

PARTY BUILDER

F O R M E M B E R S O N L Y

VOLUME II - NUMBER 5 December 3, 1947

ACTIVE WORKERS CONFERENCE SUPPLEMENT

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REPORTS ON BRANCHES FOR THE ACTIVE
WORKERS CONFERENCE - NOVEMBER 8-9
1947

* * * * *

REPORT ON DETROIT

By Herman Benson

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The continuing problem of the Detroit branch is the following: (1) The branch is excellently placed in the shops and in other types of mass activity. It can and does carry out its work effectively and effeciently as demonstrated in the recent election campaign, (2) but this activity has only to a tiny degree been reflected in the form of real contacts and sympathizers for the Party and not at all in the form of recruits. The last recruit to join the party did so in April of this year. Since that time we have not recruited a single member.

This has been a problem for some time, but in the past period the "normal" difficulty was intensified when the attention of the branch was inevitably turned inward by the developments in the unity negotiations and later by the Johnsonite split. Right after the split, our branch entered the election campaign, which, while it was of great value to the party in every respect, does not automatically lead to the personal and intimate type of contacting required for recruiting. The branch in the next months will have to try to capitalize on the successes of the election campaign.

Membership:

Membership as of December 27, 1946 31

Transferred out 3
Resigned 1
Dropped 3
Split 8*

(*this figure includes people who had been transferred out of our branch immediately before the split. But in actuality they split from our branch.) 15

Total continuous membership in this period 16

Recruits: 3**
(*This includes 1 person who was dropped and is so recorded above.)

Rejoin 1
Transfer in 1

5

Membership as of October 15, 1947..... 21

Net loss to the Party - 8

Shops and Unions: All but three of our comrades are members of unions, mostly the UAW. One woman became a member of a white collar union and soon was elected president of her local, a small local. (The three non-unionists include the full-time Party organizer.) All are active in their unions, hold positions of responsibility as stewards, officers, heads of committees or active members of committees. In the UAW we have been active in the factional fight carrying out our policy. We may not have any delegates to the UAW convention; if so, we will have missed out in three cases by small margins. We have four delegates on the local CIO Council and have participated in discussions on key issues, especially political action.

What was said in the opening paragraph of this report holds for our shop work. Only one of our comrades has succeeded in getting a small group of sympathizers for the Party in his shop. These are all Negroes. In another shop where the prospects for the Party looked promising, we ran into a bit of hard luck when the company moved production to another city and laid off most of the workers in the shop. Our comrade here who reached a good position in the local is now left in a tiny plant most of whose workers are older, and more conservative men.

Negro Work: In two shops we are trying to get the union to organize a fight against discrimination in restaurants in the neighborhood of the plants. This work is moving very slowly through no fault of ours. In one neighborhood which was a white neighborhood Negroes have begun to move in. One of our Negro comrades lives here and we have begun to discuss the possibilities of doing work on a community basis among the Negroes.

Youth: The one or two youth contacts which we have are in the local university. We have assigned one comrade to take a couple of courses there in order to get into the student activity.

Tenants: Two of our young women comrades have done an A-1 job in starting a tenants council, starting from nothing in an area where the Stalinists have been active. This became one of the few genuine tenants groups in the city, if not the only one. This juicy plum was too attractive to be overlooked by the union bureaucrats assigned to housing work by the UAW who had nothing else to concern themselves with in tenants work. The local CIO Council is controlled by the Adde-CP group and the head of CIO tenants work locally has been intervening in this tenants council with the object of pitting the "real" tenants against our comrades, with some success. In this miserable task, a Cannonite who is on the Executive Board of the CIO Council has been allied with the Addeite. We have decided to strengthen our work in the council by adding four people to tenants work.

LABOR ACTION: In the March sub drive, our branch won the banner award although we did not completely fulfill our quota. The best feature of this drive was the fact that we got a good proportion of the subs in the shops. Recently, the main use of LABOR ACTION has been for free distribution in our election campaign.

NEW INTERNATIONAL: This has been a neglected phase of our work. However, we have already sold about 70 copies of our 150 quota of the UAW issue of the NI.

Educational Work: No formal classes were successfully held in this whole period although two or three were attempted. The main educational work has been at branch meetings. Discussions here fell into three main categories (some overlapped): (1) Discussions on the UAW situation and its implications; (2) Discussions on unity and discussions (really attempted discussions) with the Johnsonites on various matters relating to the then-forthcoming split; (3) Discussions on the Active Workers Conference.

Election Campaign: This was our main activity for the past three months and is reported on separately.

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REPORT ON SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA BRANCH
December 1, 1946 to Sept. 1, 1947

By Larry O'Connor

- - -

I. Membership

In January of this year the branch had 21 active members. Of these, four were in one industry (auto), four scattered around in longshore, railroads, machinists and waitresses, nine were white collar workers, three students and one a housewife.

Between December 1946 and September 1, 1947, ten members were recruited to the branch and two moved here from Southern California. During the same period, six Johnsonites resigned from the Party, and one probationary member resigned for personal reasons. Of the Johnsonites, two had been recruited during the period in question, the remaining four being older members of the Party.

Of the ten people recruited during this period, two had been members of the Party at one time. They are distributed as follows: 2 industrial workers (Negroes); 5 white-collar and professional; 1 housewife, and two casual workers.

At present the branch is composed of 26 members, one of whom is on an extended sick leave. Of these, four are students, four housewives, six professional workers, five white collar, and seven industrial workers (one of these, the organizer, is working part time),

Of the Johnsonites, four were workers, one student and one casual. Of the four workers, two were and are real proletarians. The two others are no longer in industry.

(NOTE: Since September 1, the wife of one of the Johnsonites has asked to be dropped to the position of sympathizer. We also have had the application of a railroad worker coming up this week (9/30/47) -L. O'C.)

II. The Unity

In February and March the new situation on unity led to a certain re-orientation on the part of the branch, particularly in its educational work. The comrades were looking forward to a spurt in trade union and other mass work as the anticipated result of the collaboration which we thought would take place between the WP and SWP. Immediately a committee was elected to meet with the SWP and arrange the practical work of uniting the fractions of the two organizations and planning other joint activity.

At that time, our trade union fractions were not only weak in numbers, but most of our members had been in their plants and unions a relatively short time. The branch was beginning to do some propaganda work among Negroes, and had several good contacts among Negro workers. Otherwise, the external work of the organization was mainly of a most general kind such as distribution of leaflets, sale of the paper and contact work among subscribers to LABOR ACTION.

We soon found out that the SWP had no intention of trying to coordinate the work of the two organizations except in specific instances and on specific campaigns. That is, the SWP had no intention of meeting with us to discuss how and where we could extend the work of the two organizations on the basis of collaboration.

The branch continued to function more or less as before, but with one eye cocked at the SWP. Our educational work was revamped to lay main emphasis on the positions which distinguish the WP from the SWP, with a view to the maximum possible education of our members prior to the unity.

In reality, during the whole period of the unity "negotiations," the two organizations collaborated on one campaign, and even that only at the top. This was in our support of the Oakland Voters League candidates for the city council. The organizers of the SWP met with our committee, and we were able to arrive at a common program and attitude towards this electoral campaign, which was approved by our Political Committee. But once we had come to joint conclusions, the SWP did not want to have the memberships of the two organizations pooled in the practical work. They put out their leaflets and did their precinct work, and we did ours. This despite our suggestion that actually working as one organization on the matter would greatly increase our efficiency and would be good for the unity.

After the election, we again met and decided on a common policy to be followed in the unions in our campaign to transform the Oakland Voters League into a political organization based on and controlled by the trade unions. In this case, no joint action of the fractions was possible, as the one industry in which both parties had members was abandoned by the SWPers who simply quit their jobs. Further, after the election we invited the SWP to send a speaker to our forum evaluating the campaign. Their organizers came, but no one else. Needless to say, we were not invited to participate in any discussions which they may have held on this matter.

As it became increasingly evident that no collaboration was going to take place locally or nationally, the branch turned more and more to its own work. The discussions and educational debates on the positions of the WP turned increasingly into factional debates with the Johnson-

ites as they began their preparations for split. Though the membership was resigned to a lack of collaboration, the idea of the eventual unity was still in the backs of our minds. The final collapse of the unity with the split of the Johnsonites could not help, in the circumstances, having a depressing effect. Some comrades are of the opinion that in view of the total results of the unity campaign:

(1) Either unity was impossible from the beginning, and were at best barking up the wrong tree for a long time, (2) or the Party leadership never intended to go through with the unity and the whole thing was an attempt at a slick "maneuver" which has back-fired on us. Most of the comrades, however, seem to feel that although a healthy unity would have been the most desirable alternative, in the concrete circumstances it is up to us to continue to build the Workers Party as the rallying ground for revolutionists in America, without giving up the hope that at some future date, on the basis of changing events and a changed relationship of forces, our kind of unity can be brought about.

III. Campaigns

(a). Rent, housing, prices.

When the rent issue became acute with the lifting or modification of the OPA controls, the branch attempted to carry out national proposals on building tenants committees, etc. We found very quickly, however, that most of our members live in neighborhoods which are very difficult to organize for such purposes. In this area a large percentage of workers are home owners, and in the residential districts most of those who rent live in a room or apartment in the home of their landlord. The housing projects seem to be the only place where a small organization could seriously consider carrying on tenants work effectively.

Thus we were forced to concentrate our work on rent and housing in the unions and AVC. In the UAW, on our initiative, the local set up a rent committee and distributed cards throughout the membership on which those signing them pledge themselves not to pay any increase in rents and to turn to the union for help in the event of evictions or threatened evictions. Though many members signed the cards, no real enthusiasm could be worked up in the union over the matter.

The organizer appeared before a Joint Committee of the State Assembly and Senate which was investigating housing and attempted to present the WP position (the brief was published in LABOR ACTION). The branch sent out a letter to all veterans and political organizations urging a conference to map out a militant program on rents. The Bay Area Council of AVC replied that they already have a council for such purposes, and one post of the VFW replied that they would be interested. Thus nothing much came of it.

In one housing project the SWP was able to initiate a tenants league. Though the WP has no members in this project, two sympathizers are now running the League due to the departure of the SWPers from the project.

On prices, again the branch was able to do little except general propaganda work. This was true up to last week. At that time a movement was started in a housing project in San Francisco to form a

"shoppers league." Over 150 families in the project met at a mass meeting last Saturday and pledged themselves not to buy any dairy products for a week as a demonstration. The story hit all the local papers. Our comrades are leading this movement, and there is every chance that this may lay the basis for the formation of an independent branch in San Francisco.

(b) Labor Party.

The comrades are acquainted, through our press, with the position of the Party here on the Oakland Voters League election. A group of candidates, sponsored and supported by both wings of the labor movement swept into the city council. This branch gave the candidates critical support. Though it was impossible for us to formally affiliate with the Oakland Voters League, our members did work as poll-watchers, clerical work in the League office, and some precinct work. About five or six members were involved, though none of them actually did enough work to attain a position of recognition among the campaign workers.

We issued a leaflet in our own name giving critical support, and held an election rally shortly before the election to which the SWP and the candidates were invited as speakers. All the candidates declined giving other commitments as their excuse.

Once the election was over, the important question was: What should be the organizational set-up of the Oakland Voters League? The SWP and we were able to get resolutions passed in various unions demanding that the OVL be set up on the basis of organizational representation. The resolutions of the SWP were endorsed by the CIO council. The WP organizer was sent as a delegate from his union to the Central Committee of the OVL.

However, it became apparent at once that despite the passage of resolutions, the Stalinists who are the dominant active force in the OVL had no intention of actually promoting a campaign in the unions for representation from the locals. The Central Committee is one of these affairs where any smart boy can attend the meetings and vote along with the rest. Despite our efforts and those of the SWP it seems probable that at this stage the OVL will either go out of existence, or will become the tool of the CP in collaboration with some top AFL bureaucrats (though this collaboration, very warm in the past period, is showing serious signs of strain.)

IV. Trade Union Work

As pointed out before, at the beginning of the period in question our fractions were not only weak in numbers (and still are), but were new in their industries and unions. The UAW fraction had, by March, five members. Three of them had just concluded their probationary period in the plant, and two were still on probation. Since then, two Johnsonites have left the party, one of them also the industry. One of our comrades has also left the industry.

In this area, the UAW is run by the Thomas-Ades faction. There has been no Reuther faction organized. In fact, the membership of the local is almost completely ignorant of what the Reuther faction is and stands for.

Our comrades have thus had a long, up-hill struggle in the union. The meetings are poorly attended, and despite active participation by our members on the floor on important issues, this kind of activity has not brought them many contacts. They have found that in this situation contacts have best been made by means of militancy on the job. One excellent contact who was politicalized failed to join the Party for purely personal reasons. Just in the past few weeks, for the first time, our comrades have been making progress among several men in a directly political sense.

We represent the only real opposition to the conservative-Stalinist coalition which leads the union. Representatives of the Reuther group (including Victor Reuther) have approached us for the formation of a caucus here. The policy which our comrades are following is to try to win support for a program which goes far beyond that of the Reuther caucus, but to make it known that they consider themselves a critical left wing of that caucus as opposed to the CP and Thomas forces.

In the longshore industry, our one comrade there only recently became a full book member. Up till that time he had to be exceedingly careful, as he has a long record on the Coast as a Trotskyist. Now he has been joined by another book member from the South, and we have recruited one Negro longshoreman. We also have as close political sympathizers several other Negro longshoremen. Our comrades are actively taking the floor on vital issues, are beginning to gain some prestige in the local, and are trying hard to aid our longshore contacts to also become fully active educated trade unionists as well as revolutionary socialists.

On the railroad, the one activist we had has had to devote almost all his attention to his duties as branch organizer. His sole work is to attend union meetings and try to inject political issues there. In this he has had some success in connection with a fight over endorsement of the California Labor School (a Stalinist outfit) and in relation to the Oakland Voters League. However, possibilities of recruitment stemming from this work are very slight.

Two of our office workers belong to an AFL union. One of them has been functioning as an employee of the union, and has been doing excellent work in organizing the unorganized. However, neither of them has been in a position to make political contacts in their union, though efforts have been made in that direction.

As is clear from the composition of the branch, we have not had too much success in the industrialization of our membership. This has not been due to inattention, but it just seems that none of the white-collar, professional or student members are willing or able to become industrialized. We feel that an undue emphasis on this will get us nowhere. Our job is to recruit workers. We have made considerable progress in bringing our non-industrial comrades in contact with workers, and they are rapidly developing educational techniques which should make them very valuable in recruiting workers who are contacted either in the unions or through our LABOR ACTION sales.

V. Veterans Work

At the beginning of this year the branch had ten people who were eligible for membership in AVC. The maximum members who have been active in AVC at one time or another has been eight. These had to be distributed among four chapters, due to the place of their residence, as follows: 1 - San Francisco; 3- Oakland; 2-Berkeley No. 1; 2-Berkeley No. 2. Since that time, the comrade in San Francisco has left with the Johnsonites and the two people in Berkeley No. 2 and one of those in Berkeley No. 1 have had to stop all AVC work in favor of work in their unions.

From the beginning the work in AVC was well organized under an able fraction chairman. A program of action was worked out applying the WP transitional program to the situation in the AVC, particularly advocating action on such things as housing, prices, the bonus, etc. We made it our business to distinguish ourselves from the Stalinists by the militancy of our concrete proposals, and from the liberals by our constant pro-labor orientation.

AVC in California is a Stalinist stronghold. In both Oakland and Berkeley No. 2 our comrades were able to neutralize the Stalinists organizationally and to commit these chapters more or less to our programs.

At the time of the California State Convention the fraction planned its work and got the full support of the branch. We had delegates from two chapters, and in addition our convention fraction included one close sympathizer in one chapter, a comrade from Los Angeles and one SWPer from Los Angeles. The branch organizer and rank and file AVC Party members went to San Jose to assist in the work. At the convention we saw as our function the putting forth of our bonus and labor orientation, and combatting the Stalinist drive for control under the slogan of "unity." The overwhelming numerical superiority of the Stalinists, plus the hopeless confusion and disorganization of the progressive forces at the convention led to our defeat. However, we put up such an effective fight that the Stalinists were forced to show the iron fist in the felt glove by steamrolling the convention to such an extent that our comrades were able to subsequently get the endorsement and support of their chapters for the role they played.

Since the convention, the AVC here has been in organizational crisis. It has not grown significantly, nor has it been able to play any significant role in the life of the veterans. Our comrades have been forced to the conclusion that if AVC is to represent an arena of mass work, it will be to a great extent up to them to build AVC into a mass organization by jimmy-higgins activity. Yet the demands of union and Party are such on their time that we have very few people indeed who can give much time to such work.

The chief deficiency of the work in AVC has been the failure of the comrades to make political contacts and recruits for the Party. They have gained much experience in their chapters and at the convention in presenting the Party's positions in a mass organization, but this is not enough. Perhaps the chief factor contributing to the lack of political contact and recruitment has been the attitude on the part of our comrades that given the strength of the CP it was inadvisable for them to openly expose themselves as Trotskyists.

This same attitude has in the past inhibited our trade union members from openly approaching contacts with our literature and invitations to our meetings and forums. In the past few weeks our members in UAW have abandoned this attitude, and our members in AVC are becoming increasingly aware of the fact that if they are to recruit they must take the risk of exposure.

VI. Negro Work

This section of the report must suffer most from the need for brevity. The Negro work conducted by this branch has been the most fruitful field of activity as far as gaining a periphery and Party membership is concerned, and even more fruitful from the point of view of what the membership has learned in the process of the activity.

Despite the fact that for over a year the branch had concentrated such activities as sub campaigns in Negro neighborhoods, and for some time held semi-monthly forums in a Negro neighborhood in Berkeley, no really durable contacts were made. With the acquisition of a headquarters in downtown Oakland, near the chief Negro district in the area, the branch soon found that it had a large number of Negro contacts and a growing number of Negro sympathizers.

Gradually, out of some twenty or thirty Negroes who have been attending our socials, a group of six or seven began to show real interest in the Party. One longshoreman, particularly, began to attend our political activities, and to make efforts to bring his friends.

Finally, the branch was able to start a class in the home of a Negro contact which lasted for some eight or ten weeks, and was regularly attended by six Negro contacts, one white contact, with other people attending one or more sessions. Originally, we had planned to have this class for all contacts, Negro and white, but due to a lack of white worker contacts the class became mainly Negro in attendance.

