

COMMUNIST INDUSTRIAL POLICY

308
Z
13. 620

New Tasks for
New Times

308
Z
13. 623

PRICE ONE PENNY

THE COMMUNIST PARTY of GREAT BRITAIN
16 KING STREET : COVENT CARDEN : W C 2

Communist Industrial Policy



Foreword

The sub-title "New Tasks for New Times" aptly expresses the spirit of the following statement on Communist Industrial Policy.

Standing firmly upon the declared policy of the Third Communist International the Party in Great Britain at the same time must endeavour to meet the problems that face it as they are presented in this country.

The reader is accordingly reminded that a Communist Industrial Policy—like every other phase of Communist activity—is not an unalterable statement of an idealistic objective. It is an examination of the tasks before us and the guiding lines to pursue. Such a statement, however, is bound to partake of a general character.

It suggests the recognition of the existing trade unions as the Labour Organisations of the majority of the masses and seeks to transform the unions from being mere benefit associations into organs of revolutionary struggle. The following statement is neither final nor complete. It is a general guide to our attitude to the great Trades Union movement, and indicates how the Communists and revolutionary workers must tackle the problems of union organisation and activity. To-day the rivalry in the unions is becoming acute, and the union bureaucracy prefer splitting the unions rather than be subject to revolutionary influences within them.

To become the Party of the masses the Party cannot ignore the unions. The character of the struggle they are compelled to wage becomes increasingly revolutionary, in spite of all the desires of the Trades Union bureaucracy to prevent it. The Communists must therefore join the unions.

MAY 5 1943 PCR

MAY 5 1943 PCR / H-50

But the Communists must set themselves against splits in the union movement. Whoever adopts this policy of splitting the unions are weakening the masses in their hour of greatest need. We must unite the working masses if we would save them from further defeats and disasters. There is therefore urgent need for every Communist to study well the lines indicated in the following statement of policy and get busy right away. Direct representation of the workers affected on all local and national bodies and the strengthening of Communist leadership locally and nationally, is the urgent demand of the movement. We must have Communist guidance for the workshop activities, Communist guidance in the local branches of Labour Organisations and Trades Councils, Communist guidance in the national activities of the working class towards the consolidation of Labour's march to the conquest of power.

§ I

RECOMMENDATIONS TOWARDS AN INDUSTRIAL POLICY FOR THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN.

All Parties belonging to the Communist International must carry on a systematic and persistent Communist work amongst the masses of the proletariat.

Particularly must this work be carried on in the factories, workshops, pits, railways, etc., and especially in the labour organisations such as the Works Committees, Trade Unions, Co-operative Societies, and all the class organisations of the workers. The Labour organisations are a direct product of the merciless economic struggle which the working class is compelled to wage against the systematic efforts of the employing class to secure and maintain the economical and political servitude of the masses. The Communist Party is the vanguard of the proletariat. It alone sees in the labour organisations, especially in the trade unions, the effective machinery for the proletarian mass fight against capitalism, and for the proletarian revolution. The Communist Party sees in the trade unions mass organisations of the proletariat which develop into organisa-

tions uniting all the workers in a given branch of industry. They not only include the class-conscious Communists, but all the backward sections of the working class who have been drawn into the trade unions by virtue of their experiences with and the struggles against the employing class. The trade unions represent a wider organisation uniting a greater mass of people than the Party. Hence the principal task of the Party is to win over the confidence and support of the majority of these masses to Communism, for without their support the proletarian revolution is impossible. In other words, the Communist Party must become the Party of the masses.

In order to equip them for the suppression of capitalism, and for the triumph of Communism they must initiate the form of unions where these do not exist. All voluntary withdrawals from the industrial movement and every artificial attempt to organise special unions represent a great danger to our Communist movement. Such acts play into the hands of the reactionary leaders, and leave the workers at the mercy of the bourgeoisie.

Voluntary withdrawals or the setting up of fresh unions are only permissible when compelled thereto by acts of expulsion of voluntary groups or branches on account of Communist activity, or where a narrow-minded aristocratic craft policy excludes large sections of so-called unskilled workers.

