

Labor unions - Communist problem

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HOW

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OPERATE IN

LABOR UNIONS

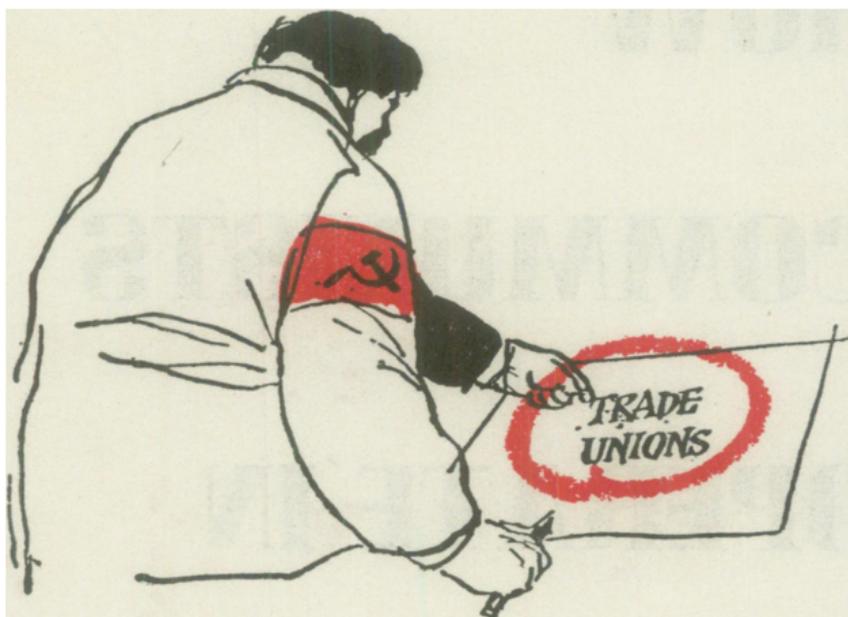


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How Communists Operate In Labor Unions



By *DAVID J. SAPOSS*

The communists find trade union organizations ready-made for use as their tools. Consisting of wage earners, trade unions are designed to improve and protect employment and living conditions of their members.

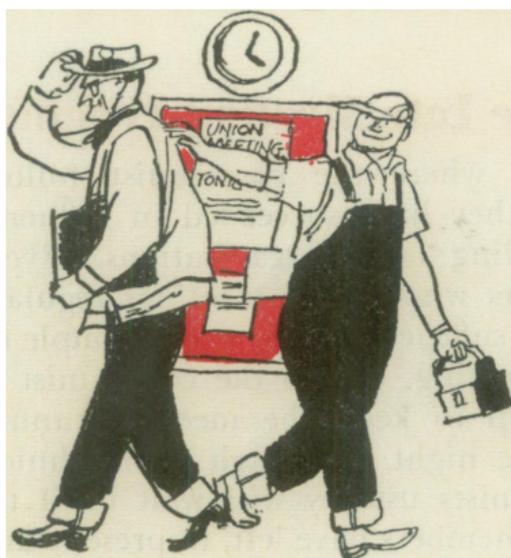
Trade unions prefer to accomplish their aims through peaceful negotiations under collective bargaining. But as a last resort, unions depend on direct action, not excluding the strike. Even in the United States, the wage earner has many wants that are not satisfied. In most other countries the wage earner still occupies an inferior status, working and living under conditions that leave considerable room for improvement. Hence the mood of the average worker is rather belligerent. The communists, therefore, regard this social sector a highly profitable area to exploit.

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Besides this, the nature and composition of union organization presents tempting opportunities for communist intrigues. Labor organizations are not only highly diversified but are scattered far and wide into local and district organizations. This makes it easier for designing groups to penetrate and control them. The average national labor organization grants a wide latitude of autonomy to its local affiliates, except on certain basic policies such as collective bargaining, apprenticeship and other matters that concern all or most of the members throughout the country. And even on basic subjects like collective bargaining, some national organizations grant extraordinary leeway to their locals.

