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# Put Federations to Work

by David P. Berenberg

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(National Office Press Service.)— I have been giving some thought to the function of the foreign federations within our party. Since it seems that the federations are going to be continued, we ought to define clearly our reasons for maintaining them, and also what we expect them to do. It is not enough for the federations to pay dues to the party and to take part in party councils. If the federations have any reason for existence it is because they can reach foreign groups of workers in the United States which propaganda carried on in English cannot reach.

It is a tendency of all bodies, once organized to continue themselves even after the chief reason for their existence has passed away. We ought to guard against this in our foreign language federations. This we can do as long as we are aware of the danger.

It should be the function of the federation to prepare the foreign worker for participation in the American movement. The federation should be a clearing house for the foreign workers. To this end the federations should see to it that their members learn English with the greatest possible speed. In fact, the federation should, wherever possible, conduct classes in English with the greatest possible speed. In fact, the federation should, wherever possible, conduct classes in English for its members and for those of its language group who are outside the party. In doing this the federation will be doing two things — it will prepare the worker for activity in an English-speaking branch, and, further, it will save the worker from the contaminating influence of the usual night classes in English for foreigners.

As soon as the immigrant learns enough English to enable him to function in an English-speaking branch, it should be the duty of the federation to see to it that he leaves the federation and joins one of the regular branches of the party. I admit that it is asking a good deal of the federation to reduce its membership voluntarily, and even ul-

timately to abolish itself. But the party stands higher than the federations. This work of teaching English must be done, and the federations are the proper agencies. They should have the interest of the party sufficiently at heart even to submit [to] a gradual extinction in order that the party may be built up.

The federation should further see to it that each of its members becomes a citizen as soon as possible. It should conduct classes in civics and government, so that candidates for citizenship may be prepared for the questions that are usually asked in the naturalization courts. They should help the candidate for citizenship with advice and every sort of encouragement.

While doing all this, the federation does not need to reduce its activity in carrying on foreign language propaganda among those who read no other language. It has a great work before it — a work that is indispensable. The gap between the party and the foreigner is great. Only the federation can bridge it. But if the federations remain isolated groups, more anxious to perpetuate their existence than to do party work, they are worse than useless, and should be abolished at once.

*Edited by Tim Davenport*

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