

EDUCATION AND SYSTEM: THE BASIS OF ORGANIZATION

Understanding

Organization means getting together with a common understanding and a common end in view, and working systematically for the attainment of that end. For the workers to organize effectively, they must have a correct understanding of their position in society and of the conditions under which they live and work. If they fail to understand these things, they will either not organize at all or will organize in an ineffective manner. The effectiveness of their organization depends on the correctness of their understanding. The better they understand conditions the more effectively they will organize.

The Dumb

If the workers misunderstand conditions to the extent of believing that they are all free and independent sovereign citizens; that all men have an equal chance to become wealthy and powerful, or to enter the White House as President; that it is a man's own fault if he is not "successful"; that they would starve to death without bosses to employ them; that the employers pay them in wages all that they are worth; that the rich gained their wealth by honesty, industry, self-denial and close attention to business; that there are as many opportunities for advancement today as there ever were; that workers are protected by the law, and get justice in the courts; that the boss is their best friend; that the way to improve their condition is to work harder; that poverty is a blessing, and work a privilege; that profits are the wages of superintendence; that all are workers

and there are no classes in society; that all agitators should be lynched; that this is the best of all possible worlds, and that they will get "pie in the sky when they die"; if they believe all this they will not organize at all.

The Half-Baked

If they misunderstand conditions to the extent of believing that, altho wages are too low and hours too long, still the interests of labor and capital are identical; if they believe in a fair day's pay for a fair day's work; that their officials should receive large salaries and should run the union; that it is alright to scab if you have a union card; that the boss should be a member of the union; that only the white race should be allowed to organize; that in union there is strength but—the way to get together is to split up; that the best way to keep their officials straight is to make them bankers; that "labor banks" can scab Wall Street out of existence; if they believe all this they will organize in the craft unions.

If they believe that conditions are bad, that labor is exploited, that profits are robbery, that the rich are parasites but—that the workers have the ballot and can use it for their own emancipation; that "working class" politicians are honest; that the government can run all industry like the postoffice; that the only effective way to strike is at the ballot box on election day; that capitalism can be overthrown by a count of noses, or smothered by an avalanche of ballots; that a "working class" government can purchase the industries; that the capi-

talists will bow to a majority vote and meekly surrender their power because the workers wish it, that "comrade" capitalists are good capitalists and will do all they can to vote themselves out of business; that widow women with large families, who do washing for a living, should have free water; that capitalists and workers should get together to fight the capitalists and workers of other countries; that the way to organize is on the basis of political opinion instead of economic interest; if the workers believe all this, like a lowing herd they will swell the ranks of some so-called working class political party.

If the workers are dissatisfied with capitalism but have no faith in themselves or their class; if they want to be led by politicians; if they believe political action is no good but are unable to take any other kind; if they aspire to capture the labor movement or believe in "boring from within"; if they think they can defeat the military power of capitalism with their bare hands, with wagon spokes, fire crackers, toy pistols or fountain pens; if they wish to make themselves raw material for the fool-killer "on the barricades"; they are then excellent material out of which to fashion a tail for the kite of ambitious politicians who lack ability to secure a roosting place on the decadent tree of capitalism.

The Intelligent

When workers study conditions and get a true understanding of the essential points, they can neither be chloroformed into inactivity nor carried away by half-baked theories. They do their own thinking instead of trusting to politicians or would-be leaders to do it for them. The science of economics gives the key to the understanding of conditions. Economics is the science which has to do with satisfying the material needs of man—with the production and distribution of wealth. Wealth is any form of natural resources adapted by labor to suit the needs of man. All wealth is produced by labor, but it is taken by the capitalists, who give the workers

in the form of wages just enough to keep them in working condition and to reproduce their kind. The capitalists own the natural resources and the machinery of production. Two per cent of the population—the big capitalists—own sixty per cent of the wealth, while sixty-five per cent—the workers—own only five per cent. The capitalists live in luxury and extravagance never before heard of in the history of the world. They control government and all institutions of society by means of their wealth; they get their wealth by means of controlling the job, the source of all wealth; and they control the job because they are organized. Being comparatively few in numbers, it was easier for them to organize than for the workers. Consequently they have organized first, and, as long as the workers remain unorganized, there is none able to dispute their power. By controlling industry, they control the means of producing all the necessaries of life—all that satisfies the material needs of man. Their power is economic. In their hands they hold the meal ticket of the world. Economic power is the basis of political, military, and all other forms of social power.

As long as the capitalists retain control of industry, nothing can break their power. Governments bow to them, courts hasten to do their bidding, politicians grovel at their feet, editors color the news and distort facts in their interest, the heads of great universities tremble at their slightest frown, and "dignitaries" of the church, with an eye to donations, fawn upon them as the embodiment of all that is divine on earth. They control all these elements of society by means of their wealth, and they get their wealth by virtue of their control of industry—the job. Therefore, control of industry by the employing class is the root of the tree of capitalism. Servile governments, corrupt courts, lying press, traitorous politicians and prostitute "educators" are only branches. It is useless to trim the branches or cut them off, for

as long as the root is functioning, new branches will grow. The only way to abolish capitalism is to strike at the root, and thus kill the tree by cutting off the source of its nourishment. This is radical action and it is the only radical action. The word "radical" is derived from the Latin word "radix," a root. It means "pertaining to a root." Radical action means action that deals with causes instead of tinkering with effects.