No 8-Hour Day for Communists

Besides, while the trade union is important to the average worker, it is only part of his life. He has other interests that command much of his leisure time, such as the family, church, lodge, and other social and recreational fields. Only on critical occasions does the average union member devote much attention to his union's affairs.



During normal times he is content to entrust its conduct to those who are willing to contribute a considerable amount of their leisure time. As long as he profits satisfactorily from his union he is content to let others run its affairs. If the union achieves reasonable

and good results in promoting and protecting the interests of the average member, he is willing to overlook its digressions into other activities, such as supporting causes to which he would not subscribe, or carrying on other activities which are not normally in accord with union practice.

Since the local union is a democratic institution conducted on town-meeting principles, those attending meetings, as long as a quorum is present, make the decisions. To the fanatical communist who has dedicated his life work to the cause, this type of organization is made to order for capture, control, and misuse.



The Late Meeting Technique

Even where the communist following is small, they have succeeded in influencing or controlling labor organizations. Even those members who attend meetings regularly consider it sufficient if they give a couple of hours to a meeting, but to the communist it is no hardship to keep the meeting running late into the night. Through this technique, the communists usually will wait until the bulk of the members have left, to present their resolutions and motions which they can then railroad through against the handful that may remain to oppose them.

Through such simple techniques, unless a sufficient number of alert trade unionists constantly stand on guard, the communists can succeed in using the union to their ends.



The Caucus

But in order to prolong the meeting so that they can put through their motions and resolutions, they must plan their procedure in advance. This planning is carried on through their caucuses and cell meetings. On coaching and direction from the outside, the communist caucus plans its procedures in advance so that each of them has his role assigned. Waiting until it is rather late in the evening with the ordinary business of the union having been transacted and with the average member feeling that he must go home, they will then concentrate on putting over their schemes.

In attacking communist intrigue it is important to use a rifle rather than a shotgun. Oppositions are indispensable in a democracy whether they operate in government or in voluntary organizations. However, such oppositions must assume a high degree of responsibility and loyalty to the particular body in which they operate.

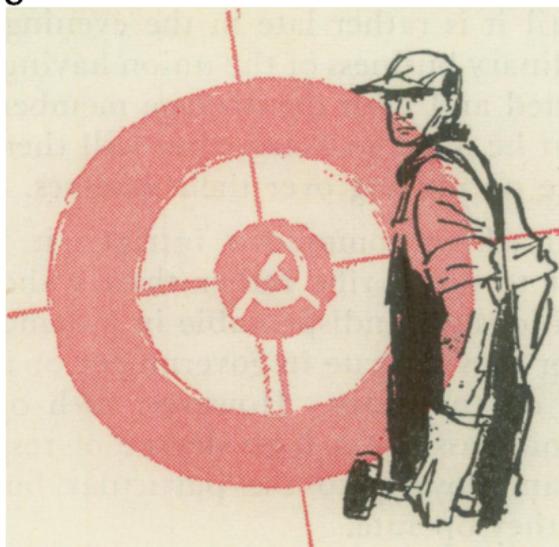
Communist cells in trade unions, as in other organizations in democracies, are neither responsible nor loyal to the particular agencies in which they operate. By now it is clear that their first and only loyalty is to the communist international—a conspiratorial movement designed to further the imperialistic and totalitarian ambitions of Soviet Russia.

Unfortunately most honest and fair-minded persons fail to differentiate between conspiratorial groups that pretend to operate as genuine oppositions and the real oppositions.

The Key Man Technique

Just as the communists have devised techniques for controlling union meetings, so have they also worked out various tactics for controlling the machinery of a trade union organization. They will concentrate on bringing under their influence the key offices through which the affairs of the organization are conducted.

The shop steward is a target for which the communists avidly aim. He is in charge of union affairs on the shop level, handling affairs arising out of the day-to-day relations between the company and employees. He has daily contact with the workers of the particular unit over which he has supervision. He is the person with whom the rank and file comes in closest contact in so far as union affairs are concerned. Since he is elected by the membership, he naturally is a person of influence and prestige.



