# WORK AMONG WOMEN

PUBLISHED BY THE
COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN
16 KING STREET, COVENT GARDEN, W.C. 2
1924

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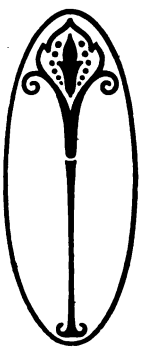

COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN
16, KING STREET, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON, W.C.2.

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# Explanatory Note

Is there any need for an introduction to the report on the activities of our women comrades in the Soviet Workers' and Peasants' Republics? Hardly so. A sufficient introduction to this report is the historic fact that these Republics which, politically, are to-day the freest States of the World, were only a few years ago the hunting ground for Tsarist oppression and spoliation. There is also the other fact that in the overthrow of Tsarism, women played their part and showed themselves capable even of laying down their lives for the conquest of power by the proletariat.

We will only indicate a few characteristic features of the report. Facts follow facts described in simple language.

In the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, Communist women concentrate all their talents and energies on constructive work, on the task of awakening the interest of all women workers to the economic and social reconstruction of their respective countries. The missed opportunities of many centuries are to be made good overnight.

The reports of our women comrades are nothing but records of hard practical and fruitful work. This work may seem to many hundrum, even " reformist." But those whose souls and minds are open to the great symphony of the class conscious march towards Communism, will be able to detect revolutionary chords even in this everyday work. They will realise that these reports are a record of untiring, self-sacrificing and skilful work and a reflex of the creative forces within the women's movement. All this characterises not only the leading women comrades, but also the millions of women among whom they work.

We can see by the details of the reports that the revolution and the establishment of proletarian dictatorship have brought out the latent powers and talents of our women comrades in the Soviet Republics and have taught them to apply these talents for the welfare of the women of their country

and the proletariat at large. Thus, the reports are for the women Communists of the capitalist countries something more than examples of ways and means for awakening the interests of women workers in the demands and ideals of the Communist Party. They are irresistible exhortations to come out into the forefront of the proletarian struggle for the conquest of power as the next decisive step in the revolution. And that is not all, for women of the capitalist countries must get inspiration and learn perseverance from the struggles and experiences which led to the establishment of the Soviet order and from the glorious example of the revolutionary strength of our women comrades in the Soviet Republics.

If this Russian example be followed on an international scale, we shall not have long to wait before world revolution writes the epilogue to the reports of our women comrades of the Soviet Republics notwithstanding the present slow progress of historic events.

# The Russian Communist Party at Work Among Women

THE fundamental task before the Communist Parties of all countries in connection with work among women, is to rally the proletariat, regardless of sex, to the banner of class struggle. The aim of Communist Parties when establishing special sections for work among women is not to divide workers into men and women, who pursue different aims in their struggle, but to unite them in the name of their community of interests (regardless of differences of conditions and customs and the results accruing therefrom).

The political backwardness of working women—a result of their age-long social enslavement—is the cause of their indifference to social life and to the struggles of their class. This indifference amounts in some cases to a complete failure to understand the tasks confronting them. A slave to the everyday needs of the family, the working mother does not only restrain her husband from taking an active part in the fight against capitalism, but as a participator in production, she herself acts as a strike breaker, and is thereby on the side of those who are fighting against the working class for the preservation of the bourgeois social order. Working women, from being a drag on social progress, must be converted into class conscious participators in the great struggle of the proletariat. And this is not all. It is essential to extend Communist Party influence over large sections of the masses of proletarian women. It has already become a truism that a victorious proletarian revolution is impossible without the support and sympathy of large numbers of working women, housewives and peasant women. In every working class family, and in every peasant cottage, the guardian of the hearth and home may either be a bitter enemy or an ardent and active supporter of civil war. Our October Revolution furnished many examples of this.

Special methods had to be adopted in order to get into contact with large masses of working women. By these methods it was made clear to them that their subjection originates in the bourgeois social order, and that Communism alone can achieve their emancipation. Experience has shown that special women's meetings and campaigns in connection with the particular interests of working women are more likely to arouse them than anything else; while in countries where proletarian dictatorship has been established, the best means of awakening women out of their lethargy and developing their class consciousness is—to encourage even the most backward working and peasant women in the active work of Socialist construction.

A favourite method is individual propaganda and agitation by the more educated working and peasant women who are familiar with the conditions of life of the various classes of women and who have, therefore, considerable influence over their more backward comrades.

In the Soviet countries women delegate meetings (of working women in towns and of peasant women in the countryside) are among the most effective means of spreading the influence of the Communist Party over large sections of working women. If this work is well organised, it results in the systematic training of a cadre of working and peasant women whose dormant qualities are brought out and developed. Through these women delegates the Party is able to permeate the mass of the working women. Women delegates are drawn into all kinds of campaigns, into work in children's institutions, Soviet sections, co-operative societies and in factory councils' commissions.

Gubernia (provincial) conferences of working and peasant women are another form of Party work among women. Those who have attended such conferences can testify to the revolutionary spirit animating these functions. Such conferences are also one of the means of establishing a link between working women and peasant women, which frequently becomes still closer as a result of joint activities.

The working women's sections are the apparatus used by Party committees for this work. Frequently methods of work, which are matters of routine demanding the establishment of a special working apparatus, are confused with

"organisation." The term "organisation of women" is frequently used even by responsible Party workers in speaking of the sections for work among women. No one ever attempts to identify the agitational propaganda department or the organising section of the Party Committee with a separate Party organisation. This would be the height of political illiteracy, would it not? Then why should the section for work among women give rise to such confusion of ideas?

This, no doubt is a relic of the past. Evidently such an attitude towards women's organisations (for equal rights) of all forms and tendencies, from "Christian" to opportunist, is still maintained by force of habit even by Communists.

A women's organisation invariably pre-supposes a division according to sex regardless of class, which is an attack on working class unity with the object of impairing its strength. **To make the working class one and indivisible in the full sense of the word by developing the class consciousness of an enormous section of it and thereby making it unconquerable**—such is the opposite aim pursued by the Communist Party when it organises sections for work among working and peasant women.

The necessity of drawing large masses of working women into the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat, confers a special significance on the work among women in capitalist countries. This requires above all the inclusion of working women in Communist Parties and their training into class conscious fighters for the dictatorship of the proletariat. It also requires the growth of Communist influence on large sections of working and peasant women. **Such are the two indispensable pre-requisites of a proletarian revolution in the capitalist countries of the West.** It is for this reason that Communist Parties must do their utmost to overcome the sluggishness of the individualistic psychology of the working and peasant women, and to awaken feelings of class solidarity among them.

Communist Parties in all countries must at last realise how important it is to draw proletarian women into the revolutionary movement. Enough lip service has been done to this slogan. It is deeds we want. It would seem that our West European men comrades are even more inert, as far as the women's question is concerned, than our comrades of

the Russian Communist Party. This, of course, has a very bad effect on Party work among women. In reality, women have not yet emerged from the state of infancy and have made very little progress since the Second Conference of Communist women in 1921.

It is true that working women have distinguished themselves in the revolutionary struggles in Germany and in the struggle with the Fascisti in Italy and other countries. But is this due to the efforts of Communist Parties? How much earnest, difficult and tedious work have the parties done in this direction, and do they fully appreciate the importance of this kind of work? Is it not a fact that, having established working women's sections, the Communist Parties are content to rest at that? The prevailing idea seems to be "let the women bother about they petty women's affairs, *we* give our thoughts and energies to more important questions." Does this not explain the inadmissible indifference of the French Communist Party to the splendid dressmakers' strike and to the strike of women textile workers? What was actually done by French Communists in the direction of making a good use of the mood and temper of the women on strike? What does the British Communist Party do to increase the ridiculously small number of women members in its ranks, etc., etc.?

As long as women's participation in the revolution is considered a negligible quantity, as long as in the inmost recesses of their minds, our men look upon women as irresponsible, ornamental beings, we shall not be able to make much progress in the work among women with our women's sections alone. We shall simply mark time with our sections and will not achieve the results at which we are aiming.

Thus, the thing which is most needed in our work among women is a change in the attitude of all Communist Parties towards this work. The Parties must realise the truth of the fundamental slogan of Leninism: "The proletarian revolution can only be victorious if the Communist Parties join forces with the large masses of the exploited and oppressed." Is it not a fact that proletarian women are the most exploited section of society? And can they be left out of account if a close contact with the exploited masses is to be established?


Presidium of the 4th Provincial Congress of Working and Peasant Women, Nizhni Novgorod, 20/2/23

Nearer and nearer to the masses! This permanent slogan of the Russian Communist Party, which is adequate at all times, deserves special emphasis in connection with propaganda among women in capitalist countries.

Nearer to the working and peasant women! Pay closer attention to the selection of methods which are to assist you in this work! Adopt the methods to be learned from the Parties of other countries, including Soviet countries in spite of the different conditions under which the struggle is carried on there. In our steady march forward new methods of work must be elaborated, account must be taken of the experiences of the past, of victories and defeats! Perhaps our progress will be slower than we would wish, but though slow, it will be sure; for it will rest on a more stable and comprehensive foundation. Forward, hand in hand with the proletarian women—true and faithful comrades who will help to secure the victory of Communism.

S. SMIDOVITCH.

# Methods of Approaching Working Women

"WHEN we have constructed the first large new house according to the plan of the best Soviet architect, a house which will be able to accommodate fifty workers' families, with one kitchen for the entire house under the control of a well trained housekeeper; when we have built a second house of the same kind, fully adapted for children's crèches, this will reflect on the consciousness of the most backward working man and working mother."

These words spoken by Comrade Trotsky at the Third All-Russian Conference of workers among women, illustrated with extraordinary clearness the methods of approach to the working and peasant women which have been employed by the women workers' sections of the Russian Communist Party during the whole period of their activities.

From the first days of the October revolution the Communist Party has utilised the abilities of the Communist women and the more intelligent of the women workers in the organisation of the Soviet Government, appointing them to various responsible positions, including even that of People's Commissars.

In spite of this, however, the wide masses of the working women, especially in the provinces, have not only failed to take an active part in the building of the new life, but are often hostile to the Soviet government.

The low cultural level of the working women (even in 1923, after five years intensive work by the Soviet Government for the liquidation of illiteracy, 629 women out of every 1,000 were still illiterate), the impossibility under Tsarism for the worker and especially the woman worker, enslaved by her family, to participate in the social movement, pre-

vented her from realising that the October revolution and the Soviet Government created by it, brought with it the emancipation of women.

The Party has set up a special apparatus to carry on agitation among working and peasant women. From the very beginning of the work it became evident that the method of approach to the illiterate working women living in difficult conditions was not lofty phrases about future happiness, but only by the real, practical work of improving her position and that of her children, her family, etc.

The idea underlying the work of the Russian Communist Party among the toiling masses of working women is to draw the working and peasant women into practical activities for improving their conditions.

But to accomplish this the existing Soviet, trade union and co-operative organisations must take cognizance of the needs of the working and peasant women, and include measures for the improvement of their condition in their regular activities. And, therefore, the women's sections are taking the initiative in pressing for action on the questions relating to the actual emancipation of women, and the problems connected with motherhood.

The women's section has carried on its work of Communist education of working and peasant women for more than five years and all the experiences accumulated in the course of the work demonstrate the correctness of the methods employed by the Party from the beginning. With the future development of the work, the methods will be intensified and developed.

At the beginning of its activities (in 1919) the local women's sections sent representatives of the women Communists (who were called social organisers) to the Soviet departments of education, health, social insurance, and food, and also non-party working women's delegates to receive practical training with a view to attracting a greater number of women workers into practical work, and enabling them to raise the problems vital to the working and peasant women in the Soviet organisations.

Those undergoing training, as well as the social organisers, acquaint themselves with the work of the Soviet institutions and at the same time act as the initiators and the practical executors of a number of measures for the improvement of the conditions of the working and peasant women. They also assist in bringing about closer contact between the Soviet departments and the women workers.

The extensive development at that time of creches, children's homes, kindergartens and communal dining rooms was due in large measure to the initiative and energy of the working women.

In order that the questions brought up by the working women and the workers in the women's sections in various spheres of Soviet activities should be brought to the attention of the central Soviet organisations, the women's section of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party sent its representatives (social organisers) to the People's Commissariats. Thus the interests of the working and peasant women received consideration in all Soviet organisations from the lowest departments up to the People's Commissariats, and were reflected in Soviet legislation. Even in the first years of the revolution a number of laws were introduced on the initiative of the women worker's sections. Of these it is interesting to note the following: the law which removed abortion from the list of penal offences; the decisions of the Eighth All-Russian Congress of Soviets urging the participation of women in all organisations directing public economy; the decision of the Council of People's Commissars regarding the placing of peasant and working women in departments and institutions of local Soviet executive committees, and thus training them to become Soviet workers, who would clear the Soviet apparatus of bureaucratic elements. In addition to this, on the initiative of the women workers' sections, inter-departmental commissions were formed to assist in the protection of mothers and infants, and to combat prostitution.

The transition to the New Economic Policy, the introduction of a stable budget for Soviet departments, the transfer of industry and a number of institutions to a self-supporting

basis, all complicated the problem of training the women workers. The women's department consequently adopted a new method of drawing the women workers into practical work. Into the work of the sections of the town Soviets they admitted delegates on the same basis as members of the Soviet.