Economic Insecurity

While the capitalists revel in luxury and riot in extravagance, the workers are condemned to lives of poverty, ignorance, toil and privation. They lack economic security. Poverty and the fear of poverty render their lives miserable. The average worker is not more than a few weeks removed from a state of dependency. If he should become sick or injured, he would soon become a burden to friends or relatives or to public charity. Thousands are killed annually in the industries. Hundreds of thousands die from occupational diseases. Millions of children are deprived of education and are stunted and dwarfed physically and mentally by slavery in factories and mills. Other millions go hungry to school and suffer from countless diseases brought on by malnutrition. Having no standing before the law, workers are hounded by the police, victimized by the courts and subjected to all kinds of abuse, injustice and tyranny.

The position of the workers in society, like that of the capitalists, is only a reflex of their position in industry. Being for the most part unorganized, they exert little control over the job and consequently get little of the wealth produced. Lacking wealth, they lack power, and the wealth they produce constitutes the power of the capitalists which is used to hold them in subjection.

The workers have a power infinitely greater than that of the capitalists. That is their power to produce wealth—to run industry—to carry on pro-

duction. They can do this without capitalists, while without workers, capitalists are helpless. But the power of the workers is unorganized and therefore ineffective. By organizing on the job, the workers can gradually gain control of industry. As their power increases, that of the capitalists diminishes. As wages go up, profits go down. In their conflicts with the capitalists, the workers become trained, disciplined, efficient, responsible and competent to manage industry after capitalism has been overthrown.

Complete job control means possession of the source of all wealth and social power. When the workers control industry, they will own the earth. By organizing on the job, and in no other way, can the workers gain control of industry. In no other way can they improve their conditions or gain economic freedom.

When a worker knows these facts, he has a correct understanding of conditions. All workers who correctly understand economic conditions, have come to a common understanding. That is they understand them the same way. They may differ on minor points but they agree on the main principles. They know that "The working class and the capitalist class have nothing in common," and that "Labor is entitled to all it produces." This constitutes the common understanding necessary for organization. The common end in view is to gain an ever-increasing share of the wealth they produce, and eventually to get it all; in other words "Abolition of the wage system." When a man understands conditions in this way, that is, as they really are, he is ready to join the I. W. W.

Systematic Action

So much for the common understanding and the common end. We now come to the second part of the definition of organization—"to work systematically for the attainment of that end." There can be no organ-

ization without action, and it must be systematic, not haphazard action. Systematic action means each member doing what he is best fitted to do, in the best way he knows how, and in co-operation with every other member. It means each one doing his part, and all co-operating in the production of the whole.

When a man organizes, he does so because he can work or fight more effectively with his fellows than he can alone. He does not need to organize to "lay down" for he can do just as well as an individual. Getting together is not enough, we must get together and act systematically, otherwise we are not an organization but only a herd. There is a vast difference between an organized body of men and a herd of individuals with cards in their pockets. A man may join an organization but unless he acts in co-operation with the other members, he is not organized; he is only so much excess baggage. Only the active members—the live members—are organized. There can be no organization among the dead, and in modern society millions are dead intellectually and don't know it.

A watch is a piece of machinery made up of organized parts. Every wheel, spring, lever, check, balance and screw is organized to work to the best advantage with all the other parts. All parts work together for a common purpose—to keep time. There are no useless parts—no dead members. But take the watch apart and put all the parts in a bag. Then, altho they are together, they are no longer organized for they are not in a position to work or co-operate. In

fact, it is no longer a watch, it is only a mass of disorganized parts. The various parts only become a watch when they are assembled, in other words, organized.

When the workers get together on the street to make a "demonstration" or use "mass action," they are only making a demonstration of their own ignorance, and a target of themselves for machine guns and poison gas. They are not organized; they are only a powerless mob—fit candidates for the Suicide Club—and they will go the way of all the unfit. The power of the workers is not on the street but on the job.

Applied Intelligence

When workers get together in industry with the object of job control, some acting as organizers, some as job delegates, some as job committees, some as speakers, some as writers, some arranging and advertising meetings, some distributing literature, all taking part in business meetings, discussing all their problems, exchanging ideas and making decisions by the combined intelligence and experience of all, then they are organized and are using their power to the best advantage. Every worker can take part in this activity.

So let us study economic conditions that we may understand them and agree on a common end, and all work systematically by the intelligent use of our economic power for the attainment of that end, which can be none other than to take over the means of production and distribution and operate them for use instead of profit.

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