The original plan was to have five sessions on such subjects as the class struggle, nature of capitalist exploitation (surplus value), the Negro question, the trade unions, the role of the Party. We proposed to have different comrades teach each session, with a 15-20 minute presentation and the rest of the time given to discussion.

In practice we found that some subjects could not be dealt with even in rudimentary form in one session, and that other matters of great importance had been left out, such as the role of reformism and the CP. Further, that despite the advantage of training comrades, the class suffered from the fact that there was not enough continuity in the teachers. People who had not been attending the class, who did not appreciate the development of the different individuals in it, and who had not been able to learn from the previous experience of the first sessions, could not give the class a continuity of development. We found that all the comrades suffer from a tendency to use the jargon of the movement, to treat problems too theoretically without knowing how to make them real and concrete to new people, to treat ideas which seem elementary to them in too cursory a fashion. We found that curiously enough each Party member there was able to detect these faults very clearly in his fellows, while falling prey to them himself.

As the class developed, the factional situation in the branch forced it off the pre-determined path. Gorman who had been commissioned to teach a session on the NAACP and CP, used the opportunity to present the Johnsonite line on the Negro question, and to propose to those present that they issue forth into the Negro community with a plan to unify all social and other Negro organizations into some sort of "community" organization. This was put forth in typically Johnsonite fashion, without any effort being made either to propose a program on the basis of which these diverse organizations were to be unified, or to prepare the contacts for the opposition they would meet and the problems they would confront in such a course of action.

To meet the situation with which the branch was confronted, we were compelled to draw up a program of action on housing, evictions, rent, prices, democratic rights in general and discrimination in the unions and elsewhere. It soon developed that the contacts who had been agitated by Gorman had as yet no conception of a real struggle, or rather of leading a real struggle, in these fields. They are indeed anxious to do something practical and effective about their problems, but expected the Party members to lead such struggles rather than expecting to lead them themselves as Party members with assistance and guidance from us.

Despite the disruption and confusion attendant on the factional struggle, two Negro workers have joined the Party, and another worker and his wife have signified their intention to join as soon as a personal problem has been settled. Two others who attended the class remain as close sympathizers, with the possibility that they too may join eventually. This despite the fact that after the split Gorman circulated among our contacts spreading the vilest slanders against the branch: the WP has a "two faced" policy towards Negroes; the WP believes Negroes are inferior; we are prejudiced, etc., etc. This situation got so bad that we were compelled to invite Gorman to a debate in the class. The solidity of our work, and the good relations developed with our contacts are attested to by the fact that not a single one of them was turned against the Party by Gorman's absolutely vicious, criminal and anti-socialist behavior.

The Negro Committee of the branch is now preparing another series of classes for contacts which, we believe, will be informed by all our experience in the first one. In the meantime, the educational director has conducted a series of classes on the lives of "Leaders of Revolt" (Toussaint Louverture, Marx, Frederick Douglas, Lenin and Trotsky), using the biographical technique to teach the ideas of the movement. These classes have had an excellent response from those attending, both members and sympathizers.

It should be clear from the above that the chief deficiency in our Negro work has been our inability to involve our contacts in anything but educational and propaganda work. We do not as yet have enough people who can enter the NAACP or other organizations with large numbers of Negroes in them and there work together with our new members and sympathizers. In due course this will have to be done. We feel that it will be possible to do this effectively only when we have a group of Negro members who understand our program and methods of operation. This day should not be too far away.

VII. Educational Work

This phase of the work can be divided into four headings.

(1) "Educationals at branch meetings; (2) internal party discussions of a higher political and theoretical nature; (3) contact and sympathizer classes; (4) the setting up of a temporary branch library.

(1) Branch educationals have been mainly devoted to current political problems. We have discussed the Oakland Voters League, State AVC and AFL conventions; Taft-Hartley bill; the revolt in Indonesia; etc. During the faction fight we had a series of debates and discussions on unity, the Negro question, the treatment by the Party of the miners' strike and the prospects of general strike, etc. In some instances newer and less experienced members led the discussion. Despite constant mutual admonitions, we must unfortunately record the fact that in most discussions participation has been limited to seven or eight comrades.

(2) As previously reported, no sooner were we informed of the perspective of unity with the SWP than a series of intense mid-week discussion groups was initiated. Almost every member of the branch participated in one or another of these groups. These the WP and SWP, the split of 1940, and a careful analysis of the political and programmatic points of difference between the two parties.

After a month, the groups extended their discussions to specific theoretical problems confronting the movement generally: developments in the Soviet Union; Stalinism and the international situation, etc. During the past two months these groups have gradually ceased meeting, except the one in San Francisco. They are now being re-formed for those comrades who wish to participate. It might be recorded that the Johnsonites generally showed no interest in attending these discussions, and some of our trade unionists were unable to attend due to a pressure of other work.

(3) Under the previous heading the work of the contact classes has been reported. Although the Negro Committee was directly in charge of the first contact class, its program was worked out in collaboration with the Educational Committee.

(4) For purposes of the educational work on the program of the Party, the books, bulletins, magazines and other material owned by Party members were collected and classified and made centrally available to all members. Unfortunately, this was used mainly by those preparing reports rather than by the membership as a whole. However, this has impressed upon the branch the need for and the great role which a regular branch library could play, both for members and contacts.

The Educational Committee proposes to continue the type of activity outlined above. More and more of the newer members will have to be involved both in the preparation of reports and lectures, and in the discussions. The political level of the branch has been appreciably raised by our educational work, as well as by the general work of the branch. With all its bad features, the faction fight with the Johnsonites also served as a badly needed political education for the membership.

VIII. Promotion and Sales of Literature

Throughout the period mentioned the branch has been taking a bundle order of 125 LABOR ACTIONS, and our bundle of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL has been raised to 70. LABOR ACTION has been sold regularly at the longshore meetings in San Francisco, and in Oakland one night a week at the AFL Labor Temple, twice a month at UAW meetings, weekly at meetings of Local 1304, United Steel Workers; twice a month at the United Railroad Workers, CIO, and for a period at meetings of a local of the Machinists.

However, the sales have not been too good. During the past month a careful check was made, and we found that we were selling on an average of only 50 papers per week. We have therefore been forced to reduce our bundle to 90 copies, to provide for special meetings, etc. On several occasions the branch ordered special bundles of 100 for mass meetings. On one occasion, with great effort, almost 200 papers were sold at such a meeting.

For one reason or another, only a small percentage of the membership is willing or able to sell papers at union meetings. These comrades have been going out week after week. Most of the union meetings are poorly attended, and we have not found that the consistent sale of the paper has a tendency to greatly build up the clientele. We hope that it will be possible to involve more members and sympathizers in this work, and to find other unions with larger meetings or a more responsive membership.

The sale of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL has been mainly from two or three newsstands and to sympathizers. The lateness of appearance of the magazine has not helped, though we understand the causes. Our bundle is sold out regularly, except for some returns from the stands.

The branch has not done well in selling subscriptions consistently. We have filled our quotas when there were sub drives, but otherwise the work has been very sporadic. Most of our present periphery subscribes to the paper, and further subscriptions will depend mainly on expanding the periphery or on special drives. Even before getting instructions from the National Office, the branch had decided to devote a Red Sunday to getting re-subscriptions.

Other literature is mainly sold to contacts who come to our office, or at socials and forums. This also has not been too well organized. The comrades are not yet sufficiently conscious of the importance of selling our pamphlets, though "Plenty for All" and "The Fight for Socialism" have had pretty steady sales.

The Literature Committee has concerned itself mainly with maintaining our sales at union meetings, and arranging for special sales at mass meetings. It has not been able to really get consistent and strong action with respect to getting the paper on newsstands, though some efforts along these lines have been made.

Further, we have not been too successful in getting our new contacts involved in selling subs and literature, either publicly or to friends. This is an important phase of contact work which the Literature Committee will have to take up.

IX. Public Meetings

During the period in which the branch had a headquarters in which it could hold meetings, we held two "forums" a month. Since we were forced to evacuate our headquarters, we have been holding one public meeting each month. The meetings are advertised by sending out leaflets to a mailing list of some 300 contacts and subscribers of LABOR ACTION, distributions at the meetings where we sell the paper, etc. We have found, however, that the only way to really get worthwhile contacts to attend is to bring them ourselves.

Our public meetings have been attended by from 25-45 people, usually around 30. I think we have averaged about 10 to 15 non-members. Efforts are made to hold the meetings on matters of national or international concern. They are usually followed by lively discussion, mainly emanating from members. We have held meetings on the elections, on Taft-Hartley, on "Bilboism," on Stalinism, etc. These meetings can become increasingly valuable if the comrades bring people from their unions and AVC to them.

Further, we have established the practice of throwing all branch meetings open to sympathizers personally invited by the members. In the past months we have had from two to five or six sympathizers present, most of whom have been recruited to the Party. The question of whom to invite and whom not to invite to branch meetings has caused some friction and dissatisfaction in the branch, as invitations were originally extended by branch vote. Our present practice is that except at special meetings, designated in advance, it is up to each member to use his or her discretion in inviting contacts.

X. Student and Youth Work

Despite the number of students in our branch, we have not done any organized student work up to the present. We are now in the process of correcting the situation with an effort to organize a group on the campus of the University of California. We propose to initiate this work by calling a public meeting near the campus to present the views of the WP. We have several contacts who will collaborate in calling this meeting, and are prepared to join the group which should come from it.

XI. Social Activities

As with our public meetings, so with our socials we have been greatly handicapped by the lack of an adequate headquarters. While we had our headquarters, our socials were particularly successful politically. In addition, we were just beginning to institute an "open house" every Saturday night. These were informal gatherings attended by five or ten people which gave an excellent opportunity for informal political discussion.

We have held socials each month, attended by from 35 to 60 people. These have been the usual dancing-drinking-conversation socials. The socials have been attended by from 20-30 young Negroes who have shown no interest in the organization politically, in addition to the five or ten who have shown such interest.

The branch has been making constant efforts to "politicalize"

the socials. At our May Day social we put on a skit, written and presented by some 10 members, portraying the History of May Day. The response was excellent. At our last social we gave a smaller less ambitious skit on the labor party which also went over. We have not been able to get our comrades to paint posters which would give the halls in which we meet a political atmosphere.

However, we have been driven out of one hall after another (not physically) because of the mixed character of our socials. On occasion we have had to hold house socials instead of socials in a hall, and to these we could invite only a selected list of guests as we don't dispose of large houses. The branch has usually been able to raise from \$20 to \$40 at a social, as well as to sell some literature and make some contacts who could be drawn into political work.

XII. Finances

Not much need be said on this score, except that we are still here and kicking. We operate on an estimated budget of about \$120 per month. Sixty-five of this goes for office and hall rents, the rest for phone bills, leaflets, organizer, etc. We have consistently paid our bills to the National Office. Every time we get a sympathizer who contributes a little money, we soon recruit him or her, and the funds then are split with the National Office. Generally, we have failed badly in tapping sympathizers for money, except through socials. There are a number of members who do not contribute what they should. All are pressed by the rising cost of living, but those who have the will find ways of fulfilling their obligations to the full. There are only three or four glaring delinquencies in the branch in this respect.

XIII. Executive Committee and Other Committees

The Executive Committee has been meeting regularly on a special night, and has, by and large, devoted its attention to all the major activities and problems of the organization. The participation of some of our most active trade unionists on the Executive has been rendered impossible due to their very activity, as well as to other personal problems. The comrades have gotten into the habit, by and large, of coming to the Executive with problems, proposals, etc. rather than throwing them into an unprepared branch meeting.

We have tried to organize the work of the branch on a committee basis. The Educational, Contact, Literature and Negro Committees are supposed to involve every member of the branch. These committees meet for 20 minutes at the beginning of every branch meeting. The branch then meets in plenary session. The organizer reports for the executive committee on political problems, special campaigns, etc. The chairman of each committee reports on the work of his or her committee.

The purpose of this plan of organization is to involve every single comrade in the planning of the activity of the branch, in at least one sphere. The work to be done is not limited to the members of the committee, as each committee is free to call on any member of the branch for activity in its particular field.

This system of organization obviously has its disadvantages as well as advantages. Much depends on the experience, enthusiasm and competence of the chairman of each committee. There has been a growing

tendency for the members to come late to meetings, as they feel that all they will miss is their committee meeting. Yet, by and large, the feeling of the branch seems to be that the committee system has served to involve more members in thinking about and planning branch activity than are involved in the usual organizer-executive-director plan of branch organization.

XIV. Present State of Branch Perspectives

By and large, the branch is in a healthy state with good prospects of growth. Our trade unionists are better established, have more contacts, are more experienced than ever before. Morale is not on a high level of exhalation, but it is fair. A spirit of firm determination is perhaps the best way to describe the attitude of most members.

This is not to say that the grind of activity and the slow progress of the branch are not having some effect. Personal frictions play their role, but are neither serious nor growing. We have recouped the numerical losses of the Johnsonite split, and there is a general feeling of relief at having it over with.

The comrades all feel keenly our need for an adequate headquarters, and only the impossibility, to date, of finding a place has kept us from getting it.

The unity business had not helped, but it has not done too much harm. Perhaps the greatest source of disquiet among the membership are the rumors of a spirit of lassitude if not demoralization in other parts of the Party, as well as the reports of general disintegration of our sister organizations abroad. We have no brilliant prospects of umping over our organizational problems, but recruitment continues and the prospects are all for more and better recruits (from the point of view of social composition) rather than for less. If the Party nationally can surmount its immediate financial and organizational difficulties, I feel confident that the San Francisco Bay Area Branch will be able to progress in the coming period towards building a revolutionary socialist organization which will really make its presence felt in the working class and the community generally.

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REPORT ON THE READING BRANCH

By Vincent Pettinato

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From the period starting December 1, 1946 to September 1, 1947, the Reading Branch has been in a state of intense crisis and experienced an almost complete disruption in any organized and systematic work. Indeed, from an organized branch of 6 members, it dropped down during this period, to a fraternal branch of 4 members, one of whom is in doubt. There were both objective and subjective reasons for this debacle. But the main reasons (90%) were purely subjective and could have been avoided, except for personal weakness. The objective conditions of our area of activity would have imposed a curtailment of

many fruitful activity and diminished our immediate prospects, but the debacle that actually occurred was unnecessary and completely unavoidable.

From the beginning, the whole existence, the ebb and flow, of the Reading Branch revolved around and influenced and was influenced by the situation in one specific Steel Local in Reading. I refer the comrades to two articles published in previous issues of the PARTY BUILDER for a more thorough analysis. As a result of the debacle in the Steel Strike of 1946; the constant attack by the International against the local; the inability of the local leadership, however, progressive, to make a graceful retreat and explain the issues to the rank and file clearly and offer perspective and cohesion to the local; the rank and file just was unable to resist the pressure and went into a period of apathy, disappointment and discouragement. It no longer responded to proposals for any kind of action. The ranks require a long rest before they will once more forge to the front as a militant and aggressive local. Some of the militants directly under our influence likewise became affected by the same mood. We were not able to develop any more of them at this particular time, as cadre elements. Four workers were recruited in the local; 2 are still active, stable members and one is in doubt.

Under the circumstances, what was required was to hold on in the Local and utilize our union positions (one committeeman and two delegates to the CIO Council - the committeeman is also a CIO delegate so that only two persons were involved) to exploit every situation developed for the advancement of our general position and to establish new and fresh connections. In addition, we were planning to expand our field so that we could establish connections outside the immediate local. At a branch conference held about January 5, 1947, we discussed this question thoroughly. At that meeting we had 6 members in attendance.

After assigning the routine work more evenly, we decided that the first step we would take to break out of our isolation in one local, would be an experiment along the lines of the housing campaign that the Party proposed nationally. (In retrospect, it would have been more fruitful to make a campaign of LABOR ACTION distribution etc. at another steel shop.) For our housing campaign we chose a district in which we had begun soliciting LABOR ACTION subs during the drive in the spring of 1946. We had not covered nearly 1/10th of the area. We planned on visiting a number of the LABOR ACTION subscribers and discussing the whole question with them and enlisting whatever aid they could give, even if it were only to attend the meeting on the housing question that was to culminate the whole campaign. By visiting these people we expected to get a clearer idea of the situation in the district which would enable us to plan our leaflet and the type of meeting and campaign more adequately. After visiting these subscribers we would then issue a leaflet calling for a meeting in the neighborhood on the housing situation. The whole nature of the project depended upon visiting LABOR ACTION subscribers and other friends we might have in the district. At this point two things overtook the branch and threw it into the worst kind of confusion and disruption. (1st) The gradually accumulating effects of the increasing laxity in contact work found the branch in a poor condition to undertake an intensive contact project. Starting with the inattentive attitude to the renewal drive on expired subs obtained during

the previous summer (1946) and continuing through a series of lectures that began in the fall of 1946 and gradually began to taper off because of less and less contact work (although the general situation in the steel local had some effect) before lectures, the branch was in low gear on this activity. This worsening situation of contact work became one of the chief points reiterated constantly by the organizer. Every member of the branch agreed to carry out their contact assignments more adequately. Every member agreed that it was this, and not some programmatic inadequacy, that was standing in the way of the Party. However, no improvement was registered in this important activity. Not to recriminate, let us say as a result of several years of intense and constant activity the comrades really required a little rest and went into a slump. But we found ourselves out of gear just at the beginning of our housing drive that was to inaugurate an expansion in Party activity. (2nd) It was at this point that the oldest in years and in the movement member of the branch decided to get involved in a series of circumstances that made it impossible to carry out his end of the project, and a most important end it was. Since he was not involved in a union situation, he and the organizer of the branch were to spearhead the contact work in the district of the campaign. The rest of the comrades were to help in the technical work and also involve members from the local in the meeting. After a great deal of procrastination which dragged out over a period of three months, and which succeeded in disrupting internal and external branch life (this comrade was elected Educational Director and Financial Secretary) this comrade finally resigned from the Party - not on political grounds, to be sure. By this time the entire housing campaign had fizzled. The contact work was scarcely touched and after distributing a leaflet calling for a meeting (this was done just to go through the motions of our original plan, but with a clear understanding that not much was expected) we succeeded in having a meeting at which no one showed up and to which some of the Party members did not even come.

When we realize that this was the second time in two years that this leading comrade did exactly the same thing you can understand the effect that it had on the newer comrades. In addition to this, one of the further prospects we had for strengthening our expansive perspective was destroyed when another person preferred to pursue his own career rather than join the party. This person was also not involved in any union situation and would have been valuable. He also made his choice on purely personal grounds and not because of political disagreement.

