

PARTY BUILDING

**A HANDBOOK
FOR BRANCH OFFICERS**

***Strengthen National Unity
And the War Effort
By Building the
Communist Party***

Prepared by
Organization Department of the National Committee
Communist Party, U.S.A.

A MESSAGE TO BRANCH OFFICERS

This little booklet has been prepared primarily as a guide for every Party Branch in the Party Building Campaign. Its purpose is to direct the attention of each Branch to its specific responsibilities and how to fulfill them. Recognizing that the proper functioning and development of mass political activity of the Branch are the prerequisite and backbone of effective recruiting, it indicates some methods of improving the Branch work. It is intended for all Branch officers, new and old. It does not try to answer all questions concerning the functioning of the Branch. If the Branches feel that this handbook fills a need we will welcome suggestions on how to improve it for the future.

ORGANIZATION DEPARTMENT,
NATIONAL COMMITTEE, C.P., U.S.A.

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THE AIMS OF THE PARTY BUILDING CAMPAIGN

THE people are taking hold of this war and they are going to see that it is carried to a successful conclusion. But one of the guarantees of this is that the people be organized, and when it comes to this the world has learned to look upon the Communists as among the best organizers.

The organizational strengthening of our Party by thousands of new members will help us fulfill our responsibility in strengthening national unity, forging ever stronger the alliance of the United Nations, speeding the opening of the Second Front, establishing a centralized war economy to double production in 1943, contributing toward labor unity and the organization of the unorganized, abolishing the poll tax and the many other tasks facing labor and the nation.

We have great historic tasks on our hands. We have correct policies which, as we apply them, are an effective force contributing to our nation's victory, but we cannot say that we are fulfilling our responsibilities adequately. Our Party can be an important force in a country which has a decisive role to play in directing the course of history for generations to come.

Our Party has great potential contributions to make to the cause of victory. But we can make them only by political mass activities on a scale we have never reached before, and by Party building on a scale and with an intensity we have never attempted before. This is a great task which we need to translate into an immediate responsibility for each and every one of us. It means connecting up the tasks of each of us with the historic world events of the day and with the work that is going on throughout the country in most of the factories and plants and centers of production.

We can do greater things than we have ever done before. We must be confident in our abilities, and bold and tireless in our work among the masses. We must constantly think and discuss with them, transmitting to them the political line of our Party, which brings us into step with the great march of history. In this momen-

tous hour of world history we are optimistic because we are not idle, because we are part of the forces that are going to win the war and that are going to ensure a better world after the war.

—Earl Browder.

THE BRANCH IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS IN PARTY BUILDING

The present Party Building Campaign can be successful only if the Branch and its membership are ideologically convinced and effectively organized to recruit in the course of participating in mass work. Communist Party Branches must be alert to all issues and problems of the workers and people where these branches exist—whether in a community, shop or industry. They have a twofold responsibility. While speaking out publicly in the name of the Party, it is essential that they also collaborate with all other forces who are interested in the particular problem and thus help achieve success for all concerned. As the Party develops its own activity this will strengthen the broader movement.

The Branch that will have the best results in recruiting is the Branch with the most intimate connections with the people where it is at work, and which functions as an effective political force working publicly as well as through each of its members. Every problem must be approached with the purpose of strengthening the war effort and speeding victory of our country and the United Nations over the Axis. These intimate connections come through a combination of the following:

1. Activity in trade unions, shop committees, fraternal organizations, clubs or other organizations.
2. Participation in all phases of neighborhood war activities whether civilian defense, salvage, nursery schools, blood doing, price control, flag dedications, etc.
3. Election campaign activity of the Communist Party and its candidates and general community propaganda work throughout the year with forums, hall meetings, street meetings, etc.
4. Development of a group of more conscious supporters who read *The Worker* and other papers supporting the Communist Party and who read the writings of Earl Browder, such as his book *Victory—And After*, and other literature.

It is not enough that our members are active in trade unions or participate in war activities as individuals. The people must see the Party as an organization active in the community or industry where it functions and hear the voice of the Party on all issues. We must raise and popularize amongst our Branch membership the idea—*Know your shopmates! Know your neighbors!* These should not be limited to those we are already acquainted with but means cultivating a new circle of contacts from among those who respond and are active in daily activities and mass movements.

The Branch must gain the same political stature in its own sphere—by its activities—by its alertness to issues—by its convincing and correct advice—as the National Committee enjoys nationally. This means the Branch should develop the fullest initiative in its own field of activity on the basis of the policies of the State and National Committees of the Party. This type of Branch, with a rich political life radiating activity and confidence in itself, will be a center of recruiting activity.