In addition to this the women's sections are now making special efforts to increase the number of working and peasant women candidates for Soviet organisations. During the election campaigns the Party emphasised the necessity of electing working and peasant women. As a result of this and of the growing class consciousness of the working and peasant women, instead of the inconsiderable number of working and peasant women who were members of Soviets in 1918, we now have hundreds and thousands.

The figures for the Ukraine illustrate the increase in the number of women deputies. In 1923, there were 4,800 peasant women members in the village Soviets, and by 1924 there were already 12,000.

Great activity was displayed by the working and peasant women at the last (Eleventh) All-Russian and Second All-Russian Union Congress of Soviets. Among the delegates of the first there were 33 women, and of the second, 45. There were seven women members on the presidium of the Congress. There are 17 women members and candidates in the Central Executive Committee of the U.S.S.R. Naturally the working and peasant women members of Soviets, delegates to Soviet Congresses, and those appointed to permanent positions in various institutions are the best workers for the liberation of working women. The women workers' section maintains close connection with the women members of the Soviets, making use of them for the advancement of their work.

No less attention is paid to the question of women's participation in the trade union movement. But this is a subject for a special article. Here we must emphasise the fact that the methods of introducing into the union apparatus special organiser-instructors for work among women, of

operating in close contact with the women workers' sections, and of electing women to positions in trade union organisations, as suggested by the women's section, has been fully adopted and made a part of the daily work of the trade union organisations.

The problems of women workers—qualification, wages, labour protection, combating unemployment, all those things which so closely concern the women, are considered by the Communist Party the most essential problems in the work of the trade unions and the People's Commissariat for Labour. A special commission has been appointed under the latter for the investigation of the conditions of women workers in industry, and a special representative of the working women's section of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party has been chosen for this work.

The necessity for the concentration of industry demanded a temporary reduction of staff. Naturally this reduction could have had a very disastrous effect on the women workers, especially in those industries where they represent the less skilled workers, doing only subsidiary work. But in order to retain the largest possible number of women in industry, the Commissariat of Labour has issued a number of circulars pointing out the need for careful attention to the woman worker in carrying out the reductions of staffs. It is not permissible to substitute a woman worker by a man. Certain privileges are given to single working women, to women burdened with families and to expectant and nursing mothers. It is obligatory to include a representative of the women workers' section in the staff reduction commissions. Special representatives of the women's sections are sent to work in the Labour Exchanges whose business it is to give relief and provide work for the unemployed. The unemployed women workers with large families, are given certain privileges in the matter of receiving relief and obtaining work. By this method the Party, the trade unions and the Soviet organisations are doing everything in their power to bring the women workers into direct participation in the execution of these measures.

The improvement of the standard of skilled labour among women is the chief pre-requisite for the improvement of

woman's position in industry. And the efforts of all the organisations dealing with professional and technical education are directed toward the solution of this problem. The All-Russian Central Executive Committee of Trade Unions instructs the unions to reserve a certain number of places for girls in the factory training schools. The Central Department for Professional Training has sent out a number of circulars to its local departments pointing out the necessity of admitting men and women workers into the professional and technical schools in proportion to the number employed in industry. To facilitate the possibility of studying in the professional schools, the Department of Education issues instructions to children's homes to give preferential admittance to the children of women workers who are attending trade schools. And the fact that there are a number of women workers holding positions in trade union organisations, who take part in the direction of professional and technical education, is sufficient guarantee that these instructions will be carried out in full. Thus, in the factory committees, the women workers form 14 per cent. of the members of the committees, and in the textile and clothing unions, in the "Narpit," and among the medical, sanitary and educational workers this percentage reaches 30.8 per cent.

The participation of working and peasant women in co-operative activities has had a strong impetus during recent years. Here again, the women workers' section of the Central Committee has appointed one of its workers to act as organiser in the work of drawing the working and peasant women into the co-operative movement as a whole, and also into the Central Union of Co-operatives (Centrosoyous). The provinces have also appointed an organiser to the Provincial Union of Co-operatives. Thus, in the co-operatives, attention has been directed to the needs of the working and peasant women, and the work of drawing them into the directing and controlling organs of the co-operatives, has been intensified. One of the main tasks of the co-operatives consists in improving the conditions of its women members. The institutes for training women workers are still maintained in the co-operative organisations. According to the figures from 17 provinces, supplied by Centrosoyous, for March, 1924, there are 433 such institutions. There are also 2,447 women workers in 54 co-operative unions working as members of

the directing and controlling boards. There are 869 women attending the co-operative courses, in 16 provinces. The number of women shareholders in the co-operatives in 28 provinces is over 100,000.

Communal kitchens are an important factor in the emancipation of women.

The women workers' section, together with the co-operatives and the "Narpit" company formed by proletarian organisations make it their first task to open communal restaurants, in those industrial regions where there are a large number of women workers. The opening of the kitchens is generally arranged to coincide with some revolutionary holiday, such as "Woman's Day," May 1st, etc., around which agitation is carried on for the liberation of women workers from their pots and pans.

The women workers are playing a most vital part in the organisation of the communal dining rooms, and the directing of their activities. In Moscow, a special course has been opened to train workers for the communal dining rooms, applicants to which are enrolled through the working women's sections.

There is not a single sphere of constructive work touching the interests of working women, in which the working and peasant women have not been made active participants through the efforts of the Women's Section.

The active participation in public life of the peasant woman, the most backward of the whole sex, requires special emphasis. According to information received from 13 provinces, there are 2,202 women members of the peasants' mutual aid committee, and according to information received from 5 provinces, 500 women are members of the school boards, and in addition there are women active on the land commissions, on the force of people's assessors, and in other organisations which are connected with the village.

In order to complete the picture of this work of opening up spheres of practical activity for the women, the

Meeting of Women Workers, March 8th 1924 at Borwich, Province of Novgorod.

activities carried on directly by the Russian Communist Party in the factories and offices must be mentioned. In the Party nuclei of the factories and shops a special organiser is appointed for work among women. In the larger factories a special organiser is appointed for each department as well. In addition to the task of politically instructing the working women, these organisers are charged with the duty of drawing them into the work of the factory committee, and of its commissions (for the protection of labour, wage commissions, culture commissions, etc.). There is usually a co-operative attached to the factory and similarly women are included in the management of the co-operatives, in the control commissions and on the staff. Non-Party working women are appointed to serve on the Soviets of the schools for the children of workers, and are given work in the creches, in the dining rooms, in the clubs, in the commissions for the liquidation of illiteracy, etc. In their work they are assisted by the woman organiser from the party nucleus. Their work in the institutions is the best guarantee that the interests of the wide masses of working women will always be defended. They keep the masses of women workers informed on the activities of all the institutions connected with the factory, and thus rouse their interest in these institutions.

The campaign for International Woman's Day demonstrated how deeply the idea of the actual emancipation of women has penetrated, and how eagerly the working class men of the Soviet Union desire to ease the burdens of their sisters. There was not a single organisation over the whole territory of the Soviet Union which did not celebrate " Working Woman's Day " with some measure for the improvement of the condition of the working and peasant women. It is sufficient to enumerate the decisions of the central organisation to show the dimensions which this work has attained. Special decisions were passed by the Central Executive Committee of the Union of Soviet Republics, the All-Russian Central Committee of Trade Unions, the People's Commissariats of Labour, Health, Education, Agriculture, and Social Insurance, the Central Commission for Political Education, the Centrosoyous and the Political Department of the Red Army.

The slogan of the Communist Party has been put forward by Comrade Lenin : " The work of the Soviet Government

will have been completed when not merely hundreds, but millions and millions of working and peasant women take part in it." The Party, the Soviets, the Trade Unions, and the co-operatives will work faithfully for long years to come to make this slogan a reality. We must not forget the centuries of oppression, violence and slavery which have left their deep impression on the Russian working and peasant women.

And in spite of the extensive work that has been carried on by the Russian Communist Party and by the Soviet government in educating the toiling masses to combat the slavery of women, there are still vast masses of peasant women, especially the women of the Eastern regions, who represent a patriarchal form of social life.

But the wise application of the methods indicated above, and of the tasks outlined, will inevitably lead to the complete emancipation of women.

The work which the Soviet Government is carrying on for the emancipation of working and peasant women is the best proof for the women of the East that only through the dictatorship of the proletariat and by joining hands with the working class will they be able to carry on the work for the actual attainment of equal rights for working women.

O. SAKOLOVA.

# Women's Delegate Meetings & their Role in the Work of the Party among Working and Peasant Women

PARTY work among working and peasant women throughout the Soviet Republics has achieved considerable results. This is greatly due to the important role played by working and peasant women delegate meetings, without which work among proletarian and peasant women would be well-nigh impossible.

This method of work is not new in the Labour movement; it has always benefited the Party which managed to adopt it before any other party and which realised the importance of exercising its influence over the women delegates. But we shall not be far wrong in saying that women have always formed an infinitesimal minority at any delegates' meetings organised by working men. The reasons for this are many. It is customary to select as delegates the more class conscious and active members of the working class who have the time and are free from other cares likely to hinder them in their responsible public work. Of course, these conditions would apply last of all to women, for they are less educated than men, less class conscious, and moreover, are overwhelmed with household and family duties.

It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to find means for attracting working women to the general Labour meetings, unless methods are used which are especially designed for drawing women into the general struggle and general constructive work. Even our Party, which is a Party in power (while this is still only a prospect for most of the other Communist Parties) has proclaimed the equality of the sexes and has promulgated special legislation concerning the labour and conditions of working women, has nevertheless found no other means to awaken social instincts

inherent in all men and women than the special preliminary training of proletarian women at delegate meetings.

Undoubtedly the women delegate meetings held in the towns and even in the village now are quite different from what they were at the beginning.

## The First Delegate Meetings.

Whom did we send to the delegate meetings and how were the delegates elected?

In the beginning we could not even contemplate electing delegates in the usual way. We needed the higher type of working women, those more capable than their backward sisters of understanding the position of affairs in our country, and who were inclined to join our Party to take an active part in its struggle and its constructive work. For this reason the first women delegate meetings were simply meetings of active working women. We endeavoured to draw into these meetings every working woman who showed any initiative. We picked out these women in the places of their employment (factories or other institutions), selected them at conferences and meetings, watched their attitude at these functions and positively dragged them out of their seclusion into public activity. The composition of the women delegate meetings constantly changed, but gradually an active working women's group was formed. We were not disconcerted by the fact that some of the most promising of these working women had not always approved of all the measures and actions of our Party. On the contrary, we made it a point to get hold of non-party working women, capable of speaking for themselves, of criticising and of bringing forward new ideas. We said: "You are discontented. Go along yourself, then, and see what is wrong. If you can remedy it, do so."

Unhesitatingly, we put our faith in the active workers. We stood in need of them at that time when we were surrounded by black hundreds, when every non-proletarian was a potential enemy, and when the working class was endeav-

ouring to launch its primitive Soviet bark on the stormy sea of revolution.

We were convinced that no thinking woman would betray the cause of the working class, and with revolutionary instinct, urged her towards the helm of our Soviet ship of state.

This faith in the working masses, and even in the most backward section of these masses, namely, the women, helped the Russian Communist Party enormously.

At first, working women delegate meetings devoted their attention mainly to discussing questions connected with the position of our country at home and abroad. These meetings were schools of Communism which gave object lessons in tactics and constructive work.

The struggle against the enemy (Kolchak, Yudenitch, Wrangel), the invasion of our country, the wounded, production, sabotage, all these questions were placed on the agenda and discussed, and the outcome of it was—not pious resolutions, but actual help in the work of proletarian revolution.

## The Probationers.

This work at first took the following forms: As is known, we did not entrust the construction of our apparatus entirely to the hands of bourgeois experts. The Party therefore appointed class conscious Communist workers as managers of the various branches of Soviet construction. At the same time, we sent tens and hundreds of our women delegates into all organisations and institutions as probationers. At first their task was to carry out proletarian inspection and introduce remedies for existing evils. The women delegates visited hospitals, children's homes, public dining halls, institutions for war invalids, etc. Accustomed to house management, they quickly detected sabotage, lack of order, neglect of duties towards red army men, and the children of the proletariat, and pilfering, which is all the more reprehensible when practised in a country

exhausted by wars, intervention and capitalist exploitation. According to the statistics of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, which are far from complete, no less than 25,000 working women in 1924, took part in the work of control and inspection of various government institutions.

Moreover, the probationers organised large voluntary groups of women workers to clean these institutions. They could be seen working enthusiastically, and without remuneration at the innumerable "subotniks" (Saturday voluntary work) and "Voskresniks" (Sunday voluntary work).

The following table is an illustration of the number of women taking part in this work during the period of 1918-21:

| | |
|---|---|
| In the Yaroslavl gubernia (province) ... | 7,000 |
| In the Pskov gubernia (province) ... ... | 13,000 |
| In the Iv. Voznesensk gubernia (province) ... | 32,000 |
| In the Samara gubernia (province) ... ... | 39,495 |

In Moscow and Leningrad, of course, these figures are expressed in hundreds of thousands.

