



Build for Socialism!

A Manual on Organization

By Harold Kelso

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SOCIALIST PARTY OF AMERICA

549 RANDOLPH STREET

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS



COMRADE! Save this for reference.

Build for Socialism!

A Manual on Organization

By Harold Kelso

Every live Socialist local is a power hastening the overthrow of capitalism and building the cooperative commonwealth. The strong national and international movement we need can be had only by maintaining aggressive and persistent organizations in each community.

If there isn't a local near you, you should set yourself immediately to the task of organizing one.

First Steps

It is usually not desirable that a fan-flare of publicity be raised about your preliminary organizing efforts. Your first goal should not be the building of a large mushroom local, but the gathering together of a few comrades who know what Socialism is and intend to stay in the fight until it is won.

Conversations, backed up by the distribution of leaflets and party papers, among your friends and acquaintances who are dissatisfied with the capitalist "system," will lay the foundation for your local. National headquarters and your state secretary may be able to provide lists of names of people near you who have shown an interest in Socialism. Your friends may be able to suggest names of others who can be interested.

When you have a few people on whom you can count, call them together in your home or a convenient meeting place for an informal talk. If there are five or more of you, you can apply at once for a charter, which, when granted by the state committee, will make your group the recognized representatives of world wide Socialism in your community.

The Organizing Rally

It may be, though, that the group will wish to start out the local with a wider appeal. It will then be wise to form a temporary committee, dividing among its members the work of preparing a large organizing rally.

To be successful, such a meeting must have the most careful and intelligent planning you can give it. The things to be done include securing a hall and speaker, arranging details of the program, getting publicity

in newspapers (not overlooking periodicals of clubs, lodges, cooperatives and labor unions), writing postcard invitations to those likely to be interested, visiting sympathetic organizations, distributing handbills and putting up posters. Each member of the committee should assume the tasks for which he is best fitted. Do not forget, though, that the Socialist local is a training school for the working class. If no one has "ever done anything like that before," some one should undertake the job as part of his Socialist development.

One of the party's organizers should be secured for the rally if any are available. If not, a party worker from a nearby local, or the best speaker in the temporary organization, should give the main speech of the evening.

After a talk on Socialist thought, organization and tactics, those who want to join the local should be asked to stay. Blank applications for membership should be passed out, and those who sign should apply to the state committee for a permanent charter. Be sure that new members thoroughly understand the serious meaning of the pledge they are taking.

At the very first meeting, two things should be done to start the local in the right path for future activity. First, a definite time and place should be set for the second meeting. Second, those who sign application cards should be set at once

to a definite immediate job, such as a literature distribution, a drive for subscriptions to party papers, a demonstration, or some other of the many types of activity suggested in this pamphlet or by the experience of the organizing group.

Dues

The Socialist party, in its world-wide struggles, has become convinced that the workers cannot trust to donations for their party's revenues. "Those who pay the piper call the tune," and political power for the working class depends on a party that is democratic not only in organization but also in its financial methods.

A dues system has therefore been established as the primary source of income for Socialist organizations. National headquarters sells dues stamps to the state secretary, who in turn sells them to the local treasurer, who sells them to the members. National and state offices each receive a few cents; the larger share is kept for local activities. Dues may be paid either by the month or by the year. The amount charged is never large. It is determined by vote of the members of each state organization, and definite information about the dues system governing your local should therefore be obtained from your state secretary.

Each member is given a "red card." The treasurer pastes on this card the dues

stamp, cancelling it by writing the date and his initials across the face. No one is a bona fide member of the Socialist party unless he has a properly stamped membership card.

Members who have paid dues, but become unable to continue doing so because of sickness or unemployment, are entitled to free "exempt" stamps. The use of these stamps is a well understood part of Socialist organization policy, and no comrade should hesitate to accept them when he is entitled to them.

Officers

Every live local needs a full set of officers, so that no kind of work is neglected. There should be a chairman, a secretary, a treasurer, an organizer and a literature agent. In addition, all but the smallest locals should have permanent committees to handle special activities.

