

MAY FIRST PAVED THE WAY FOR BROADER MASS STRUGGLES

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(CONCLUSION.)

Despite these definite advances made in some localities, serious weaknesses were evident everywhere in the attempts to apply correctly the Bolshevik tactic of the united front. There was an over-emphasis on negotiations with the leadership, even though in most cases the local leadership, of the reformist organizations. The maneuvers of the leaders of the S. P. and A. F. of L. organizations were not sufficiently exposed before the masses of workers. There was too much of a reliance upon the decisions of the local leadership without sufficient activity among the rank and file of these organizations, keeping them fully informed on the steps in the negotiations and organizing the unity below around the most immediate burning issues confronting the workers. This accounts for the relatively small number of A. F. of L. local unions and S. P. branches participating in this action.

In many localities, however, we were still unable to break with the sectarianism, resulting in very narrow May First conferences and rallying only small numbers of workers on May First (Kansas). At the same time in other places we witnessed the opportunist distortions of the united front tactics in making appeals direct to churches for May Day (Buffalo, Birmingham) instead of concentrating on reaching the masses attending churches.

Chief Central Demands Not Center of Mobilization for May First

The emphasis on unity placed in

all the actions of the Party for May First resulted in playing down some of the central demands of the Party. Thus, while practically all demonstrations were organized around immediate issues, this was not the case everywhere. This accounts for the weakness of the demonstrations in such places as Youngstown and Canton, where last year militant demonstrations took place, precisely because the local problems were brought to the forefront. Unemployment and social insurance, while no doubt emphasized in the speeches at the demonstrations, was not made the central issue at all united front conferences and was in many cases completely omitted from the agitation for May 1st. A concrete exposure of the Roosevelt program, bringing forward the proper demands that the situation in the country requires, still plays an insufficiently central role in the agitation. A systematic campaign was not conducted to consciously begin to break down the illusions created by the Roosevelt program and to utilize the May First mobilization especially for actions against the effects of the Roosevelt program. The struggle against imperialist war and the danger of an attack against the Soviet Union was in many cases not prominently and in other places completely absent from the agitation.

Key Task Developing Unity of Workers in Factories

The major weaknesses in the May First preparations and the demonstrations themselves is once again emphasized in the lagging in our shop work. While in one or two cities (Detroit, St. Louis) struggles devel-

oped in the shops as a result of the May First preparations, throughout the country there was very little concentration on the factories and little work conducted to win workers from the shops to participate in May First. Only a limited number of shop papers, shop leaflets were issued throughout the country and with the probable exception of a few cities, shop gate meetings were not held to acquaint the workers with May First. The old habit of issuing a leaflet and assuming that the workers in the shop would come out for May First still persisted.

This also reflects a certain wrong conception of the united front, that the united front is more or less limited to joint actions by various organizations. Detailed attention to the development of unity below among the workers especially in the factory, among the unemployed, around immediate demands was not seen as the central task in the united front activities. The welding of a powerful united front of the American workers will not be accomplished through negotiations with the leadership—it will only be achieved, strengthened and solidified in the daily struggles of the workers.

Recruiting Still Lags Behind

Due to this conception of the united front the bringing forward and building of the Party in the May First preparations and actions was often hampered by the opposition of the reformist leaders, and the fear of offending these bodies, on the part of our comrades. The Party did not play a sufficiently decisive, independent

role, bringing before the workers its position, its program—the way out for the masses of workers from the crisis. Especially, is this seen in our failure to contrast capitalism and socialism—the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship as the only way out for the toiling masses.

Such actions and mobilizations under the leadership of the Party must serve to strengthen the influence and organizational strength of the Party—to weld it more firmly with the masses of toilers. In analyzing the recruiting during the month of April in the largest districts as well as throughout the country, one can readily see that the building of the Party was not sufficiently a part of the daily preparations. While it is correct that last year the Party conducted an intensive recruiting campaign during the month of April, it nevertheless cannot overlook the fact that this year the possibilities for building the Party are much greater. And yet, the recruiting during April was practically the same as last year.

In many large districts the recruiting was even less. This failure to build the Party still reflects the separation of Party recruiting from the daily mass activity.

The beginnings made in May First, despite the many shortcomings, lay the basis for extending the leadership of the Party. But this necessitates a careful follow-up of the work conducted before and on May First—drawing in these masses into local actions, then a further development of the united front tactics, proving to them through these concrete struggles, that the Party is their leader.