Every Branch should evaluate its own standing and the direction in which it is moving by such Branch standards. Let it then set its recruiting objectives accordingly after democratic discussion.

HOW SHALL A BRANCH ORGANIZE THE PARTY BUILDING CAMPAIGN?

After adequate discussion and setting of objectives the Branch Executive should:

1. Plan the campaign week by week between February 12 and May 1. Set certain objectives for specific periods and have a weekly check on all plans and pledges.
2. See that *each and every* member is spoken to *individually* (by his Activity Committee Captain, or by a Branch Executive member, or by assignment of another comrade) and convinced why the Party must strengthen itself and *how* he or she can help.
- Get every member to fill in the Pledge that accompanied Earl Browder's Letter to Party Members.
3. Assemble by name and address the *first line of reserves* of every Branch. Who are they? They are distinguished from the broad support our Party has in a general way on one or another

issue or in a general sympathy which has not yet found a more specific form of conscious support. The *first line of reserves* of every Branch is the more conscious supporters of our Party who help influence and win workers and their organizations, shops or communities for correct policies and actions. They are:

- (a) Press readers—especially of *The Worker* and *Daily Worker* and of progressive national group newspapers.
- (b) Supporters in local unions and shops.
- (c) Readers of Earl Browder's book, *Victory—And After*.
- (d) Members of progressive fraternal organizations and clubs.
- (e) Members of the family and friends of each Party member.

In some Branches this *first line of reserves* can total up to several hundred workers. Just as the Party generally is surrounded by hundreds of thousands of conscious supporters, so every Branch, if it is functioning effectively, should be surrounded by hundreds of conscious sympathizers. The advantage of the Branch is that they know them by name—they are in touch with living beings—whom they talk to and whom they can recruit.

4. Organize open Branch meetings where the problems of the workers in the neighborhood, shop or industry can be discussed in relation to the central question of maximum mobilization for total victory of the United Nations over the Axis. To such meetings every member shall bring his contacts, and those not able to be visited personally should be notified by mail about the meetings.

5. The period of the Campaign should be utilized to develop examples of effective mass political activities wherein the political initiative of the Communist Party should be obvious to everyone. Such initiative should be shown in connection with such questions as the speeding up of the offensive in Europe, freeing of the political prisoners in North Africa, popularizing the significance of the Red Army victories at Stalingrad, etc.—and also in connection with supporting the President's win-the-war policies and defeating in Congress Dies, Rankin, Fish, Brooks & Co. Initiative should also be shown in organizing the unorganized, the anti-Poll Tax struggle, rationing, price and rent control and other local and domestic war requirements. By strengthening the Communist Party in the U.S.A. we are strengthening our country and our class, as is already clear from our contributions in clarifying and activizing the trade unions, in increasing production, in keynoting new policies for our nation

and in the high percentage of participation in every phase of war activity by every Communist Branch.

6. While the key to maximum results is the *involvement of every member in recruiting a few new members* the Branch should give special attention and leadership to those few comrades who have proven their individual ability to recruit large numbers of new members.

7. Every Branch should aim at quality as well as quantity in the Campaign. If the Branch operates in a community where there is a large population of Irish-Americans or Italian-Americans the Branch should aim at strengthening itself *primarily* among this key and dominant strata of the population. In steel, mining, automotive or shipbuilding communities the Branch should strive to recruit from among such workers so as to strengthen these workers' understanding, organization and contribution to the war effort.

HOW TO RECRUIT FROM THE FIRST LINE OF RESERVES

Let us approach these five categories one by one as listed previously:

Press Readers—The Branch should compile the names and addresses of all readers of *The Worker* and other progressive language papers in their community, shop or industry. This should include subscribers or those delivered by carrier. Included in the list should be those *Worker* readers whose subs have expired in the last few months. If the Branch does not have these available, they should get a list from the State Press Director. These should then be systematically visited by (a) comrades who got the sub, or (b) comrades who know the person, or (c) the balance by a special crew who are assigned for this work on the basis of their ability to politically explain why workers should join the Party.

As these readers are visited a record should be kept so that the Branch will know whether to revisit them during the campaign. *Sub cards of The Worker should always be on hand*. If the person visited had an expired sub, try to get a renewal. If they now receive *The Worker* by home delivery, try to get a sub.