But apart from organising and participating in mass work, every probationer had to familiarise herself with that branch of constructive work to which the Party had delegated her. To facilitate this a public instructor was appointed in every Soviet department whose duty it was to get into close touch with every probationer, to entrust her with suitable work, and to see to it that this work was properly carried out. By such means the Party, during the first period of the revolution, was able to fill a considerable number of responsible posts with working women. In 1920, 733 working women were engaged in regular Soviet work in Petrograd. In Moscow, 154 working women filled important posts, and so on. Working and peasant women are occupying honourable posts in every branch of Soviet work. They will be found in housing, health, education and land departments, etc.

How do these women work? In this respect, I will quote a little note, one of hundreds :—

" She is a woman delegate from the Mountain Republic, is devoted body and soul to the work among children, enters into the work with all the energy of her bright intellect, and works 16 to 18 hours a day. No wonder the children love her like a mother." The following case is also very characteristic: Sorokina, a Moscow working woman in charge of the invalids' homes, was asked by somebody she met in the street, " How are you getting on?" Her reply was: " Very well, thank you. I am laying in a store of linen. There are plenty of provisions in all the invalids' homes. The only thing we stand in need of is repairs to our premises."

No one strives to live his own individual life; all have merged in the communal life and in the common growth of young and old on the soil fertilised by the revolution.

## Delegate Meetings during the Period of Nep.

The probationer system was definitely sanctioned by a decree of the Council of Peoples' Commissars on April 11th, 1921. In accordance with this decree, probationers sent to do Soviet work retained for two months the food rations and lodgings provided by the institution which had employed them, while their wages had to be paid by the Soviet department to which they were attached. To give an idea of the approximate cost of this training of working women in Soviet construction, we give below a few figures showing the number and distribution of the probationers during the first period of revolution in 1921 :

| | |
|---|---|
| In Siberia ... ... ... ... ... | 3,000 |
| In Tsaritzin gubernia ... ... ... | 4,000 |
| In Saratov gubernia ... ... ... | 1,000 |
| In Moscow ... ... ... ... | 899 |

The transition from military communism to a fixed budget and the substitution of the food tax for the system of requisition naturally compelled our State to introduce economies in all departments.

Every extra copek imposed a heavy burden on our national economy. It is only natural that the general reduction of state expenditure could not but affect our probationers' system. It had to be considerably curtailed.

But the Party could not afford to lose its hold over the masses, and now ways and means to carry on this work had to be found.

## Changes in the Nature of the Work of Delegate Meetings.

In 1922, the Party adopted a definite system of electing delegates to the working women's delegate meetings. On a fixed day delegates were elected in all factories and mills, as well as in residential districts (wives of working men), at first for a period of six months, and since the autumn of 1922 for a period of 12 months.

Moreover, in the selection of women delegates we were prompted by other considerations than those which animated us at the beginning. At first we focussed our attention on the active workers; but in 1922-23 these active workers had ceased to be non-party. They had merged in the general Labour movement. The work among these women as a somewhat backward element had been completed, and the party was now able to maintain its influence over them in the ordinary way.

But there was a second and not so well-trained section of women which had to be taken in hand. The Party grappled with this task and deliberately instructed local organisations not to re-elect former women delegates, but to select for special women delegate meetings, new, but promising material. At the same time, to prevent the dispersal of the old women delegates, the Party gave instructions that a watchful eye be kept on their activities, and that efforts be made to facilitate their entry into elective soviet, trade union and co-operative organs.

The Party also deemed it necessary to draw up a regular programme for the work carried on by women delegate

meetings. A systematic programme was gradually drawn up, embracing elementary information on political economy, as well as on questions of trade union, co-operative and Soviet constructive work. The programme also included the question of hygiene, evolution, etc.

Of course, the work carried on by women is not limited to these delegate meetings, and the study of "current events" is by no means neglected.

The Party has also devised another form of practical activity for women delegates, which does not involve the expenditure of large sums of money.

The probationers' system has taken the form of work with the assistance of the sections. Without leaving their regular occupations, women delegates attend weekly delegate meetings and work in their respective sections.

In view of the fact that most local Soviets are divided into sections corresponding to the departments in the higher Soviets (sections of education, health, national economy, etc.), the Party, by means of legislation introduced through the necessary organs of the Soviet Government, bestowed on working women delegates the right of entry into these sections, empowering them at the same time to work in them on terms of equality with the members of the Soviet. But in view of the fact that in some places the Soviet sections do not represent all forms of work, supplementary sections, such as co-operative and trade union sections, are organised by the women delegate meetings.

The Party appoints the managers of these sections who are responsible for the normal progress of the work of the section. As soon as a working woman delegate has familiarised herself with the details of some special question, she is sent on practical work for which she has specialised.

In most cases a woman delegate entering a trade union section becomes at the same time a probationer in one of the committees of the factory council in the place of her employment. Women delegates working in the section for

the protection of motherhood and childhood, take part in the organisation of creches, mothers' care institutions, etc., in the place where they work. This work has made great progress and is already producing satisfactory results.

It is no exaggeration to say that it is due to the systematic work of the Party among the working women that women have achieved such signal successes at elections to Soviets, factory councils, and to management bodies of the co-operative movement. It is a rare occurrence that a working woman occupying an important place in the social life of the country, has not previously gone through the school of women delegate meetings; also it is rare for a woman who has worked for 12 months at delegate meetings to desert the social work.

## Working Women Delegate Meetings as a Means to Increase Party Influence on the Masses.

The value of women delegate meetings does not only consist in the fact that they are a method of selecting the most capable working women and peasant women, and of training them as part of the social forces on which the dictatorship of the proletariat rests; or in that they are a means of bringing into the Party the best type of working women in the country. Their chief value consists in the fact that they help to extend the influence of the Party over wide sections of working and peasant women.

If, owing to the exertions of the Party there are at present over 150,000 working and peasant women in the delegate meetings movement, then, on the assumption that each woman delegate represents 20 people, which is a very low estimate, it means that through these 150,000 women, the Party wields its influence over three million working and peasant women.

The Party pays much attention to this branch of its work, and expects women delegates to keep in close contact with their constituents by reporting to them on their work and by personal contact, etc.

Women delegates are the main factors in the organisation of special campaigns organised by the Party, in the creation of public opinion, etc. In this connection we must

mention the "League of Aid for the children of the German Proletariat," organised solely by the efforts of women delegates, and also the successful propaganda in connection with social construction on communal principles. It is due to the energetic assistance of thousands of our best women propagandists that a solid foundation has been laid in the matter of the social training of children, public feeding, etc., all of them measures which will hasten the final and complete emancipation of the working women.

## Peasant Women Delegate Meetings.

Peasant women delegate meetings in general and our Eastern women delegate meetings in particular, are still in the first stage of their development. To this day the upper strata of peasant women, viz., the most active elements, those who are in closer touch with the Soviet Government than the rest, predominate. It is but natural that in the Eastern Republics, too, women delegate meetings are recruited from such active individuals.

There are many reasons for this. In the first place, systematic work among these sections of the female population began much later, and secondly, it is much more difficult to make an impression on the petty-bourgeois psychology of peasant women than on the psychology of proletarian women.

Nevertheless, even in this field, satisfactory progress is being made. We find that the greatest obstacle in this branch of our work are the enormous distances we have to cover, for this requires a large personnel trained for this kind of work.

It goes without saying that the Party finds it very difficult, nay, almost impossible, to do justice to this work. At present the Party has at its disposal 500 paid district organisers drawn from the peasant class. There is also about the same number of district organisers paid from the funds of local Soviets. Thus there are about one thousand organisers for Party propaganda. Consequently, taking into consideration that we have about 800 cantons (uyezd) and that each canton consists of 15-20 districts (volost), we can reckon that we have in each canton one paid district

organiser. Under such circumstances systematic work can only be carried on in selected, so-called "urgent districts."

These "urgent districts," are like cases in a desert. There, peasant women delegate meetings are a permanent institution, carrying on their work according to programme, and training peasant women for various practical activities. On the strength of a special order of the Central Committee, these women delegates are drawn into the work of district Executive Committees, village Soviets, mutual aid committees, rural consumers' co-operative societies, etc. Peasant women delegates are the chief movers in the organisation (especially for the summer season) of creches for babies at breast. (In the Ukraine last year over 200 summer creches were established in the villages. With the assistance of peasant women delegates these creches provided accommodation for 10,000 infants). These women delegates are also foremost in the struggle against illicit manufacture of spirits.* (Peasant women delegates in the Kursk gubernia caught 300 persons engaged in illicit manufacture of spirits and confiscated their distilling apparatus). They are more energetic than anyone else in the agitation for the establishment of schools, reading rooms, hospitals and other institutions conducive to raising the cultural level of the Russian countryside.

The German Volga Republic has adopted the same method of women delegate meetings in its work among women. Its latest experiment consisted in introducing into the villages an adequate number of peasant women trained in midwifery.

Peasant women delegates were sent to maternity homes for thorough practical training. By this means Comrade Frey, manager of the women's section in that Republic, has a constant supply of well-trained (practically, and to a certain extent, theoretically) midwives drawn from among peasant women.

But in our work with the peasant women delegates we do not limit ourselves to cultural questions.

* The sale of spirits is prohibited in the U.S.S.R. In the villages the kulaks (wealthy peasants) circumvent this law and manufacture spirits out of corn—so-called "samogon."

Questions concerning the political re-education of the village population are generally included in the agenda of every delegate meeting. As a result of this, at every provincial peasant women's conference a strong desire is evinced by peasant women to enter the ranks of our Party.

We must point out that in districts which have no paid organisers, the work among peasant women is carried on through periodical peasant women's conferences. But the Party is determined to develop the peasant women delegate movement wherever village Communist nuclei are in existence.

In conclusion, we must say that the Party has in these women delegate meetings a mighty lever for its work among the non-Party masses of working and peasant women, which is a considerable help to the Party in the arduous task of educating the masses in the spirit of Communism and of drawing from these masses of working and peasant women, workers capable of taking part in the administrative and social work of the country during the period of proletarian dictatorship.

Apart from this, women delegate meetings are the reservoir which supplies the Party with its best recruits. The Lenin levy is a graphic illustration of the fact that women delegates are among those most eager to join the Party. In a considerable number of industrial centres it has happened that women delegate meetings joined the Party in a body. It is greatly due to women delegates that the number of women members has increased in the Party (it has been almost doubled), and that their percentage in the Party has grown from 8.9 per cent. to 10.12 per cent.

MOIROVA.

# Mass Methods of Work

THE "delegate meetings" for women have been, and remain, the chief avenue through which the Party has carried on its organisational and agitational work among the wide masses of working and peasant women. But with the growth of the influence of the Party on the women as a whole, and with the corresponding growth of the activities of the women themselves, there has arisen the need for supplementary and auxiliary forms and methods of work which would serve to reinforce the activities of the delegate meetings.

One such form of work is embodied in the various working women's "circles" in the factories and shops. They were first formed in the large industrial centres such as Moscow, Leningrad, etc., and grew up in response to the increasing demands of the women workers in the sphere of social and political life.

Mass meetings in themselves are not sufficient to satisfy the more active and progressive sections of the working women. They seek for a more fundamental and more complete response to their demands.

On the other hand, the average working woman has not yet developed sufficiently, has not acquired the necessary confidence, to enable her to take part in the ordinary study circles, courses and schools.

To meet this situation, the Party organised working women's circles, regarding this as a preliminary stage whereby women workers might be trained for participation in the ordinary schools, study circles and delegate meetings.

In Leningrad alone there are now 220 such circles, in Moscow about 60, in Siberia 64, and so on. It is not possible yet to report the results of the work of these circles, as they have been working on this extensive scale only during

the past year. But we have reports from some districts indicating that the work is extremely valuable.

During the campaign for the "Lenin enrolment" there were cases in Moscow, for instance, where an entire circle joined the Party. We are informed from Leningrad that among the woman applicants for Party membership during the "Lenin enrolment," a large percentage were members of working women's circles.

There are two types of circles. One is the discussion circle, without any definite fixed programme. These circles discuss, more or less systematically, questions of current political life, and also questions concerning working and general conditions in their particular industry, etc.

Such circles are usually composed of a permanent nucleus of women who attend the meetings regularly, and constantly changing groups of women who attend irregularly. The time spent at each meeting is not the same in all circles, and is dependent on local conditions. In some factories the women workers gather regularly once a week at a stated hour. In others the discussions are carried on once or twice a week during the lunch hour.

The other type of circle follows a fixed programme of work, and meets on definite days at a definite hour.

There are two kinds of programme which this second type of circle may follow. One is the ordinary type of elementary social science programme, but arranged from the point of view of the position of women in industry, the family and the state. The other takes the given industry as the foundation of its programme, again from the point of view of the woman worker's part in it, and the special peculiarities of her living conditions.

## Talks in the Living Quarters.

But it is only the most active section of the women workers who attend the delegate meetings, the circles, and even the mass meetings; and it was found necessary to adopt some method of approach to the masses who remain at

home in their leisure hours and spend their time in gossip, and tittle-tattle. The Party adopted two methods of influencing them through the organisation of clubs, and by the propaganda corners and talks in the living quarters of the workers.

