

WORKERS' SCHOOLS

IN WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

1937-1938 Term

Are in the field to aid labor groups in organizing and directing educational programs for their membership or for the community as a whole. Well trained teachers are made available to conduct classes in subjects of particular interest to labor, and speakers are supplied for forums and membership meetings.

Workers' Schools recognize the fact that in the main workers are unable to travel to some distant central location for the purpose of partaking in an educational program, and the consequent need of establishing educational facilities right in the industrial communities, preferably right in the union hall. Read the inside pages on how you can organize classes and forums in your local.

Downtown Office and Library

JANE ADDAMS PEACE CENTER

206 STANWIX STREET

-:-

PITTSBURGH, PA.

Phone COurt 8397

For Information — Communicate with

ROSE M. STEIN, Secretary

4629 BAYARD STREET

-:-

PITTSBURGH, PA.

Phone SCHenley 1448

WHAT IS YOUR PROBLEM?

ARE your meetings noisy and disorderly because everybody speaks at once?

ARE your meetings dull because your members do not have the courage to get up on their feet and take part in the discussion of problems vital to your organization?

ARE you troubled by occasional dissatisfaction with measures after they have been passed by the local?

IF you are faced with these and other problems the chances are 10 to 1 that you need a class in PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE. Classes in this subject are conducted as mock meetings. Every member gets a chance to be in the chair, to serve as secretary, TO LEARN IN DOING. These classes can be, and are, made lively and interesting. By way of them every union member may learn what his rights are, and how to respect the rights of others. This course is frequently combined with public speaking.

PERHAPS your members are already all good parliamentarians. In that case what your local may need is a class in some of the following subjects:

CURRENT EVENTS:

We live in a world of constant change. Events move rapidly, and history is being made at a rapid pace. If we want to keep up with the times, and to participate actively in this dynamic age, we must be perpetual students of the daily happenings about us. In this class a genuine effort is made to dig beneath the headlines through absolutely informal discussion of the news. The current press is the textbook, and unhampered conversation the method.

LABOR HISTORY:

Large scale production and mass employment began in this country almost a century ago. How has labor reacted to these developments? What problems of organization and administration has it faced? To what extent has American Labor been influenced by developments in other industrial centers of the world, and what lessons can labor today learn from the experience of the past?

LABOR PROBLEMS:

Whether you are in the thick of an organizing campaign or have an established union bargaining collectively with management, you have many problems. These may be of a general character, the kind which every union runs up against, or they may be of a character peculiar to your organization alone. In either case, discussion directed by an experienced leader will throw much light upon your own case.

LEGISLATIVE PROBLEMS:

What part has labor played in American politics in the past? What are the new trends in this respect? What are the opportunities and obstacles in labor's increasing participation in the country's political life? To what extent are we being governed by lobby? How can labor best assert itself politically?

FUNCTION OF COMMITTEES:

Detailed work in any organization must be done by committees. Very often, however, those appointed to committees do not know what their function is or how to go about carrying out the job assigned to them. As a result the union suffers. The work isn't being done. Nothing happens. A class in this subject will give the organization new life and vitality, and will help as well to stimulate activity among members who have previously shown no particular interest in the organization.

LABOR AND THE LAW:

The law and the courts have often been used against labor. Within recent years a number of laws have been passed to safeguard labor's rights. More laws will be proposed in the state and national legislatures. Labor should be well informed on these events. It should know something about injunctions, yellow-dog contracts, workmen's compensation, social security, wages and hours legislation, etc.

JOURNALISM:

Does your union have a paper? Do you get out occasional bulletins or notices of organization activities? Do you write newspaper publicity? A class in this subject will embrace instruction in the practical methods of achieving greater efficiency and better results through these media.

DRAMATICS:

Everybody likes to act. There are new techniques which make it easy to put on a dramatic performance right in the union hall, and on subjects directly relating to union problems. It will help to liven up your union meetings and social affairs, and is a particularly good means for getting women members interested in the organization. Chorus work can likewise be made a part of this program.

How Do You Go About Getting Such a Program? It Is Easy

HOW TO START AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

COMMITTEE:

Have your general body elect or appoint an Education Committee. It should not be too large—five is an ideal number. Be sure that committee members are interested in education, that they know the needs of the local in this respect, and that they will make a genuine effort to carry out the function for which they have been chosen.

CLASSES:

Your committee should then communicate with the Workers' Schools, or whatever other institution there may be in the field servicing such programs, and with the aid of an expert decide the program most suitable to your particular group. The committee should be responsible for recruiting members to the class, for seeing that a meeting place is always available for the appointed time, and that the program is orderly and is conducted in a way which will produce the most satisfactory results. If the program does not prove adequate, it should be the responsibility of the committee to change or modify it. The committee should meet frequently, preferably once a week, before each class; it should report to the general membership, seeking that body's advice and suggestions.

FORUMS:

Every industrial community should try to conduct a public forum, sponsored preferably by the Central Trades body, and open not only to all workers, but to the general public. These should be conducted on the principle of allowing full discussion from the floor. The Workers' Schools supply speakers of national prominence on various topics of current interest. Where no forum is available, locals should devote part of their regular meeting time to outside speakers. This will liven up your meetings, stimulate attendance, and keep your membership interested in affairs of the day.

LIBRARY:

Wherever possible locals should try to have some books and magazines for their membership to borrow or to read at the headquarters. Arrangements can be made for locals to borrow books from the public libraries. Lists of books and pamphlets will be supplied by the Workers' Schools, also facilities for buying or borrowing them. For further information, consult your instructor.

FINANCES:

The schools have no guardian angels. They are financed through voluntary contributions, and much of the service is volunteered. It is expected that groups which avail themselves of the facilities will try to contribute toward its work. Such contributions, however, are not a condition which groups must meet before they can avail themselves of the services. They are welcome to the facilities; contributions are purely voluntary, and are subject to the groups' ability to pay.

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4629 Bayard Street, Pittsburgh, Pa.
SChenley 1448

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