Supporters in Trade Unions and Shops—All shop workers and trade union members should be met with in groups or separately

and convinced of the necessity of compiling their own list of contacts. These may be people they have associated with, talked to, sold papers or pamphlets to, or better still, workers who have consistently supported progressive and win-the-war policies in shop or union discussions. These should then be visited and approached to join the Party, preferably by the comrades who know them. Where they are not yet convinced to join the Party, try to get them to subscribe to the *Daily* or *Weekly Worker* or to buy a copy of *Victory—And After*.

Readers of Victory—And After—This is a rich list of contacts, far broader than press readers. It should be compiled by every member making up his own list of those to whom he sold the book. Generally these are people members come in contact with in the course of other activity. Therefore the systematic talking to such people does not necessitate separate visiting but generally can be done in the course of day or evening activity. These readers of *Victory—And After* should be asked how they like the book. Enter into discussion with them. Convince them how they can become an organized force in support of the ideas expressed in the book by joining the Party.

Members of Progressive Fraternal Organizations and Clubs—Find out which members belong to and are active in such type of organizations. Follow the same procedure as with shop and trade union contacts.

Members of the Family and Friends—Recruiting can often start right in one's own family. If one's wife is approached and convinced to join the Party, family responsibilities should be shared by each to allow for activity of both. With one's family in the Party the family life is enriched by a more complete understanding of each other's activities. The new member is a rich source for new contacts from among his family or circle of friends and shopmates. *Each Branch should try to convince the new member also to actively participate in the Party Building Campaign.*

It should be made clear to all members of mass organizations that joining the Party *does not* mean withdrawing from their own organizations. On the contrary, membership in the Party helps one to work more effectively in one's mass organization.

CONDITIONS OF PARTY MEMBERSHIP

Any person twenty-one years of age or more, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex or religious belief, who is a citizen of the U.S., and whose loyalty to the working class is unquestioned, shall be eligible for membership. (Constitution, Art. 3, Sec. I.)

* * *

Today all we should require as conditions of membership are the following four points:

1. Agreement with Party program and activity in applying it where one works and lives.
2. Participation in some phase of war work.
3. Reading of the Party press, especially the *Daily Worker*.
4. Payment of dues and membership in a Branch, but not compulsory regular attendance at Branch meetings.

Our emphasis is not on okaying non-attendance at Branch meetings, but on establishing a political relationship with the Party member. What do we mean by a political relationship with the member?

1. Most decisive is to be a regular reader of the Party press, especially the *Daily Worker*.
2. The center of Branch meetings to be political discussions related to the immediate issues of the day.
3. Guidance and personal contact to the member even when he is not able to attend Branch meetings.
4. Great democracy and involvement of members in making all decisions.
5. Establish—as New York is doing—a service department for the Branches with a speakers' bureau, film apparatus and cultural activities.
6. Develop branch activity on the basis of activity committees.

We must solve the problem of political guidance to *all* our members—especially all trade unionists—by changing the character of the Branch. This will not only increase attendance. This is the key to recruiting, because through such type of political guidance, people can become more effective by virtue of their membership in the Communist Party. (Report to National Party Conference, November 30, 1942, by John Williamson.)

TYPICAL ARGUMENTS YOU MUST ANSWER WHEN RECRUITING

"I am not prepared for the Party."

The desire to be a Party member is the best sign of being prepared. This is a workers' party open to all who accept our program and who place in the forefront the winning of this war of national liberation against the Axis powers. All that is required is that you are loyal to the best interests of your class, your union, your people and your country.

"I am willing to help the Party in its work but I do not need to be a member."

To such of our friends we should put the question whether they do not believe that the stronger the Party is, the more effective will be its work. If you are supporting the fight for the Second Front, which is desired by the great majority of the American people, and you know that of all political parties in the country only the Communist Party is carrying on an organized and united struggle for the Second Front, then is it not clear that the stronger the Party the more effective will be its campaign for the offensive and for strengthening the alliance through military collaboration with our foremost allies—the Soviet Union and Great Britain? Is this not the issue on which our whole future as a nation, the fate of our labor movement, of all our democratic institutions depends? But if you realize the role that the Party is playing, don't you consider it your duty to yourself, your family and our country, to strengthen the forces making the most effective fight for policies that are vital to the winning of the war, by joining the Communist Party and thus making its work more effective? Every new member is important. Thousands of new members will make the work so much more effective, in your industry, in your union, in your community, in the country as a whole. It will mean strengthening that Party that measures its every activity from the viewpoint of winning the war. We must win new members by showing each one we approach that membership in the Party is organized participation with that body of people that is most active in win-the-war activities.

"Isn't membership in my trade union sufficient?"

