

I repeat again: our differences with Comrade Radek are not of principle but of emphasis. But the Russian comrades must realize the new and variegated forms of unionism that are developing; must realize that in our country unionism is a much more vital factor in the Revolution than in their Revolution. I feel that at the next Congress we shall agree.

The Minority Theses on Unionism

I.

The Communist International must consider the question of Unionism not simply from the standpoint of winning the masses in the unions for Communism, as a field for Communist propaganda; we must also formulate a Communist conception of the forms and functions of the Unions as Unions.

It is a mistake to think that the labor union organizations alone can conquer capitalism, and that a Communist Party is unnecessary.

It is equally a mistake to regard the unions as merely appendages of the Party (although the Party should dominate).

The unions, particularly as industrial unions, can become active means of revolutionary struggle and organs of the reconstruction and management of industry after the conquest of political power.

II.

The Communist conception of unionism develops itself as a three-fold problem:

1. The mobilization of the masses for revolutionary action — to liberate the masses from the petty bourgeois ideology and practice of trade unionism

2. The struggle against the union bureaucracy—to break the power and apparatus of this bureaucracy.

3. To reconstruct the unions as industrial unions—either by transforming the old or building the new, as determined by objective conditions—to adapt Unionism to the integration of industry and the tasks of industrial management after the conquest of power.

III.

The manner in which this problem is to be solved depends upon the stage of the development of unionism and the revolutionary struggle itself.

But although the revolt of the workers takes varied forms, in general this revolt expresses itself at first in economic action and the economic organizations. It is on the basis of this fact that the Communist Party must act in order to secure influence over the masses and direct them to larger revolutionary action.

1. The Communist Party must work

within the old unions, conducting an agitation for Communism and mobilizing the revolts against the trades union bureaucracy and the limitations of trades union structure.

The attempt to revolutionize the trades unions merely by the capture of the bureaucracy, which is practically immovable, imposed upon the masses and a barrier to action, even if successful, would not necessarily transform the trades unions into organs of revolutionary action.

The re-creation of the unions, in tendency now apparent in the agitation for and construction of industrial unions, will be completed in the Revolution and after, under the centralized direction of the Communist Party and facilitated by the proletarian state.

2. In addition to the general Communist agitation it is necessary to create means within the Unions for action independent of the bureaucracy and union limitations.

This takes the form of extra-union organizations (Shop Committee, etc.), within can not only carry on the struggle against the bureaucracy and wage the daily fight of the workers against their employers, but also familiarize the workers with the industrial union form of organization and provide means for the direct expression of the mass revolts of the proletariat.

During the period of the revolutionary crisis and struggle, when the capitalist sabotage production in order to disorganize the working class by means of starvation and unemployment, the Shop Committees, while emphasizing their character as means of struggle against the union bureaucracy and union limitations, also express the demands of the workers for control of industry. There arises an open struggle against the employers for control in the factories, during which the Shop Committees usurp functions of management. The bourgeoisie energetically oppose this movement, and the struggle for workers' control over production necessarily leads to the seizure of political power by the proletariat.

After the seizure of power the Shop Committees become the first managers of industry, force the development of the unions until they are merged in the structure of industrial unions, the organs for the management of industry.

3. The movement of the masses toward industrial unionism, caused primarily by the construction of industry, is now assuming a greater importance because it expresses the crisis in the old unions and facilitates the mobilization of the masses for revolutionary action.

The revolt of the masses against the

limitations of the old unions, is expressed not only in the formation of extra-union organizations, but also in the creation of industrial unions, whether independently or by mass-splits in the old unions. The industrial unions co-ordinate with the extra-union organizations for united action. These tendencies must be expressed and used by the Communist Party in accordance with the objective conditions and the maturity of the revolutionary struggle.

IV.

The Communist Party, while its object is the conquest of political power, realizes that the means developed out of the economic action of the workers. Under the pressure of a general crisis, this action assumes the form of general political strikes, developing the direct revolutionary struggle for power.

Therefore:

1. The Communist Party must organize Communist groups or branches in the shops, mills and mines.

2. The Party must have Communist fractions within the trades Union branches, committees, etc., the extra-union organizations and the industrial unions. These fractions, while relentlessly carrying on the Communist agitation in general, must particularly express the requirements of the immediate struggle of the workers; they must participate in and develop all movements calculated to break the power of the union bureaucracy, and re-create the union as means of revolutionary struggle and organs for the management of industry.

3. The Communist Party should, where conditions permit, build its district organizations, according to the geographical distribution of industry, that is to say, a district organization groups itself around a particular basic industry (while not neglecting ample and intense contact with the general mass of the exploited).

This does not mean that the Party becomes an industrial organization, but that it concentrates its agitation upon the proletariat in the basic industries, the action of which determines the action of the masses as a whole.

The industrial district basis of the Party organization allows:

- a) Making our agitation direct to the industrial proletariat (as against the old Socialist appeal to the "public").

- b) Feeling and responding immediately to the development of the struggle in the basic industries as a means of uniting and developing the general struggle.

- c) Preparing special programs of immediate action to reach basic industry