As a result of all this, the period from March to August was one during which we tried to just keep the strings together so that it would be possible to reassemble some forces once the whole process reached its lowest depth. We lost one very new comrade within several months after he joined as a result of the complete breakdown of internal branch life. He had many weaknesses to begin with, but he was very dynamic. Had we been able to have some healthy internal life including social comradeship, we might have had a much better chance to hold and develop him. Also, one of the other newer comrades, a person who experienced the previous exodus (the process really amounted to that) from the Party of the comrade mentioned above, and who felt very inferior and inadequate personally, also is more out of the Party than in. We will naturally make every effort to retain him and bring him back into the Party more firmly.

It is only recently that we have begun stabilizing the group. The best that we have been able to do is to arrange Branch meetings twice a month. With two of the comrades involved in several union meetings each month, it is difficult to do anything else. However, we are in contact with each other several times each week, either personally or by phone.

This is the general condition of the branch during the period in question.

On Unity and Collaboration: The Cannonites are situated in the railroad shops - AFL. We have little occasion to meet them in our trade union work. We had begun joint work on relief and had held one social, a preliminary one, attended mainly by Party members. Since then they have been occupied with a campaign to organize the shops into the CIO. All their efforts, and rightly so, are confined to that. They really have the heat on them, but probably have the support of the big majority in the yards for the CIO. The vote will be taken on the entire system, however, and it remains to be seen how powerful the CIO sentiment is outside the Reading yards - it is probably considerable. At any rate, except for several inconsequential meetings, absolutely nothing else has been done. We have once again begun our own relief work. I should add, that all of the Bulletins, etc. are sent to several of the leading Cannonites.

Trade Union Work etc.: We have two comrades in Steel and another who is, as has been explained, in doubt. The organizer is attempting to get into another steel shop which appears to be the healthiest right now. He was laid-off from the plant in which the other comrades are working. The situation in the steel local is about the same. However, the two comrades who are delegates to the CIO Council report that a more healthy situation is opening up there. As a result of the loss, a disastrous route would be more correct, of a strike conducted by the sub-district director of the steel union (who is also President of the CIO Council) his hold has been weakened. This strike occurred in one of the most powerful anti-union strongholds in the state. It was lost purely by the sheer stupidity and vanity of this sub-district director.....Having lost the strike, he has lost much of his cockiness and beerishness. Likewise, his pretense of infallibility has been shaken. He no longer can threaten. And those that thought him God now are beginning to listen to other voices. On several points, Comrade L. has been applauded on a number of his proposals at the Council. Many delegates are becoming more friendly. We intend to push along these lines. In the local itself we will continue to carry on. We are attempting to get several union vets, who subscribe to LABOR ACTION, to participate in a discussion group and to plan to propose progressive policy in the local and in the AVC. We are also trying to interest several shop stewards in a regular discussion group. In general, we are trying to use the positions we are now in and squeeze as much as possible out of it. The comrade who serves as committeeman often attends joint meetings of all local committeemen and officers. Although this is an outfit dominated by the sub-district director, we can play an important role in it from now on. We intend to pay more detailed attention to this comrade's work as committeeman so that it becomes more fruitful.

Negro Work: Nothing done along these lines.

Educational Work: Impossible from the situation during the past period.

Sales Etc. of LABOR ACTION and THE NEW INTERNATIONAL: Obviously very little as a result of the situation described previously. Renewals themselves have been very loosely attended to. This work will improve as the Branch begins to roll in motion developing some new contact etc.

Youth Work: Only recently has the possibilities of youth work opened up. After many years of non-existence, a YPSL branch has been organized which carries on public work and educationals. As a matter of fact, two branches have been organized, a junior and senior. Some of these people, those I have met, seem excellent. In addition, there has been organized a group of high school students into a Progressive Youth Committee. I doubt that it has any political direction. Several of the YPSL's are members. Some of the YPSLers attend Allbright College and carry on work there. However, work along these lines must be carefully worked out. These people are completely new to the Socialist movement (although they are children of SP members) and require a real socialist knowledge. They are not nearly like the political element that is found in the larger cities. The general approach must be one of friendliness and respect for their ideas even though these might not jibe with the more advanced Marxist concepts of the Party. Also ways must be found to participate in joint activity. Generally, it is a healthy development since it raises the political field all around.

Membership: 4 members, 1 in doubt. 2 members were dropped (one a unionist and one a self-employed worker). No Johnsonites around.

Finances: Average contribution per member - now \$1.50 weekly (based on three comrades). Ex-members and sympathizers complain when approached for money.

In general the branch is in a position where it must establish itself among new people and begin to utilize these connections.

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REPORT ON THE SEATTLE BRANCH

By B. Donaldson
for the Executive Committee

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The main orientation of the Seattle Branch from December 1946 until June 1947 was primarily educational to acquaint the comrades with the main political positions of our Party. (a) The Russian Question; (b) The National Question; and (c) The Character of the Party. In June the Executive Committee discussed trying to change the orientation of the branch to mass work. Some proposals were made to build union fractions to engage in mass work. While the branch has made a noticeable change, the role of the Party in mass organizations

and how to function in them is not clearly understood. The most important single fact to report on the Seattle branch is that every single comrade is active and vitally interested in every branch decision.

The problem of carrying out the unity directives of joint work in Seattle was made difficult by the fact that both the SWP and ourselves were comparatively isolated and where we were in unions we were not in the same unions. The two exceptions were LSWU, where we each had one person, and B., where we each had 2 persons. In both cases, due to the situation in the union, lack of an inner union struggle, progressive statements, etc., there was very little that could be laid hold of in terms of organizing for joint action. What they (SWP) seemed to be most interested in was not joint work, but of contacting our union people and trying to convince them that we had no working class or socialist perspective.

We did carry out one joint affair for relief which was moderately successful and recently, for relief, we netted jointly \$8.00 in a waste paper drive.

At the time of Johnson's resignation, we decided to try to get a headquarters to concretize the necessary turn to building the WP, but so far we have been unable to find anything within our means. The search will continue.

Recently, Roberts, SWP organizer, asked if he could appear before our branch meeting and give a report on their recent Plenum, especially on the discussion around the UAW. The branch accepted with the provision that it be a joint meeting of the two branches and the WP present its point of view as well as the SWP on the UAW. Whether this materializes depends on the SWP.

Every suggestion and proposal by us for joint work is deferred until it is okayed in N.Y. A number of proposals have been pigeon-hold in this fashion.

The branch, as a whole, pretty well understood what the issues were in the unity question and were able to even anticipate events. The branch remained firm throughout the whole period and took the Johnson capitulation without flinching. While the SWP here has already chosen who among us should belong to them, our branch remains solid. (It should be noted in this connection that of the 25 people that have joined or have been members of the Seattle branch, only four people have dropped out, while two of these are still sympathetic to the Party. Seven have transferred to other branches, but none have gone over to the SWP.)

Our comrades are confident in the ideas of the Party as compared with the SWP. Our internal Party life is more comradely, less stifling, our prospects of growth are just as good as theirs and we have no feeling of being inferior to them as apparently is the case elsewhere.

There are still fair prospects of recruiting two from the SWP in Seattle. This subtracted not from their claimed membership but from their active membership would be a decided blow to them.

Outside of a campaign on housing, conducted through the AVC, that

fizzled out, and the support of an anti-discrimination action of the SWP, campaigns have been lacking.

We are driving with every ounce of energy to make our main orientation an industrial one. We can report a limited success. While we have lost our toe-hold in the boilermakers, we have established a new one a B. with three members, one member in the Lumber and Sawmill Workers Union, but temporarily not working in the industry, 1 comrade in the telephone industry, and four in miscellaneous craft unions.

The comrades are new in the unions and are just beginning to plan their union and shop activity. We need badly a couple of comrades who have some union experience to get into B. and into lumber to aid in establishing a couple of fractions.

Veterans Work

We once had four or five people in the AVC. Two have left Seattle, so that we now have only three. The chapter where those were concentrated folded up and it is necessary to transplant the remaining three which we are now in the process of doing. J. Simons, while he was here, was Treasurer of the district council and was instrumental in initiating a housing campaign.

In the last month the women in the branch have been discussing ways and means of activating the women comrades who, with one exception, are not in mass organizations. (1) They plan on holding a series of discussions on the "women question," drawing in wives of Party members, sympathizers, friends and contacts. (2) To activate women in the branch. (3) To try to integrate and draw closer wives of comrades. (4) To make new women contacts. (5) To intervene in women's struggles. (5) to select and enter promising women's organizations.

We began this year to establish ourselves in Negro work. After six months of work with some success, the comrade assigned to it for good reasons had to give it up. We still have this problem to solve.

Educational Work - The first part of the period, as I have explained, was devoted to the discussion of our main political positions. In June we began a series, alternating with internal political discussions and current political topics. Such as: (1) The Taft-Hartley Bill, (2) The perspectives for a labor party in the Northwest, (3) The Marshall Plan; (4) Science and the Next War, (5) The Struggle in the UAW, and (6) Wallace.

We have assigned comrades to make a study of four industrial fields where we have comrades working and to make reports. They are: (1) Telephone, (2) B., (3) Lumber, (4) White Collar Workers.

In November we begin a series on the "Women Question." In the meantime we have discussed periodically (1) Unity, (2) Polish Question, (3) Ultra-leftism, (4) Spontaneity of the masses, etc., either at Party meetings or on extra nights.

Cy held a beginners class which led to the recruitment of two comrades.

Labor Action

Sales - We try to cover union meetings each Friday night. Have had a limited success in that we have been selling about 10 to 15 copies each time lately, but the main failing seems to be that the papers are received here in Seattle too late to have any current appeal. If in some way the branch could afford to have copies for union sales sent out airmail, it is believed sales would be more effective.

Subs - Although not phenomenal, the Seattle branch has been doing well in getting subs. This is mainly due to one comrade who at each meeting has at least one sub to turn in. The branch conducted a sub drive the first week in September by having a neighborhood distribution for two weeks and then a mass mobilization to obtain subs. Although we chose a working class district, we obtained only one sub by this method.

Circulation and promotion - We are increasing our bundle order with the hope that we can increase our union sales and shall attempt to get a newsstand outlet.

New International

Sale of the NI is primarily to our own comrades and to members of SWP. Have not been at all successful in obtaining subs, but no concerted action in that direction has been undertaken. We shall attempt to obtain a newsstand outlet for THE NI in the next few weeks.

Literature

Pamphlets and books are being supplied to all comrades to take with them when they make visits to contacts. We have had a fair distribution of "Fight for Socialism" in this manner.

Outside of the Gates meeting and our May Day meeting, neither a great success, we have had no public meetings except our Party meetings which we try to get our contacts to attend. We get one or two each meeting, occasionally as many as four people.

Youth

While we have one university student, one who left the university to enter industry and two young workers who just graduated from high school, we do not have as yet any real prospects for a youth group. To do so would require the reorientation of three youths now trying to sink their teeth in a union toward youth work. It seems that before we make industrial work the hub of our branch we launch out on youth work. When we get our two feet planted, one in B., with six to ten members, the other foot in lumber with a similar fraction, and we are beginning to have some effect in these industries, we can begin to make some inroads in Negro and youth work.

Branch perspective for the next period is every comrade doing

some kind of mass work. By that we mean in this instance, entrench ourselves in a shop, a union, AVC, or other organization dealing with people on their level of consciousness and attempting to push them into action toward the left.

We have set up roughly five groups: (1) B, where we have three people; one person with 7 years seniority, 1 person with four months seniority and another just starting to work. They are in the stage of working out a program for the plant and the union so that they can have a perspective and plan of action. (2) One person is in the telephone industry and she has set herself for a long term stay in the industry. She has begun the task of making friends with the women with whom she works, understanding their level of thinking and learning to find her way around in the union. (3) One comrade in Lumber, who now has a good prospect of recruiting an experienced militant unionist. In this industry too the comrade has a long term perspective. (4) In AVC, we have reestablished three comrades in one chapter. Our plans there call for (1) recruiting vets who agree with our Labor-Vets program, who are our personal friends, or who are unionists. (2) Canvassing the membership of the chapter to pick out those who are now in unions and trying to sell them our program. (3) Drawing these elements together into a caucus. (5) The five women in the branch are meeting regularly to discuss the "Women Question." They have tentatively outlined the following plans: a) To have charge of the branch forum for two or three meetings to discuss; "History of the Woman Question," "Women and the Labor Movement," "Women and Sex" and "Women and the Party." b) They plan to meet regularly to draw other women into the discussion and their activities. c) They plan to choose one or more women's groups to work in.

The main aims of the women have already been stated. It is their perspective to develop an arena of activity and work, through which we can draw women into the Party. Also it is their perspective to develop a cadre of women that can intervene in women's struggles.

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REPORT ON THE AKRON BRANCH

By George Whitney
(August 27, 1947)

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The Branch continues under the handicap of having no headquarters. This means no center of activity. No place to hold classes for contacts. No facilities for branch social affairs.

It was necessary therefore to hold branch meetings in the cramped apartment of one of the members. For a time we had access to one full blown home in which to hold socials and these socials proved to be exceedingly successful. We conducted classes for contacts in the apartment above mentioned plus the apartment of one contact. But the lack of a headquarters has deprived the branch of a readily available and spacious place for week around activity. The acquisition of such a place now occupies the fore in our efforts.

We conducted three classes for contacts. One of four weeks duration on Socialism, Utopian and Scientific; one of four weeks on Wage, Labor and Capital, and one of three weeks on the Role of the Individual in History. Following this last series we discontinued them for the remainder of the summer because of the intolerable conditions under which they were held. Classes for contacts are scheduled to begin once more the second week of October.

Internally we conducted a fairly continuous educational program. One of four weeks on the History of the Party; one of six weeks on the political and organizational differences between the WP and the SWP; one on the speeches of Cannon and Stein; one on the document of the Mexican comrades addressed to the French Party; one on the Negro question; one on the Jewish question; one of two weeks on the Trade Union question as applied locally; and, in addition, we conducted at least five classes with visiting functionaries and N.C. members.

The Branch has failed completely to find any way to effectively carry out the Party campaigns. We have been able to conduct a certain minimum of activity in the union on some of the issues but absolutely no activity in the field of tenants leagues or housewives organizations. This is due in part to the fact that there are now only two women comrades in the branch, both of whom work long hours and neither of whom has been in a position to organize such bodies given the fact that none already exist. It might be mentioned that no other organization (SWP, CP, etc.) has found it possible to do any work in this field.

The Branch has, however, conducted really serious work around our press beginning at the time of the sub drive preceding the last convention and continuing up to the very recent past. Work in this field is now returning to what has become the norm here, namely, regular distributions and house to house sub sales. This work, as well as work in other fields, had been adversely affected by the fact that the Branch found it necessary to conduct a fairly long trial and investigation into two of its members. This affair is now coming to a close and the Branch is returning to normal activity.

In the field of finances we have been fairly successful. While the branch is from time to time slightly behind in dues payments, it manages by and large to fulfill its obligations to the National Office and periodically to give additional money to both the National Office and to the relief of our European comrades. This is made possible by two factors, (1) we have no headquarters and therefore no rent to pay and (2) we have been comparatively successful in the solicitation of regular contributions from sympathizers. The Branch had heretofore failed to appreciate the possibilities in this latter field.

1. Activities around the Unity

Unlike many other branches of the Party, the Akron branch found it possible to enter into a fairly good period of collaboration with the SWP. This, though still nominally in effect, has been altered radically since the speeches of Cannon and Stein.

The principal reason making for the comparative success of our efforts at collaboration is to be found in the fact that the primary concentration of both branches is in the URW. There exist no funda-

mental differences of policy between the two parties in this International; only differences concerning methods of functioning and even these differences have not been of the nature to cause great friction though the tendency is in that direction.

Up to the time of the Cannon Stein speeches the two parties had consulted each other on all major questions in the unions where we are both interested. Joint fraction meetings were held in which we arrived generally at some agreement on policy and at which the function of the members of both branches was discussed and agreeable decisions reached concerning the future role of various individuals. However, at the time of the election for delegates to the URW convention and following the already mentioned speeches, a new attitude was manifest. One of the leading members of the SWP and a member of that party's N.C., a comrade who is employed in the URW plant where our concentration exists, entered into an arrangement secretly with some leading figures in the Bass machine to exclude our leading comrade in the plant from the caucus nominee list for the convention. Prior to the regular Bass caucus meeting at which delegates were chosen, this comrade met in a secret session and agreed that two "Trotskyites" would be too many on the list and, without any form of consultation with us, agreed to exclude our comrade in favor of himself. He then, according to one of the officers of the local, did all the leg work in lining up the votes on that basis.

We asked them for a special meeting of the two fractions to discuss this question. In that meeting the N.C. member mentioned was missing, but one of the other leading members of their branch and a member of the fraction made clear to us their policy. Unity to them was something they could take or leave. It was made clear that unity with the WP was not considered as a main point on their agenda. True they were interested in collaborating with us but they were more interested in collaborating with militants (read "petty bureaucrats and machine men") in the union and where the two became mutually exclusive, they choose the latter. We in turn made clear that our collaboration with them was functional, as we had said many times, only on those points where there was agreement on the concrete tasks. That where there was no agreement, and it was obvious that our respective attitudes on this question fell considerably short of conformity, then there would be no collaboration. No meeting has been held with them since then but as yet we anticipate no complete severance of the collaboration ties.

We held one joint relief social with them (this apparently was their first activity around the problem of relief, not even collecting a regular contribution from their own members for relief) and they have only recently called with the proposition for a second. The first one was modestly successful despite the fact that practically all the money was extracted from the combined memberships, very few contacts attending.

We found generally speaking and as a result of our relations with them, that they have a somewhat loose, to put it politely, conception of membership in the Party. This accounts for the fact that while in actual active membership their party including paid functionaries is no larger than ours locally, their membership books and reports indicate a branch roughly three to three and a half times as large. It is a fact that we have sympathizers who are more active and interested in the movement than many of their members.

It is perhaps redundant after our experiences nationally to speak of the low political level of their party but it might be of some value to mention the following. While being perfectly cognizant of the validity of the proposition that a priest may enter our party and if he defends the program and participates in the activities, be a good member, it is nevertheless of obvious significance that a considerable portion of their membership is religious to the point where they find it inadvisable to schedule functions of any sort that may interfere with vespers or the saying of one's beads. Thus, they requested changing the date of a joint fraction meeting scheduled for the morning of Easter Sunday on the basis that a number of their fraction members would be at church.