The work of each officer and committee could easily be the subject for a complete leaflet. What follows is suggestive only, and the work may be divided differently to meet local conditions.

The CHAIRMAN is usually elected at each meeting, in order to train many comrades to lead public meetings. His function is to guide without dominating the proceedings.

The SECRETARY keeps minutes of business meetings, carries on necessary

correspondence, notifies state and national headquarters of newly elected officials, and in general takes care of all detail work not specifically assigned to other officers or committees. A "live" secretary almost always means a strong organization, a "dead" one can easily kill the local movement.

In large locals, the work of the secretary is often divided between a recording and a corresponding secretary. In small locals, the offices of secretary and treasurer are often combined.

The TREASURER keeps a card file of signed membership applications, collects dues, purchases dues stamps from the state secretary, keeps a record of money received and paid out, and makes a monthly report on finances and membership to the state secretary.

The ORGANIZER is in charge of all activities undertaken primarily to add new members. When a local becomes large enough to have district, township or ward branches, he will be in charge of the detailed arrangements necessary to organize and build them. Branches, in general, act in their smaller districts along the same lines as the local.

The LITERATURE AGENT supervises the sale or distribution of Socialist publications. A later section of this leaflet discusses such activity in greater detail.

One of the first permanent committees which should be provided is one to take

charge of the EDUCATIONAL program of the local, aside from the distribution of literature. Until such a committee is appointed, its work should be assigned to the secretary or literature agent.

Other committees may be added as the local grows to plan and audit FINANCES, secure PUBLICITY, arrange ENTERTAINMENTS, conduct work with YOUTH, and provide special activities appealing to WOMEN. The largest locals, especially if they are composed of several branches, will find an EXECUTIVE committee necessary to carry out the details of party policy.

Supplies

The minimum assortment of supplies needed by every local or branch will be some blank application and membership cards, a minute book for the secretary, and an account book for the treasurer. Other supplies which will be helpful, especially to larger party organizations, are mentioned in the national headquarters price list.

Business Meetings

If a local meets every week, there will be no doubt in anybody's mind about the time to come. If meetings are held less frequently, it will be wise to notify members.

In the beginning, you may meet at the home of some comrade, but this should be discontinued as soon as it is possible to get

permanent headquarters. Do not hold meetings in a dingy building or a poorly lighted neighborhood. An attractive hall will mean doubled attendance.

It is convenient to follow the same order of business at each meeting. An outline similar to the following should be adopted and turned over to the chairman of each meeting by the secretary:

1. Call to order by the secretary, or in his absence, by any other member in good standing.
2. Election of chairman for the meeting.
3. Reading minutes of previous meeting and correction or approval of them.
4. Consideration of applications for membership.
5. Communications and bills.
6. Reports of officers and committees.
7. Intermission for payment of dues.
8. Unfinished business.
9. New business.
10. "Good and welfare."

The business part of your meeting should usually take not more than one hour. If your meetings habitually are longer than this, it is an almost sure sign that the membership is deciding details that should be assigned to officers and committees.

The local should adopt some standard book giving "rules of order" and follow it throughout the business meeting.

Socialists should train themselves to think clearly, talk calmly, and debate kindly but forcibly. It will usually be convenient to set a time limit on speeches. A fault, however, worse than "long-windedness," is the habit sometimes found in all organizations of arguing by indulging in personalities. It is part of the chairman's job to limit debate to the topic under discussion, but any member may rise to a point of order when a speaker strays from the subject before the local.

Form the habit of starting your meetings strictly on time. An organization that is habitually late in small affairs can hardly be expected to be on time for the inauguration of Socialism.

It is customary among party members, especially at meetings, to use the term "Comrade" instead of "Mr." or "Mrs." when talking to or about each other. The salutations "comrades and friends" or "comrades and fellow workers" ordinarily are used by the party's public speakers instead of "ladies and gentlemen."