The method of talks in the living quarters has not been applied very widely owing to a shortage of organisers. Nevertheless it gives positive results wherever it is carried on.

In conjunction with the discussions on any particular subject of especial interest to the workers at the moment, we have also begun reading social literature. Thus, for instance, the leader of the discussion, having well prepared himself beforehand, gives a resume of the contents of some such novel as Sinclair's "Jungle," emphasising those places on which he wishes to concentrate the attention of his hearers, for instance, the condition of the woman worker in capitalist industry, the exploitation of children, etc.

After the reading, it is very easy to get a lively discussion started, since the most backward working woman is aroused and interested by such narratives.

This method has only been partially applied in Moscow and other places, inasmuch as it demands well-prepared directors, who are able to deal with the resulting flood of questions, and to keep the attention of the workers on the essential points. Unfortunately there are not many who can do this.

## Club Work.

The attraction of working women into club life is somewhat complicated by the fact that it is difficult for them to leave their children. But there are still a large number of young women who are drawn into the dramatic, choral and sports circles. Also a large percentage of the working women take part in the literary, social and political circles.

Recently a number of plans have been drawn up which should increase the interest of the working women in the

2nd County Non-Party Women's Conference at Tiflis, March 8th, 1923

clubs and enable them to take a more active part in their work.

A proposal has been accepted for the organisation of children's nurseries in connection with the clubs. This makes it possible for the working woman to bring her children to the clubs, to entrust them to the care of a competent nurse, and then to read the newspapers, or watch the play without anxiety.

In addition to this, measures have been taken to make the nature of the work of the club correspond more closely to the interests and demands of the working woman. At the same time the work of organising club corners in the living quarters should increase the interest among those workers who still remain aloof from the club work.

## Non-party Conferences of Working and Peasant Women.

The task of establishing strong ties between the town and country is one of the chief problems of the Party. This task has confronted all the women workers' sections and has been considered at every meeting of working and peasant women. In a number of provinces it has also occupied the attention of the non-party women's conferences which play such a large part in establishing a real link between the working and peasant women.

Such conferences are sometimes limited to a single county, but more often they include a whole province which ensures far wider results.

There are a number of provinces where such conferences are held regularly once a year. Thus, for instance, the fifth conference was convened in Nijni-Novogorod in February of this year, in Tula the second conference was held after an interval of two years, and in Orel, Vladimir, Minsk, Kazan and other places, such conferences have been called in recent years.

In order to give some idea of the composition of these conferences we give the following table :

*Niji-Novgorod.*

| | |
|---|---|
| Total number of delegates ... ... ... | 323 |
| Composed of :— | |
| (*a*) Peasants ... ... ... ... ... | 114 |
| (*b*) Workers ... ... ... ... ... | 206 |
| (*c*) Housekeepers ... ... ... ... | 3 |
| Party membership : | |
| Members Russian Communist Party ... ... | 82 |
| Candidates ... ... ... ... ... | 14 |
| Members League of Communist Youth ... | 17 |
| Non-Party ... ... ... ... ... | 209 |
| Literacy : | |
| Literate ... ... ... ... ... ... | 174 |
| Semi-literate ... ... ... ... ... | 21 |
| Illiterate ... ... ... ... ... ... | 34 |

*Orel.*

| | |
|---|---|
| Total number of delegates ... ... ... | 137 |
| Composed of :— | |
| (*a*) Peasants ... ... .. ... ... | 76 |
| (*b*) Workers ... ... ... ... ... | 61 |
| Literacy : | |
| Literate ... ... ... ... ... ... | 106 |
| Semi-literate ... ... ... ... ... | 23 |
| Illiterate ... ... ... ... ... ... | 10 |

The number of party members at this conference was extremely small owing to the fact that Orel is an agricultural province and among the peasants the percentage of Communists is quite negligible.

The majority of conferences of working and peasant women on the whole are of a similar composition. The inconsiderable percentage of Communists, the extraordinarily low level of culture, indicates that these conferences bring together the very lowest strata of the peasantry—the real masses.

What are the chief advantages of these conferences?

The first and most important is that the peasant woman, having the opportunity of learning about the life of the working woman at first hand, has the unadorned and real truth brought home to her that the labour of the working women is no less difficult than that of the peasant woman. This plays a large part in arousing the attention and sympathy of the peasant woman for the working woman. It is true that when the peasant women first come to the cities they look upon the working women as upon a privileged class of society, regarding the eight-hour working day as mere child's play, and speaking with envy and even with a certain amount of dissatisfaction of the system of four months leave before and after childbirth, and the various other forms of protection for women in industry. But experience has proved that organised excursions to the factories are more convincing than all the various lectures and speeches on linking up town and country. The ceaseless roar of the machinery and the hurry and bustle in the large factories serve to convince the peasant women that all the measures undertaken by the Soviet Government for the protection of women in industry are no luxury but absolute necessity.

This is undoubtedly the principal achievement of the non-party conferences of working and peasant women. They teach the peasant women to regard the labour of the working women with interest and consideration, and they teach the working women to regard the difficult labour and living conditions of the peasant women with greater attention and understanding.

But this comprises only one aspect of the problem. These conferences help the working women and more especially the peasant women to a much clearer and more concrete understanding of the basic tasks and activities of the Soviet Government. In addition to all kinds of reports and discussions, a series of consultations on various questions of interest to the peasant women are arranged in connection with these conferences, such as consultations on agricultural problems, veterinary problems, etc. These consultations are carried on in all the living quarters where the delegates are distributed. During recess for meals, in the morning and in

the evening, the peasant women may go to any of the consulting experts who are on duty and clear up any perplexing questions regarding her agricultural or household work. These consultations are considered very useful by the peasant women.

In the course of these conferences excursions are arranged for the women delegates not only to factories but also to the institutions for the protection of mothers and infants (the creches, children's homes, milk kitchens, etc.), and in addition theatrical performances are arranged, which comment on urgent social problems, anti-religious propaganda, etc.

The mass of material received after such conferences in the form of letters from the villages bears witness to the great amount of revolutionary and creative energy which is generated and stored up for use for a considerable period thereafter.

These conferences are a means of measuring the progress of the villages in general, and especially of the village women. Among the delegates there are always a number of women presidents and members of village and volost (township) soviets, mutual aid committees, school boards, and other elective institutions of the village. In their reports at these conferences the peasant women furnish highly instructive material on the valuable, useful and creative assistance the women are contributing to the everyday tasks of village life.

Notwithstanding the fact that the organisation of such conferences demands considerable preparation and appreciable expenditure, they are beginning to spread more and more to those provinces where they were not carried on in the first days of the revolution.

The work of the Russian Communist Party among the working and peasant women has many and diverse forms and methods. Not only the surface but the very deepest layers of the masses of working women, have been ploughed by the Communist Party. The party has turned the richest soil, and the Communist sowing will yield a certain and abundant harvest.

F. NURINA.

# The Press as a Means of Organising the Proletarian Women

EXTENSIVE work among the proletarian women naturally demands a corresponding apparatus for organisation, agitation and propaganda. In the work of organising the "great realm of women," the Press cannot be excluded, for, to use an expression of Comrade Lenin, the Press is an enormous, powerful, collective organiser.

First of all, the question of principle arises: is a separate Press "for women" necessary?

We think this question is decided by the affirmative answer to the fundamental question. In so far as separate, organisationally detached work among working women, dictated by the peculiarities of their economic and social position, is necessary, the party must serve this need through the women workers' departments.

## "The Woman Worker."

In Russia the first journal for women workers was published by the Central Committee of the Party (Bolsheviks) in 1914.

The well-known revival in the Russian Labour movement which began after 1912, caused the growth of *Pravda* and the appearance of a new class of proletarian intellectuals; and together with this, caused the party to strive to widen the sphere of its influence.

It is then that the first mass women's paper makes its appearance. This reveals the direct inter-dependence between the growth and compass of the Labour movement and the growth of the "women's" proletarian movement.

Naturally, the latter could only appear and develop on the ground of the developed mass Labour movement generally. Only when the first cadres of a proletarian party have been formed does the strong tendency arise for that party to extend its sphere of action. Consequently we can say that where the Communist Party is strong, it pays attention also to the problem of the work among the women proletarians; on the other hand, where the Communist Party is just in the primitive stage of accumulating its general forces, naturally this question is only of second-rate or even third-rate importance.

The *Woman Worker* was of enormous importance for us, not only as one of the few sallies of the proletarian party into the domain of the Press. In the history of our party it has played an enormous part principally as a collective organiser. From its very first appearance it has served as a rallying centre for whole groups of class conscious women workers—mainly Leningrad women.

In the first days after the February revolution of 1917, the *Woman Worker* not only played the part of agitator and propagandist; but to a considerable degree it played the part of a collective organiser. The first meetings of the Leningrad working women took place round the *Woman Worker*. This journal was the organiser of the famous meeting of protest against the high prices that took place in July, 1917, in the Chiniselli circus. This meeting attracted many thousands of Leningrad working women and actually became an enormous political demonstration.

It is necessary to point out that the first attempt to organise the mass of Leningrad working women was made on a decision of the Central Committee due to the initiative of a group of working women attached to the *Woman Worker*.

It was this group that called the first conference of the Leningrad working women which represented 80,000 women. It was this group that made the first attempt to convene the first All-Russian conference of peasant and working women in the beginning of 1918.

As a consequence of the removal of the government, the central organs of the Party, to Moscow, and mainly because of the closing down of the Leningrad mills and factories, and the beginning of the process of the dispersion of the Leningrad proletariat, the *Woman Worker* died a natural death.

After the official closing of the journal, the members of the staff who remained, repeatedly called meetings of working women's circles in the offices, at which important political questions were discussed.

Our late Comrade Concordia Nickolaevna Samoilova conducted the work most energetically.

## "The Working Women's Page."

At the end of 1918 and the beginning of 1919, on the initiative of Comrade Samoilova, "Working Women's Pages," and later "Peasant Women's Pages," were published in our Party Press, and there can be no doubt that these supplements brought much benefit. The "Working Women's Page" pursued two aims; firstly, to get the working women interested in reading newspapers generally; and secondly, by dealing with the needs and problems of the life and work of the working women, to force them gradually within the reach of the extensive proletarian reading public.

The "Women Workers' Page" was published for the first time in the *Pravda* and in the *Krasnaya Gazeta* in Petrograd in 1918. By the summer of 1920, these "Working Women's Pages" existed in forty-seven gubernia organs and thirty-eight uyezd papers.

It is characteristic that in this, as in many other things, the beginning was made in the most advanced centre—in Labour Leningrad. Even there, apparently, something was needed, in the beginning at least, to concentrate the attention of the working woman unaccustomed and, what is more, unable, to use a daily worker's paper; that "something" is provided on her page where, in a simple, lucid, comprehensible form, all her needs and questions are explained.

These working women's pages, although fulfilling considerable work of agitation and propaganda, mainly served as organisers of the mass of working women and peasants awakened to a new life by the revolution.

Through the medium of our working women's pages we brought to the front and organised a whole class of working women with inclination and ability to write articles, correspondence, poetry and stories.

## The First Women's Paper.

With the development and growth of our paper, the inadequacy of such superficial, sporadic flourishes in the paper now became more and more noticeable. The idea arose of adopting some form of agitation which, while still retaining the working women's pages, would be able to penetrate to the most backward, who do not read or even see the newspapers, and which would be able to encompass by its size a wider field of questions.

At the end of 1920, the first women's paper appeared in Moscow, published by the Moscow Working and Peasant Women's Department. At first, this paper was published monthly and from the very beginning had a considerable circulation (over 40,000). The paper dealt with the most important questions in the life of the peasant and working women, and again played the part of organiser of the masses.

The Moscow *Peasant and Working Woman,* under the management of M. I. Ulyanova, was the first to come forward as an organiser of the women's "writing fraternity." M. I. Ulyanova, with the comrades working with her, was the first to organise working women's "literary collegiates," to unite them with similar organisations of male workers, and to gather in all women able and willing to write.

The *Peasant and Working Woman* simply continued the work begun by the "pages." It continued the work of forming, educating and gathering new classes of peasant and working women around the departments of working women, and around the banner of our Party.

About the same time, the Penza departments published a newspaper called the *Voice of the Working Woman,* and other departments did the same.

With the introduction of the New Economic Policy, the concentration of the forces of the proletariat and the intensification of political work among the proletariat, the women's departments decided to intensify their work, and began reconstructing accordingly.

The " pages " as a rule began to be discontinued. They remained only in the more remote districts, where the masses are more backward, and where consequently less advanced methods of agitation and propaganda work are retained. The women's departments began to develop their work not intensively, but extensively. This, of course, caused an increase in the demand for agitational and propagandist organs.

The " Women's Pages " as we have said, began to disappear, except in the remote districts, or to appear in the papers only as occasion arose, during some big campaign.

But from these pages and even papers we turn to a magazine which, by its character, technical finish and contents is adapted to serving the more profound, more serious requirements of this work.