2. Campaigns

As previously indicated the Branch has failed to find avenues through which to prosecute the Party's campaigns. Our total efforts in this field have been confined to not too effective work in the union field and the veterans organization.

We collaborated with the SWP in the presentation of a resolution for the Labor Party and have from time to time spoken on that question in the union, on the floor, in various committees where we have been involved and in general work with individual members. Our task here has been made exceedingly difficult by the activities of a group known as the United Labor Party. The back bone of this group is the former Corbett Group, comprised of some eight or nine former Trotskyists who were expelled from our Party shortly after the SWP split convention of 1940.

This group combined with an old time militant in the Akron labor movement to form the United Labor Party. They claim 300 members. Actually it would appear that they succeeded in signing up a large number of people on the basis of a very watered program and that they have seen very few of them since they signed them up. They have a core of probably 15 active members. These are distributed fairly evenly in the principal URW locals and through their activities have succeeded in discrediting the whole idea of a Labor Party. They are absolutely isolated among the active unionists. It is only necessary for them to speak on any question, or rather to support any proposal to insure its defeat. They have provided the perfect point of departure for all the reactionaries and opponents of the idea of a Labor Party.

4. Trade Union Work

The Branch has just completed an extensive discussion of its union work. This discussion covered the resolution of the last active workers conference, the Party's outline on the role of the trade unions and our past work locally in the union movement.

Several variations of the same point of view were presented but the branch has not yet adopted one as its opinion. On one thing there was complete agreement. The Branch has failed to recruit from its work in the unions and as the document of the last Active Workers Conference points out, the yardstick by which we measure the success of our union work is the recruitment we realize from it. With that for our point of departure, we recognized that our functioning has

been defective. Generally we agreed that, for example, in the one big union where we have comrades and where there is a well established progressive caucus in which we function, we must in the next period recruit into this caucus, union members primarily on the basis of our ideas rather than purely trade union ideas. This will then provide a more solid base for our work inside the caucus and will provide the reservoir from which we may recruit. In the past we have concerned ourselves with working with the already existent members of the caucus only to find them singularly unsusceptible.

5. Veterans Work

Following the last convention of the Party, the branch sent three available comrades into the AVC. Two of these comrades were active in the union movement. Unlike other cities where our comrades must struggle for recognition or where hotly contested elections for delegates, etc., ensue as a result of the CP and other reactionary groupings, we soon found that our people were being saddled with jobs on all manner of committees and their time more and more taken up with vets work.

Now, if we had had comrades available who could devote that sort of time we would gladly have accepted it. As it was, two of the three were busy with union work. One of these two, a comrade who has a family and a certain minimum of responsibilities there, had the following meetings each week which were already mandatory: Party branch meeting, Party EC, union EC, union caucus, educational classes for contacts, periodic meetings of other committees in the union, AVC meetings, housing committee of the AVC and in addition to all this he was being pressed determinedly to serve on other committees in the AVC. This situation was obviously intolerable based on already established laws of the solar system. The same situation was true to a lesser degree of the other union comrade. We therefore decided that these two comrades should attend AVC meetings only when they found nothing else conflicting with them and that they should for the time serve on no committees or in any other capacities inside that organization.

We succeeded in saving our union comrades from being swamped under but we also succeeded in breaking the back of our AVC work. The one remaining comrade ceased to function and in short order we had no one even attending meetings. That situation is now being corrected and the branch will be able to make a more encouraging report in the future.

6. Negro Work

We have conducted no work in any Negro organizations. We have, however, conducted organized and regularized solicitations in Negro neighborhoods and have enjoyed a certain success. We are at present occupied with the same type of work. Through the efforts of our one Negro comrade and another comrade whose work had led him into contact with young Negroes, we have worked with three Negro contacts. One moved permanently to New York City and our comrades from Akron personally introduced him recently to Comrade Falk of the youth and he will be contacted by the New York Youth.

7. Literature

Our work around LABOR ACTION has already been outlined. We conducted regular weekly solicitations for a period of some twelve months. This work while successful in the sense of a steady source of subscriptions to the paper, proved to be something of a demoralizing experience for some of the comrades and we suffered a relapse in activity for a period of about two months. We have once again begun this work in what appears to be a better method of alternating distributions and solicitations.

We place the NI on three newsstands and sell it to contacts and friends. Our success in this field has been negligible. All the branch members are subscribers and that eliminates sales inside the branch. We tried giving each member an extra copy of each issue and requiring payment in advance. In most cases this only meant an additional financial burden on the membership and did not solve the real problem of distributing the magazine.

We have done pretty well with the Party BULLETINS and PARTY BUILDERS, managing to keep about even there. The branch has been building up its supply of Workers Party Publications and now has a decent supply of pamphlets and books. We have kept our debts to the National Office under control and this week the Literature Agent is cleaning up all debts to the Literature Department.

8. Public Meetings

We held the following public meetings since last January: Two with Wilson speaking, one with Howe, one with Walters and one with Whitney. On the average we had somewhere between 25 and 30 people at these meetings. None of them were exceedingly successful. The best reaction both in numbers and effect was one meeting held with Comrade Wilson. We are at present making plans for an open meeting immediately following the AWC with Comrade Shachtman speaking. We have hopes of making this our first really big post war meeting.

9. Youth

Some time ago we had two youth around whom we tried to build a youth organization. This effort failed and we eventually lost the one comrade. The other is absolutely inactive and the branch plans to try once more to activate him and get him in good standing financially. If unsuccessful they intend to drop him from the rolls.

10. Membership

The total official membership at present is 15. Of these two are residents of Lorain, Ohio and do not attend our meetings. They are carried on the branch books upon the instructions of the National Office and meet their financial obligations through the Akron Branch. Of the remaining 13, 2 are inactive. The one already mentioned under the preceding point and another comrade who is active in the union movement and whose reasons for inactivity inside the Party are recognized by the branch as more or less valid for the present. This comrade has requested permission of the branch and the National Office to transfer to the Oakland Branch where he intends to resume his Party activity. Another comrade, very active in the past period, is

in the process of moving to Cleveland and will request transfer to that Branch. Two comrades have been tried on charges of conduct unbecoming Party members but the trial committee has not completed its work yet. They have voluntarily retired from all Party life against the advice of the branch and now stand suspended for non-payment of dues and non-attendance at meetings.

The branch lost no one through the split of the Johnson-Forest Group. At the next regular business meeting we are recruiting one new member. This comrade has been associated unofficially with first the CP and then the SLP. His wife has recently given birth to a child and though sympathetic and in agreement with us, is not joining but wishes to be considered a close sympathizer.

11. Functioning of the E.C.

The Executive Committee for the most part has fulfilled its function of providing political leadership for the branch to the extent indicated by the foregoing report. It has met regularly despite the fact that at least one of its members has found it difficult to attend because of union work. The comrade who is moving to Cleveland has been a member of that committee. Election for branch offices including the Executive Committee are scheduled for the next regular business meeting. The branch has decided on a three man committee instead of four as in the past.

12. Social Activities

As already indicated the branch held a series of very successful socials so long as it had a place to hold them. We made money on all of them and people really enjoyed attending. We are holding sporadic affairs now dependent upon our ability to borrow a place to hold them in. Renting facilities in Akron presents no solution because first of all such places have their own bars and they make the profit. Secondly, the size socials we hold will not finance such projects as comrades in some of the larger centers hold.

13. Student Work

This field has been a void until recently, primarily because we had no students and no contacts among students. Some time ago, one of our comrades entered a nearby university as an instructor and we have succeeded so far in gaining one contact, a former CP'er.

14. Estimate of Present State of Branch

The branch has come through a period of summer inactivity and a period marked by a somewhat demoralizing trial of two of its members. While we at present have 10 people who are in one way or another active and live in Akron, we are faced with the prospect of once again losing two comrades to other branches of the Party. That will bring the total number of Akron comrades now functioning in other branches of the Party to 16: New York 1, Newark 2, Chicago 2, Detroit 3, Seattle 2, San Pedro 1, Morgantown 1, Lorain 2, and now Cleveland 1 and Oakland 1.

Aside from the normal turn over in membership, Akron has always suffered from losing its most talented people to other branches.

Among the 16 who function elsewhere, three are NC members and almost all the rest may be considered among the secondary leadership of the Party. Despite this overwhelming generosity on the part of the Akron branch not one party comrade in the history of the Trotskyist movement has ever found himself sufficiently injured to migrate here. Twice observers have ventured in on brief research missions, Comrade Stiler in the late thirties and Comrade Gates for a period of three profitable months preceding the 1946 convention.

The branch made every effort to secure a full time functionary during 1946 and much encouraging talk on this score emanated from New York. As the echoes of this began to die away, we petitioned for pioneers who would settle if only for a short period. To the numerous returned veteran comrades who were looking for a place to settle we held out the promise of jobs, temporary housing, paternal care and various minor things for their approval and edification. The result? More people are leaving Akron.

Despite this somber tale the branch is entering a period of revitalization that cannot but increase the size of several of the other branches of the Party. The remaining comrades mentioned are all full-fledged Party members, active, loyal and devoted. All phases of the work show definite signs of improvement, especially recruitment. This is occasioned primarily by three things: 1) An increase in understanding and appreciation of what the Party means and how it functions. (A contributing factor here is to be found in the visits of a number of the comrades to New York and Newark for their vacations and excellent manner in which they were handled by the New York and Newark comrades.) 2) The cleaning of the internal atmosphere occasioned by the already mentioned trial of two members and their voluntary withdrawal from the life of the branch. 3) The automatic reaction to a considerable period of comparative inactivity.

All indications at present point to a serious and substantial rebuilding of the Akron branch.

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REPORT ON NEWARK BRANCH

By Saul Berg - Organizer

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This report on the Newark branch unquestionably presents a less rosy picture than the report of last November. The general status of the branch as compared with last November can be summed up this way - our political contacts, people friendly with us etc., are as numerous as ever; in the field of youth contacts we are better off than before; we are not isolated, and we have active UAW and AVC fractions, but we have been unable to integrate most of our recruits, some people have dropped out, and although all the sparkplugs in the branch remain and are still sparkplugs, the branch does not have enough flesh on its bones to handle the contacts it has or to be reasonably attractive to them.

Membership

November 1946 -- 14

September 1947 - 11

During these eight months seven people were recruited, while 10, including 1 Johnsonite, dropped out. In addition, 3 people transferred out of town and 3 transferred in. Of the 7 recruited, 4 dropped out within the same period and are included in the above total number dropped. Of the other six dropped, 2 had joined only a little earlier than last November.

Campaigns

The branch was unable to carry on any real political campaign on housing, labor party, etc. We did carry on a consistent follow-up of our sub drive of last year in the housing projects. A high percentage of renewals was obtained and in one project a substantial group of party contacts was developed, which I will describe under the heading of Negro work. The drive for new subs in April was a failure. The members turned out but they got a very poor response.

Union Work

In April-June 1946, five comrades, the total number available for industrialization, all went into a GM plant twelve miles out of Newark. In January of this year, one comrade quit, and another was laid off. A third comrade, our only Johnsonite, performed absolutely no political function. Thus we emerged from the whole preparatory period with an entrenched fraction of only two, who have consistently developed their activities. In February 1947 both were elected to the Shop Committee. Later, one became Vets Director, the other Educational Director. One of the comrades is now the local's delegate to the Eastern GM Council, and is on its screening committee, whose job is to prepare proposals for the next GM contract. He has already proposed and had accepted by this body the escalator clause.

The fraction has carried on considerable Labor Party agitation. But (1) the shop has only 800 workers, not a very large arena; (2) it is located in the Republican suburbs and the rank and file is less union conscious than in most eastern UAW shops; (3) if we recruited from among the white militants in the plant, we would not be recruiting into the Newark branch; meanwhile for this whole year, two active old time comrades in a small branch have been able to do comparatively little political work in Newark. This does not mean that they should not have been active in the plant, but it helps to explain the lack of forces in the branch for local political activity.

A large part of the Negroes in the plant live in Newark. The Negroes are lined up behind us 100% in the local. Among them our fraction has been more open politically. Six subs were obtained and a small class of Negroes from the plant was finally organized two months ago, taught by Comrade McKinney. However, because of the complexities of the shifts in the departments, this class only gets together about once a month. Three sessions have been held, and there are long term prospects for recruiting from it.

Veterans Work - In September 1946, four branch members, all those eligible, joined Newark AVC. No one was assigned to AVC as his major activity, but two of the four were instructed to carry on some work. For six months we did very little outside the chapter meeting (this is a chapter of 500 members, incidentally), but a great deal on the floor on all sorts of issues. In April one comrade was elected to fill a vacancy in the chapter executive committee. He was put in charge of the chapter's pre-convention discussion, and was successful in having much of our platform for AVC adopted. Both comrades were delegates to the Milwaukee convention.

Considering that the active core of this chapter is not very large, its internal politics are incredibly confused, and I won't attempt to describe it. In any case, over a period of time, we had a great deal of effect on the thinking of a few good progressive activists. On the rest, we had no positive effect, except to make them very, very conscious of Trotskyites. Last year's chapter administration was a mixture of everything. There were no caucuses. Now, elections are about to take place and there are no less than three organized groups - (1) a caucus that can be characterized as right wing, since it excluded all radical minorities; this caucus has within it dissidents that opposed such exclusion; (2) the CP; (3) us. In addition, the SWP has a large fraction which does absolutely nothing and is known to almost no one. They are running one candidate and will not campaign for him. We are running a propaganda campaign for our candidates, based on the program and name of the Labor Vets Group.

As for actual recruiting out of the chapter, prospects are not good. Several active chapter members have LA subs, and one is reading our literature. Also, several old radical sympathizers, by seeing us at AVC maintain some interest in us, and come to our bigger forums. What is needed in the chapter is concentrated personal contacting of the best people.

Negro Work - I have already described the contact class made up of Negroes from our GM shop.

Last fall J. R. Johnson came into Newark to conduct a series of classes attended by our Negro contacts. 10 attended, all pretty consistently. Ten sessions were held. Johnson, starting pretty well, proceeded from the general to the more general to the still more general, and in the end tried to recruit by great personal pressure. One Negro went for it whole hog, joined but later dropped out because of overwhelming personal problems. On the others, the class had no great effect, although by and large they remain sympathetic.

In our best housing project we carried on persistent contacting of a number of Negro workers, who had had considerable experience as unionists and some previous contact with the radical movement. When the third round of renewals for LA subs came up in this project, we obtained thirty renewals, half of whom had attended one or more Party functions over a period of time. This summer a comrade was assigned the task of organizing a Socialist educational and social club on the project. About six of the contacts, all well acquainted with us and convinced Socialists, were active in starting the club, but what with summer vacations, etc., have not gotten far. Serious efforts on this task will resume now. Recruiting possibilities here remain good, and with a type of potential Negro recruit more advanced

than most of the close Negro contacts that we developed earlier in branch work.

Unity and Collaboration - The prospects of unity with the SWP undoubtedly had a very damaging effect on the branch's independent activity. Many efforts at independent work were put off with the idea that soon we will be in another party. However, this temptation was succumbed to so easily by us only because of the difficulties we already faced - the failure of the one month sub drive, the failure to recruit from Johnson's class.

After unity fell through, we had a new panacea - the SWP Minority. Since the Bayonne SWP branch dissolved and transferred its members to Newark, Newark had become the Minority's center, with 8 to 10 faction members, and a few others friendly besides. We would keep hearing that they were about to join, and since that would double the size of the branch, we would put off solving difficulties with the notion that after they joined it would be easy to solve them.

As for collaboration with the SWP, they consistently and successfully avoided it. In the AVC it was impossible to avoid collaboration completely -- but they extended themselves and achieved the impossible.

Educational Work - Between November and June several successful meetings were held with "national" speakers, contact attendance ranging from 10 to 40. In between we held frequent forums with local speakers, with a fairly consistent attendance of four or five outsiders. After a short unsuccessful class in American Labor History, we gave up any attempt to continue the forum during the summer. A couple of discussions were held in a private home, attended by us, SWP Minority and sympathizers, but these were given up when the SWP branch cracked down on the Minority.

Literature, LA, NI - Our literature department is excellent and by and large literature is pushed pretty well. Likewise LA subs were handled well until the summer and should now pick up again. But other LA promotion is almost nil. Only rarely are sales held. THE NI is placed regularly in one bookstore which sells three or four copies.

Youth Work - This work has progressed. Two of our best recruits are youth. One has entered the University of Chicago. The other goes back to Rutgers, where we already have a number of contacts. We have conducted for the past six weeks a series of discussions in a comrade's home attended by AYD'ers and members of Hashomer Hatzair. One AYD'er is through with the Stalinists and is recruitable by us pretty soon - the others remain on the fence but keep listening. This work has now been turned over to a leading N.Y. youth member since our own will be living on the Rutgers campus in a couple of weeks.

Finances - Finances are good. The members pay what they are supposed to and give what they ought to and without bitching. Also, in the last fund drive \$90 was obtained from a dozen sympathizers. Not enough has been done, however, to get regular pledges from sympathizers.

Perspectives - After what has been said earlier, it would seem unwise to tie up local perspectives with the SWP Minority. However, as this is written, the IKD'ers have already left the SWP Minority, most of the faction that remains is for immediate entry into the WP and we are solemnly assured that it is all a matter of two weeks before they join.

Their adherence in Newark will have great effect. First, it will more than double the size of the branch. Second, it will resolve the doubts of that section of our periphery which floated in between us and the SWP. Third, it may result in quick recruitment of several sympathizers.

Further, the group of 8 to 10 Minorityites that will join our branch are of high calibre politically and organizationally. Also, they will add to the branch a trade union fraction of two comrades, in a Stalinist controlled UE shop of 5,000 workers. One comrade is a steward, the other a chief steward.

In the field of industrial activity, nothing earth-shaking can be expected from our UAW fraction in its relatively limited arena, although continued progress should take place. However, if the Party and UAW fraction nationally want to seize a real opportunity, they will move heaven and earth to get some comrades into the new Ford plant at Metuchen, New Jersey. It will employ several thousand, and is already beginning to hire. Anyone who remembers Brewster knows what a big concentration in the Eastern region of UAW can mean to us, and we should get in on the ground floor. Since there is no one available in Newark for industrialization, this is a project for the National Office to take up.

