

International Workers Order
National Training School
1 9 3 8

WORKERS FRATERNALISM

AS A FORCE IN

THE COMMUNITY

Prepared By The
General Secretary

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By Max Bedacht

General ' to organize among them and to secure for its members mutual
Purpose ' aid. This need for mutual aid is caused by the economic in-
of Order' security of the masses. The lives of the masses depend on

their jobs and on their physical ability to work. Wherever or whenever
they cannot find jobs or when their physical conditions make it impos-
sible for them to work, their income is discontinued. Their sources of
life stop flowing. Though their life and existence depends on their im-
mediate earnings, these earnings stop and misery knocks at the door.

As a fraternal benefit society, our Order endeavors to help
its members to meet this problem. One means of helping is the organiza-
tion and practice of mutual aid among them. Through collective efforts a
common treasury is established and maintained. The individual members,
when in need, are entitled to draw on this common treasury in accordance
with certain constitutionally fixed rules.

Aside from this constitutional insurance, the membership also
practices voluntary mutual aid. This voluntary aid is practiced by the
organization beyond the limits of its membership. In other words, the
members do not only help each other; they also get together and as a body
help support endeavors outside their organization. Why?

Why Ex- ' This practice is rooted in the recognition that the Order
tend Help' cannot confine its aid to meeting needs which grow out of a
Beyond ' certain condition; it must also be ready to combat the condi-
the Orga- ' tion out of which these needs grow. This is a commonly re-
nization?'

cognized and practiced principle. The community, for instance, does not confine itself to helping the victims of a flood. It is just as eager and ready to help in preventing floods. It is certainly recognized that it is not enough to help victims of an epidemic. The community must also be ready to join forces in helping to prevent epidemics.

Order ' That is why our International Workers Order, desiring to be a
Must ' truly good brother of its members, must and shall be active
Support ' not only in the field of cure but also in the field of pre-
Workers ' vention. It must supply immediate help to its members when
Economic ' Struggles'
----- attacked by the calamity of their economic insecurity. In
addition it must try to help strengthen the economic security of the
masses. The Order will do this by supporting efforts of the masses to
get better wages; it will accomplish it by supporting movements for shorter
hours and for more regular employment; it will work for it by becoming
a force in the movement to win healthier working conditions and achieve
protection of the limbs and lives of the workers on the job. All of
these things are closely connected with and are part of the elements that
make for greater economic security. They are part of the measures preventing
the calamity for which the mutual aid and constitutional benefits provide
some immediate emergency help.

Very many of the problems of health and security of life are problems shared by the whole community. For instance, the question of public health and hygiene touches all members of a community: housing problems, the problem of sanitation and security of school buildings are questions of interest and importance to the whole community. They are social problems. They touch not only the members of our Order; they do

not concern only the masses of one class; they touch the welfare of every man, woman and child in the community.

Activities are a Fundamental
Necessity for the Order

To be an effective friend and brother of its members therefore obligates the International Workers Order, aside from its function as an instrument of mutual aid, to become a force for social improvement. It is obligated to become a factor in the community for the improvement of public welfare and for the struggle against conditions that menace the life and the health of the masses.

To become such a benevolent factor in the community, the mem-

Order Must' bers of the Order must be won for action in these fields. The
Act on ' leadership of the Order must be awake to social and community
Community ' problems
Problems ' -----
problems. They must at all times be ready and able to lead
the masses of members into action for the solution of such problems.

This readiness to mobilize its members for and lead them into action for the solution of community problems is necessary:

A/ Because only by this means can the members themselves learn that the problems which brought them together in the organization are really social problems.

B/ Because only by experience will the masses learn that organized action can successfully solve their problems.

C/ Because only in action can the organization cooperate with and ask for and expect the cooperation of other organizations working in the same field and for the same purpose.

We already know that the issues for this kind of activity are

----- determined by the immediate purpose of the organization.
How Choose' Questions are sometimes raised about the advisability of li-
Field of ' Action ' miting the field of action for the Order. Students of the
question can of course show that all the problems of the toiling masses
dovetail into each other; all of them depend on each other; all of them
have a common, fundamental origin as well as a common, fundamental cure.
It is this ramification of all conceivable social and economic problems
of the masses that raises the question: Why is it necessary for our Or-
der, or for that matter for any particular workers organization, to limit
the field of problems it considers its own immediate concern? Why quali-
fy the field by confining it to activities connected with the immediate
purposes of our Order?

----- The answer is not hard to find. Limitations are necessary,
Why Limit' first, because of political reasons. The conceptions, tradi-
Field of ' tions, beliefs and desires of the individual members in any
Action ' for Order' real mass organization and certainly in our Order, differ
----- very widely. Under these conditions it is very difficult if not impos-
sible to get united consent for and united action of all members in all
fields of endeavor and on all issues concerning the problems of the mass-
es. However, it presents no difficulty at all to win such consent and
achieve such unity on problems connected with the immediate and fundamen-
tal purposes of the organization.