Some time should be devoted to discussing the "good and welfare" of the organization. A short lecture, a debate, or a reading from a suitable book is in order under this heading, or the time can quite profitably be spent by the local resolving itself into a study class. This part of the meeting should be carefully planned by the edu-

cational committee to fit into the local's broader program.

Singing is valuable to build Socialist morale. Some attention should be given to teaching the words and music of workers' songs to the comrades. Party meetings may well close with "The International" or some similar song by all present.

Most locals have found it advisable to have at least one meeting each month in which no business is considered, but the entire evening devoted to social or propaganda features. Suggestions for such meetings will be given later.

Activities—General Suggestions

Your Socialist local should have "many irons in the fire" at all times, but it is convenient to divide its activity into four main fields. There is first the job of thoroughly teaching Socialist philosophy, program and tactics to the members of the party. Second, there is the task of spreading the party's message among non-members. Third, a strong political fighting machine must be built. Finally, the local should be a social center for the working class.

Certain principles govern all organization activity.

The local should have a definite plan of work. Set your goal high enough that its accomplishment will mean real exertion, but not so high as to produce fatigue and

failure. When one job has been thoroughly done, the members are encouraged and enthusiastic, ready to tackle the next.

Put every member to work. A working member is a real asset, a "nominal" member soon loses interest and drops out completely.

A friendly rivalry should be encouraged. Names of comrades obtaining the largest number of subscriptions to party papers, securing the most new members, or passing out the largest amounts of literature, should be reported at meetings and perhaps posted on a bulletin board.

Training Members

Every Socialist activity in which a member engages is part of his education for citizenship in the cooperative commonwealth. Some parts of the local's program, however, are undertaken specifically to train its members.

Many locals have an installation program for new members, in which an experienced comrade briefly outlines the privileges and duties involved in Socialist membership. Others have a letter which the secretary sends to new members. Copies of such a letter, ready to sign and mail, may be obtained from national headquarters.

The New Leader, official national organ of the party, should be read carefully by all comrades. If there is a sectional party paper, it should also be read.

The local should systematically build up a library covering the various phases of Socialist thought, and encourage its constant use. Comrades should be urged to build up individual libraries of party pamphlets and books. The choice of books is important. In general, the Socialist classics, such as the **Communist Manifesto**, **Socialism—Utopian and Scientific**, and **Value, Price and Profit**, should be in every library. The selection of other books will depend on the funds available and the nature of the group to be reached. State and national headquarters will be glad to offer suggestions for choosing a well balanced library.

The "Good and Welfare" part of business meetings will play an important part in training Socialist workers. Separate study classes may be formed to study public speaking, election methods, and general tactics to be used in the workers' struggle against capitalism. For the younger people, "Socialist Sunday Schools" are valuable.

A separate organization, the Young People's Socialist League, has been established for work with comrades between 14 and 25, with the provision that members over 21 must also be members of the party. More complete information about work with youth may be obtained from the national director of this organization, whose office is at national headquarters.

Educating Non-members

Distribution of party leaflets and periodicals is the fundamental method for spreading the Socialist message.

Get your membership together regularly, and distribute leaflets thoroughly and efficiently over an entire area. Start with a leaflet on some problem of local interest, working gradually, in later distributions, toward general leaflets giving the Socialist program in greater detail. A wide selection of leaflets, at very low prices, can be purchased from your state or national headquarters. Leaflets for distribution in foreign language speaking neighborhoods are also available.

Arrange to have literature passed out before or after business meetings of cooperatives and labor unions, forums, and other public meetings,, especially when the subject discussed can be linked up with Socialism. Here again is a place for the party's leaflets on specific problems.

Bundle orders of our papers can frequently be obtained at prices so low that the local can afford to distribute them instead of leaflets. In any case, these periodicals sell for a few cents only, and comrades can turn newsboy and sell them at public gathering of sympathetic organizations, and at mass meetings held under party auspices.