Membership in a trade union for a class-conscious worker, far from being a substitute for membership in the Communist Party, is actually one of the conditions for eligibility. This also ought to give you a clearer understanding of what kind of a political party the Communist Party is and how it differs from all other political parties.

There are today 12,000,000 members in the trade unions. Ten years ago there were less than 3,000,000 organized workers. If you are an auto worker, a steel worker, a shipbuilder, a miner, a textile worker, a marine worker, a needle worker, a white-collar worker, or a worker in any other industry, you and your shopmates know the role that the Communist Party played to bring about the present achievements of the trade unions. You and your shopmates know that Communists in the shops, through distribution of leaflets, shop papers, meetings, urged the workers to organize unions where none existed, or to join the unions that were trying to organize. Today the Communists continue to work for the organization of the unorganized, for strengthening the unions and for *labor unity*. It was this pioneering work that played no small role in rousing, educating and stimulating the workers to organize.

Pioneering—this is the word that best serves to explain the role of the Communists. If you are a Negro trade unionist, then you surely know that the progress made in gaining equal rights for the Negro workers to enter industry, to become members of the trade unions, against social inequality, was in no small measure due to the small groups of Negro and white Communists who had a program and fought for it. The same can be said with regard to the fight for the rights of women in general and the rights of women to enter industry, receive equal pay, join the trade unions on an equal basis with the men.

In order to understand why you should join the Communist Party, you must bear in mind the difference between the trade unions and the political party of the working class—the Communist Party. The trade unions unite all workers irrespective of politics, race or religion, primarily in defense of their economic interests. While it is true that the unions more and more consider political questions—and it is right that they should do this—it can readily be seen that the unions by the very nature of their composition and function are limited in the tasks which they undertake and in their

ability to provide effective and all-around leadership on all questions and issues before labor and the country. It is our task to help the trade unions and the whole working class to free themselves from all influences which interfere with the defense of labor's interests and labor's full participation in the national war effort and the achievement of its aspirations for a better world; in short, it is our task to help the working class and the trade unions achieve independence in their thinking and in their action. The working class and the trade unions are making progress in this direction. But this progress is possible only on condition that there exists a working class party that is based upon the scientific teaching of Marxism-Leninism and expresses the fundamental interests of the working class in every field of human endeavor, and that this working class party brings its knowledge and experiences to the labor movement. The Communist Party is such a party and its work aims to accomplish this task.

"It will take up all my free time."

The Party requires very little additional time. The worker who joins the Party remains at his job, in his trade union, in his fraternal organization. The member is asked to try and attend the Party Branch—which usually meets once every two weeks—and is organized in a manner not to interfere with his or her other obligations. These meetings teach and inspire the members to work more effectively among their shopmates, fellow trade unionists, and neighbors. He learns the answers to questions that puzzle others. He learns how to read and estimate events. He is thus able to be more helpful to his fellow workers, to his family and to his country.

"Belonging to the Party costs too much."

The only additional cost is the Party dues, which are lower than in the majority of unions and are based on the ability to pay. Any other financial obligations are of a voluntary character.

"I couldn't stand the discipline of the Party."

Party discipline is by no means a burden to the honest and militant worker. It is voluntary discipline based upon common convictions and common action. Party discipline means working in an organized way after democratic discussion and decision. Of course,

he who betrays his trust to his fellow workers has no place in the Party. But such a person would also be disciplined by his union. Actually the Party is able to play its effective role despite its relatively small numbers not by a mechanical and organizational discipline, but primarily through the united understanding and united will that it brings about in its membership.

WELCOMING AND ACTIVIZING NEW MEMBERS

While specially organized Induction Meetings for the new members may be organized on a Section or city-wide scale, the responsibility for making the new member feel "at home" and, on the basis of his membership, feel that his stature as a citizen and member of the working class has been raised, rests primarily with the Branch.

From the beginning he should belong to a Branch. While attendance at classes or schools will be useful, the decisive thing in keeping and developing the new member is the manner in which the Branch functions.