The members of the Order got together to seek a solution of
the problem of their economic insecurity -- to secure help when they fall
sick or get crippled, to get help for their families in case of death,
etc. They may never give a thought to the social meaning and connections

of these problems; but the painful realities of these problems are clearly in the minds of all of the members. It is not only not difficult but natural to get unanimous consent from the membership for any action clearly embodying an effort to solve one of these problems. Such united action will gradually broaden the social understanding of the problem on the part of the members. It will teach them the connections of these problems with many others. It will help them acquire a fundamental understanding of the economic, social and political problems of their class.

Those acquiring this understanding will increase their activities. They will become more ready to enter new fields of endeavor; they will become more conscious and more active members of their unions; they will enter political organizations and struggles of the working masses. Thus, although the Order limits its immediate field of endeavor, it opens an unlimited field of action to its members.

A limitation of the field of activities for the Order is also necessary for physical reasons. The total sum of energy available for activities in any organization is limited. It is limited by the numerical strength of the organization as well as by the limits of the readiness of the membership to go into action. An organization trying to spread its attention to all possible fields will accomplish nothing. It will dissipate its strength; it will confuse its members; it will tire them out and in the end it will have no definite achievement to its credit. Achievement presupposes concentration of attention and of action. It presupposes a wise utilization and organization of the available forces and the available energy. It presupposes the selection of a field of action within which the greatest

possibility of mobilization exists and therefore also the greatest possibility of achievement.

The Order Must Become a Force
For Progress in the Community

With these general principles before us we approach the problem of the function of the International Workers Order within the community and in the political field. First we will deal with the role of the Order in the community.

Important' The very needs which induce the mass of people to seek protection through membership in a fraternal organization are
Community' reflected in a number of problems of the community at large.
Problems' -----

These problems may generally be classified as the problems of community health and hygiene. Within this field there is a wide range of questions. We need only mention a few. There is the problem of the health and safety of the children in school, of the sanitary conditions of the school building, of the safety against fire hazards in these structures. There is the question of street cleaning, garbage removal, sewage and sewage disposal. All of these questions and many more make up the general problem of public health. They concern the people of the whole community. Then there is the problem of neighborhood playgrounds for children, the need for health centers and for nurseries. There are a thousand and one questions touching on the welfare of each individual in the community. The Order must make all of these problems its own. It must become a force for the education of its members toward a recognition of the meaning and importance of all of these problems. It must become a force for the education of the whole community on these problems. It must become the initiator and organizer of campaigns for the solution of these problems. It must be an ever ready and forceful supporter of every cam-

paign or movement aiming at a realistic and effective solution of any of these problems.

Leadership Has Major Responsibility
For Functioning of Order

Task of ' coming leaders in the community. That is the peculiarity of
Leader- ' the duties of leadership of a movement with social import.
ship ' -----

Such a leadership cannot confine its function to internal questions of organization and activities. It must expand these functions beyond the limits of the organization into the sphere of life of the whole population.

The ability of a leader of the IWO to carry his organization into this work depends a great deal upon the quality and effectiveness of his own work in this field. The leader must be seen and heard as an advocate of public health and safety measures, before city councils and public health authorities. He must be seen and heard in every place and on every occasion where such community problems are under discussion. The Order behind him and its membership will give weight to his words and to his actions. His words and actions in turn will give guidance and incentive for activities to the organization and the members behind him. Thus the Order will become known as a force for progress and for public improvements in the community. It will attract large masses of people who not only are glad to avail themselves of the insurance protection provided by the Order but also want to become active in the cause of progress.

Unity of Action is Condition
of Unity of Membership

At the same time the members and sections of the Order become welded together into a powerful whole. This result of community

work is most important. An illustration out of life will emphasize this importance.

Common ' In one particular town of about 13,000 population, our Order
Action ' has a membership of over 900. This membership comprises,
for Com- ' therefore, nearly eight per cent of the total population.
mon Weal ' Eight per cent of the population, organized, can become a
Unifies ' powerful force for the good of the community, if they make up their

minds.

In reality the Order in this particular community plays no outstanding role. The 900 members are organized in various language lodges. Outside of their common central insurance treasury, they have uncommonly little in common. They lack a common objective. Instead of unitedly becoming a force for good in the community, they form numerous small, independent, but weak communities within the organization.

The raising of a common community problem will supply a sorely needed common objective. It would supply an incentive for common action to all of the lodges and members in this community. The Order would be heard from in this town. At the same time a greater spirit of unity would develop within the organization. Many more common problems would be found. The confidence of the members in the strength of their organization would increase. With the growth of this confidence new and greater problems could be tackled successfully. Aside from all these ideological reasons, the numerical strength of the Order would rise from 8% to a majority of the population.