A small rubber stamp may be secured from any stationery store—the cost is not great—to be used in the margins of leaflets or papers to announce meetings, to give the address of local headquarters, or for any other party purpose.

Sometimes it may be worth while to print special leaflets dealing with local issues, or special handbills announcing mass meetings or demonstrations. If a mimeograph is available, reproductions of drawing, writing or typewriting can be issued by this process. If no mimeograph is available, even small locals will be able to afford a hektograph, and this process, while less satisfactory than mimeographing, can be used to advantage for small distributions.

Try to get as many subscribers as possible to Socialist papers among non-members. Carefully organized campaigns to secure subscriptions will bring returns better than any other activity, for the amount of time and energy required.

Public meetings held by the party come next in importance to literature distribution.

As long as weather permits, hold these meetings outdoors in parks, vacant lots or on street corners. Have a regular time and place so that your crowd always knows where to find you.

Some locals light up their outdoor evening meetings with red torches or rail-

road signal flares. Besides the light these give, they help to draw a larger crowd.

Police regulations governing open air meetings vary from place to place, and locals are cautioned to comply with ordinances in force. Sometimes, however, other groups—such as the Salvation Army—are permitted to speak unmolested when Socialists are denied the same right. In such cases, every possible test of the prohibition should be made.

Indoor meetings should be held regularly in the winter. They should be widely advertised, using the methods suggested in the earlier section on the organization rally. Usually these meetings will be in the form of a lecture followed by questions. Debates should be arranged occasionally. Try to get a chamber of commerce man to debate a Socialist on economic subjects, or a Legionnaire to debate on disarmament. Such an affair is more likely to attract a crowd than a lecture.

On special occasions, such as May Day, Labor Day, during an election campaign, when a nationally prominent Socialist is passing through town, or while some public question in which the party is interested is being agitated, the local should promote mass meetings, mass demonstrations and parades.

Competent local speakers should address unions, forums, cooperatives, women's clubs, lodges and churches at every oppor-

tunity. Circularize these organizations with offers to send them speakers on current topics. The local should hear a speaker before recommending him to outside groups, because it sometimes happens that individual comrades have intellectual hobbies not related to the Socialist philosophy and program.

A good Socialist speech should be an elaboration of some single point or a series of related points in the party's platform or declaration of principles. Not more than 20% of any speech should be a denunciation of the old parties or the Communists. The best Socialist speeches are those which give such a vivid explanation of the stand of the party that no doubt is left in the minds of the hearers that Socialism will benefit them.

If a speaker is heckled during his talk, he should explain that it is a Socialist custom always to leave time at the end of a speech for questions and discussion, and that he will be glad to meet the heckler's objections at the proper time. If the interruptions are kept up, the speaker should bear them until he is sure the crowd is just as disgusted as he is, and then he should rebuke the heckler severely, at the same time being careful not to give the impression that he has lost his temper.

Plan to sell literature at every meeting held under party auspices, and whenever possible at meetings of sympathetic organ-

izations. Set up a literature table in plain view of audience. Have a good selection of pamphlets and books at a wide range of prices. Be sure your stock is neat and clean. Sometimes it will be possible to pass out one of the less expensive pamphlets to every member of the audience, after a sales talk, and return later to collect payment or the literature.

The radio can often be used free, especially for out-of-town speakers. During campaigns, the Federal Radio Commission's order No. 31 provides that if a station gives free time to some candidates, it must also give time to all the others who ask for it.

Use the correspondence columns of newspapers. Differ from editorials upholding capitalist principles. Answer attacks on unions, cooperatives and the party made or reported by the paper. Make your letters short, and relate them to some definite news event. Do not write long essays out of the clear sky. Start in mild tone, not by "bawling out" the editor. Remember that he always has the last word if he wants it!

Political Campaigns

Some time before the election, a campaign committee should be chosen, consisting of the most active comrades in the local. This committee should make itself thoroughly familiar with the election laws,

so that it may see that names of candidates are filed properly and on time.