The lukewariness and theoretical indecision of the masses and their tendency to yield to the arguments of the opportunist leaders can be overcome only during the process of the ever growing struggle by degrees as the wider sections of the proletariat learn to understand by experience, by their victories and defeats, that human conditions of labour are impossible on the basis of capitalist production. And as the advanced Communist workmen learn through their economic struggle to be not only preachers of Communism, but capable and determined leaders, so will the Communists be able to take the lead in the trade union movement and make of it an organ of the revolutionary struggle for Communism.

It is necessary to bring home to the working class that

economics and politics are closely connected. That there is scarcely an important issue to-day affecting the trade unions, but also affects the political labour movement and vice versa. The cry of "No politics in the union" as a principle is fostered by the capitalists and the reactionary leaders with the object of prejudicing the working class against Communism. There can be no such thing as "neutrality" on the political issue. This the Communists must prove inside the union organisations by their untiring propaganda efforts and examples from the daily struggle. Communist activity, however, must be based upon the recognised immediate problems before the working class, prior to the conquest of power. This involves a recognition of the tasks with which the existing labour unions seek to grapple. These tasks are the immediate organisation of the workers on an economic basis to fight for immediate improvements in the conditions of labour. Everywhere the work of the Communist lies in formulating the concrete demands of the moment, initiating action, and above all seeking to transform the battles of the workers for better conditions into a conscious struggle for the conquest of power. But since the Party seeks to organise the masses, and hand in hand with them go forward to the attack on and overthrow of capitalism with the object of laying the foundations of the social revolution, *i.e.*, the organising of production on a socialist basis in the transition to Communism, Communists everywhere must oppose the narrow craft spirit and support every movement towards the transformation of existing unions into efficient organs of the struggle for the suppression of capitalism and for the triumph of Communism.

§ II

OBLIGATIONS OF PARTY MEMBERS IN WORKS, FACTORIES, MINES, RAILWAYS, AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS GENERALLY.

The paramount duty of Party members is to win by their Communist activity, by exemplary conduct and courage in the workshop, the leadership of the organised masses for the Communist Party. The support of

the masses can only be won by taking part in the everyday struggles of the working class, particularly at their place of occupation. In every matter that concerns the working class, however trivial the question may appear, no opportunity should be lost to give the Communist lead. Only in this way can we get close to the non-class-conscious masses. By close identification with the concrete demands of the workers, by formulating and expressing these demands with the workers where they are employed, the Communist will at the same time find himself in a more advantageous position for exposing and fighting the reformist and reactionary leaders of labour. While the attention of the workers and shop committees is slowly being crystallised round the demand for workshop control, this, it must be explained, can only be possible in the interests of the workers when the strong hand of proletarian dictatorship proceeds to the suppression of capitalism, and towards the Communist organisation of society. For the effective conduct of our propaganda a Communist industrial nucleus or group embracing the Party members therein should be established in every shop or works, etc. Such Communist nuclei must not assume that they are works committees in the real sense of the word.

Workshop, factory, or pit committees embrace all or the majority of the workers in a given plant, including non-party workers as well as party members.

They are wider organisations than the Communist nuclei. They arise when conditions compel the workers—the backward as well as the advanced sections—to forge the necessary weapons to fight against the particular grievances of capitalism which cannot be tackled by the official bureaucracy of the trade unions.

The Communist nucleus has a part to play in undertaking responsible work on such committees, and leading them in a class direction. Where no factory committees exist, the Communist nucleus must carry on a campaign in favour of the establishment of such committees, but it must never assume itself to be such a committee. It must be borne in mind that the establishment of works or factory committees embracing all

the workers in any one establishment is becoming a more difficult problem, due to the growing volume of unemployment and the ever present fear of victimisation following upon open activity in the workshop. The timid workers shrink from responsibility, and the class-conscious workers are thrust into the ranks of the unemployed. The Communists inside the workshops must not be daunted, but must endeavour to meet all such difficulties in a practical way. By accepting the duties of shop steward, besides helping to fight in the labour struggles against the employing class, they will use that position for carrying out Communist work. Even though some of the duties involved may be distasteful to them, yet by accepting such positions and by fighting loyally on behalf of their workmates on every question affecting their interests, they will not only get the backing of their fellow workers, but may occupy an important place for Communist activity during a period of crisis. Where the principle of works committees forms a part of the structure of the labour unions, additional protection is afforded those Communists who may be active on such committees by virtue of the power and influence of the entire union which can be rallied in defence of its own constitution in the event of an attack by the employers.