## " The Woman Communist."

In the summer of 1920, the Central Department issued the first number of the *Woman Communist.* The magazine comes forward, with every right, of course, as the successor to and follower of the ideological traditions of the glorious old Pravdist, *Woman Worker.*

The journal was published during the preparatory work of the First International Congress of Women Communists. It discussed all the questions on the agenda and by its every line and word connected the problems of the peasant and working women of the Soviet Republics with the slogans of the proletariat of all countries. It discussed the important, topical questions of every-day life and the problems of our

work. From the very beginning it introduced its special department, "News from everywhere," which gives accounts of local work.

The Central Committee placed a group of well-known party writers and revolutionaries, Comrades Inessa Armand, Bukharin, Kollontai, at the head of the editorial committee. After the issue of the first number, Comrade Olminsky, one of the veterans of the Bolshevik Press, wrote to the editorial committee offering his services. "I would be glad to write for such a magazine," he said.

Many comrades failed to understand the functions of the magazine, and were inclined to regard it as a "ladies' pastime." In the third issue of the magazine, however, an article appeared by Comrade Lenin, definitely pointing out the enormous work in conquering hearts and minds that the international women's proletarian movement will have to fulfil.

From the very outset, of course, the *Woman Communist* with a circulation of 30,000 copies, calculated on free distribution. In it the elements of a leading magazine were combined with feuilletons and fiction. This was natural while the magazine strove to cater only for the "women's departments" and the rank and file working woman.

The magazine retained this character until 1923, when the editorial committee decided that the magazine was to serve as the guide and instructor of the leading workers in the women's departments. Fiction and the general newspaper feuilleton material disappeared. It even assumed a narrow departmental character, but at the same time gained in unity and concentration on definite questions.

The first subscribers, 2,500-3,000 persons, were mostly collective subscriptions from our women's departments, but the number of subscribers increases, and it is most encouragain to observe that it is the individual subscriptions which are increasing rather than the collective subscriptions.

In October, the circulation was 3,000; by the beginning of 1924 it fluctuated between nine and eleven thousand, an indubitable success.

## The Contents of the "Woman Communist."

Usually in the general departments of the magazine articles on general political questions are included in connection with current party campaigns.

Special attention is paid to the sections dealing with labour and social conditions and the trade union movement. In 1923 exceptionally valuable articles—"The Time Budget of the Russian Worker," written by Comrade Strumillin, "The Woman Worker in Industry," by Comrade Ryasanova and others—were published in the magazine.

In every number articles are published dealing with the working conditions of the working women in different branches of industry (such as the metal industry, printing, chemical, clothing, peat, sugar, transport, leather, mining and others); articles dealing with the qualification of female workers, technical education, unemployment among women, prostitution and numerous others. Articles are also published on the fundamental problems of current work and campaigns.

The editorial committee is endeavouring to improve the section dealing with local work. Besides articles and correspondence received by the editorial committee from local comrades, reports and summaries based on material received from the districts, or on reports of instructors who have visited the districts, are published. The work of the Oriental departments is illustrated separately.

The magazine, besides these, has a special section captioned "Abroad," in which the conditions of working women in other countries and the work of the International Women's Secretariat are described.

At the celebration of the third anniversary of the first issue of the journal in the summer of 1923, and at the conference of the women's departments of the U.S.S.R., the enormous role and significance of the magazine was emphasised.

From the most remote frontier territories, from the obscurest uyseds it was pointed out that the *Woman Com-*

*munist* " was the handbook of education, that it was the guiding light for all entering the difficult work among the backward mass of working and peasant women."

The enormous value of the *Woman Communist* was finely expressed by Comrade Elsa Baum, in greeting it in the name of the " Die Kommunisten." She pointed out that the *Woman Communist* is of great importance to the comrades in the West; it enriches them with the experience of the Russian movement; they learn of the Russian work. Besides this, Comrade Elsa Baum, writes: " We were inspired with the spiritual power that radiated from every page of the *Woman Communist* for our every-day struggle."

In the same number, Comrade Clara Zetkin pointed out that in greeting the *Woman Communist,* the revolutionary women proletariat of the world greeted the courageous and self-denying women peasants and proletarians of Soviet Russia, whose very life is the revolution, and who are ready to give their heart's blood for it."

## On the Road to the Creation of a Mass Journal.

With the reconstruction of the *Woman Communist,* with the increase of the scope of the work, there naturally arose the need for an organ that would satisfy the extensive masses of working and peasant women.

Two new journals are issued, *The Working Woman* and the *Peasant Woman.* The former at the present time (April), has a circulation of 60,000 copies. Its fundamental aim is to be not a journal *for* working women, but a *working women's* journal. Already the journal has a large staff of women worker-correspondents, which is the best way of maintaining contact with the extensive masses of working women. The journal deals with all questions affecting the life of the worker and is becoming popular among the working women.

The *Peasant Woman* has a circulation of 20,000, and

is served by several hundreds of rural, peasant women correspondents. Wherever the journal penetrates it is received with eagerness and pleasure. To obtain the *Peasant Woman,* the peasant would walk miles to the centre of the volost. They club together their products (eggs, cream, and so on) and with the money realised from their sales, subscribe to the journal, which according to many letters, is as necessary to them as " water is to a fish."

The need of the mass of working and peasant women for a popular journal explains the appearance of numerous local magazines. The *Working and Peasant Woman,* published in Leningrad, has a circulation of 30,000 copies; the *Woman Delegate,* in Moscow (15,000 copies); the woman's department of the Siberian Bureau continues to publish the *Red Siberian Woman,* the woman's department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine issues the *Woman Communard;* the Tula gubernia department publishes at intervals the *Krasnaya Tulyatchka,* while the Transcaucasion committee issues the *Trujenitsa Zakavkazia.*

In this manner the party of the victorious proletarian dictatorship puts that powerful weapon of modern society—the Press—to the great task of freeing the working women.

R. KOVNATOR.

# Methods of Approaching the Working Women through the Unions

UNTIL the Fifth All-Russian Congress of Trade Unions (September, 1922), no systematic work was carried on by the unions among women. The unions extending their forces on every front, had not sufficient resources to devote to this work. The working woman, as of old, failed to understand the relation of union problems to working class conditions, and not realising to how great an extent the work of the unions affected her own interests, was often a hindrance to union work.

To promote work among women the Women's Sections of the Communist Party sent their representatives into the trade unions to raise the questions of improving the position of women in industry, of raising her cultural level, of drawing her into active trade union life. In the second half of 1922 this work began to make some headway. The results of the intensified work were noted in the resolution on the question of organisation at the Fifth Congress of trade unions. "The increasing number of women in the elective bodies of the unions," the resolution asserted, "demonstrates the favourable results of drawing women into union work accomplished with the help of the representatives of the Women Workers' Sections."

In our further work we adopted a course of intensified activity and penetration into the field of general union work. All questions on the improvement of conditions of labour and life for the working woman became questions for the union as a whole, and were considered at the general meetings.

On the basis of this decision the All-Russian Central Committee of Trade Unions issued a circular on the need of reinforcing and intensifying the work among women, and of appointing from the members of the unions, through the union apparatus, union organisers for this purpose.

At the Fifth Congress it was decided that instead of sending representatives of the women's department to work in the trade union bodies, the work among women should be made an integral part of the general union programme; and the Central Executive Committee of the Unions in its circular emphasised the fact that such work was an organic part of all union activities.

It is interesting to note how far the work of the unions among women has progressed since that time. Work among women according to industry may be divided into three groups. The first group includes ten unions (the paper, transport, water transport, printing, railroad, art, telegraph, mining, chemical and clothing unions) and in this group the management committee or one of the officials of the gubernia committee, is charged with the responsibility of carrying on the work. The second group of eight unions conducts the work through union organisers officially appointed for work among women. Thus organisers were appointed for the food workers' unions in thirty gubernias, for the sugar workers' in the Ukraine, the Kiev and Podolia districts, and for the municipal workers in forty-three gubernia departments in 1922, and in fifty-two in 1923. There are now organisers in the metal workers' unions in all the important districts—Leningrad, Ijevsk, Tula, Prioki. The Narpit has special organisers in 50 per cent. of its gubernia departments; the leather workers in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Odessa, Orel and Tambov; and the Textile Union has appointed organisers for thirty-two out of fifty-four departments and of these twenty-five are representatives of the Women's Department. In the third group of six unions (land and forest workers, educational, medical and sanitary workers, construction and wood workers, and government employees), the work is carried on in the majority of the gubernia departments as part of the regular union activities, and no person is especially appointed for the work. Our work among the inter-union organisations is carried on in exactly the same way. Those trade union organisations having special workers for agitation among the women, have carried on extensive work in arranging inter-union conferences of working women (in Saratov, Kazan, Minsk and other places), and is now arranging union conferences (in Nijni Novgorod, in Rostov-on-the-Don, Tula and for all the

unions in Moscow in addition to various other places). In Tula, for instance, during the past year, eight conferences of armament and munition workers, two conferences of women railroad workers, one provincial conference of land and forest workers, three conferences of medical and sanitary workers, and twenty-two county conferences of working women were held. There were 599 special meetings of working women, and 182 talks with working women, in which altogether 26,070 working women participated. In Bashkiria, Irkutsk, Moscow, Leningrad and a number of other cities, the women delegates were invited to attend the general union conferences, the deliberations of the factory committees, etc., with a view to interesting them in general union activities and thus gradually preparing them for the transition from special women's meetings and conferences to direct participation in union life through the general meetings.

When the work among women was first initiated, special women's meetings were the accepted practice, and at these meetings only questions of a general character, such as the relation of the working woman to the trade unions, the gains of the working woman from the October revolution, etc., were discussed. These meetings prepared the women for participation in the general meetings of the union or factory. The majority of working women attracted to these meetings displayed an active interest in the work, and gradually they began to discuss a greater number of general questions affecting working women in their own industry or union. At present most of the unions feel that they no longer need the special women's meetings (in the union of medical and sanitary workers and others in Rostov-on-the-Don, Kiev, Donetz Province, Briansk and Saratov) and special emphasis is now being placed on drawing the women into general union work rather than on the special women's meetings. In order to obtain a clear and exact idea of the progress of work among women in the gubernias, the Organisation Department of the Central Executive Committee of the Trade Unions has undertaken a special investigation. The answers received to the questionnaires sent out were not always complete, but nevertheless they threw a great deal of light on local conditions, on the way the work was being organised and methods applied, as well as on the

Tartai Women "Artel" Crimea working during holiday (Bogaram) Easter, in spite of Mussulman religious laws.

obstacles hindering the development of the work among women.

Table No 2. shows that the prevailing method of work among women is still that of special women's meetings:

TABLE No. 2.

METHODS OF WORK.

| UNION | Special Women's Mtgs. | Conf. of Women | Delegates Mtgs. | Factory Mtgs. | Discussion Circles | Gen. Mtgs. | Con. of Organisers |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Clothing workers | 10 | 5 | 5 | 4 | — | 11 | — |
| Medical and Sanitary | 15 | 7 | 9 | 2 | — | 8 | 2 |
| Textile ... ... | 10 | 4 | 8 | 2 | — | 6 | 1 |
| Chemical ... | 13 | 6 | 3 | 2 | — | 5 | 1 |
| Printing ... ... | 15 | 3 | 3 | 3 | — | 7 | 1 |
| Food workers ... | 11 | 5 | 3 | 4 | — | 6 | 2 |
| Municipal ... | 14 | 8 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Railroad ... ... | 17 | 4 | 13 | 3 | 1 | 6 | 1 |
| Total ... ... | 105 | 42 | 48 | 23 | 3 | 50 | 10 |

Out of a total of 173 sectional departments of the railway unions and gubernia departments of all the other unions which were investigated, general women's conferences had been called in forty-two, and women delegate conferences in forty-eight departments.

There were very few conferences of organisers from the factories—only 10 out of 173—which is explained by the fact that there are no special organisers appointed by the unions for work among women in the factories. However, organisers are appointed by the Women's Department, and are called together and directed in their work by the latter, except in exceptional cases when these workers are elected to the factory committee and the gubernia department calls them together as members of the factory committees. Most of the work carried on among women directly in the factories has been under the direction of the Women's Department. Although work among women has been made an integral

part of the general union work in the Provincial Union Council and in the gubernia departments, the factory committees have as yet scarcely begun to take part in this work, and as a rule they still follow the practice of having a member of the Women's Department on the committee, in an advisory capacity. In the majority of cases, the factory committees still consider that work among women is the business of the Women's Departments, and only recently has there been any evidence that the factory committees are beginning to realise the necessity of carrying on this work themselves. However, our efforts to carry on all such work through the union organisations rather than the Women's Department has produced certain positive results.

