strikes and therefore will not solve strikes, etc." The workers took it much more soberly than our article did (which was a little reminiscent of the 3rd period Daily Worker). Already one large yard is voting to give notice of 30 days to strike in order to break a deadlock in negotiations. The attitude of the men is "Let them put us in jail, if they think that is a way of building ships".

"What happened to our correspondence column? It should grow and not diminish. It is the first thing many people turn to. A solid half-page of letters would not be too much. Even more if we had them.

"I am against continued articles. But most of our long articles can be run in two issues as separate articles having a whole story to tell without making it necessary to read one to follow the other. Most of the long articles on Elk Hills, Ship profits, etc., can be treated this way. 700 to 800 words one week and the same amount again the next week. If some of the analysis or comment is repeated, fine and good; at least workers will find it inviting to read instead of forbidding length and density.

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[Ernest Lund]