To tie such an individual to the communist network is an important step in influencing the unsophisticated or unoriented members, who do not take the time to keep themselves informed on what's happening. It is natural for them to look to the shop steward for guidance and leadership.

Their next target is control of as many officials of the local union as possible. They are particularly interested in controlling the treasurer, since he is the person who will pass upon the financial expenditures authorized at union meetings. If he is under the domination of the communists he will not interpret union rules and regulations too strictly in case funds are being siphoned off for support of communist activities, including front organizations. A treasurer unsympathetic to communist causes would be in a position to block appropriation of funds made at union meetings on a strict observance of the union constitution and rules.



How the Minority Rules

In so far as possible, the communists will then concentrate on getting control of other officials of the union. The more they can control, the more certain they will be of directing the affairs of the organization in the interests of the international communist conspiracy.

Unfortunately, through caucuses and other means it is not difficult to control a union meeting with a small well-organized highly disciplined group. Unless the members are exceedingly alert and well informed, it is easy to deceive them by a few who are fast talkers and persuasive. With more officials working in the communist cause, the members are more easily controlled, since naturally they look to their officers for leadership and guidance.

Extending the Net

The communists do not stop with controlling the local unions. They also concentrate, once they have gained some strength, in broadening their influence—first to the district or regional organizations of the particular union in which they control a number of locals, and later to the national or international organization.

They will often concentrate on controlling the official publication if one is issued by the union. Union members may be skeptical of ideas which they might read elsewhere, but if it appears in the official organ of their union



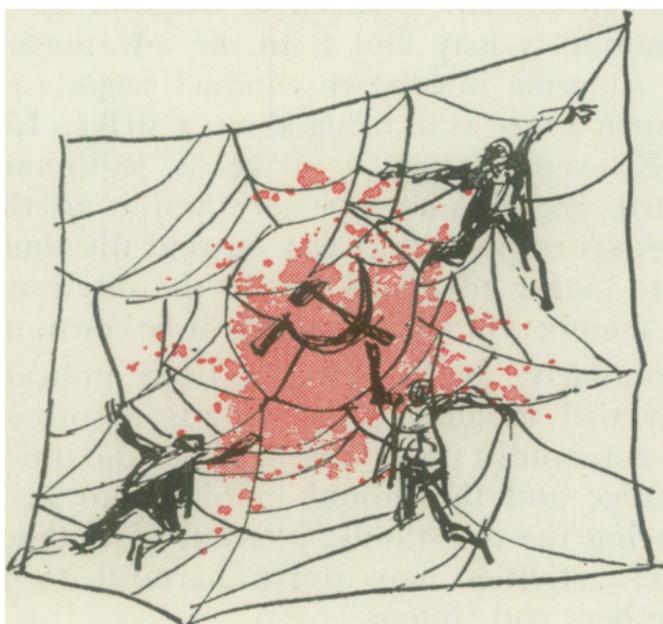
they are likely to give it credence. Control of the editor or influencing the editor are objectives which the communists strive for. Of course if they can control the treasurer they will have access to finances of the union which they can divert for open and disguised communist activities. The higher the status of the official, the greater is the influence of the communists over the members.

To gain control of union machinery or to influence union officials, the communists will stoop to anything. False rumors, blackmail, smears and slanders are ammunition in the communist arsenal in getting control of the unions or in forcing the union leaders to submit to their dictates.