## Participation of Women in the Trade Union Apparatus.

The participation of women in the trade union apparatus has unquestionably increased during the last two years. For instance the number of women members on the administrative board of the unions in Rostov-on-the-Don increased from nine members in August, 1922, to twenty-five in December, 1923. In other words, out of a total of 187 members on the administrative board, 13 per cent. are women. In the lower union nuclei—the factory and local committees—there were 91 women members in August, 1922; by December, 1923, this number had increased to 249, or 21 per cent. of the total membership; 26 per cent. of the union membership in that district were women. Thus we see that the proportion of women members in the unions is only 5 per cent. higher than the proportion on the factory committees. At present 10 to 11 per cent. of the administrative bodies of the gubernia departments in the Ukraine consist of women. In November, 1922, it was 8 per cent. In 1923, the number of women on factory committees represented 12 per cent. of the whole. Taking the Union of Soviet Republics as a whole, the average percentage of women in elected positions is considerably lower. Generally speaking, the work of drawing women into trade union activity is proceeding very slowly, even in those unions where the most favourable conditions for this work exist. This table illustrates the situation existing in July, 1923

Percentage of Women on Union Administrative Bodies.

| Of the Union Membership | On Gubernia Councils | On Central Committees | In Provincial Sections | On Factory Committees |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 27.3 per cent. | 5.7 per cent. | 4.2 per cent. | 6 per cent. | 14.4 per cent. |

This table shows that the proportion of women in the basic nuclei (the factory committees) is almost double the proportion of women in the membership as a whole. In the remaining Trade Union bodies the proportion of women is negligible.

In order to increase the number of women workers in the union apparatus and the union movement, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of Trade Unions issued instructions to its local sections to include a greater number of women in the administrative apparatus than has been the practice in the past.

In addition, the demand for more highly skilled labour compelled the Central Committee to propose that measures be undertaken to raise the qualifications of women workers. It proposed that the Central Committee of each union discuss the question of raising the qualifications of women in industry and guarantee a definite number of places for women workers in the factories and in the union technical schools and courses. The majority of the Central Committees of the unions adopted measures of this kind. The Central Committee of the Printers' Union decided at its plenum to set aside 25 per cent. of the places in the factory technical schools for girls. The Central Committee of the Chemical Workers' Union decided to set aside in the factory technical schools a number of places for girls proportionate to the number of women workers occupied in that industry, and also to furnish individual instruction to the women working in the industry. The Central Committee of the Metal Workers' Union sent out instructions to its local sections that women's labour should be used in a large number of trades which had formerly been confined to men. The Central Committees of the other unions (of the municipal, leather and paper workers, the miners, etc.), sent out general instructions regarding the

necessity of allotting places to girls in the factory technical schools, of sending the women workers to attend special technical courses, and of giving them individual instruction in the factory.

The following are statistics from the Commissariat of Labour on the infringements of the Labour Code for the protection of women in industry.

## Trials in the Labour Court in 1923.

Table showing the proportion of cases dealing with infringements of laws for the protection of women, to entire number of cases tried.

| First Quarter of 1923 | Second Quarter of 1923 | Fourth Quarter of 1923 | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Percentage | No. of Complaints |
| 4 per cent. | 6 per cent. | 9.4 per cent. | 342 |

Complaints sent by women to labour inspectors—average number per inspector per month.

| First Quarter of 1923 | Second Quarter of 1923 | Fourth Quarter of 1923 | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Percentage | No. of Complaints |
| 3.29 per cent. | 3.16 per cent. | 3.22 per cent. | 4,448 |

These figures give the general number of complaints to labour inspectors and infringements of laws for the protection of women in industry. Unfortunately we have no special information regarding the decisions that were made in this sphere with regard to the protection of pregnant and nursing mothers. The number of court proceedings having to do with women in industry is insignificant in comparison with the general number of accusations, but nevertheless the percentage increased from 4 per cent. in the first quarter to 9.4 per cent. in the last quarter. It is, therefore, the business of the unions to insist upon the strict enforcement of the labour code in questions affecting women as well as in all other matters, and in this connection the Central Executive Committee of the Unions, jointly with the Commissariat of Labour, has sent out instructions for the appointment of women as labour inspectors.

In order to diminish the hardships among women due to unemployment, the unions have co-operated in the organisation of communal homes for single women, in providing

public work, and extending material aid to unemployed union members, in addition to government aid. Instructions have also been sent out that women are not to be the first to go when staffs are cut, and that women are not to be replaced by men.

The unions are paying particular attention to questions concerning the living conditions of the workers and are encouraging the building of organisations for improving the social conditions of the working women, such as communal dining rooms, bakeries, and laundries; sewing and repairing workshops, cheches, kindergartens, etc.

Financial support of the creches and kindergartens by the industry is part of the collective agreements that are concluded by the unions with the factory management.

Summing up, we may say, that our experience proves that the best methods for organising the most backward part of the working class—the women workers, is through the trade unions, under the direction of the Communist Party. Through the unions the Party may consolidate its influence over the broad masses of the proletariat.

O. CHERNISHEVA.

# Forms and Methods of Work Among the Women of the Soviet East

THE Soviet Government, having announced the most complete and thorough-going programme the world has ever known for the abolition of all forms of oppression of man by man, was not content with mere formal proclamations, but took immediate measures for their execution. Thus, in dealing with the question of nationalities, the Soviet Government not only proclaimed the equality of all nationalities living within the Soviet borders, but took practical steps to make them equal in fact. Since equality is only possible among nations which have attained the same level of economic, cultural and political development, the first step along this line was, of necessity, immediate assistance to the most backward nations in order to raise them to the level of development that had been attained by the more progressive peoples. Under the special conditions of the Soviet Union, particular attention had to be paid to the people living in the Eastern border countries where the colonial policy of the Tsar, resulting in the artificial retention of whole nations in a primitive state, had brought about the most disastrous results. The main forces had, therefore, to be diverted to the Eastern borders—the weakest section of the national front. The Soviet Government was faced with a great historical task in the East. First there was the problem of developing and quickening the economic life, of replacing the prevailing primitive forms of agriculture and cattle-breeding with more modern methods, and of building up local industrial centres capable of quickly shaking off the survivals of feudalism. Then came the problem of raising the cultural level of the working masses, of waging an energetic campaign against such relics of barbarism as polygamy, religious prejudices, ancient customs, and the purchasing of wives. Parallel with this, it was necessary to familiarise the population with the elements of culture, to abolish illiteracy, to reform their social life and finally to undertake the task of the Communist education of the workers.

But the execution of all these measures, leading to the complete liberation of the backward peoples of the East, is inextricably bound up with the question of the liberation of the Oriental women who are still incomparably more enslaved and oppressed than men. The debased position of the women of the East, which is an outrage to human dignity, is directly due to the fact that the Eastern women take no part in productive labour and are confined entirely to the subsidiary labour of the home and the care of the family. Economically helpless, the Eastern woman is completely at the mercy of her husband or her father, who are the absolute masters of her fate. Her world is limited to the bedroom, the kitchen, and the children, and thus the woman becomes sluggish and passive, a drag on every forward movement.

The backwardness of the women of the Eastern countries is the main obstacle in the road not only of the reorganisation of family and social relationships, but of the economic structure. And without that fundamental change there can be no thought of the awakening of the East. In view of these conditions, the first task is to release the suffering women of the East from the grip of ancient social forms and religious prejudices in which she is held, and help her to stand on her feet and enjoy those rights guaranteed to her by Soviet law. No matter how difficult this task appears, we cannot wave it aside or put it off until tomorrow, for without the liberation of the women, the abolition of national oppression is impossible. Moreover, the emancipation of Eastern women will mean an increase in the productivity of labour in Russia as well as the broadening and reinforcing of the social basis on which the Communist Party depends in its constructive work. Although incapable of grasping the meaning and substance of Bolshevism mentally, the toiling women of the East, awakening to the new life, cannot but instinctively sympathise with the Communists for the very reason that they belong to the most oppressed class of society and they are drawn involuntarily into the struggle for liberation, carrying with them all the passion of one who but yesterday was a slave. For all these reasons the work among the Eastern women occupies a unique position, and the question of the apparatus directing the work, the conditions under which it is carried on, and the forms and methods employed, require particular attention. The

Working Women's Department serves as the apparatus for organising the toiling women of the East on the basis of their economic interests, aiding in their cultural development and attracting them into Soviet and party life.

Since the Working Women's Department is fulfilling such an important function and is forced to carry on its work under such exceptionally difficult circumstances, without assistance from any other organs (for, until they have discarded their veils and thrown off their social and religious prejudices, the Oriental women can only be approached by a women's organisation), it should be reinforced in its Eastern section both in respect to the qualifications of its workers and to an increase in the staff. An increased staff is particularly necessary in view of the fact that the number of women workers in the East is extremely small in comparison with the number of women scattered through the villages, which really requires a considerable number of local village workers, and county and district organisers. In order to prepare a corps of such workers from among the native population, every means should be employed, from individual training and the organisation of special circles, schools and courses under the Working Women's Department, to direct appointments from the Communist universities, the party schools and the workers' faculties. Probationers must also be utilised. All these methods are still not sufficiently employed by the Women's Departments at the present time. According to the figures for the second half of 1923 there were 145 workers able to take charge of republic or regional areas, but of these only 35 were native women. The number of county organisers increased by 30 in 1923, as compared with 1922, and the number of volost organisers by 82. In addition to this, 140 Eastern women were appointed in the second half of 1923 from party schools and courses—twice as many as the year before —and the Communist University of the toilers of the East sent out 46 women of Eastern nationality.

But all this is still insufficient. With all the heroic efforts of the Women's Department, it is impossible as yet to train a sufficient number of workers from among the masses of working women to carry on all the work that is necessary among the hundreds of thousands of unenlightened women of the East. Only if the work among the Eastern women is

recognised as the problem of the party as a whole, and if the working women's department is able, through the Press and special reports at non-party peasant conferences, to develop sufficiently widespread agitation among the male population of the East, shall we have the required conditions for developing the work, or, more exactly, an apparatus capable of directing the work.

But the mere presence of a working apparatus does not necessarily ensure the success of its activities. This depends on whether the task is approached correctly, and whether the forms and methods chosen are practicable.

A certain amount of experience has already been accumulated, in relation to both these particular questions, enabling us to select those ways and means which have already been proved applicable to the unique conditions we have in the East. The first thing to bear in mind is that the work of the Women's Department must not be confined to working women employed in the factories, but should be carried on among women engaged in home industries, women peasants and housekeepers. And in every case special attention should be paid to young girls, for they are especially good material both for educational propaganda work and as prospective members of various kinds of organisations. Moreover, at the present time girls comprise only a very small percentage of the membership of the League of Communist Youth, and practically no intensive work has been carried on among them. The best method of carrying on this work is for the League of Communist Youth and the Women's Department to work together, organising nuclei of the girls, and Youth Sections in connection with the women's clubs and schools.

Passing from general considerations to the question of the conditions under which the work among women must be carried on in the East, we must first of all emphasise that the chief requirement here is flexibility of method. Changes in method must be made as the special social forms of particular nationalities require it.

In organising work in the Eastern borderlands we must not for one moment forget that every one of these national republics and regions represents a separate world, with its

own customs and habits determined by its isolated economic life. In adapting themselves to these special conditions, the Women's Department workers must avoid equally any survival of the imperialistic attitude toward the border regions, with its contempt for special national needs and mistrust of the native workers, and any tendencies in the direction of local Chauvinism, finding expression in an exaggeration of local needs to the detriment of the interest of the Union of Soviet Republics as a whole.

Following these remarks on the conditions under which the Women's Department is forced to work, let us now take up the question of the forms and methods of their activities.

First of all, we shall consider those methods directed toward the economic liberation of women. In this sphere measures must be used for raising the qualifications of women's labour, for combating unemployment and for the organisation of industrial artels.* With the aim of acquainting the working women of the East with industrial methods, special trade and factory schools have been organised. In certain cases these schools are conducted with women's clubs and schools.

As part of its method of dealing with unemployment among women, and with its consequence—prostitution, the Women's Department has succeeded in placing its representatives on the administrative board of the Labour Exchange and on the bureau for the organisation of public work. At the same time the department is consolidating and extending a chain of handicraft and agricultural artels, is trying to assist them in improving their productive methods and is supplying them with raw material, etc. Even in cases where the industrial artels have proved unprofitable because of lack of capital or poor management, the Women's Department, in view of their exceptional importance, has tried to find some means for their support. Such a policy with regard to the artels is dictated by the general consideration that the extent of women's participation in industry determines her position in both the family and in society, by the fact that the home

* Co-operative associations.

industries furnish a means of livelihood for a certain number of unemployed women, and finally, for the reason that they prepare a corps of skilled women workers who may subsequently be employed in industrial centres which, within a few years, will be built up in all the economically backward countries of the East.

There are 106 women's artels at present in the Soviet East. This number is more or less equally divided among the different national republics. And the fact that the majority of artels have existed for over two years proves the stability of this form of economic organisation.

The overwhelming majority of the artels include almost exclusively only the very poorest elements. But there is a great diversity in regard to the social composition of the artels and in the character of their work. Artels for collective ploughing and dairy-farming function side by side with sewing and laundry artels and silk-spinning, knitting and weaving shops. The most flourishing of these artels are those which are connected with the local industries by the very nature of their work. They receive special support from the Women's Department.