The general propaganda of an election campaign is quite similar to that which the Socialist party is carrying on at all times, except that it is more definitely centered on the political situation. The platform covering the election should be printed attractively, and should contain pictures of our candidates, or at least of the one "heading the ticket."

Socialists and those friendly to Socialism should be circularized with the platform and a letter asking their help, either in the form of services or financial contribution in the campaign.

Neighborhood meetings at which candidates may meet with small groups should always be used before elections. There is no better way to win support. Give your candidates an opportunity to meet their future constituents.

See that known friends are registered on time, and that they vote. See that all foreign born Socialists are naturalized and that they register and vote.

At the polls, have a committee in every precinct to pass out specimen ballots before the voter enters the booth. Always have watchers for the voting and the counting afterwards. Thousands of Socialist votes have been lost by collusion between the capitalist party watchers and counters.

During and following campaign considerable attention should be given to the securing of new members.

Go into elections to win! Fight them so that, win or lose, you come out with a stronger local than you had before the campaign—but do not compromise or obscure your Socialist principles to gain votes. A midwestern city of 70,000 elected a Socialist mayor although the local had only six active members before the campaign. An eastern city of 110,000 turned a Socialist administration out of power as the result of a coalition of the capitalist parties, but the local added several hundred members in less than a month after the election.

Social Activities

Almost any form of recreation may legitimately be promoted by a Socialist organization—"hard times" parties, dances, picnics, home talent plays, group sings, card parties, inexpensive "Jimmie Higgins" suppers. Many of these activities can be made to pay in money as well as in increased party activity.

The entertainment committee should work with the treasurer or finance committee on the one hand, and with the literature agent or educational committee on the other.

Non-Party Organizations

Every good Socialist will join the labor union of his trade or industry, if there is one in his community. Every good Socialist will support producers' and consumers' cooperatives near him. The extent to which the local gives organized aid to such movements depends on local conditions, and must therefore be decided by the membership, or in some cases by the executive committee.

Socialists are constantly doing yeomen's service in aiding to establish new unions and cooperatives, and in helping to fight the battles of those already organized. Every workers' organization in your local's territory should be given to understand that it may count on your full cooperation, unless it acts on a program inconsistent with the ideals of organized Socialism. It is hardly necessary to say that the local (and individual members) should insist that the union label be on all possible goods purchased.

Under favorable conditions, the local may also vote to cooperate in specific campaigns with other types of organizations. For example, it may work with peace societies to spread sentiment for disarmament, or with public ownership groups to agitate for municipally owned utilities.

Under no circumstances should the local join forces with any other group for a political campaign, unless the organization with

which the party cooperates definitely represents working class interests, and even then the local should first get the approval of the state committee.

Special Action Groups

More definitely socialistic will be other organizations built up by the party for particular purposes. These will be formed to gain the support of sympathizers who do not accept the entire Socialist program. Such groups may be permanent, as schools for workers' education, or temporary, as committees for strikers', relief.

Special attention should be given to forming unions of the unemployed. These groups will agitate for measures to bring immediate relief, and in some cases set up cooperative self-help enterprises. Meanwhile, they will serve as agencies for teaching workers that their jobs can never be secure under capitalism. A program for unemployed unions will be sent on request.

Publicity

Always let others know what the party is doing. Usually real news about Socialist activities has a fair chance of getting into the papers. News of speeches in your community by out-of-town members is most likely to be printed. Candidates nominated, platforms adopted and resolutions passed are usually news. Especially in towns and smaller cities, social events held by the party are usually given space.

Timeliness is vital to a good news story. Find out the "dead line"—that is, the final date or hour that news is accepted—of papers near you, and see that your material gets in on time.

Study the style of news stories and write accordingly. The important thing is to mention the most striking fact in the first sentence, if you are writing straight party news. For social events, this is not so important. Leave the top one-third of your sheet blank for the newspaper's head—don't try to write one yourself—and write on only one side of the paper, double spaced with the typewriter or legibly written in ink.