The main job in Newark itself is individual recruitment and prospects along this line are good. We have no dearth of sympathizers with some political education, and after the slackness of the last two months we must now intensify our contacting and educational work among the best contacts with the aim of strengthening the branch forces.

As for expansion in the rest of the State, we can set as a concrete aim during the next six months the organization of an SYL unit at Rutgers.

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REPORT OF MANHATTAN CENTRAL BRANCH, NEW YORK CITY

By Mary Bell

The present Manhattan Branch was formed about a year ago, when the old Manhattan Branch, characterized largely by miscellaneous city activities, merged with most of the comrades from the Yorkville-East Harlem Branch, the latter being one of the "branches-on-wheels" which experimented for almost a year in a new neighborhood with total lack of success. At one of the first meetings of the new branch a half-facetious, half-true remark was made about its being a branch of "DP's"-- indicating its rootless, heterogeneous composition.

There were three needle trades comrades in the branch, and one of them was made organizer in order to expand the fraction and try to give the Branch an industrial orientation. The reactions of most of the New York comrades, including members of the city committee, to an active and vociferous campaign to get members into the garment industry varied from cynicism to sabotage. This fraction is still tiny, its activities have consisted mostly of articles for LABOR ACTION, participation in ILGWU educational discussions and exploratory work in the ILG. It is unfortunate that this field of concentration is being overlooked, particularly in New York City where the industry is a particularly strategic one for political activity and Labor Party propaganda.

But the branch did find fields of activity elsewhere which kept the morale of most of its members relatively intact. For this reason it did not suffer the pessimism and almost complete inertia which characterized most of the New York party branches in the same period.

TENANTS' COUNCIL FORMED

Through the instrumentality of an East Side AVC chapter and the initiative of three comrades, a tenants' council was formed on the East Side. Our comrades were the most active in building it, one of them is chairman and others are on the executive committee. There are about eighty-five paper members and the attendance at meetings ranges from 25 to 75. The council has campaigned actively since its formation on rent control, has settled many grievances in this blighted area, and has conducted indoor and outdoor educational meetings. It has a reputation for militancy and is known by the Stalinist-led group to which it is affiliated as a "Trotskyist" organization. One of the main difficulties in recruiting has been the fact that most of the members are elderly people. The present tenants' fraction consists of six branch members.

AVC WORK

Starting with two members, the branches East Side AVC fraction now has an active fraction of six in a chapter which has a membership of about 385 and which gets about eighty to its bi-monthly meetings. Prior to the national convention of the AVC, our comrades got all of the resolutions they submitted passed. They could very possibly have gotten a delegate to the national convention, but they were not oriented in that direction because of lack of coordination through the city veterans' committee.

For the current New York City convention of the AVC, two of our members are serving as delegates on a progressive slate of six by a vote of 100-25 the Stalinists having gotten only the alternate posts. We work in the progressive caucus, run by a Liberal Party liberal. However, we have been able to differentiate ourselves from the liberals and to demonstrate that we are not pure-and-simple anti-Stalinists.

In order to assist the East Side tenants and AVC fractions which have given the branch its tone, vitality and locus for activity, the branch held several street meetings on the East Side during the summer on popular issues such as rent or prices. LABOR ACTION was sold and signatures collected for the tenants' council. Opinion in the branch is divided on the success of these meetings, since the composition of the audience was most frequently the older, semi-Stalinized generation.

NO CONTACTS

The most conspicuous lack and the most urgent need in all of the branch work are new party contacts. Despite the activities and the generally good morale, the branch has not picked up any genuine contacts. This is partially due to the fact that spadework was started in the spring just prior to the summer lull, that newer comrades rather than more experienced ones were leading the work, that rent work was new for the party, that the city as a whole was unable to undertake any rent campaign, and that for much of this period the internal education of the party had to revolve around the Johnson dispute--which was scarcely conducive to planning meetings for outsiders.

PERSPECTIVES

The branch has two major perspectives on the East Side:

- (1) To form a genuine East Side branch through the work of the present fractions, by recruiting East Siders.
- (2) To lay the groundwork for an election campaign on the East Side in 1948.

To further these perspectives, the branch has set up an East Side "Survey Committee," which is in charge of conducting a sociological survey of the area, its racial and language composition,

political history, voting records and of furnishing information on the organizations most feasible for branch members to work in. One of the important tasks of the committee is to get data on this tenement area as the basis for presenting our housing program. One of the members of the committee was assigned to the five-cent subway fare issue, which, while a city-wide issue, will be especially important for us to utilize in this type of neighborhood work.

The branch executive committee is concretizing the work of the survey committee by assigning members not otherwise involved to scout and work in organizations in this area, and will call upon the Manhattan Youth and other branches for assistance.

The two executive committees the branch has had in this period have functioned exceedingly well and have actually functioned as leaders of the branch. They have not been victims of the general slump in morale. Newer members have been drawn into leadership.

The branch failed signally--as did the New York party as a whole--to realize its perspectives as an industrial branch. But despite the internal dispute with the Johnsonites and preoccupation with unity, it did manage to sink some roots, tenuous as they are, into the East Side. With persistent care, we should see some fruit next year.

REPORT ON WEST VIRGINIA

By James M. Fenwick

* * *

The importance of the fact that for the first time in the history of the Trotskyist movement in the United States a toehold has been secured among one of the most important sections of the working class, the coal miners, need not be dwelled upon. Knowledge about coal miners and the coal mining industry, which was previously based upon memories from the old days of the Communist Party or upon newspaper accounts, is now direct and concrete. Without falling into that starry-eyed enthusiasm which occasionally substitutes for sober analysis in our Party, it can be soberly said that properly cultivated the contacts which we currently have established in West Virginia, the work which we have done, and the experience which we have gained offer us exceptional opportunities for the extension of our influence.

In view of the general absence of information which exists in our organization in regard to the coal industry and the coal miners - conditions which are outside the experience of the average comrade working in the factory - some prefatory information on conditions in West Virginia, exclusive of our Party work, will probably not be amiss.

West Virginia is primarily a coal mining state. About one-quarter of the coal mined in the country comes from this region. There is other industry such as glass, chemical, textile, etc., and some marginal farming, but these are of relatively slight importance in a state whose industrial complexion is overwhelmingly determined by one industry - coal.

The Monongahela River, which rises in West Virginia and flows north to Pittsburgh, is of arterial importance in the economic life of the area. One-tenth of the coal transported in this country is barged long this river, largely to the Pittsburgh industrial agglomeration. At intervals along the northern stretches of the river are large towns which serve as administrative, shopping, and social centers for the very small coal villages which surround them. Since coal is an extractive industry, it is not centered in urban areas such as is the case with the steel or automobile industry, for instance. The coal villages in which our organization works, or the villages in which we have the possibility of working, have total populations ranging from 300 to 1,000 persons.

Morgantown

Morgantown is the parent body for the satellite coal towns in which our work is concentrated. It has a population of 30,000 persons, a considerable proportion of whom are petty-bourgeois, though a certain number of miners live in town and commute to work. Industry is inconsequential, consisting chiefly of a chemical plant, a shirt factory, a faucet factory, and a glass factory. Given the character of the state and the size of the town itself it is not surprising that the social consciousness is rather retarded. One

index of this is the comparatively extensive influence of protestantism, which, not being a tightly-knit organization like the catholic church, for instance, is normally of little social weight in the average mid-west community. Considerable social service work has been done by the Presbyterian church in the mining camp of Pursglove. The swimming pool and "The Shack," both built with miners' funds and labor - modest acquisitions that they are - have received considerable national publicity.

What chiefly distinguishes Morgantown from similar towns in West Virginia is the presence of West Virginia University, an institution of some 6,000 students. It, too, however, does not escape unscathed from the cultural milieu. It is, for instance, Jim Crow in the undergraduate school. Philosophy courses are devoted to proving the existence of God and to lectures underlining the evil effects of nicotine and alcohol upon the male spermatozoon. Writers like William Faulkner are airily dismissed with the rhetorical question, "Now, really, would you want to read Faulkner aloud to your mother?" Few would. Veterans are, for the moment, busy in making a career. Nevertheless there are the usual gifted few among the faculty and the student body who are turning over the whole realm of knowledge seeking answers to the current world crisis. In spite of everything, the university acts as a genuine heaven in the town.

The Coal Camps

A great number of the coal camps are situated along the Monongahela or in valleys whose creeks flow into this major river. A large number of these villages date from the coal boom of the first World War. Despite the ads which the coal operators run in national magazines, and despite an amelioration of conditions over what they were twenty-five years ago, the camps are hardly more than Hoovervilles. None of the usual conveniences of living in the city exist. Normally there are neither bathrooms, inside toilets, hot water, sidewalks, rubbish and garbage collection, telephones, central heating, nor cellars. Though company stores have lost some of their predatory character, they still exist and still exact extortionate prices. Recreation is on a primitive level. Given the monotonous life of the miner, a funeral takes on the character of a major social event. For the rest, relaxation from the dangers and monotony of mining consists of attendance at church, especially on the part of Negro miners, going to a cheap picture show given perhaps once a week, homeric drinking, pool, and unbelievable attention to and finesse with the pin-ball machine. Education is primitive, and is Jim Crow. From the sixth grade on Negro children have to go to town to finish their education, as is true for white children from the ninth grade on. Under such conditions, the general level of education can easily be imagined. Given the exceptionally poor living conditions, the brutalizing character of mining as currently conducted, the lack of educational opportunity, and what Marx so justly called "the idiocy of country life," the inevitable result is generalized violence. Slashings, shootings, and fist fights, usually displaying an amazing fertility of inventiveness, are common.

"Public opinion," as it is usually conceived of in urban centers, hardly exists in the coal camps. Almost everybody is a miner or has a very direct relation with the miners. Petty-bourgeois opinion which might be mobilized against the miners usually consists of the

beer-joint owner and his family, a handful of the mine bosses who actually live in the village, a reverend or two, the company doctor - and that is about all. That is hardly a formidable array of personnel or talent. Add to that the nature of mining, and it usually does not make necessary reference to the effectiveness of the UMWA machine to explain the remarkable solidarity of the miners in all their actions.

The Mining Industry

A good proportion of the mines in the Morgantown area are owned by the Pittsburgh-Consolidation Coal Company. This huge combine, the largest single producer of coal in the United States, was formed in 1943 under the leadership of the Hanna Corporation of Cleveland. As in almost all other fields, the coal industry underwent a process of concentration during the war. Smaller firms, along with numerous individual entrepreneurs, were combined into this large corporation. The mines in the area are mostly slope, not shaft, mines. Strip operations are becoming more and more common. The mines have been in full production ever since the beginning of the war. There is every indication that this condition will continue, given the necessities of current U.S. production and the commitments which will be necessary under the Marshall Plan. Full production has been impeded in the Morgantown area, and in northern West Virginia generally, because of the railroad coal car shortage which resulted from the increased rate of deterioration induced by wartime operations and the lack of replacements. Nevertheless, from the long-time point of view the coal industry is a declining one. The coal operators have established a large research laboratory in the Pittsburgh area for the development of new uses for coal and for the exploitation of coal derivatives. Given the expansion of the coal industry which has taken place the past seven years, a recession will produce very serious social repercussions in the coal fields.

The Miner

The most striking fact about the coal miners initially is that an exceptionally large number of them are old men. This has been a source of concern among the coal operators, as is evidenced by discussions in the trade journals. In view of the high degree of mechanization in the mines, only by the increased output possible with younger men can the operators see a way of seriously increasing production. Following the pattern of a phenomenon that is world-wide, there is a flight of the youth away from the mines. They strike out for the large industrial cities; some re-enlist in the army. The hard life of the mining camps which produces this exodus also induces considerable mobility among other layers of the population who do not have too many commitments in terms of family, home, furniture, etc.

There is considerable diversity of national types among the various villages. Some will be predominantly Italian, others Russian, for instance. In the area in which we work the composition is largely Negro and native white.

The level of literacy and culture is naturally low. Along with this goes a low level of responsibility and leadership--at least in the terms to which we are accustomed. It is probable that hasty

generalizations should not be made in this regard, for our experience is hardly a fair sampling of the hole mining area.

The double exploitation to which women are subjected under capitalism is a reality in the mine villages. Housework is exceptionally arduous, families are large, and the lord and master concept is well-established. Most of the young women would like to marry someone outside the mine camp and escape the hard and monotonous life.

Negroes

In the coal camps themselves - not in the larger centers like Fairmont or Morgantown - the Negro-white relations are the best that I have ever seen. There is no discrimination within the mine in the ranks of the working force. Negroes have all jobs that whites have. The same is true for the UMWA. Negroes are not merely given honorary posts of no real value. They fill all positions in the union. There is a great deal of social friendliness and visiting back and forth between the Negroes and the whites.

Most of the Negroes were brought from the South as scabs during the bitter 1922 strike period but have remained to become good union men. A great number of the Negroes, especially the older ones and the women, are religious - religious in the sense that religion constitutes a great part of their social life and is a rationale for the blows existence delivers them. Among the class conscious Negroes - those who had some contact with the CP during the 'thirties, for instance - texts from the Bible and from Marx are equally drawn upon in proving the case for socialism.

Mining Conditions

Mining is still a very hazardous occupation in comparison with other ones. It is sufficient to glance around in the mining villages and to note the number of men with arms, hands, fingers, legs and feet off, and to note the number of cripples and deformed, to realize the truth of this fact. The dramatic mine explosions are the ones which make the papers, but there is a constant human attrition caused by minor explosions, rock falls, and accidents with equipment which swell the casualty totals. That a great deal of this was obviated formed the basis for the existence of the UMWA - and guarantees its continued existence.

The United Mine Workers

The average mine local in the area meets every two weeks. In comparison with operating standards in the UAW, the UE, or the URW, it must be said that the UMWA is on a primitive level - but probably not more primitive than many small AFL craft locals. One fact will illustrate this: the secretary is paid for drawing up resolutions and statements, a condition which is a combination of a respect for literacy, a shortage of talent, and a conviction that skilled labor should be recompensed. Grievances are of a normal type, with the exception that since safety is of such primary importance the safety committee is probably the leading committee. Considerable of the work commonly assumed by a local in regard to the negotiating of wage and other demands is, of course, not done on a local basis but is no-

gotiating of wage and other demands is, of course, not done on a local basis but is negotiated on a national scale by the UMWA leadership. The field covered by the check-off is extensive and covers union dues, the welfare fund, the doctor's fee, and unemployment compensation, in addition to specific local items. The UMWA is held together by a cadre of older people. As seems to be true elsewhere throughout the country it is the people who built the unions and who remember the bad old days who keep it on its toes today. The number of young people attending union meetings or participating in its work is very small.

Though the UMWA is hierarchically organized, there is a great deal of democracy on the lower levels. It is only when matters transcend the local basis and are thrown into the lap of the district representatives that the weight of the Lewis appointees begins to be felt. In the area in which we worked, it should be remarked, there was no ascertainable opposition to Lewis except some opposition from the right of a minor character. The miners in our particular area offered little opposition to the passage of the Taft-Hartley Bill. What opposition to the bill existed was of a mixed character, since the miners' vacations coincided with the passage of the bill and they followed their usual procedure of taking-off early.

Since there is almost no local government in the mine areas and since demands usually made upon city administrations have to be made upon the operators, there are plenty of grievances which normally would not be taken up by a union but can be utilized by a conscious union leadership. Such things as garbage and rubbish collection, the painting of houses, etc., can form the basis of a real social program for the unions. Actually, the miners are fairly well paid. None of our comrades, for instance, probably gets below fourteen dollars a day. But no matter to what level the wages are raised, and even with the elimination of the coal car shortage, which has been cutting down the take home pay in the area, the social problems of the mining areas are not soluble on an old-fashioned trade union level. Questions such as housing, education, sidewalks, plumbing, etc., are social ones, requiring a broadening of the vantage point from which the social scene is currently viewed. Further, the simple fact noted by Robert Owen a hundred years ago is very real among the miners: wage increases cannot be utilized to best advantage by the miners given the irresponsibility which their life has forced upon them.

The History of the Party

The Workers Party was first established in the Morgantown area through the efforts of Morgan West, who subsequently became a Johnsonite. To give the devil his due, he did a pretty good job in the initial stages before he got carried away on wings of song. In May, 1946, an SYL composed of six people was formed. With this as a basis LABOR ACTION distributions were made between May and September of that year, with a good response from the miners. From among the LABOR ACTION subscribers and from among the ranks of the SYL, which had pretty much fallen to pieces when school started in September, a Party group of 11 people was formed. In December of that year E. R. McKinney visited the area and formally installed the branch, which began with a membership of 11 people. When I arrived in the area in late January, 1947, one member had been added, 3 had moved

out of town, one had been dropped and one was inactive through a sever illness. The branch actually consisted of 7 members, composed as follows: 4 miners, 3 of them Negroes, and 1 of them a white; one student; one housewife; and Morgan West. Before the split this was augmented by one Negro unemployed miner, a former CP'er; and five students. This made a branch of 13 all told.

The problem which the branch presented was an obvious one: it was the task of politically and organizationally grounding the branch, if in a rudimentary sense. Education was begun using topics derived from the constant developments in the struggle of the UMWA with the government; LABOR ACTION, "Plenty for All;" and, for the lack of a pamphlet of our own, the SWP pamphlet, "The Struggle for Negro Equality." All of this education had to be conducted on a viva voce basis. It was all but impossible to get those members who had a certain facility in reading to do so. Some of the comrades were not able to read or write. There are probably few places in the movement outside of S.E. Missouri where the personal relations between the politically educated comrades and the recruits was so decisive in raising the level of the membership. Elementary steps in the organizational consolidation of the branch were taken. Meeting nights were stabilized, the dues system was instituted, and contacting on a modest scale was begun. Limited trade union work was instituted.