But the measures described represent only one side of the activities of the Women's Department. Side by side with its efforts to raise the cultural level of the women of the East, the Women's Department is carrying on the extensive work of implanting the elements of culture in the minds of the Eastern Women, and attracting them into community work. The methods used in this work are many and various. First of all, as a means of combating the high mortality and social diseases so prevalent in the national republics, and the various ancient customs physically disabling women and children, the Women's Department has organised a chain of medical stations, maternity homes, children's consultations, creches, etc., and is carrying on a wide propaganda of sanitation and hygienic information. Special attention is also directed to such survivals of barbarism as the marriage of minors, the wearing of veils, the binding of women in childbirth, etc. In addition to these forms of direct help to the backward population of the Eastern borderlands, instituted by

the organs of the Commissariat of Health, the Department for the Protection of Mothers and Infants, and the Commissariat of Social Insurance, the Women's Department has devoted no less attention to the combating of national ignorance. Along with the various medical and children's institutions, the Women's Department has tried to develop a chain of educational institutions. Special efforts have been made in the direction of liquidating illiteracy and in increasing the attendance of girls at the Soviet schools.

In many cases the various institutions which have just been mentioned, medical centres, children's consultations, schools, etc., are concentrated round the clubs. These clubs grow out of the industrial artels, and, in the process of their development, form into various cultural groups which attract many new elements in addition to the members of the artel. As experience has proved in Azerbaidjan, the women's clubs attain great popularity and hold great promise for development among the Eastern women. One inestimable advantage of the clubs is that they attract even the most backward and apathetic women, who are unconsciously drawn into community work, and thus the influence of the club is extended far beyond its circle of membership. The model club known as the Ali Bayramov Club in Baku, is known not only in Soviet Russia, but beyond its borders. Around this club 645 Mahomedan women are grouped, of whom 445 are directly occupied in some phase of the club's activities. In addition, there are 200 unemployed Mohamedan women associated with the club, who attend the meetings, lectures and plays, and make use of the club reading room and library. In connection with the club there are party schools, sewing artels, literary schools, and higher schools, circles of various kinds, a creche, and recently the club has undertaken to house a party school within its walls. Other women's clubs are as a rule not so comprehensive and have not developed so many cultural groups; but they serve nevertheless, as cultural centres which provide activities for the working women in line with their tastes and interests. One of the chief tasks of the club is to develop the independence of its members and to enlist them in community work; this can be achieved in any properly organised club. First, the woman joins one of the circles where she is given definite functions; then she attends the school, and ultimately a position is provided for her as a

probationer in some Soviet institution, or in the Women's Department itself. In all these cases the club serves as a preparatory school for public life.

There are altogether 28 women's clubs in the Soviet East. The great majority of them are in Azerbaidjan, where their membership is over 2,000. In addition to the clubs there are at present in the East, 93 circles of various types, 36 preparatory political schools, and 55 schools for the liquidation of illiteracy. All of this, of course, is far from sufficient to raise the women of the East to the necessary cultural level. But the system of educational institutions serves as a starting point and as a firm foundation for further progress along the road to complete spiritual emancipation.

No small part in supporting the work of the educational institutions is played by the Press. Nine newspapers are published in the Soviet East which contain special pages devoted to the needs of the working women of the East. In Turkestan a special paper for women is published, and in Azerbaidjan and Georgia there are two women's journals, *Jenshina Na Vostok* (The Woman of the East) and *Nash Put* (Our Path). All of these organs are printed in the native language so that the local women may understand them.

Another form of cultural activity which should be noted is the question of women's rights. The first task of the Women's Department in this field is to inform the native population of the decrees of the Soviet Government establishing complete equality of the sexes, the protection of mothers and infants, and the protection of women in industry. The second task is to stimulate the women to make use of the rights which have been secured to them and to draw them into work in the capacity of assessors, advocates, judges, etc., with the aim of doing away with all the barbaric survivals in the realm of women's rights and position. The best means of attaining this, in addition to widespread propaganda through the Press and platform, is through the organisation of a series of legal bureaux connected with the clubs or the Women's Department, to which women may turn for advice and protection in cases of infringement of their rights by their husbands or fathers; the arrangement of special public trials

from time to time and the staging of mock trials for the consideration of matters connected with the local convention of marriage and family relations. The number of women assessors has increased rapidly. In 1922, there were altogether 51 women acting in this capacity in the Eastern regions of the Soviet Republic, in 1923, there were 276, and in 1924, in nine republics and regions the number has grown to 486. The work of the women as assessors amounts to their actual participation in the active work of the Soviet Government. This work must, however, be preceded by a certain amount of political education. The institution of delegates is the instrument for carrying on political education among the wide non-party masses of women. The women delegate meetings should bring together the working women, the peasant women and the housekeepers, and at the present time when the solution of the national question requires the **forming of ties with the peasants of the national minorities, the work among the peasant women of the countries of the East** must be given first consideration. In this connection there is still a vast amount of work to be done inasmuch as the statistics for 1922 show that the delegate meetings are far more popular in the cities than in the villages, and that the delegates in the cities are correspondingly far more active in the cities. The entire number of delegates in 1923 amount to 11,839, and of these there were almost twice as many in the towns as in the villages. Another unfavourable circumstance is that the number of Russian delegates exceeds the number of native delegates (6,829 Russians and 5,012 natives). The figures for 1924 are far more satisfactory, as the entire number of delegates has grown to 21,371, an increase of almost 100 per cent., and of this number 7,541 fall to the share of the city, and 13,830, or almost two-thirds, to the villages. Unfortunately we have no figures giving a picture of the proportion in which the various nationalities are represented among the delegates. During 1923, there were 2,959 delegate meetings, an average of 2 per month in the various localities. These conferences were held chiefly in the district centres and in the cities; there being comparatively few in the smaller geographical divisions. The chief deficiency in these conferences was that the programmes as a rule were not carefully enough prepared. The delegate conferences were usually divided up into various sections which considered questions such as co-operation, social and political instruction, protec-

tion of mothers and infants, trade unions, Soviet problems, etc. In all the important volosts and cities of the East, campaigns were carried on on such occasions as May First, the Anniversary of the Women's Department, the Soviet elections, the elections of delegates, relief to the German children, the Red International Aid, etc. Between the 12th and 13th Congresses of the Russian Communist Party there were in all 293 non-party conferences of women, attended in the Bashkir Republic alone by 13,900 women.

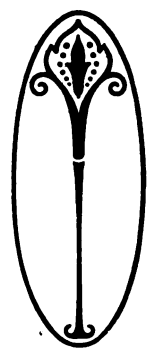
The chief task of the delegate meetings both in the separate political campaigns and in the general non-party conferences is to draw the women into the government, trade union, co-operative and party structure. The Women's Department endeavours to have women included on the election tickets to all Soviet organs, and particularly to the village Soviets, the volost Congresses, the Volost Central Executive Committees, and the town Soviets. With the aim of increasing the activities of the members elected to the Soviets the Women's Department should bring up at their meetings questions having to do with the family, and the social and economic position of the Oriental women. Those delegates who are not members of the Soviet must be urged to participate in the discussions on these questions.

In addition to drawing the women of the East into government organs, it is also necessary to increase the activities of women in trade unions, and to attract the peasant and proletarian women into consumers' co-operatives.

It is difficult to over-estimate the importance of the phase of the work of the Women's Department that has just been indicated. The participation of Oriental women in active, constructive work will advance the Communist movement just as far as their backwardness and apathy have held it back. Furthermore, the practical work in Soviet institutions and social organisations means the gradual separation of the most conscious and dependable women from among the backward women of the East, and these women swell the ranks of the Communist Party and increase the number of active builders of the new life. And among the remaining masses, the work in the capacity of delegates or practical workers serves to awaken them to the decrepit condition of

the Oriental social forms and customs, which is the first step to their complete support of the activities of the Soviet government. Not until all the hundreds of thousands of women in the East have been thus awakened, can our work among them be considered successful. Under present conditions the work among the Eastern women occupies a very prominent place. The attention of all the enemies and friends of Soviet Russia in other countries is rivetted on this work. The former observe the awakening of the East with alarm, but the latter are carefully noting the ways and means applied by the Communist Party in order to make use of the experience of the Russian Communist Party in their own countries, after the imperialistic and colonial system has been brought to an end.

V. KASPAROVA.



Group of Women Delegates to the Section:- Protection of Motherhood and Childhood, attending lecture on chemistry.

# Protection of Mothers and Infants as the Chief Pre-requisite for the Creation of New Forces of Social Life

ALL social forms and customs reflect as in a mirror the economic and political structure of society; and it was natural that the first decrees of the Soviet government should deal with the social aspects of civic rights for women and new legislation in the sphere of family relationships. The old bourgeois-feudal way of life that has grown up through the centuries could not, of course, be rooted out and re-constructed by decrees alone. Special organs had to be created for the execution of the new laws, for carrying out practical measures to ensure the emancipation of women and their participation in the general social and economic life of the country, for liberating them from their condition of sex servitude and perpetual toil. We all remember the time, not so long ago, when the women workers, deprived of all rights and loaded with duties, carried a double burden, giving of their strength to the last drop in both factory and the home.

There was not even any mention of an eight-hour working day. Ten to sixteen hours were consumed at the factory, the remainder of the time in endless household cares and sleepless nights, was devoted to the children demanding to be fed and cared for. The bourgeoisie government did everything in its power to keep the woman worker in her difficult position, legally degrading and enslaving her, depriving her not only of practically all political and property rights, but often even depriving her of her own children, in cases of separation from her husband. Age-old prejudices and the low cultural level of the masses accomplished what the bourgeois laws could not, and held the woman worker in a position of domestic slavery, materially and politically dependent on her husband, who was allowed to exert over her all the rights of a master over a slave—even to beating

her. Every one of our women workers has vivid memories of that time, and has still not recovered from the disastrous physical and spiritual consequences which remain as a legacy of that irrevocable past. But these things can never be again, and the new generation of women will recall them only in plaintive songs about the " sad lot of woman."

The Workers' and Peasants' Government in addition to decreeing a new form of family life, has organised a department for the protection of mothers and infants, the functions of this department are to help women to realise their right of participation in the general political life of the country; to obtain a real eight-hour working day; and to instill in them a new understanding of their relationship to children, who should be regarded as the future citizens of the state, and not merely as the personal property of the mother and father, and members only of the small family group. While the individual woman and child occupy the centre of its attention, the department concerns itself also with the question of the position of the women and children in the community as a whole, transforming their lives by re-organising it on a new social basis. This is not a matter merely of compassion for the weak and helpless, nor of the social security of women, but of changing the whole family structure.

With the aim of creating social and family conditions which will enable every woman worker to fulfill her duties of motherhood—her civic duties of training the future generation, the hope and the foundation of all humanity—the Department for the Protection of Mothers and Infants is helping to save the time of the mother through a number of subsidiary institutions, and is thus making possible her participation in other realisms of the cultural and economic life of the country. The rights of the child and its position in our Soviet State are not dependent in any way on family relationships—on the " legitimacy " or " illegitimacy " of its birth, recognition or non-recognition by the father. Thus the first destructive blow is struck at the old order of things. Every human being has the right to the care and attention of the State while still in its mother's womb. The Department for the Protection of Mothers and Infants establishes a large number of institutions, such as homes for mothers and babies, where

the mother may go before childbirth and remain for a certain time afterwards, and day nurseries and consultations which simplify the mother's difficult task of bringing up her children. At the same time, the laws for the protection of labour give to pregnant and nursing mothers the right of leave before and after childbirth, insuring them full wages during that period. After returning to work the mothers are given the right to stop work every three hours in order to nurse their babies, inasmuch as artificial feeding is extremely harmful and often reacts disastrously on the health of the child. During working hours the infant is cared for in the day nursery, where it receives specialised feeding and nursing, and the mother may go tranquilly about her work without being distracted by the thought of a helpless and uncared for infant left at home under lock and key. Thus, the woman worker is enabled to fulfil her second function of participating on an equal footing with her husband in the productive and political life of the country. Fetching her child from the day nursery after work, and there observing the improved methods of nursing her children, the mother returns home with a store of knowledge as to how she must further feed and care for the child at home, in order to bring it up with the best results for herself and the community. A system of doctors' consultations have been organised, supplementing the day nurseries whose business it is to help the mothers solve any problems that may arise and to direct and instruct them in the correct care of their children. It is only necessary to emphasise the fact that the mothers are supposed to make use of the consultations during the whole course of the development and growth of the child, not awaiting the actual appearance of illness, because the main function of the institutions for the protection of motherhood and childhood is not primarily the cure, but the prevention, of illness. Museums, exhibitions and lectures teaching the women workers the care and training of children, complete the work of the day nurseries and consultations, gradually accustoming the woman to an attentive and sensible attitude toward herself and her baby, and developing her into a wise and enlightened mother.

By January 1st, 1924, we had organised the following institutions in Russia, exclusive of the Ukraine, White Russia and the Caucasus :—

| | |
|---|---|
| Day Nurseries ... ... ... ... | 548 |
| Mothers' and Babies' Homes ... ... | 107 |
| Homes for Babies ... ... ... ... | 401 |
| Children's Consultations ... ... | 185 |
| Mother's Consultations ... ... ... | 44 |
| Maternity Homes ... ... ... | 35* |
| Other Institutions ... ... ... | 20 |
| Total ... | 1,350 |

While attending the above-mentioned types of organisations, the mothers and the babies remain under the constant observation of the Department for the Protection of Mothers and Infants from the time of conception until the child is ready for the kindergarten. Every woman worker attending the institutions of this department receives not only direct help and support in the bringing up of her child, but is re-educated herself, is permeated with new ideas. She begins to esteem both herself and her child more highly, and to feel independent and free, not only in her family, but in her civic relationships. Thus the old order is dealt a second blow, and the true way is laid to the creation of a new life for the woman herself. Formerly, when she was in complete dependence on the director of the factory, and on her husband at home, the woman worker never ceased to feel herself a slave during every hour of her life. Now, enjoying full political rights, and receiving material and spiritual support from the Mother and Infant Protection Department, the woman worker is building up a new family, a union of members possessing equal rights, and is training her husband to a rational attitude toward herself and the child, and to family life and responsibilities. New habits and customs are growing up, changing in its very essence the whole form and content of family life, and the woman workers' relation to it.