*"The contribution of the Communist Party to promoting national unity and to enhancing the leading role of the working class depends, to a large extent, on how its policies reach down into the heart of the communities; not merely on how its policies are enunciated from the top through its national and state organizations, but also how it influences the pulsating life of every community, of every factory, and meets with the understanding of the labor movement and of civic organizations. A great deal, therefore, depends upon the Branch of the Communist Party. If the membership will feel that presence at a meeting increases one's knowledge, the attendance will become regular and the manpower of the Branch will increase for the carrying out of the manifold tasks." (Sam Don in December issue of *The Communist*.)*

Every new member should receive the *personal* attention of the comrade who did the recruiting or of another comrade assigned to that task. This should be done in a friendly manner and not with any paternalistic approach. Every new member should feel the warm comradeship of the Party not only in political but in personal relations. We should not try to impose too many things to read upon new members. Every new member should be encouraged and convinced to read regularly *The Worker* and *The Daily Worker*, by taking advantage of the *Daily Worker* Club Subscription. The new member should also be acquainted with and read:

1. Earl Browder's book, *Victory—And After*.
2. A booklet containing Part 2 of the Party's Brief in the Bridges Case, which reviews the historic development of our Party policy.
3. The Party Constitution.
4. *The Communist* should be called to his attention and he should be encouraged to read specific articles.

INITIATION OF NEW MEMBERS

After being voted into the Party membership by a majority vote of the Branch, the new members as a group shall take the following pledge:

1. Recognizing that my country is engaged in a just war, it is my duty faithfully to serve and to encourage all others to serve in the armed forces, or in the industries or on the farms in all-out production for victory.

2. I will be a loyal and active member of the trade union of my industry, craft or profession, and will promote the unity of organized labor as the backbone of the democracy of our country, indispensable to its victory in this war of survival. I will promote the national unity of our country to win the war.

3. I will promote the strongest unity of action of our country with its allies, the coalition of the United Nations, headed by the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain and China; and I will promote the unity of the trade unions of these and all countries as a necessary guarantee of the destruction of Nazism and fascism throughout the world and the preservation of our democracies.

4. I will oppose all discrimination, hatred and prejudice within my union, within our country or among the nations, based upon differences of race, color, sex, national origin or religious creed.

5. I will study the program, the history and the theory of the Communist Party, and I will help the members of my trade union, my neighbors and the members of my church or fraternal society to understand the program and to join the Communist Party. I will read and support the press which supports my party, I will pay dues, I will belong to a Party Branch, I will regularly and actively perform my patriotic duties as an American citizen in all the activities necessary to win this people's war of national liberation."

During the Party Building Campaign this pledge may be given at large induction meetings on a Section or city-wide basis.

AGENDA OF BRANCH MEETINGS

Branch meeting agendas shall be prepared by the Branch Executive at its regular meeting prior to the Branch meeting. Many of the Branch meetings will be open to the people of the community. Such meetings will be devoted primarily to an explanation and discussion of current political problems and what should be done in the neighborhood. Other Branch meetings may be open to non-Party members by invitation. Still others may be strictly business meetings confined to Party members.

The following is an agenda which, with modifications of the Branch Executive, can guide the last two types of Branch meetings:

1. Reading of minutes of previous meeting.
2. Report of Executive Committee and its Sub-Committees.
3. Educational discussion.
4. Dues payments and initiation of new members.
5. Good and Welfare.

A FEW ADDITIONAL HINTS TO BRANCHES

1. *Start your meeting on time.* It should not last more than two and a half hours.

2. *See that your Branch has a functioning Executive Committee.* All large Ward Branches should assign their membership to various standing Activity Committees. These Activity Committees may be constituted of those participating in specific phases of mass work, those active in *Worker* circulation, etc. The Membership Director or Committee of the Branch, after careful discussion and consultation with the new member, assigns him or her to an agreed-upon Activity Committee.

3. *See all members who are unable to attend Branch meetings and convince them to subscribe to the Daily Worker.* Such regular visits should be the occasion to discuss their problems, collect dues and sell literature.

4. *See that all the most active members read The Communist each month.*

5. *Each quarter the Branch Financial Secretary must submit a financial report to the membership.*

LITERATURE FOR PARTY BUILDERS

VICTORY—AND AFTER, by Earl Browder	\$.50
INVITATION TO JOIN THE COMMUNIST PARTY, by Robert Minor01
CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA05
THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE U.S.A.: ITS HISTORY ROLE AND ORGANIZATION, by Earl Browder05
COMMUNIST PARTY BRIEF IN DEFENSE OF ITS BASIC PRINCIPLES10
PRODUCTION FOR VICTORY, by Earl Browder05
THE CONGRESS AND THE PEOPLE, by William Z. Foster ..	.01
WOMEN IN THE WAR, by Elizabeth Gurley Flynn05
FARMERS AND THE WAR, by Anna Rochester05
WHY THE NEGRO PEOPLE SHOULD JOIN THE COMMUNIST PARTY, by Ben Davis, Jr.01

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EVERY PARTY BUILDER SHOULD BE ARMED WITH THESE BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS TO HELP WIN NEW RECRUITS FOR THE PARTY.