

WORKERS' EDUCATION

By Alice Hanson Cook

BEFORE 1933, German trade unions had the most highly developed labor education program in the world. They trained their own leaders in a school system which began with evening courses in the local union, progressed through short-term resident courses, to six-month terms in economic schools, and finally to a year's training at the University of Frankfurt's Academy of Labor.

Special courses were offered for training local union officers, work's councillors, lay judges in the labor courts, union deputies in insurance bodies, youth secretaries, and the directors of women's work.

Schools experimented widely in educational methods. Architects were called in to build school homes which would be best suited to the needs of adult worker-students. Libraries, film centers, visual aids were all put at the service of labor educators.

Twelve years of Nazi persecution aimed to eradicate every trace of a free trade union movement. Although the Nazis met more sustained resistance on the part of labor people than any other section of the popu-

lation, these years did deep and irreparable damage to the German labor movement.

It would have been relatively simple to go back to 1933, and to have taken that pattern as a blueprint for the post-war education program. But an education program which is not fitted to the needs of the times cannot justify itself and probably will not stand up very long.

WHAT are the demands which Germany today makes of its trade unions? How does trade union thinking differ today from 1933? What kind of education program do the unions have in mind for training their leaders and formulating a workable labor philosophy adequate to present-day needs?

The 1947 unions are no longer tied to a particular political party. Their base is broad and they are organized to meet the problems raised in industry without reference to the program of any party. Political and religious tolerance has become part of the credo of the new unions.

One labor leader put it this way: "The labor movement today dare not

isolate itself from other sections of German society. Our job is to be one of the important agencies for realizing the economic and social demands of the German people."

Some of the questions which arise out of this new point of view are: To what extent should unions try to realize these aims through legislation? To what extent can the state solve problems in industrial relations without interrupting the free play of human initiative in meeting industrial problems?

THE tendency today is to reject a dogmatic Marxism to which they formerly adhered because it was not an adequate explanation of the developments of the past 14 years. At the same time there is general agreement that a high degree of state planning is necessary to bring Germany through to economic health. The unions recognize that in such a state, free trade unions must carry a heavy load of responsibility in positive contributions to planning. But the experiences of a state-controlled labor front under the Nazis teach them that their contribution is also one of checking and balancing state control of their own activities. The contribution they make must be freely given but carries with it the responsibility for sharing in administration.

In general they see that at the moment two main educational programs must be set up. The first, to train leaders for union administration, and for labor representation on public bodies and in government offi-

Scenes at the Rheintaler-Hof near Garmisch, used as a trade union school by the Bavarian Federation of Labor. (left) View of the building returned to the unions a few months ago. (right) Gustav Schiefer, president of the Bavarian federation, surrounded by students picked from various unions for the two-week course.



ces. The second, to place emphasis on a general education program to give youth some idea of the function and scope of trade unionism in a democratic society and some preparation for understanding what the rights and duties of trade unionists are both in the shop and in society in general.

THE problem of leadership training is acute. Most of the old trade union leaders who reemerged at the end of the war and were ready to take over their duties once more, were men in their late 50's, many of them in their 60's. In five years their ranks will begin to thin; in 10 years they will have to be replaced almost to a man. Young men are one of the many scarce commodities in Germany today.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the unions put a good deal of emphasis on the speedy and intensive training of the Works' Councillors, elected by their fellow workers in the shops and charged with the responsibility of handling shop problems in cooperation with the union representatives. These Councillors have been chosen as shop leaders by their fellow workers and are the best sort of leadership material for bigger jobs later on.

In Bavaria, the unions have set up a Works' Councillors' school at Berneck near Bayreuth where short courses are held studying the duties of the Councillor and also general trade union backgrounds and problems.

The Hessian unions are planning to open a school this summer at Oberursel in the Taunus which will offer short courses not only for Councillors but also for all the other union officers in turn: financial secretaries; lay judges in the labor courts; labor representatives in the social insurance offices; volunteer and professional welfare workers; and youth leaders.

In Darmstadt, Works' Councillors planned eight evening classes. They organized themselves into a Works' Council and went through the duties of the Councillor beginning with the conduct of a plant election. They handled grievances, negotiated with

employer representatives, took up cases before a labor court, presented workmen's compensation problems, considered special insurance cases, and heard pleas of unjust dismissals.

THE Academy of Labor in Frankfurt was reopened in April 1947 with 65 young men and women students representing all four zones. They are studying university courses in labor law, economics, social psychology, government, history, and labor theory. The Academy in 1947 aims to turn out trained union officers and representatives with a background broad enough and deep enough to give them a grasp of trade union function in terms of the general welfare.

For the time being, the unions are doing most of their general educational work with youth. Since 90 percent of German children leave school at 14 to become apprentices and unskilled workers, their formal schooling from that time on is limited to one day a week when they go to vocational school. Youth organizations are the channels for most other educational and recreational opportunities for the next few important, formative years.

TRADE union youth is no different from other young people in wanting sports, handcraft, music, or hiking. But trade union youth secretaries remember, too, that the young people in their groups can easily be the educationally underprivileged unless the youth group provides forums, classes, or training courses. Most of these young workers today were cut off from normal growth into the labor movement through family, neighborhood, and children's club influences. These young people although they come from worker's families and most likely will themselves be workers all their lives, for the most part have no knowledge of the history of the labor movement in Germany and of the role it is destined to play now.

At the same time, the unions recognize that this generation within a few years will supply leadership in the shop and local unions. Schools at Raintaler Hof near Garmisch, at Suedelfeld in the Kaiser Mountains, at a youth home near Kassel, and at

two youth centers in the Taunus are giving short courses to trade union members between 18 and 25 who can become local youth group leaders.

THE easy solution to social problems is to pass a law. The difficult one is to find and develop leadership in organizations with important social functions who are able to see their tasks and programs in terms of the general good and to carry them out in this spirit.

German labor unions are trying to meet the responsibilities placed on them by bringing their whole membership to a consciousness of their responsibilities for Germany's future and to train leadership which can carry out a program adequate to these needs. The schools and classes operating today are only beginning, and their success will depend upon the degree to which they measure up to the importance of their function.

Bremen Water Control

In order to implement MG directives and policies in the Land Bremen area, the Weser River Field Organization was created as a parallel organization to the existing American Danube and Rhine Field Organizations.

The Weser River Field Organization is charged with the responsibility for direction of American water transport personnel at Bremen under the control of US Military Government, and for liaison between the Office of Military Government for Bremen, the Bizonal Transport Organization, and the Transport Division of US Military Government.

In bizonal matters, the Weser River Field Organization has the dual function of being the inspectorate for both inland water transport and costal shipping in the Bremen area.

Title Change Delayed

An OMGUS cable V-19489 of 14 June, dealing with the licensing of non-German organizations, directs that MG Regulation Title 3, Change 1, Part 6, "will not be put into effect until receipt of implementing directive" from OMGUS.