It was not long, however, before it became apparent that without a cadre the possibility of the growth of the branch, not to speak of the maintenance of it, was problematical. The worker comrades, despite some excellent material among them, did not have the necessary experience or the possibility of acquiring it in the foreseeable future. Morgan West, who under other circumstances might have developed the basis of the necessary local leadership, was by this time a full-blown Johnsonite, with all the personal arrogance and political unreality which at its best guarantees in advance the construction of a type of movement which is completely alien to the WP. I very soon cast around for personnel from which a native leadership could be constructed. We were fortunate in having West Virginia University located nearby in Morgantown. Though the university is backward in comparison with many state universities, it is not overwhelmingly so. A great leavening factor was the presence of a majority of veterans among the student body. A number of these were youth from mining villages who normally might have wanted to go to school but who would not have been able to do so for financial reasons. The GI Bill of Rights provided them with the opportunity. There were, additionally, several liberal professors, each of whom was trying to improve the intellectual and political climate in some fashion or other. On the inspiration of one of these professors an AVC chapter was formed. This attracted to and around it those student elements who had the clearest conception of the actuating mechanisms of the real world. I picked up a friendship with the AVC personnel. I found most of them people with a belief that world events could be explained once the causal agent could be discovered and that to work for a change in the present order of things was a worthwhile occupation in life. Most of them had already, in one mode or another, rejected bourgeois values.

As a result of long, patient talks with many of them, in which we raced or limped madly over the whole field of human thought, four

students were recruited from the AVC. At the same time, a considerable body of persons friendly to our ideas in one degree or another, was created. The work of clinching these students was accomplished in a class centering around Max Shachtman's "The Fight for Socialism." A fortunate factor in the work at the university was the absence of any sort of radical, liberal, or even roughly intellectual institution. To round off the basic education which the students had received, it was proposed that they go to New York for a training period during the summer in preparation for a return to the area in the fall. Three persons, two of them comrades and the other a sympathizer, were able to do so. From New York and from New York comrades they received a very condensed but well presented education not only in politics but in general culture as well. As a result of this period of self-development the sympathizer joined the organization. These comrades, of a type of which we have not had an accession since the winning over of the socialist youth in the 'thirties, can form the basis of the necessary native cadre for West Virginia work.

Problems and Solutions

I left Morgantown in early July prior to the Johnson split. When the split took place, Morgan West was able to take four miner comrades with him. The most advanced miner comrade, despite his inexperience, the absence of any WP cadre elements, and the misrepresentation on the part of West, remained with us. With the re-entry on the scene of WP cadre personnel some two months later the miner comrades are beginning to come back to the organization. It can be stated with confidence that those comrades who are capable of branch activity will return to the Party. The fact, however, that there will be two competing parties operating in an extremely small area will have a much more adverse effect than the presence of two such parties operating in a large industrial milieu. The SWP (Johnsonite) personnel in the area are far from formidable competition, but they possess a certain flair for acting as a nuisance. But their inexperience, their Johnsonite deformations, and their personal situations should not permit them to hold the field against our comrades if our comrades prove able to implement the Party policy.

Another problem is to integrate the student elements with the coal miners. The gap between workers and intellectuals is not the easiest one to bridge under even the best of circumstances. In the coal fields the problem is posed in its sharpest form. This problem is primarily one of the education of the student comrades and correct leadership on the scene and from the center. The presence of Comrade McDermott, with his industrial background, should be of great help in this respect.

A primary importance for the development of our base in coal is the acquisition of qualified miner leadership, both Negro and white. We are weak at the moment in not having sufficient contact with white miners. Further, we must seek to lower the age level through recruiting from among young miners, so that we can have an active leadership. This I do not consider an exceptionally difficult problem because the field open to us is very extensive and we have explored only a minute part of it - with unusually productive results.

The university remains a very fruitful place for work. Interest in the course of world events is keen though not often manifest. A debate held by the university on the Truman Doctrine last semester, for instance, drew an excited crowd of over 500. The AVC here can serve as an excellent campus polarizing force. As the capitalist-induced war fever mounts it is certain that there will be reflexes within the student body which will be advantageous to us.

Once the current membership is stabilized and a minimum program of education has been assimilated, a careful program of expansion can take place. The elemental first step is the selling of LABOR ACTION subscriptions in the mine camps, now that we have a personnel of sufficient size to do it. This work will have to be carefully controlled so as not to exceed the resources of the available personnel. At the same time simple and practical work can be started in the UMWA. Our comrades there will want visible evidence of our right to existence. Further expansion throughout the state, for which we have the necessary contacts right now, can be taken on judiciously, and only when the work in the Morgantown area is firmly in hand.

Nowhere that I have worked in recent years has afforded the creative satisfaction that the work in West Virginia has. To go into a strange area, to start from little, and to watch it grow - that is a deep pleasure. The miners are waiting to hear what we have to say. The prospects are real. When I left, one of the miner comrades took my hand and said, "When you get to New York, tell them that we're a-comin', we're a-comin'." A good part of the rest, I submit, depends upon the seriousness with which we regard the initial steps we have taken among the ranks of that most basic sector of the United States working class, the coal miner.

October 30, 1947

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REPORT ON BUFFALO NOVEMBER 4, 1947

By Herb Ferris

1. STATE OF THE BRANCH

A. The high morale of the Buffalo branch stems from two main sources; We feel that we correctly understood and applied the party's orientation towards proletarianization, on unity, in the UAW factional fight, on a live, vigorous wholesome internal branch life, and on its emphasis upon "facing outward". We have had the satisfaction of seeing our work bear fruit in the form of recruits.

Secondly; The high esteem in which the PARTY is held by the core of UAW militants in the city and by the international. Each of our trade unionists has personal prestige to a greater or lesser degree. But we do not have to draw covert satisfaction that WE know this or that respected trade unionist is a party member. MOST of the UAW core know our members as PARTY people. They are conscious of the party too, as they meet LABOR ACTION at caucus meetings, at rallies, and at plant sales. WP'ers are expected and welcome at UAW picket lines and at the affairs of several unions. This attitude upon the part of what we consider a really worthwhile periphery reacts upon the comrades. The fact that leading militants are carefully scrutinizing the party, critically evaluating the branch as well as individual comrades gives us an added sense of responsibility and party pride.

We feel that the above moderate successes are our just reward. We were, in the main, responsive to the needs of the union militants, on the picket line, flying squad, CIO council, in agitating for an area wide caucus, in driving for programmatic issues, in sponsoring an open debate on union issues. In a lesser but important degree, we were responsive to political events in the city. A Zionist picket line, sales at every semblance of a political meeting, letters to the press. Each of these actions, did not, in themselves, net any exceptional results. In their totality they add up to a more interested and friendly periphery.

Perhaps, for some, it is necessary to point out that we were not always responsive, that at times we were downright irresponsible lazy, tail-endish and inefficient. There were times when we dithered along in a "slump" for months at a time. Occasions where contacts poured in, and week after week of talking to ourselves,

We do not airily wave these deficiencies aside. In some degree or another they are part of all organizations, particularly such as ours. These deficiencies become dangerous when the branch isn't moving. Most of our comrades are sincerely trying to "keep the branch on the ball." There were unquestionably many things we COULD have done and didn't. What we DID DO paid off.

B. We still have a fair sized, well decorated headquarters. We have torn down and built partitions, painted, cleaned, added couches and chairs--so now we pay \$40 per month for rent.

II. MEMBERSHIP

At the writing of the last report we had 16 members in the branch. The report read: "13 are fully active, 1 merely keeps himself in 'good standing'; one is tied down to his business." Despite all our efforts we lost these three comrades. The comrade who is tied down to his business is a contributing sympathizer to the party.

Three comrades were transferred into the Buffalo branch. Two were from New York and one from Chicago. We in turn, transferred two comrades to New York. Thus in this period we increased our membership by only one comrade through transfers as against six the preceding period.

In Dec. 46 we had 14 members. Of these 5 were Buffalonians, 7 New Yorkers, 2 from Syracuse.

Today we have 24 members, 12 Buffalonians, 8 New Yorkers, 2 from Syracuse, 2 from Rochester.

We recruited 11 people in 11 months.

9 work in shops; one unemployed worker, 5 white collar; 3 student one union official; one functionary.

To make the figures clearer it is necessary to know who the people are and how we recruited them.

In December 1946 only two of our members had more than six months seniority in the shop. They were both in the same shop and the only ones able to bring shop contacts to our meetings. They brought a few now and then and could build up a decent social or public meeting occasionally. The other comrades were just beginning to make friends in the shop.

Our periphery consisted of three prospects, some contacts, and about 35 subs to LA. When the Minority parties were thrown off the state and local ballots, we played a part in calling a protest meeting. Through this we met two members of the SP, both of whom we had attempted to recruit some years back. Both were active in the SP, one was the branch secretary. A class in Marxian fundamentals was formed of the two SP'ers and our three prospects, given by the organizer, which met weekly in private homes for about four months. Of the five three joined the party. The other two became almost indistinguishable from party members but did not join for personal reasons.

At about this time unity was again put on the agenda. We made an all out effort to make unity work (see end of report). In the course of our efforts we convinced three SWP members and two of their closest contacts of the correctness of our position on unity. The three SWP members have joined the WP and one of the contacts also joined. The other is an active sympathizer. Unity hurt our main shop concentrations (see report of Murrain) We were unable to draw a contact from that shop to our meetings for months.

Of the other four comrades, one was recruited in a shop, two by working with Rochester people by mail and visits, and one in the course of our general activity.

TRADE UNION CONCENTRATION AND INDUSTRIALIZATION

In Nov. 46 we had the following trade union composition; 8 members in five shops, divided in this manner; 3,2,1,1,1. Two of these were barely in the party as explained above and we lost them. One was transferred to New York.

Our present composition is; 9 members in shops, divided in the following way; 2,1,2,4. The shops are listed in the same order as those above. One can observe a slight shift of fractions. One fraction is composed of completely new recruits to the party. All fractions are led by comrades who have been in the movement, if not the party, for more than six years.

In shop A our comrades are both stewards. They took the initiative in getting pro-Reuther elements into a caucus, gave organizational direction to the caucus which made it the overwhelming force in the local, injected programmatic questions into the caucus and the local. One comrade is widely known among the militants within and without the shop as a WP'er.

LABOR ACTION is sold weekly at the plant gates. Sales ranging from 18-25 copies a week.

12 subs have been sold inside the plant.

Shop B -- (see report of Murrain)

Shop C. This fraction is composed of two recruits, the leader of which is an ex-Lincoln Brigade Fighter, and a former close contact of the SWP. The other is a former member of the SWP. One of the biggest problems that the fraction faces is the SWP. The latter have formed a rank and file caucus which is fighting the CP for control of the plant. Our comrades are working within the rank and file caucus. They are faced with a constant battle with the SWP on organizational maneuvers, high handed procedures in the caucus by the SWP, character assassination of our comrades, etc. It further evidences our growing inability to work harmoniously with the SWP. There are no particular political disagreements between our comrades in the shop and the SWP. Since the acceptance of the Johnsonites, the cannonites have completely dropped even the mask of friendship and attack our comrades in the most unprincipled manner.

In Fraction D we have one bargaining committee member who is also a member of the executive board. The other three comrades are new in the shop. The union and political level of the shop is very low but the situation holds forth much promise for us in the future. We have just recruited a member from this shop. This recruit worked in plant B previously where he knew our people.

We have three delegates to the CIO council. These comrades have been instrumental in getting the Council to go on record for an Independent Labor Party, in support of the Zionist picket line and several other issues which have given them and the party a high standing.

One of our primary objectives has been to unite the militants

of different shops. We urge constantly the need for area-wide or even multi-union caucus to fight in the CIO Council, UAW, for a Labor Party, etc. We are recognized as the only group in the city which has consistently attempted to do this. It is, by the way, a RECOGNIZED difference among the militants, between the WP and the SWP who retire more and more within "their" local.

A striking example of our position in the UAW in this area is the public debate we held between Ben Hall and an international representative of the UAW on Thomas' staff. We are very proud of the debate.

One of our early, unrealized plans was to achieve close organizational ties with Detroit, to exchange ideas, speakers, fraction material and branch visits. We managed to utilize comrade Ben Hall for the debate.

We had an attendance of some 70 people. Two union presidents, some three or four UAW staff members and about 30 committee men, stewards and rank and filers were included in the audience.

We covered expenses for the meeting, including Ben's carfare.

We received good press coverage.

The real importance of the debate lies in this; that the Workers Party in Buffalo took up the cudgels for the Reuther caucus against the Addes caucus. The union militants and even the UAW reps. came to the debate to hear us drop the opposition. Our constant agitation for a Reuther caucus, and the failure of the international to set one up, made our sponsorship of the debate seem quite natural. In the eyes of the militants, the Workers Party was a part of the union situation. Only the Addes men, the SWP and the CP protested that the debate was giving us too much prestige, or that by debating us Scheitinger was debating an "outside force" who was trying to capitalize on the union situation.

The debate was generally hailed as "more education in one night than I've had in a year" and as "the kind of thing we need more often". Our comrades enthusiastically drove home the point that our party believes in standing on its two and arguing its point of view in public, that we think these issues should be brought to the rank and file without fear of "confusing the workers."

To summarize our trade union position in a sentence; We feel that we have managed to sink our roots into the unions, particularly the UAW, and that the next period will really test our ability to recruit.

VETERANS WORK

A. All of our eligible veterans have not yet been placed in Veterans organizations. The primary reason for this is the press of other activity and the fact that most of those who do not belong work on the second shift.

B. We spent some time in the AVC this year. There is one chapter in the city composed of 175 members on paper. Only 20 or so come to meetings. One of our comrades was a delegate to the convention. The press of other activities and the inactivity of the AVC itself has made it impossible for our comrades to really help build the AVC.

C. We have just recently appointed a Veterans Director who will plan and organize the work in the future.

FUNCTIONING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND INDIVIDUAL DEPARTMENTS

A. We have an excellent executive committee. Any combination of changes could and probably will be made in the executive committee without improving its function one bit. Our cadre spills over the executive committee deep into the branch.

B. Most of the branch committees are functioning at a high degree of efficiency.

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY

Our educational program is divided into three parts:

A. Branch Educationals - Such topics as "Whats Behind the UAW Faction Fight?" "Palestine," "The UE today", "The roots of Minority Discrimination," Quiz. Emphasis is placed upon branch participation. Contacts as well as members are kept in mind when the educationals are planned.

B. Internal Education:

We had planned an 8 week course for new members and a discussion group for members on the program of the party. Though the Educational Committee planned the classes well and the instructor of the party was excellent, interest fell off. One prime factor was the inability of the comrades to come regularly due to union or other party business. A second factor was that despite their best efforts, older comrades tended to drive less experienced members from the discussions. We have substituted individual education for branch classes. Leading comrades have been assigned one, two or three comrades with whom they meet once a week and to whom they give a formal "class" for an hour or so. This method requires more effort than a branch class but is infinitely more superior. It knits the branch together as educational work is "dispersed" through the branch. New recruits find this method more helpful and stimulating and feel their personal needs are being met. Over a period of time we hope this method will create a THINKING membership, able and willing to engage in political discussions. This is very difficult to achieve in the "out of town" branches.

One important problem in education is the comrades on the second shift. These comrades are also a branch organizational problem. We have adopted the following idea to try to cope with this condition. We have organized an "extra-legal" branch meeting of our second shifters where they discuss party problems and have an educational. These comrades also attend the regular branch meetings on Sunday. This has already proved its worth as one of our new members is on the second shift and can attend this meeting far more regularly than the branch meeting. This meeting may prove to be the founding of a second shift branch. Five comrades are involved in this meeting.

C. External Classes:

We have a class in Marxian fundamentals for some immediate prospects. The class referred to in our previous report netted us three comrades. We hope to acquire as many this time. All those who attend the class "pay" for the class. This is quite a help to our monthly budget.

NEGRO WORK

Effective activity----- 0
Reason----- Laxity

STUDENT WORK

- A. We have just appointed a student director
- B. We have a fraction of two on a campus
- C. We have a fraction of two on another campus.

FINANCES

We have attained a fair degree of financial responsibility. We managed to come through the period Dec '46 to the present maintaining our headquarters at \$40 per month, paying organizational expenses of \$15 per week (sporadically it is true), paying our dues and pledges-- and though it took a special branch fund drive we managed to pay all our back debts on NI, LA, WP Publications. An ancient debt of \$55 still hangs over our head to the NO. We hope to pay this in the next period.

CAMPAIGNS

The branch has been unable to participate in any specific campaigns. There have been none carried through by other forces in the city and we have not tried to initiate any.

We are definitely looking forward to '48 when we plan to put forth a party candidate.

Y.WCA

We have a housewives fraction in the Industrial YWCA. Fraction members have participated in several housewives and consumer committees which did not develop very far. We have obtained a few subs and expect greater rewards in the future.

LITERATURE

All during the summer months literature sales had been at a standstill. We had about 40 on our LA sub list and 10 on our NI list. In August we appointed a literature committee consisting of three comrades and a Labor Action squad of the same three plus one more comrade. Since then Labor Action has paid for itself. The squad of 4 comrades was to carry the main burden of LA sales and the following plan was established to sell our weekly LA bundle of 40. A weekly LA sale was to be held at these places: 1) a housing project in a Negro neighborhood, 2) a plant gate where we have a concentration of two comrades, 3) CIO Council meetings.

At the housing project over a period of 2-3 months we sold approximately 150 single copies of the June Jim Crow issue of LA. We obtained a dozen subs and established some 15 contacts. We have just begun the follow up there.

At the plant gate we worked in conjunction with the comrades working inside the plant. We are selling an average of 20 copies a week at the gate and the comrades inside see all those who buy the paper. They can then effectively follow up the sales. One comrade has sold 12 subs in the plant in a short period of time. This means that so far there are about 35 workers in the plant who read LA every week.

At the CIO Council attended by some 60 members we averaged about 15 at each sale.

Our NI bundle is 15. During the last two months, due to the UAW issue, we sold 35 NI's. We also sold 5 Plenty for All, 4 Fight for Socialism.

Literature in general had been a weakness in the branch but the small results we have obtained indicate that with a little effort we could really sell literature.

LABOR ACTION CORRESPONDENT

We have set up a Director of Labor Action Correspondence. The director is a leading comrade. He is not responsible for WRITING articles but for assigning and editing them. Though this is a new thing in our branch it is improving our relations with Labor Action. We are also planning a full fledged publicity committee. Their function will be besides LABOR ACTION, the party Builder, the local press, a newsletter to contacts, etc.

UNITY

The night the Buffalo branch officially announced that unity negotiations had been reopened, a highly valued new comrade quit the WP, because of his feelings toward the SWP. The overwhelming majority of the branch welcomed this second opportunity to unite the two parties. We elected a committee of four leading comrades which was to meet with the local branch of the SWP and arrange a series of activities which we could collaborate on. Our program was as follows:

1. A joint social, the proceeds to go to International Relief.
2. A mutual invitation to members of both parties to attend each others branch meetings.
3. Joint discussion meetings on any of the following topics (or any they might desire) Unity, UAW Today, Labor Party, Democratic Centralism, France, etc.
4. Joint fraction meetings in the plants where we both had members.
5. A meeting of the trade union committees to discuss the issues of flying squads, district council of the UAW CIO Council, Reuther caucus, etc.