The main forms of Communist activity, in addition to the setting up of works committees are to assist the workers in their trade unions in their struggles against the employing class, to initiate common action for economic improvement, and draw the sympathetic elements in the shop towards Communist activity. This may be done by verbal propaganda amongst the backward workers by the distribution of all forms of party literature, by meal hour talks, and the participation in every form of organisation connected with workshop life. The co-ordination of all shop nuclei and works nuclei is secured through their connection with the local Communist branch or leading party committee as the responsible controlling body representing the industrial department of the Party.

§ III

OBLIGATIONS OF PARTY MEMBERS IN THE TRADE UNION ORGANISATIONS.

Recognising the existing labour unions as the mass organisations of the proletariat, the task of the Communist Party in the trade union movement is that of transforming such unions into revolutionary organs of struggle.

It is, therefore, obligatory on all members of the Communist Party to join the trade union catering for their industry, participate in its daily activities, and aid in the recruiting of the unorganised workers to the unions. Side by side with the daily revolutionary Communist work the activities of Party members in the trade unions branch must take the direction of assuming responsible positions. Communists must not adopt an attitude of doctrinaire purity and hold aloof from the activities of their trade union branch because that branch is under the domination of local yellow labour leaders, or because the work activities and demands made by the branch are not always of a revolutionary character, but may often be of a reformist nature. The duty of the Communist is to take part in every petty struggle in every local activity, seeking by assuming responsibility to fight down the opportunist and reformist elements, and to wrest the leadership for Communism. No opportunity should be lost to emphasise the revolutionary nature of the struggle confronting the workers. Communists working in their trade unions must endeavour to utilise every opportunity for discussion, and seek to extract the maximum practical value out of every daily situation. Communists who are trade union officials must remember that the winning of official positions by Party members can only be of value for Communism when Party members holding such positions use them to the advantage of the Party.

The main forms of Communist activity in the trade unions are :—

- (a) Participation by the working groups in all branch affairs in district committee and national activities.

- (b) The organisation of groups of sympathisers to the Party for organised action.
- (c) The promotion of aggregate meetings of the union locally and nationally for the proper discussion of general industrial grievances, and particularly the relation of these to the union.
- (d) The organisation of the election of Communists as officials or union representatives—failing Communists, then sympathisers to Communism—either to positions on the local Trades Council or to the Union or Trades' Conferences.
- (e) The formation of a trade union press to counteract the capitalist newspapers and to distribute Party literature.
- (f) Active opposition to the narrow sectarianism of the aristocratic organisations, and the transformation of the unions into revolutionary organs of struggle on the basis of industrial unionism.

§ IV

RELATION OF COMMUNISTS TO TRADES COUNCILS.

Trades Councils to-day in most cases in no way organise the workers and prepare the masses locally for struggle. This is largely due to the absence of deliberative powers being vested in the delegates, and the fact that in most cases the Councils are dominated by reformist and reactionary leaders who do not desire any forms of militant action, but rather oppose the same. In many cases they are dominated by the labour leaders merely as a means to advance their personal progress towards municipal and parliamentary positions.

Attention must therefore be given by the Communists to the Trades Councils towards revolutionising their character and making them real organs of struggle capable of massing the workers locally for conflict with the employing class. For this purpose Communist fractions must be formed on such bodies.