Develop- ' In this connection we must also keep in mind that the growth
ing ' of the organization and of its activities requires an expan-
Leaders ' -----

sion of its leading personnel. As the organization grows, it grows ever hungrier for more leading people. Leaders do not sprout in hothouses or study rooms. They grow only in action. Only in action one learns the dynamics of leadership. Only in action one learns to understand the importance of objectives in the development of an organization. Only in action one can learn to understand the role of the membership in such action. Only in action one can learn the function of leadership.

Life of Lodges of Order Must Become a
Contribution to the Life of the Community

To become a force making for public efforts to solve community problems is only one side of the task of community work for the Order. There is another side. The Order itself must in its own life help solve some of the community problems. This can be done in many ways.

Club ' form of maintaining interest among the members for the orga-
Life ' nization. It also solves a social problem.

Public or community efforts to supply social life and recreation are unfortunately very rare. This creates a big problem, especially for the broad masses. The well-to-do, with their big homes and with no scarcity of funds, can and do solve this problem in their "society life". But for the mass with low and most uncertain income, with crowded homes, there is and there cannot be such a "life". Yet social and recreational life is not a luxury. It is not something that may be indulged in or left alone at will. It is a necessity of existence.

----- The mass has usually only one way to supply this necessity.
IWO Cen- ' It is often a very doubtful way. That way is to buy the re-
ters a ' Necessity' creation, entertainment or social life in the commercial mar-

ket, in the public dance halls, in the neighborhood political "athletic" club, in the pool hall, and elsewhere. There recreation and entertainment are sold for private profit. Most of the time the profit object dominates the event. The supplying of the customers with recreation, entertainment and social life is only considered of secondary importance.

Under these conditions the effort of the Order to organize among its members social life, to provide recreation and entertainment, serves a social, a community problem.

The fraternal center of the Order, if well conducted and filled with social and recreational life, becomes a contribution to the community. In the degree in which it helps solve this community problem, in that degree it attracts the population to the organization.

The special consideration of the problem of organization of

Child- ' children and children's work in the Order will show the im-
ren's ' portance of this work, because it supplies some fundamentally
Activi-' necessary bridge between the public education of the child
ties ' and its home life. The very general necessity of this work brings it

within the sphere of community service.

Let us take the organization of children's orchestras or drum and bugle corps. Aside from the contribution made by the organization and training of such groups to the solution of the problem of the children and their parents, it is also a contribution to community life. The children's band or drum and bugle corps becomes part of that community life. At public affairs of importance, public parades, etc., they give color and verve to the occasion. Experience has shown that in many smaller communities the organization of such groups and their function

became a major contribution to the community life.

Another contribution to community problems that must be considered by the Order wherever possible is the organization and maintenance of day nurseries. The safety and care of children during unavoidable absence of their parents touches not only the individual child but is a community duty and problem. In many cases, with the help of forces within the Order and with the help of friendly people outside of it, the Order can contribute to the solving of this problem without great difficulty.

Sports ' The problem of youth work in general and its importance will
----- be treated as a separate major problem. However, it must be
 mentioned here that youth activities and especially sports
activities are part of a community service to which the Order is pledged.
The development of sports groups, ball teams, swimming teams and many
other forms of sports activities is not merely the satisfying of the individual desires of the participating young men and women. It is a contribution to the solution of the health problem of the community. It is also a contribution to the solution of the problem of public recreation and entertainment.

Women ' One of the reasons why masses of women do not actively participate in the community life is the fact that this life is
----- not organized for the women. A large number of these women
are housewives. They are tied down to their duties during the periods in which the official life goes on. Our fraternal life, our club life, will become a contribution to the solution of this problem of activating the mass of women in the community and for community purposes, by organizing

gatherings for them during periods when they have time, by organizing instructions, lectures on problems not only important to them as individuals but important to the community.

This activity is a necessary training ground for masses of women for community life. It is necessary to show them the need of interest in the community problems and also to show them the way in which they can contribute to the solution of these problems.

Interrelation of Problems Important
Factor in Success of Leadership

This life within its own body on the one hand, and the function of the whole body in the community and as a force for the solution of community problems, make up the service to the community and community life which our International Workers Order can give and must give. Of course, the degree in which the Order solves this problem depends on many factors. A major factor is the strength of the organization. Another is, of course, leadership. These two factors, however, are not entirely disconnected as we have already seen. Leadership will be able to develop, even within a comparatively small organization, a high degree of life. This life in turn becomes a factor for further growth. This growth and intensification of life draws more and more members into action and develops new leaders.

This interrelation of all problems to each other must be emphasized because very often the demand for organizing certain activities is disregarded on the ground that "we are not strong enough". There is no such thing as creating the one thing as a condition of creating the other. Of course, the existence of a lodge or an organization is a precondition; but after that condition has been fulfilled, all of the life

that is to characterize the organization must begin manifesting itself right then and there, even in a small lodge. As long as the organization is small, the life will manifest itself in a small way. As already stated, this will contribute to its growth and gradually all the problems are solved simultaneously and not one as a precondition of the solution of the other.

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