6. Possible joint anti-discrimination action, rent, housing, etc. That we issue a joint statement on the teachers' strike, etc.

7. That both branches make available to each other discussion documents.

After several delays the SWP met with us. They had no proposals of their own but condescended to hear ours. The tone and character of the meeting is too familiar to all comrades to warrant description here. At the conclusion of the meeting, the SWP organizer said that he would present our proposals to the branch but he would not recommend them favorably. He did agree that a joint social for Relief was permissible and that "if they had time" we could arrange one together. He said he would let us know of the branch decisions. In the course of the next 6-8 months not one joint action took place. Nothing was done on Relief.

Though none of our proposals was acted upon, our comrades did support SWP functions: their Saturday night forum, public meetings. At first they were suffusly welcomed. When they sat quietly in their seats, drank at the bar, or played ping pong, everything was harmonious. As soon as they began to question SWP comrades about the reason for unity, the lack of collaboration and final blasphemy--as soon as it became clear that our comrades would and could argue their political convictions, the temperature in the SWP changed. It dawned upon them that we did not intend to meekly surrender our political beliefs and then they promptly remanded us to hades.

But they did not dare say they were against unity--as the political committee was on record for unity. Their conception of unity was the same as that revealed in the Martin letter. That the WP was joining the SWP like any new recruit. They counted our chairs, placed our sofa and added our membership. The difference between joining and uniting was not apparent to them--and in the majority is not apparent to this day.

There approach can be judged from the following illustration. The SWP organizer asked the WP organizer "as an evidence of good faith" to withhold sale of LABOR ACTION at a CIO rally because the SWP was going to distribute the MILITANT. A leading comrade in the SWP asked one of our comrades to help distribute the MILITANT. In turning down these requests, we tried to explain the political reasoning behind our refusal. To no avail-- it was evidence of "lack of good faith."

Unavoidably in a town of this size, both parties cover most political and union meetings with our respective papers. Incidents of an unpleasant nature often occurred. Just before the re-opening of unity both parties covered a Foster meeting. Both came in "strength" each having more watchers than distributors. They shouted such slogans as: "This is the real Trotskyist paper", "That's a Shachtmanite paper". One might assume these to be the excesses of overzealous distributors. When a foremost comrade of the SWP takes the ONE SWP'er who spoke to us at the sale and informs him that it were best that the Stalinists did not seem him talking to us because they might become confused and think the SWP and the WP were one, then the picture is clear. There was no change in attitude after unity negotiations were revived.

The comrade who spoke to us was an ex-Stalinist and had had his surfeit of this type of thinking and acting. He and one other comrade with whom he had split from the CP to join the SWP were fully in favor of unity. They made a study of the unity question, discussed the question thoroughly with the WP members and with all SWP members who would discuss the problem. More and more as they voiced their qualms about the SWP role on unity they were isolated, frowned upon, intimidated and finally castigated as petty bourgeois and WP spies.

At the same time the SWP had a close contact named Gordon. Gordon was an ex-CP'er, fought in Spain etc. From every point of view a great asset. As a SPECIAL contact Gordon was permitted to come to fraction meetings, branch meetings and was expected to join the SWP. In the course of his trade union work, as the unity controversy developed and as he saw how the two above comrades plus another comrade who began to have doubts were treated, Gordon began to shy away from the SWP. After about six months of discussions, trade union evaluation etc. Gordon joined the WP. Immediately he was attacked as petty bourgeois, a big cry baby, a maneuverist, etc. When one or more of the above comrades demanded an evaluation of Gordon's divorce from the SWP and his affinity for the WP, they were sneered at and told to go along with him. Their mildest defense of Gordon's reputation and personality brought forth abuse upon their own heads.

The situation was brought to a head when the SWP finally agreed to an internal discussion on unity. After a 45 minute appeal for a genuine unity made by one of the above comrades, the SWP leadership launched their attack. The Russian question, the personality and character of the speaker, linking up the other two dissident comrades with the speaker, all were discussed--but nothing was said on the problem of unity. Were the leaders for or against unity? No answer except calumny. Then came the WP statement on unity which we have not yet acted upon. Acknowledging they they were embarking on an orgy of democracy, the SWP organizer had the secretary read the statement in full. Then with the only copy in his hands, he overemphasized, distended, distorted, ripped out of context, in short--butchered the document, its content, its meaning and reduced it to a mere jumble of words. One point as illustration. Discussing the position of the SWP and the WP toward the Stalinist parties, Shachtman writes of the unbridgeable gap between the two ideas. THERE they now they come out with it! See we were right all along--the two tendencies are incompatible within one party. Shachtman exposed his own maneuver. The reaction?-- APPLAUSE. Thus the statement of the PC of the WP on the failure of unity which we acknowledge as a blow to the movement, the SWP organizer presents as a victory for the SWP. Their position won out. But wait--someone says, "haven't we been for unity? If so, then this is a defeat for us as well. But the protests are brushed aside and the comrades who sincerely have been for unity are left aghast.

Considering the line of the SWP with regard to unity insufferably crude, bureaucratic and two faced, feeling that further efforts to get the SWP leadership to collaborate upon local trade union issues, relief public meetings with the WP, were futile and surfeited with name calling, character assassination and personal animosity the three comrades have sent in their resignations to the SWP and have declared their desire to join the WP.

The Buffalo branch, therefore, in the period since unity began won away from the SWP three members, one "special" sympathizer and one "ordinary" sympathizer with "special privileges". An immediate total of five people.

We say here sincerely that the pleasure of adding these comrades to our rolls as members and sympathizers is greatly offset by the failure of unity between the two branches and the acrimony that is sure to follow will work to the disadvantage of both groups. We feel that we made every effort to make unity work. We gave all--they gave nothing. It is fitting that they should pay the greater penalty.

CHICAGO REPORT

By R. Ferguson

* * *

Chicago branch events on the background of about $\frac{1}{4}$ of the branch being factory workers, $\frac{1}{4}$ students and a large section of the rest of the comrades being themselves old-time politicals. In not recruiting successfully or breaking significantly out of our isolation otherwise in mass organizations, the branch went through a long period of merely existing and doing minimum activities. This was climaxed by a more severe than usual summer slump, which has now been checked and most signs point to significant reactivation.

The unity question aroused especial interest in Chicago; branch discussion and personal preoccupation with the problem tended in my opinion to be excessive. One meeting of a top committee was held with the SWP to plan collaboration; only one general meeting of unionists was held together. The only other collaboration lay in ACEWR affairs and putting over a social.

The major campaign of past period was the mayoralty election in January and February, report of which was in Labor Action. Because we did not expect to get on the ballot due to the 88,000 signatures required, membership participation in petition gathering for the purpose of contacting and distributing literature soon appeared fruitless, and in the last weeks of the campaign interest diminished abruptly. Lacking roots in either unions, other organizations or neighborhoods, the branch highlighted the 3 radio speeches and appearances before public hearings of candidate Goldman. The main election rally did not attract other than the usual crowd of political people in our periphery. Not a single good contact resulted from the campaign. The branch now feels that any plans for future electoral work must be laid in accordance more with possibilities of getting on the ballot and concentration in areas where roots have been, or can be definitely laid. One activity still hanging fire from the campaign is a united front initiated by us thru the Civil Liberties Union, involving the SWP, CP and Prohibition Party for pushing ballot reform in the State legislature.

Rent and housing campaign activity did not get beyond plans interrupted by the interest in the unity question, and then later the summer slump. Local SWP successes in this field organizationally can be attributed to the fact that their comrades either live in or close to buildings which they organized. A survey of our comrades buildings found none which could be organized.....No special campaign on the Labor Party has been conducted other than the support, political and organizational, that we gave the Revere UAW local's aldermanic campaign on a labor party ticket.

Of our 11 unionists (nov 1) only 5 are in concentrations; 2 in A and three in B. In the latter union our comrades are the real stiffening force in the spines of the leadership and are looked to for real guidance. Conditions of disorganization in this local have made it necessary for these comrades to take on considerable work of a plain union building character, with the result that contacting work has never achieved more than a verbal emphasis. In concentration A our 2 comrades are in 2 widely separated plants, active and recognized by the extreme right-wing Reutherite leadership as a potential danger to them

In Negro work the branch is just now finding it possible to do continuous work, through having selected appropriate personnel to engage in activity in CORE, an unusually good ground for making contacts with militant Negro youth. We have participated in a meeting sponsored by this group to boycott State St. Stores for Jim Crow hiring politics. Because of the SWP's stacking of the Hickman Defense Committee, making no attempt to obtain an organization to organization united front, our work for this cause has been limited to a small amount of Jimmy Higgins effort.

Educationals in connection with branch meetings comprise the past activities in this field, and have been thought to be effective for branch members (and close sympathizers who occasionally attend) Classes last winter petered out, and a regular forum on Sundays did not become operative. The Women's club sponsored speakers on cultural subjects from outside the party. The branch held well to its objective of having at least one public meeting each month, aside from branch educationals.

Literature work in the past was sustained primarily by the efforts of one comrade, who now is unable to handle this. Plans are now in effect for putting the sales of literature on a basis more acceptable to the membership than street sales and housing project sub drives.

In AVC our comrades were extremely active last winter; dropped entirely out of the picture for many months, so that we did not even have a delegate to the AVC convention (covered technically by Chicago comrades Now on the campus at the U of C with our vet organizer present, we expect to take a prominent role in AVC affairs; also at Roosevelt College by planned collaboration with other left wing elements vs. Stalinist control.

Membership figures are given elsewhere. Membership as of Nov 1 is 42. Finances have been a continual stumbling block to the branch. Had it not been for the assistance of the NO, they would have been disastrous last January and prevented the Mayorality campaign. Paying \$125 per month for headquarters, the branch after May 1 was unable to pay the organizer, who found it necessary to resign to take factory work at the end of June.

Functioning of the EC cannot be treated here. Suffice it to say that opinion of EC members ranged from "worst I've ever sat on" to "all right" With the advent of the new organizer and increasing activation of at least student comrades, the problem of differences over the former organizer is scuttled and the heartening outlook in the student field gives promise to the branch outlook. The new organizer is not full-time being a part-time student, part time worker.

We have recruited 4 comrades in the past month, 2 of them being SWP minorityites. The other two are students at Roosevelt college, where we now have a fraction of 9, control the Socialist club and the E. Roosevelt forum and are a recognized political factor on the campus. At the U of C we have a fraction of 4, run the Politics club where Comrade Shachtman recently spoke to a crowd of 200.

ANALYSIS OF THE DETROIT ELECTION CAMPAIGN

By Herman Benson

* * *

The Detroit election campaign took place at a time when the labor officialdom, as a result of the beating it had been taking in the political field was in a state of political demoralization and without perspective. Hungry for a political "victory" they decided to give tacit support to Mayor Jeffries (later open support) whom they had fought tooth and nail for four years in the Fitzgerald and Frankenstein campaigns of 1943 and 1945. They hoped thereby that Jeffries, having become "obligated" to the CIO, would be more sympathetic to it. The Stalinists had their own special axe to grind. Jeffries, whose defeat in the Republican primaries for Governor had taught him the need to make an occasional liberal gesture if his political career was not to end as a big frog, became signer number one on a CP circulated petition to repeal the Callahan bill, a state measure directed against "foreign" influences in the unions which was so extreme in its stupidity that the State Attorney General announced that he would refuse to enforce it because it was not constitutional. This move by Jeffries was enough for the CP. For months before the primary elections, the CP press avidly reported his every move, giving it the most "liberal" interpretation.

But there was one thing wrong with this fine strategy. The CIO members had learned to detest Jeffries as anti-union and Jim Crow which he is. Without going into his recent record, Jeffries ran for office in the last two campaigns on the basis of an open appeal to the most degenerate prejudices against Negroes and by playing upon the fear of the petty bourgeois elements of a "labor dictatorship." It may be hard to believe, but the blessings of the CIO fell upon this man as the lesser evil.

We decided to seize opportunity by the forelock. We ran for Mayor on the basis of a vigorous denunciation of the policy of the leadership of the CIO, a call for a new policy - Labor Party, and by agitation on the question of rent and housing. The articles in LABOR ACTION, the reprints of the various speeches, and our election pamphlet give an accurate idea of what points we stressed in the campaign.

The results were unexpected. The activity of a comparatively(!) small number of comrades succeeded in polling over 4,600 votes for our candidate or about 1.8% of the total. A partial qualification should be entered here. The Detroit elections are non-partisan in character, no party designations on the ballot. This makes possible the casting of ballots on the basis of accidental considerations. Anyone whose name is Edwards, Jeffries, Comstock, Murphy will poll a good vote even if he is an idiot (because he is an idiot?). (An example: the brother of one of our comrades was asked if he voted for Benson. He said, "No." "Why not," he was asked. "You know," he replied, "that I don't want to vote for any damn Trotskyite." "But then who did you vote for," he was asked. Reply: "I voted for Max Lerner." Howard Lerner, the man whom he obviously voted for, was the SWP candidate.)

To be ultra-conservative, we might cut the total vote in half to indicate the "significant" vote, cast with some real thought behind it. Even this would be a wonderful showing. However, such a minimal calculation would not present a true picture. The SWP vote, as has been reported, was right behind ours with about 4,450. (The next candidate in line got 2,000 fewer votes than Lerner.) An analysis of the vote shows that both Lerner and Benson got most of their votes in proletarian and Negro areas. The more bourgeois the neighborhood, the fewer votes.

The results of the campaign, the immediate results, were very great. The spirit of the branch as a whole rose to great heights, as we learned that thousands of workers actually listened to us and at least to the extent of a vote, followed our lead. The prestige of the Party rose among all the elements in town who know the political scene; for we had shown that we could run a successful campaign and the standing of our Party members in the eyes of their co-workers in the shops who knew them as WP'ers, went up. A small group of Party contacts had worked for us in this campaign; this was an unusual thing and to a small extent we had gained a few new contacts. And last of all, the results of the campaign were a big blow at the pompous boasts of the SWP and its fancy claims to a tremendous following. So concerned was the SWP with the outcome that its organizer made hurried phone calls to our former "friends," the Johnsonites, to try to learn how we had gotten so many votes. More accurately, he was seeking some "rational" explanation that might satisfy his own members.

Comrades may shrug the whole thing off with the thought that this was all a happy accident made possible by a series of political coincidences peculiar to the Detroit scene at the moment. They will commend us for our initiative and pass on. But that would be wrong. The happy accident is inherent in the political scene which witnesses the disintegration of CIO policy. To support Truman in 1948 will not be too different from supporting Jeffries in 1947. We must all be alert to take advantage of all these inevitable "happy accidents." For this reason, the Party as a whole, despite its terrible financial weaknesses, must begin now to consider the possibilities of running a candidate in the 1948 presidential elections. Even if we can get on the ballot only in three states, it would be worth while.

SWP and WP in the Detroit Elections

Our campaign was a revolutionary socialist campaign. We fulfilled our first duty well, which was to criticize the false leadership of the CIO which supported Jeffries and to call for a new policy. THE SWP DOLGED THIS ISSUE. It ran an opportunist social-democratic campaign. For one thing, it was under the illusion that the CIO was actually conducting an independent labor political campaign in supporting five so-called "labor" candidates for Common Council (called "labor" only by the SWP). One of these candidates is a Stalinist who is a Democratic Party representative in the State Legislature. And so, since the CIO, in its opinion, was moving forward, they reduced their criticism of its policy to zero. The total error of this analysis was fully exposed when the PAC endorsed Jeffries and 2 other openly bourgeois candidates for Council after the primaries.

There were four Negro candidates for Council, all backed with

more or less warmth by the Negro press. One of these Negroes, Charles Hill, a preacher, was endorsed by the PAC as part of its slate. Hill works with the Addes group which controls the Wayne County (Detroit) PAC and so it threw its support to him. The SWP officially endorsed Hill and ran joint meetings with him, hoping thereby to pick up a few extra votes.

Our policy was quite different. We urged a vote for all four Negro candidates stating that we agreed with none of them but supported their candidacy in order to guarantee Negro representation. The SWP, by singling out Hill, endorsed his candidacy not simply on these democratic grounds but in effect endorsed his phoney liberalism, which alone distinguished him from the other three Negroes. They had rejected a proposal for a joint campaign with us. But they ran joint election rallies with Hill. This they hoped would help them pick up a few votes.

The whole campaign of the SWP was an opportunist one. Main argument for a labor Mayor: In Detroit there are a majority of workers, the Mayor ought to be a worker. Elect a socialist Mayor and inside of six months the whole housing shortage will be solved and subways with three minute service will be installed. Pleasant thought!

Finances

At the start of the campaign, we debated whether to operate on the basis of a \$300 budget or a \$250 budget. We decided on the smaller figure. Once we got started, the comrades came across and we ended up with a total expense of \$470. In this connection, three of our newest members contributed a total of \$105.

Mailings, Press Releases, Etc.

We sent out two general mailings to a list of about 350 people asking for money, etc. Response was poor. We sent letters to about 150 local unions asking to appear before their memberships and speak. Not one reply.

Press releases were sent out at least once a week and sometimes more. These releases were ignored by the regular daily press which printed only one notice of our campaign. One of the weekly Negro papers, however, printed most of our releases. Copies of these releases were sent to a special mailing list of about 30 close contacts. This device succeeded in arousing great interest. In the last week of the campaign the Detroit Free Press ran pictures of all the candidates with brief biographical notes. By a little strategem, our candidate had parts of our platform with his picture instead of the meaningless biography. Since this was printed in the Sunday edition with a large circulation, we feel that it helped our vote. Phone calls were made to part of our list of 350 (but this was not completed) The response of the people at the other end of the line was good and they seemed very pleased to hear from us. This method is to be recommended.

Neighborhood Work

We canvassed in one neighborhood, a mixed neighborhood. Although we did not put in very much work on this, what we did found ready response. We learned that our propaganda could be put forward effectively to whites as well as to Negroes. We sold about 100 or more copies of our pamphlet from door to door in a very sympathetic atmosphere entirely unlike the cold reception received in door to door canvassing for LA subs. However, we made the mistake of choosing a neighborhood in which none of our comrades live and in which we are not doing any regular work. It will not be possible to contact the people we met in the future normal course of Party activity. Special arrangements will have to be made.

