

say. Organized and energetic ignorance will never build a democracy. If we are to divert some fifty or sixty percent of our productive capacity to meeting the requirements of a victory program, it follows that the civilian population must yield to such controls as rationing, price control, priorities, and in many instances to do without consumer goods normally produced in peacetime economy. Let us ask ourselves, What does the worker know about taxation other than that he has to pay taxes? What does he know about the effect of price control, rationing, and priorities upon the wage structure, the financial solvency, and the economic productivity of the American economy? How much does he know about the problems of housing and its effect upon production and community life? Is the American worker interested in a greater expansion of public education facilities? Has he promoted communitywide recreation programs? Can he speak intelligently of the need for a public health program? Does he recognize the problems inherent in *mass production* monopolistic industry and centralized finance? The issues could be multiplied a hundredfold but behind all of these questions remains the job of establishing a workers' education program of such magnitude as to equip American labor with the educational background and understanding necessary to build and perpetuate a progressive democracy. To put it quite frankly, American labor within its own ranks has not placed enough emphasis upon the basic issues of democratic government; that is, the promotion of understanding and intelligent inquisitiveness.

Total war has taught all of us a lesson long overdue; namely, that America is not several communities, but one. Any group or any organized movement that hopes to survive as a free and independent organization should recognize that programs and principles must encompass within their aims the welfare of a total America and not a restricted group or area. Workers' education, through its techniques of adult education classes, public forums, visual aids, surveys, and other educational devices can equip the worker to understand his relationship in an economy made up of diverse economic interests, races, social, and political organizations. Workers' education can be instrumental in developing a program for American labor that will gain the respect and recognition of all Americans. The only question to be answered is "When do we start?" Let's quit talking about the nicety and value of an education and get down to the unspectacular task of getting the job done. As one who has been interested in the broad field of adult education and, in particular, workers' education, I think it about time to be frank about the whole matter and say that to this date much verbal and vocal energy has been expended on the cause of enlightenment but the necessary financial support and wholehearted endorsement of union leadership has been conspicuous by its absence.

It would be a grave mistake to say that workers' education has not made strides forward worthy of our praise. The education programs of the United Automobile Workers, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the International Ladies Garment Workers, and the activities of the Workers

Education Bureau, the Labor Education Bureau, and others, have demonstrated that the job can be done and that the effort is worthwhile. It is only proper to recognize impetus given the workers' education movement by the federal government through the WPA Workers Service project and its national head, Miss Hilda Smith. We, here in Minnesota, have blazed the trail but unless definite and positive efforts are made by the unions themselves, the period of experiment and trial may be all in vain. WPA funds and personnel are extremely limited. By the expressed directive of the Congress, all WPA funds must be expended for programs of direct benefit and concern to the war effort. The result is a severe curtailment of normal workers' education services at a time when American workers and unions need the strong support of educated membership. As previously mentioned, the sudden influx of workers into unions may be for good or for bad. If the new union member is interested only in himself, his job, his wage, then we may look forward to a steady degeneration of the labor movement. If the new union member is uninterested in his union, if he refuses to attend meetings, if he is unable to participate in meetings, if he is unfamiliar with the history, the principles, the cause of labor, then I say to all union leaders, you have built a house of cards that will collapse with the first blast of economic or political disturbance. It's time to recognize the dangers afoot. It's time to take action and put first things first - this means union funds, union support of a labor education service.

The realization of a union education program is not a dream. Workers' education has already established its roots in the American labor movement. What it needs now is an orderly plan of finance, a determined effort on the part of local unions to fill the classrooms, the group meetings, the work shops. Take for example the U. A. W. program. A per capita tax provides the funds. Their record of accomplishment is one of the bright spots in American labor. Numerous weekend education institutes have been held and the caliber of instruction is outstanding. Make no mistake about it, the union that now educates will be the union that produces the leaders of tomorrow. Our future is based upon the ability of the laboring people to think and act. Union labor can set the pace, can lead the way.

The development pattern for workers' education is not unknown. Here is how your union can get in line. First, select an education committee of not less than three members. Don't make the fatal mistake of considering the education committee unimportant. Its membership should include the best talent available. Once the committee is selected, see that it works, that it reports back to the local. The education committee must be backed by financial help. Either a per capita assessment or a grant of funds are absolutely essential. Unions cannot expect their teachers of workers' education activities to serve without pay. Be prepared to pay for professional services. Pay well and demand results. The next questions confronting every local union interested in workers' education is, how do we organize

the classes, the social activities, and the other features of workers' education? There is no fast set rule to follow; however, it is desirable to carry on the program at the union headquarters. There is where the workers are. It is the union hall that belongs to the workers, so why not use it full time. In some instances, where workers' education activities are more advanced, a union education center or labor college is desirable. The problem of space, of tables, light, heat, etc., are matters for the education committee. How about the program? Of what should it consist? Your education committee can help on this by writing to the international office or by contacting the Labor Education Service. In general, just remember the worker is not a queer creature. He wants to know how his union operates. He desires to be able to participate in the union meeting. He should know the background of labor history. These are fundamentals in any union education program. Progressive workers' education also demands that the activities be so directed as to interest all members of the family; social events, recreation, dramatics, etc., are all an integral part of the workers' education program. Space does not permit a detailed description of the organization of the wide number of activities possible under a workers' education setup. The details can be worked out according to the needs of the local union group. We may summarize by saying that, first, the union education committee must be appointed or elected; second, this committee must be active and have full responsibility for education activities; and, third, a

of the American labor movement have not always appreciated the need for *action on the political front.*
~~a highly developed and well organized workers' education program.~~ Too much emphasis has been placed upon membership growth and too little upon intellectual and leadership training. With the vast number of defense workers flowing into the trade union movement, all inexperienced and unacquainted with the history and philosophy of American labor, it may be that unless positive steps are taken to remedy the situation, the American labor movement will have within its ranks thousands of workers who are unconcerned as to the future of organized labor. It is not enough to have merely initiation fees and organization meetings. This will never bring a faith in the cause of labor or a devotion to its principles. More emphasis needs to be placed upon quality during the period of recruiting for quantity.

American labor has been asking for recognition in all government war agencies and, in particular, at the peace table and postwar planning. American labor wants to have the right to speak at the peace and in the future. Let's be sure that American labor has something worthwhile to

sound and substantial means of financing the program must be established at the outset. Let no one underestimate the possibilities of a union education service. It will revitalize the most dormant local union; it will produce a genuine feeling of fellowship among union members and the families of union members; it will build a strong future for the common people of America.



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