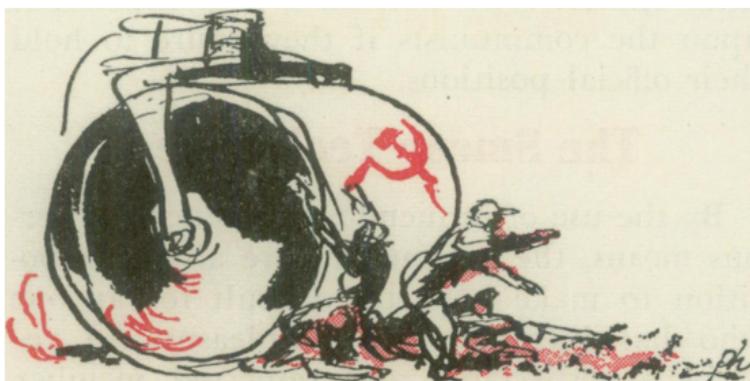
It is often comparatively easy for the communists through their cells and caucuses to defeat officials who refuse to bend to their commands. Similarly, ambitious union members who strive for official positions may find it convenient to make a deal with the communist groups. Once they have fallen into the clutches of the communists they find it very difficult to disentangle themselves. Because of the strength of the communist cell and its caucus, these officials often find themselves dependent upon the communists if they desire to hold their official positions.

The Smear Technique

By the use of innuendos and other slanderous means, the communists are also in a position to make it pretty difficult for anyone who has incurred their displeasure to remain a respectable and respected member of an organization. Where they have strong control of a union they may be in a position to make it difficult for a discarded union official to even continue making a living at the job. Hence, once a person has fallen under the influence they succeed in terrorizing and subjugating him so that he hesitates to break with them, even though he may be fully aware of being their tool and his conscience may bother him for betraying the interests of those who have placed their confidence in him.



When communists exercise considerable influence or have secured control of a union organization, whether on the local, regional, or national level, they begin to use it in furthering their own interests. If their interests coincide, whether directly or indirectly, with the interest of the members, well and good; if not, the interest of the party is placed above the interest of the union and the mem-



bers. They will still try to secure results and benefits for the members and keep the union in an influential position; but all of this is now subordinated to the higher interest.

Communists and Strikes

Thus even though it may be possible at times to secure a satisfactory adjustment by negotiation and collective bargaining, the communists may find it to the advantage of the superior interest to conduct negotiations in such a way as to bring about a strike. Likewise, even though a strike is legitimately called, the communists may find it to their interests to prolong it way beyond the time it is no longer advantageous for the interests of the members or the union that it be continued.

Similarly, as has already been indicated, they will squander union funds to promote the communist cause, they will use the union's prestige and the union's publications in advancing the communist interests even though these activities may prove harmful to the members and unions.

When the members become aroused and the honest and responsible leadership musters strength to oppose communist intrigue and maneuvers, the communists will not hesitate to disrupt a union either by weakening it or even seeing it die rather than lose control to the honest and responsible leadership. There are many such instances on record in the United States as well as in the rest of the world.

Divide to Conquer

The communists will not hesitate in splitting the organizations which they control from the legitimate trade union movement if it serves their interests.

In many countries, including the United States, the communists have also not hesitated in organizing "dual unions" to those which they cannot control. Study of the pronouncements of such communist-controlled unions reveals that they use union funds, devote major parts of union activity to promote the interests of the communist international conspiratorial movement. It is seldom that the



majority or even a very large proportion of the members of these unions are communists. Since the unions are also engaged in looking after the economic interests of their members, most members thoughtlessly are willing to overlook the fact that their organization, their

union dues, and their offices are really an arm of the communist movement.

At one time the communists followed the policy of working within the legitimate trade union movement, which is known as "boring from within." At another time they founded a separate trade union movement which is known as "dual unionism." However, since communists are not guided by principle or scruples, they have found that it suits their purpose best to operate on both levels at the same time.

So we will find that in most countries the communists will attempt to infiltrate and penetrate the legitimate unions, and at the same time they will also operate unions completely controlled and dominated by them. This practice is more confusing to the ordinary rank and file union member and gives the communists greater power and influence.

The leaders and more active members of the non-communist trade unions in most countries are quite conversant with this technique and do everything in their power to counteract it. Nevertheless, it is a big undertaking and they are not always as successful as they would like to be.

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