We tried to hold two open air meetings in the neighborhood. One of them was advertised. They flopped completely and we gave up the idea.

We held one public meeting at the mid-point of the campaign but it was a failure. Only about 5 non-party members attended. No other public meetings were attempted.

In the Shops

One of the biggest weaknesses was our failure to adequately utilize the campaign in our shops. There was one and only one primary cause for this: Our comrades did not have real confidence in the campaign and did not feel that we could get anywhere with it. Toward the end of the campaign, in the last week or so, a few comrades made some effort to sell our pamphlet with surprising success.

In one shop, a contact sold 20 copies; only two of our own comrades sold as many in the shops (one comrade sold 40).

About 18,000 copies of LABOR ACTION and about 10,000 copies of a special election card were distributed free at plant gates. All material was well received. Six shops were covered, most of them twice.

An Open Letter was distributed at a meeting of the Wayne County Council of the CIO requesting the right of our candidate to speak to the delegates. (Jeffries had spoken previously.) This letter was ignored, but it made some impression on the delegates. In one of the debates, our candidate was referred to several times. Our own delegates ripped into the pro-Jeffries official policy.

Briggs Local 212 held an election symposium and invited all the candidates to speak. We ran away with the show from every point of view; sold NEW INTERNATIONALS, distributed our pamphlet and made the best showing from the platform.

Pamphlet

Our pamphlet "Stop the Enemies of the Workingpeople" was our most effective campaign instrument. It was attractively printed with a cover drawn and designed by a branch member. 2,750 were printed. We sold about 1,200 at 5¢ each as follows: Labor Day parade - 850; in shops - 100; house to house - about 100; meetings

150. The rest were passed out free. Special commendation goes to the one comrade who alone sold over 300 copies!

Radio Programs

Our candidate spoke on the radio twice. One program was a 15 minute paid broadcast (which cost us \$110 with advertising in the press). The other program was a 3 minute speech as part of an election symposium scheduled by one of the major stations on a Sunday morning for all candidates. This program is a standard program with a very large listening audience. Most of us feel that these radio speeches alone justified our entry into the elections.

Membership Participation

The whole campaign was conducted by a few people. The branch has only a total of 21 members. Without the enthusiasm displayed early in the campaign by 5 comrades, it would have been impossible to carry the thing through. Seven people were very active in all phases of the work. Seven others participated in several activities and made an appreciable contribution. The remaining seven for good reasons and for not such good reasons did little or nothing. (Union work and tenants work continued throughout. However, it was not necessary to gather any signatures on petitions. The law requires only a payment of \$100 to get on the ballot.)

Had there been a unanimous and confident enthusiasm right from the start of the campaign, we would have undoubtedly shown even better results.

Follow-up Work

Will the branch be able to capitalize on its campaign by gaining recruits or subscribers? It is difficult to tell now. One of the outstanding features of this whole experience has been the difficulty in arousing any active response to our efforts. Workers are willing to listen to us and to buy our literature but are obviously reluctant to go much further with us. Despite the excellent showing we made in our vote, consider these facts:

- 1) The public meeting was a failure.
- 2) Out of some 20,000 free copies of LABOR ACTION, not one subscription sent in.
- 3) Of the several thousand copies of the pamphlet distributed including the many hundreds sold, not one interest blank was sent in.
- 4) From all our mailings we received only three replies: 2 with donations, one for further information.
- 5) Only one reply to our radio invitation for interested people to send their names. This one reply, by the way, emphasized that the writer did not want anyone to visit his home.

The total number of new names added to our list of contacts as a result of all our election activity is the following:

Contributors to our campaign fund	2
Result of radio speech	1
House to house work (most of these are of doubtful value)	9
Worker who gave his name to an LA distributor	1
Election forum at Briggs Local	1
Other	1
	<hr/>
Total -	15

In addition, there were a few of our old contacts, two or three, who became interested in the campaign and did some work for us. This will be the time to renew our efforts to get them into the Party. This aspect of our report may not seem excessively "glowing" but one must judge comparatively. This is the first time that we have been able to involve any non-members in our Party activity. There may have only been half a dozen but that is a gain for us here.

We will begin our work on all these people with a public meeting for Comrade Shachtman on October 26. From then on, it remains to be seen if we can interest any of these people in Party meetings, classes and activities.

With the election campaign or without it, the problem is there: we must dig out each contact, one by one, with a pick and shovel. And that is just what we will have to do. However, the fact that we have had a successful election campaign establishes a generally more favorable environment for all our work.

October 20, 1947.

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By A. Slater & S. Morris
Manhattan Branch, Local N.Y.

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In November 1946, three of our comrades were the main speakers at a rally on tolerance and housing held by their local AVC chapter. Among their proposals they brought up the question of creating a housing and price control group. The audience responded to the suggestion by the head of the Settlement House, where the meeting was held, to volunteer then and there and set up a committee on housing.

The following week the first meeting was held. It consisted of two comrades and their wives, the chairman of the AVC housing committee and five girls who belonged to a social group in the Settlement House. At this meeting the AVC chairman insisted that the group be subsidiary to the executive committee of the AVC chapter. We pointed out that such a group would be limited to AVC veterans and their wives and would not attract non veterans and their families. It was decided by the majority that the group be autonomous but work very closely with the AVC. The AVC membership agreed to this arrangement.

The group then got down to planning. We decided the first task should be twofold: (1) to amass information on housing and rent control; (2) to acquaint the tenants in the neighborhood of the existence of the council.

After a few weeks of screening literature on housing and rent control and contacting the neighboring Stalinist-controlled councils for practical advice, leaflets were issued. Mother's clubs, Settlement Houses, socials clubs, youth clubs were contacted and given our leaflets. The girls from the social club dropped out but new and more active people replaced them. One of our comrades became chairman. By this time it was evident that our main fight should be on rent control. We therefore organized house-to-house activity and presented each individual tenant with a membership card, a petition for an effective state rent law and pledge sheets for the tenants to sign, pledging himself not to pay any rent increase.

From this activity came our first mass meeting which was attended by over 60 people from the neighborhood. They took petitions and pledges to circularize in their houses.

In the beginning the Stalinist councils were very helpful. They urged us to go all out, as they claimed they were doing, in organizing house to house and block by block groups for rent strikes in the event of a rent increase. However, a month later we were informed that they decided not to take such "negative action" but to "fight positively with petitions." We remained the only tenants group in the neighborhood which championed militant organization of tenants toward rent strikes. We, however, pointed out in our Sunday mornings house-to-house work, that this action would have to be coordinated properly, and that one person in a house could not go on a rent strike. We needed all the tenants in the building and support of the neighborhood. The Tenants Council would have to decide when the time came whether we could go ahead.

The Stalinists then called a coordinating conference to unite all the tenants organizations in the neighborhood. At this meeting there also were representatives from Stalinist-dominated trade unions, individually organized houses, Communist Party, American Labor Party, Progressive Citizens of America group, the SWP and the WP. Before the meeting some of our comrades working in the tenant organization approached the SWP members working in the PCA, in order to present a joint resolution on rent strikes. The SWP members ignored us and as a result three individual resolutions were submitted by the SWP, the PCA, and our Tenants Council. The resolution we introduced came up on the floor but was skilfully tabled. The resolution of the SWP and the PCA was never considered. From this point on we were identified to the Stalinists, and they made an attempt to exclude our council from the Executive Committee of the coordinating body. The issue was raised on the floor and the Stalinists were defeated.

On the question of rent strikes we would often receive support from "misguided" Stalinists or embittered housewives at an assembly of delegates from all the tenants councils.

After the first coordinating conference the SWP were no longer seen or heard of. The Manhattan branch sent one comrade down to represent the Party. This comrade made clear his position on the question of rent and offered to help from the Party in the way of publicity. Subsequently, two branches participated in an East side parade organized by the Tenant Coordinating body but unfortunately, due to the machinations of the Stalinists, a proposal by the ALP and the CP was adopted to the effect that no political organization could carry its name on the placards.

The Coordinating Body was doomed to failure. It could neither organize or unite the councils, instead it kept pressing for financial and physical aid for itself which under the circumstances was lacking in the councils.

Our Tenants Council, however, attracted people and began to show promise. Nevertheless, it soon became apparent that without a concrete and immediate activity we could not seriously establish roots in the neighborhood. This brought about the establishment of what we call the Complaint Bureau. House to house work was abandoned and we chose 18 square blocks as our particular area. Here leaflets were distributed in mailboxes explaining that the Complaint Bureau was created to help tenants with processing of complaints that were violations of the Building Department and Health Department codes or the OPA. The Bureau met with immediate success. When one telephone call to a landlord succeeded in getting one tenant's complaints almost immediately acted upon we gained confidence in the plan.

Whenever we had the opportunity we got together all the tenants in a house to issue joint complaints on painting, dirty halls, lack of proper garbage disposal, etc. We also got together a group of housewives who went down to the Building Dept to see that inspectors were sent immediately to their homes. This unusual procedure brought prompt action from the Department and within several weeks apartments were beginning to be painted, plaster repaired, broken toilet seats replaced, and steam given regularly. News of these accomplishments spread. To date well over 100 complaints have been processed and more are steadily coming in.

In April, 1947 the Council enlisted the aid of two lawyers who offered to act as council advisors without any charge. Last May a meeting of about 50 people was held wherein the lawyers cleared up the legal entanglements of the proposed new rent law then being worked on in Congress.

During the summer we held mostly street meetings. They were so arranged that in the evening we had as many as 3 meetings on separate corners. We campaigned against the signing of 15% increase leases, publicized our indoor meetings and got hundreds of petitions signed.

At present the Council has applications available which were obtained from the NYC Housing Authority for one project being built as soon as other projects open up we will have applications for them. This new phase of work seems to attract younger people to us. We are also investigating the possibility of building a project in our immediate neighborhood.

This rent work had an effect on the branch's activity and general orientation. The Manhattan branch was at its start another branch on "wheels" with a mixture of needle trade workers, Party functionaries and comrades who had no particular activities. Today we have in the same neighborhoods of the Tenants Councils six comrades in a relatively good AVC chapter. From the experiences of the Tenants Council, proposals were made to the chapter to set up a similar Complaint Bureau which will be organized shortly. The project applications have been made available to the AVC also. We intend to coordinate the activities of both groups. (AVC merits separate report).

The Manhattan branch is planning a two or three month campaign of sending comrades into all groups in the neighborhood: PCA, ALP, Liberal Party, Settlement Houses, Zionist organizations, etc. The comrades will not join these groups but will attend three or as many meetings as necessary to discover what these groups are doing and discussing. At the end of the investigation period the branch will decide which organizations it would be most advantageous to send comrades into. This activity will certainly help us to lay a basis for a possible 1948 election campaign.

To date we have not recruited. We have, however, made some close sympathizers and acquainted a few people with Labor Action. Our main difficulty with recruiting is that up to now the Tenants Council has attracted mainly older people, many of whom speak foreign languages. Comrades must realize that neighborhood work is drawn out and diverse. A party in order to establish itself in a neighborhood must be involved in many organizations. Only then can a street meeting or an election campaign become a serious and profitable undertaking.

ADDENDA TO THE PROGRAM OF ACTION

Adopted by the National Committee and Active Workers Conference

November 9, 1947

P R E S S D E P A R T M E N T

Goals and quotas for the distribution and expansion of the Party press can be set in accordance with our present membership, Party resources and the activities outlined in the Program of Action as submitted to the Active Workers Conference of November 8th and 9th, 1947. The largest amount of the Party's finances spent and manhours used is expended on LABOR ACTION, the NEW INTERNATIONAL and pamphlets and books. This time and money can only bear fruit for our movement, in proportion to the carrying out of ALL Party activities and the greater intertwining and utilization of our Press in these activities. The press is the herald of our program. Our program must reach wider numbers of workers in the daily life of the class struggle.

The Program of Action for the Party Press, as outlined below, has taken into consideration our past experiences. In past sub drives an immense number of subscriptions were obtained, but these drives were usually totally unconnected with regular day to day Party activity and therefore, despite all the energy expended on them, were never in a position to be followed through.

The obtaining of subscriptions for LABOR ACTION, THE NEW INTERNATIONAL, sales of these publications and Party pamphlets must be interconnected year round activity of the party as a whole and of each individual member. We are therefore not proposing national sub drives. Rather we are basing all our proposals, our quotas on the basis of activity for the next year (subject to revision at the end of the first six months). Individual branches will then decide whether to carry out drives in accordance with the plans and needs of each local.

1. Expansion of the PAID circulation of LABOR ACTION.

At the end of the next twelve months (Nov. 1, 1947 to Oct. 30, 1948) the total circulation, subscription and sales is to reach 6,000 paid copies per week.

a) Subscriptions: 4,500 paid subs by Oct. 30, 1948. The work of Party members in all fields of activity is to result in every comrade obtaining an average of one sub per month or 12 subs during the year. Branch quotas will be based on their present membership. For certain localities the National Press Department may set higher quotas on the basis of more favorable situations. (Also, there will be a general review at the end of 6 months.) **FOR EVERY PARTY MEMBER ON OUR ROLES WE SHOULD HAVE 12 LABOR ACTION SUBSCRIBERS.** This is a minimu.

One to twelve -- 1 to 12.

b) Sold copies: 1,500 individual copies to be sold each week by Oct. 30, 1948. Quotas for each branch is to be based on all local factors: membership, union activities, etc. To be included in this figure are all newsstand sales, bookstores, etc.

c) Free distributions: In planning all local Party campaigns especially for the coming National Elections first consideration, both from the financial and manpower point of view, is to be given to the utilization of LABOR ACTION. The paper is to be used by having Special Editions (as, for example, the New York, Philadelphia and Los Angeles election issues), and special articles in the regular edition. Special distributions are to be planned at factory gates, etc. for promotional work to be followed up by sales, and in relation to special material that the paper will carry during the year on specific union issues, rent campaigns, etc. Copies for such distribution will be available at 1¢ per copies in bundles of no less than 200.

2. Expansion of the PAID circulation of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL.

At the end of the next 12 months the total circulation, subscriptions and sales, is to reach 2,500 paid copies per issue.

a) Subscriptions: 1,500 paid subs by October 30, 1948. To attain this goal every Party member is to obtain a minimum of 3 new subscriptions per year or one every four months. Through the efforts of every branch and the National Press Department, we must in addition retain the present subscribers or get additional new subscribers to make up for any deficit that may accrue as a result of the present subscribers not renewing.

EVERY PARTY MEMBER MUST OBTAIN ONE NEW SUBSCRIBER EVERY FOUR MONTHS. OR THREE NEW SUBS IN ONE YEAR.

b) Sold copies: 1,000 individual copies to be sold each issue by October 30, 1948. This means only a 33% increase in our present sold bundle copies. To achieve this goal greater attention must be paid to placing THE NEW INTERNATIONAL on newsstands and in bookstores, in covering lectures and meetings, and in selling copies to workers in the shop, veterans and to our contacts in all phases of our activity.

c) Universities, Libraries, Organizations: All branches, through their Literature Agent, and in cooperation with the National Press Department must organize a systematic campaign to obtain subscriptions from (or donations of subscriptions to) these institutions. In most cases they will pay for a sub to THE NEW INTERNATIONAL. It is of utmost importance to have our propaganda available in such institutions.

d) Use of Special issues: We will attempt to arrange for special articles to appear such as the recent ones on the UAW and the Taft-Hartley Act. For issues such as these, special efforts are to be made to obtain wider circulation. Copies for such distributions will be available at 1-¢ per copy in bundles of no less than 50.

3. WORKERS PARTY PUBLICATIONS

National quotas cannot be established for the sale of our various pamphlets and books, now in stock. We can attempt to meet certain goals in our sales of pamphlets that will be published during the next period, such as for the Negro pamphlet, the Labor Party pamphlet and the one on Stalinism. These goals will have to vary from branch to branch depending on their special types of activities. For these pamphlets we can set a very conservative goal of 1,000 copies to be sold in three months. Every branch should discuss at one of its early meetings following the AWC the question of selling our current stock of pamphlets (especially P for A, the Fight for Socialism, and the New Course), and attempt to experimentally set goals for the branch as a whole and for each comrade. For example: after analyzing the branches present number of contacts, new subscribers and other activity, setting the goal of selling 50 different types of pamphlets during one month.

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LABOR ACTION

<u>BRANCH</u>	<u>10-1-47 Subs</u>	<u>Paid Subs Quotas by 10-30-48</u>
Akron.	73	180
Baltimore.	13	96
Buffalo.	55	228
Boston	25	36
Cleveland.	47	168
Chicago.	93	456
Detroit.	123	252
Los Angeles & San Pedro.	52	312
New York City.	479	1,500
Newark	43	132
Philadelphia	91	180
Pittsburgh	7	
Reading.	15	48
St. Louis & Missouri . . .	34	48
San Francisco.		
and Oakland	100	336
Streator	21	24
Seattle.	41	180
West Virginia.	17	120
Youngstown	7	60
Mixed Ohio	64	
Mixed Pennsylvania	111	
Louisville	4	12
Minnesota.	22	12
Oregon	13	12
New York State	66	12
Washington State	51	12
Mixed California	63	
Mixed Illinois	72	
Mixed Michigan	68	
Mixed New Jersey	77	
Mixed States	80	132
	<u>2,027</u>	<u>4,548</u>

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL

<u>BRANCHES</u>	<u>10-1-47 Subs</u>	<u>Paid Subs</u> <u>Quotas by 10-30-48</u>
Akron.	7	55
Baltimore.	5	25
Buffalo.	25	75
Boston	11	10
Cleveland.	22	55
Chicago.	60	175
Detroit.	25	150
Los Angeles & San Pedro.	26	100
New York City.	163	425
Newark	8	50
Philadelphia	34	55
Reading.	3	15
St. Louis.	4	15
Minnesota.	4	15
San Francisco & Oakland.	15	150
Streator	2	5
Seattle.	7	50
West Virginia.	1	30
Youngstown	3	15
Louisville	2	3
Mixed Ohio	3	
Oregon	4	3
Mixed Pennsylvania	7	
Pittsburgh	4	
Mixed California	4	
Connecticut.	4	
Mixed Illinois	5	
Mixed Michigan	9	
Mixed States	47	50
	<u>514</u>	<u>1,516</u>