Many stories that are not "news" to your local papers are valuable to the party's papers. Send in advance news of meetings and social events to be held, stories on work you have done and plans you have tried. At the first possible minute after an election, send in the figures on the Socialist vote.

A dime invested in carbon paper, so that copies of your stories to the party press can be sent to state and national headquarters, will win you the sincere gratitude of those offices.

Finances

The dues system should serve as the backbone of your financial policy, but additional funds will almost always be neces-

sary. These can be provided by collections at meetings, sale of literature, income from social events, and donations.

If you have made for your local a record of activity that gives outsiders confidence that your affairs will be really worthwhile, it will be possible to add considerably to your treasury by promoting social and educational affairs for which a small admission charge is made. Experience has actually proved that a live local will get out a better crowd for a prominent out-of-town Socialist speaker if a nominal entrance fee is charged than if the meeting is free!

The amount of income you will receive from any source can be greatly increased by careful preparation. A good sales talk, pointing out the merits of a particular pamphlet or book, will sell several times more literature than a careless announcement. A good collection talk, explaining the need of funds for specific purposes, will bring far better returns than a slipshod speech.

Do not accept any gift that will obligate your local to do favors for the donor.

Make your financial policy strictly business-like, as this, too, is part of the necessary preparation for the social revolution for which we are working.

Arrests

The Socialist party is law-abiding, working by legitimate methods to reach its

goal. It frequently happens, though, that officials sworn to enforce the law do not respect its provisions. Besides, it sometimes happens that it is worthwhile to test an oppressive law or court decision by disobeying it.

If a comrade is falsely arrested while engaged in party work, the local will of course stand behind him and see the issue through. In this, it can depend on the utmost cooperation from state and national headquarters.

If the local wishes deliberately to test the legality of a statute or decision, it should first consult the state secretary, so that the backing of the entire organization will be assured. In larger cities, the local representative of the American Civil Liberties Union should also be consulted.

The publicity value of such efforts is usually all out of proportion to the amount of inconvenience involved. For this reason, if no other, they should be undertaken only by seasoned comrades who know exactly what they are doing, and how best to utilize the situation for the fullest returns to the working class.

Use Your Party Machinery

The various state offices differ widely in personnel, equipment and resources. Some have several employees, a stock of literature, and in general are able to handle all types of party work, so that the local

can address all its orders, inquiries and requests for help to the state secretary. In other states, the secretary does all the work himself, perhaps with added help during campaigns. If this is the case, the local should maintain much closer contact with national headquarters. Your state secretary will be glad to advise you in regard to this if you will ask him.

Whether your dealings are mostly with the state secretary or mostly with national headquarters, one thing is vital. Use your party machinery.

Use it of course as a source of literature and supplies. It is no mercenary spirit that prompts this suggestion—counting overhead, the party's sale of literature actually involves a loss—rather it is the certain knowledge that the local that is using lots of leaflets, pamphlets, books and local supplies is "on the job" in party work.

Use it also as a source of information about Socialism and social problems, of suggestions as to how to meet unusual situations, as a repository for summaries of work you are doing and methods you have found effective.

Particularly, give immediate and careful attention to letters from state and national offices. The suggestions for new work and requests for information or help

sent out by party officials are always carefully thought out, and your prompt attention to them is necessary.

NOW, GET BUSY!

The plans given in this pamphlet have been gathered from the experience of hundreds of successful Socialist locals. Every party organization will find here many suggestions that will meet its own needs. But no method will work itself. Victory will come to the workers of the world only when we unite in persistent planned action.

THE TIME TO START IS NOW.

FORWARD TO SOCIALISM!

For further information write to the
SOCIALIST PARTY OF AMERICA

549 RANDOLPH STREET

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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Last Reminder!

*A good builder
needs good tools.*

*Literature
to meet every
educational need—*

*Supplies
to serve every
party organization—*

At lowest prices!

*Are shown in
our price list.*

Send for it!

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