The principles and practices of the Department for the Protection of Mothers and Infants have not only an indepen-

* Here are included only the Maternity Homes under the control of the Department for the Protection of Mothers and Infants, not counting the Maternity Sections in the hospitals which are under the supervision of the Medical Department.

dent value, but they find expression in all fields of the political and economic life of the country.

The participation of women in industry, the resulting increase in their class consciousness and their active influence on the psychology and temper of the working masses made up of their husbands and fathers, must be accompanied by the organised protection of mothers and children, which will enable the women to take part in productive labour without injury to their children. We cannot improve the condition of the worker's family and raise the standard of women's labour, without the basic pre-requisite of an extensive system of institutions for the protection of mothers and babies.

The conservation of the labour resources of the country the prevention of infant mortality, the establishment of proper conditions for the development of the growing child—all these things are impossible without organisations for the protection of mothers and children.

In a word, the temper of the masses, especially of women, in both their work and conditions of life, is closely bound up with the questions of the correct regulation of the protection of mothers and children.

The working women have been quick to learn and to understand the importance to themselves of the protection of mothers and infants; and work in this field has been stimulated by the active sympathy of the wide proletarian masses ever since the first days of the revolution.

The working women have everywhere organised co-operating committees for the protection of mothers and babies, they have organised collections, they have given up their leisure time to help the institutions for the protection of mothers and infants; through the department for work among women they have helped to carry into effect every kind of measure and campaign that has arisen in the course of the work.

In addition to this the organised working women have contributed a considerable number of directors and organisers to the mothers' and babies' department, who have been able to carry out their tasks with the help of the doctors and specialists.

Those who attended the nurses' course which the Central Department for the Protection of Mothers and Infants organised as early as 1918, were delegated by the local departments for work among women, and were chosen predominantly from among young working and peasant women.

Every statesman, every political worker, every worker and peasant, man or woman, understands the importance of this work, and is, therefore, bound not merely to express formal sympathy for the work, but to co-operate in every way in the development of the institutions for the Protection of Mothers and Infants, and in the wide propagation of our ideas among all the labouring masses. We have accomplished much, but so far we have only outlined the path of development; there is still a great deal of work before us. For a long time to come sympathy and persistent work will be necessary in order to destroy the age-old prejudice, darkness, and ignorance, which have chained the women workers and especially the peasant women, in the past.

The class conscious working and peasant women must exert all their strength, creative ability and perseverance to guarantee themselves not only the right, but the actual possibility of making use of the institutions for the protection of mothers and infants.

No effort put into the constructive work in this field of cultural extension should be regretted, because we are dealing with problems of the creation of a new and perfect way of life, a new type of harmonious humanity.

V. LEBEDEVA.

# The Woman Worker and Communal Dining Rooms

THE fierce struggle for power of the vanguard of the proletariat, the Russian Communist Party, which continued for more than three years under incredibly difficult conditions, ended in a complete and decisive victory, enabling the Workers' and Peasants' Government to devote itself in the years that followed to the peaceful and constructive task of strengthening the economic position of the country.

In the decisive struggle for political supremacy between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the women workers played no mean role. The proletarian woman was not only a sympathiser but gave herself up wholly and determinedly to active participation in the combat. Perhaps the success of the movement as a whole was due not so much to the part women played in the actual struggle, as to the great moral support and help which they were ever ready to give to the weary and hungry proletarian fighters.

To realise the full importance of this, one must remember the horrors of famine, cold and disease accompanied by civil war in Russia. It will be clear then that not one of our fighters, no matter how great his spiritual strength, could have held out in that struggle, if the woman worker, whether mother, wife, or sister, had not been wholly on his side.

But the days and years of warfare and open conflict have passed, and days of peaceful reconstruction have come. The period of victories and defeats has given way to a period of arduous every-day labour to re-establish the economic structure of the country and to reinforce the Socialist foundation of a new life of proletarian culture.

In this sphere the role of woman becomes even greater, and attains first rank importance, inasmuch as the woman worker is bound up in the closest possible way with all those things that have to do with social forms and with conditions of life. In our progress toward a new society we are confronted not by armies of enemies, but by certain facts of our own lives. We are confronted by the family—that primitive and ancient cage for the enslavement of women, and by the whole organisation of the social life built up through the ages, which weighs upon us like a heavy burden, making our journey along the road to the Socialist order all the more difficult. However, we cannot win the battle for a new life as speedily as we won the battle against open enemies. The rebuilding of the social life built up in the course of centuries is not a matter of days and years. Even under the most favourable circumstances, and with the most intense will to victory over the old social forms, this contest will continue for decades, and be brought to a successful conclusion only by the closest and most active participation of the woman worker.

We must not forget that the woman worker, more than any of us, was directly bound up with the old order of things, with the old social forms. To conquer an enemy it is first of all essential to know the extent of his forces, his discipline, everything about him, and it is only the woman worker who knows all the burden and affliction of the old order against which we have declared war. She has suffered from it more than anyone else.

This struggle is especially difficult for us because social forms permeate every phase of existence. We are surrounded by them constantly, every minute of our lives, and we cannot change them, we cannot destroy them, until not only have we created the conditions suitable for the introduction of new social forms, but, what is more important, we have new social forms ready to substitute for the old.

Our problem, especially in connection with the woman worker, consists in selecting from the old society its most fundamental and persistent forms, and directing our attack

against them, at the same time preparing a new way of life to replace the old.

The most fundamental social forms of the old order are the bourgeois forms of marriage and the family, and the so-called "domestic economy" resulting therefrom.

As our aim is to replace the system of private capital first by a system of state capitalism, and then by a system of Socialist economy, we commenced the struggle by declaring war against the old form of domestic economy, or, more simply, against the private kitchen, that greatest evil of the old order. In the Socialist state the woman worker must take the place of the housekeeper. Our problem is to help liberate the woman from household cares, to free her from the private kitchen, and enable her to become a woman worker in the real sense of the word, participating on an equal basis with men in the economic, political and cultural life of the country.

To accomplish this, we must deliver the woman worker from the slavery in which she is kept by her household tasks.

This can be done only by the slow and gradual but determined substitution of a system of communal dining rooms for the present system of private households and private kitchens. We must, therefore, begin with the organisation of communal dining as our task for the immediate future.

The organisation of a system of workers' dining rooms, especially in the industrial centres—mainly in Moscow and Leningrad—has achieved important results during the past year.

The three main results of our work in this field, in which the women workers have played a very important part, are as follows: first, the establishment of a definite organising centre; secondly, a fact of particular importance, that

of communal dining, and our system of public kitchens from the position of entirely negative importance occupied in the years 1919, 1920, 1921, has ceased to be a specifically repugnant institution as formerly regarded; and thirdly, the definite practical attainment in the form of the workers' restaurants operating at the present time, fulfilling the function of centres of new culture and new social forms, and acting as a splendid and powerful means of agitation—of propaganda by demonstration.

We will now proceed to the separate consideration of these attainments, treating them as briefly, but at the same time as exhaustively, as possible.

The centre for the organisation of communal dining in the Union of Soviet Republics since May, 1923, has been in the "Narodny Pitania" ("Public Feeding"), known as the "Narpit." The Narpit was organised as a joint stock company. The shareholders are the trade unions and party organisations, the co-operative societies and the state economic organs. The capital of the company amounts to one million gold roubles. It goes without saying that the original group of shareholders invested their money voluntarily. This centre, uniting the work of the organisation of communal dining rooms, is extending its influence all over the Soviet Union, in compliance with the statutes of the company. The "Narpit" is striving to carry out its policy of uniting the work of the communal dining rooms through the primary nuclei of Soviet society—the workers' co-operative and the factory committees. Through these organisations the "Narpit" brings together the workers in industrial enterprises, and the proletarian students in the educational institutions.

At first there was a certain amount of prejudice against the Narpit which was justified in view of the reputation of the public dining rooms during the civil war, in which, owing to the famine, the service was bad.

From the very beginning of its operations, the Narpit has striven to provide wholesome, well prepared and palatable

food in clean and comfortable surroundings at cost price. Thus, the Narpit has accomplished two things. It has overcome the prejudices of the proletarian masses against the idea of communal dining, by better organisation than was possible immediately after the difficult years of civil war; and secondly, it has begun to compete successfully with the privately-owned restaurants.

The favourable attitude of the workers to this new organisation is one of the guarantees of its future success. The "Narpit," however, is extending its work with extreme caution and deliberation, and is guided by the advice of our leader, Lenin, "little and good."

Consequently, during the first year of its existence the "Narpit" organised and opened up only a hundred restaurants. Reckoning the average daily capacity of such restaurants at a thousand people, we may state that roughly 100,000 people make use of the dining rooms every day.

Of course, the need in this line far exceeds anything we have done to satisfy it, but our experiments during the first year must be carried on with the utmost care and discretion in order not to repeat certain mistakes we are prone to make.

The main thing is to remember that the future growth of a system of communal dining rooms depends entirely on the success of the experiments we have already made. And we may conclude that the experiment has been successful, and has proved its importance, from the fact that it received indirect support in the decisions of the National Conference of the Russian Communist Party, where the organisation of communal dining was recognised as one of the healthy forms of bringing the Party into closer contact with the masses. Subsequently, the Central Committee of the Party issued instructions to the local party organisations on the necessity of rendering all possible assistance to the Narpit in its work.

A firm and strong foundation had been laid, and after the first hundred dining rooms with the first hundred thou-

sand diners, will be opened a second, a third, and then further hundreds of dining rooms. The Narpit does not hide from itself the difficulties and complications of this work. It is not alone in this. The party and trade union organisations have guaranteed their full participation and support. The main support for the Narpit, however, must come from the Women's Department, as an organisation which unites, directs and leads the work of all the active women workers. Our foremost and immediate task should be to attract the working women to active participation in the building up of new forms of social life, and in the effort to abolish the burden of the private kitchen. Parallel with this we will develop the system of workers' dining rooms, because each newly opened dining room (if we remember that the diners are more or less permanent, and that they represent the most class conscious of the working men and women and their families) releases a considerable number of women from the necessity of working in their own kitchens, and opens up the possibility of their active participation in Soviet public life, and thereby in the Socialist order.

ARTEM KHALATOFF.

APPENDIX.

# A Suggested Programme for Working Women's Study Circles

*First Theme*: What is produced in a factory? What raw materials and fuel does it require? Where are these raw materials and fuel obtained? What are the chief sources of raw materials and fuel in U.S.S.R.? Has the production of these things increased this last year? For what market does our factory produce? What are the connections between the village and town? What is necessary to increase the output of our factory.

*Second Theme*: The technical equipment of our factory. The skilled and unskilled labour in our factory. What work is performed by women? How is skilled labour trained (factory schools—technical schools, apprenticeship, etc.) The number of women attending institutions training for skilled labour. The reason for their small number. The still prevalent view that women form merely an auxiliary, reserve labour army. Social conditions, family, etc.

*Third Theme*: The management of our factory. The factory management and its relations to the industrial organs (trusts, etc.). Works committees, their functions and relations to the trade unions. The management of the workers' co-operative and its connections with co-operative organs. Industrial delegates' meetings. The participation of women workers in all these bodies. The growth of this participation. Reasons obstructing it.

*Fourth Theme*: The labour protection committee in the factory. Legislation protecting female and child labour. Female and child labour in capitalist society. Institutions of motherhood and childhood in the works (day nurseries), and the protection of motherhood and childhood in U.S.S.R. The

participation of women in this work. The importance of institutions of motherhood and childhood for the emancipation of women.

*Fifth Theme*: The kindergarten in our factory. Social training of children, its importance. The function of social training in re-organising the life of the workers' family. The participation of women in social training. The working women delegate meetings. Their function, work and achievements.

*Sixth Theme*: The rights of working women in U.S.S.R. Their rights in Tsarist Russia. The constitution of U.S.S.R.

*Seventh Theme*: To what extent do working women enjoy their rights. What hindrances exist (old family customs, burden of house work, backwardness and illiteracy of working women, prejudices, etc.). The construction of life on social foundations, public restaurants, social education, communal boarding, etc. The pre-requisites to this—improved industry and prosperity of the country, initiative and activity of the working class, raising its cultural level.

*Eighth Theme*: The October revolution and the part the Russian Communist Party played in it. The Russian Communist Party and the woman worker. The attraction of women to the Party.

*Ninth Theme*: The October revolution as the beginning of the world revolution. The revolution in Germany, etc. The Communist International as the leader of the international proletariat.

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