But to make the Trades Councils real fighting organs of the proletarian class struggle they must have some

vital touch and contact with the working masses. This can be best achieved by having direct representation from the works committees, as well as from the trade union branch or district committees of the unions. The structure of the Trades Councils must be enlarged for this purpose. The Communists everywhere must seek to gain control of the Trades Councils, and by ousting the reactionary leaders, transform these Councils into real councils of action, ready to fight every issue that affects the workers, and with power to call the workers into action whenever necessary for the defence or advancement of working class interests. Experience teaches, however, that it is not enough to declare a strike. It is just as essential to be able to maintain the strike when it is declared. Contact with the local co-operative societies, therefore, provides a useful method of maintenance, and direct representation from the co-operative societies in conjunction with the representatives of the workshop committees and trade union branches with powers to take direct action would transform the Trades Councils from being mere hunting grounds for political careerists into real industrial fighting organs of the class struggle, capable of taking direct action and at the same time ensuring maintenance during such struggles.

For the better representation and organic contact between localities nationally the Trades Councils should have direct representation on the Trade Union Congress.

§ V

NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS: CONFERENCES AND TRADE CONGRESS.

The question of Communist activity throughout the national organisations and a common policy will be a matter for the Party members in the particular unions working through their fractions in conjunction with the leading Party committees. It will be the function of such national fractions to co-ordinate the Communist activities and organise the various groups for common action during national congresses under instruction of the guiding Party committee. The agendas of all conferences should be discussed beforehand by the bloc

groups so as to ensure a common line of action. It goes without saying that Party members are obliged to contest the official positions in the national unions that are held by the enemies of Communism. Particular attention must be paid towards securing the election of Communists or sympathisers to Communism as delegates to the national conferences and to the Trade Union Congress.

As with the Trades Councils, so with the Trade Union Congress. The latter must be transformed from being a mere debating assembly into a real organ of proletarian struggle under the guidance and leadership of a *real* general staff. But to make the Trade Union Congress a real council of action its structure must be enlarged. It must be made up of—

- (a) Direct representatives from the workshops on a given numerical basis;
- (b) Direct representatives from the National Unions.
- (c) Direct representatives from the Trades Councils.
- (d) Direct representatives from the Co-operative Societies.

From these representatives a general council should be elected, and from the council a small but real general staff should be elected with deliberative and disciplinary powers to take direct action on matters of vital concern for the working class. In all Communist activities our object must ever be the acquisition of as much power as possible, to develop the ability to lead the widest sections of the masses in the Communist direction, and organise them for the final conquest of power from the hands of the present capitalist class.

§ VI

RELATION OF COMMUNIST PARTY TO THE RED INTERNATIONAL OF LABOUR UNIONS.

Through the medium of the International Labour Conferences, organised by the capitalist government, the Imperialists seek to divide the working class, and to defeat the efforts of the Communists to organise the trade unions under the banner of the Red International of Labour Unions.

In this the government are supported by the reactionary yellow leaders, who act as tools in the hands of the bourgeoisie, and by means of their Amsterdam International lend strength to the designs of the Imperialists. The Communists must utilise their influence in the branches of their respective organisations to win them away from the influence of the Amsterdam International, and to unite under the banner of the R.I.L.U.

This work can be done progressively in the following manner:—

- (a) Utilising, through speakers to the branch, delegates to the Trades Councils and to the District Committees every opportunity afforded by these bodies to raise the question and press the agitation for such affiliation.
- (b) By pointing out the designs of the Amsterdam International and its close association with the capitalist governments, and securing the adhesion of the branch to the Red International of Labour Unions.
- (c) Putting all possible pressure on the national executives of the unions for the same purpose.

The formation of Red trades unions committees in any locality or district in no way obviates the necessity of working through or seeking to capture Trades Councils or National Councils. Red Trade Union Committees must not be assumed to be rival organisations either to the works committees, Communist nuclei in the trade union branches or local Trades Councils. Nor should the Central Bureau be regarded as a rival body to the Trades' Congress. The immediate purpose of such Red trade union committees is the task of securing the affiliation of the trade unions and labour unions, generally to the Red International of Labour Unions, and to make of them instruments under the effective leadership of the Communists for the realisation of the dictatorship of the proletariat.