

BE AN
ACTIVE
UNIONIST



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**Building Workers' Industrial
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Asst. Federal Secretary

R. Hancock.

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F. McCauley. J. Chandler.

Executive Members

P. Clancy. J. Stride. A. Hawkes.

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B.W.I.U. Federal President Gerry Dawson speaking at the opening session of the N.S.W. Branch Annual Conference in August, 1960. N.S.W. Branch President Frank O'Sullivan is seated.

**BUILDING WORKERS' INDUSTRIAL UNION
OF AUSTRALIA.**

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This job meeting shows the united spirit of workers of different unions fighting for a common objective. Photo is of a job meeting called by the shop committee at Bunnerong Power Station, Sydney.

WORKERS NEED UNIONS

A brief examination of the composition of the population figures of Australia or any other country will show that the working people are the vast majority.

While fairy tale films of individual successes and stories of sudden riches may give some illusions, the plain fact is that most workers have to rely on wage earnings for their whole working life and Government pensions after retirement.

Some dream of winning the lottery or other means of obtaining security, but only a tiny fraction of workers ever succeed in such an escape from reliance on wage earning.

Therefore it is of great importance to win the highest possible wages and the best possible conditions for earning these wages.

How can those things be won.

The boss won't give them to us out of the goodness of his heart.

No Government in Australia has ever made any fundamental improvement in the conditions of the workers off it's own bat.

The only people who are completely interested in improving the position of the workers are the workers themselves.

As individuals they can do little, but workers represent the majority of the people of Australia and organised together they can be invincible.

That is why we have Unions.

They are not perfect — many workers are not members of Unions, many more are members but do not take an active interest in their Unions.

That is an important reason why the Unions have not been as effective as they could have been.

But even so they have been able to force from employers and Governments many improvements in the life of the workers.

In the post war period, the organised workers have won many gains, and Australian workers have shown their ability to win important concessions by the use of the organised strength and united action of unionists.

Gains won by Australian workers in the post war years include higher wages, improved working conditions, the 40 hour week, better week-end penalty rates, better annual and sick leave, introduction of long service leave, stricter safety and health regulations.

These gains were not won easily, but they were achieved mainly because of the self-sacrifice, energy and enthusiasm of active trade unionists, backed up by large numbers of workers in a series of nationwide campaigns and job struggles.

They were won in the face of strong opposition from the employers, because every gain represented an attack on the employers' profits.

VALUE OF WORKERS' ORGANISATION

The employers have many resources. They have millions of pounds at their disposal to use against the workers' organisations.

The employers own the daily Press and most radio and television stations.

Against this concentrated political and economic force the workers have their numerical strength which reaches its full power only when joined by organisation and strengthened by unity.

While the employers have great social power, in the final analysis the workers' organisations are stronger, for they rely upon the united efforts of the working people.

The fighting democratic spirit of the workers of Australia has built a strong trade union movement.

It is a powerful working class organisation, with more than 2,500,000 members.

On a world scale there are now 170,000,000 unionists as compared with approximately 10,000,000 in 1914.

It is a very good thing that Australian workers have such a strong trade union movement, and this movement will grow even stronger as more and more workers become active militant unionists.

WHAT IS NEEDED?

There are many workers who agree that the trade union movement needs the active participation of more of its members, and are themselves willing to help, but uncertain as to exactly what is required.

They point to the examples of bureaucracy in some Unions, to denial of members' rights, disregard of workers' problems, and failure to campaign effectively for declared general union policy.

It can be said at the beginning that these shortcomings do exist and must be overcome if the trade union movement is to achieve its full effectiveness.

The answer lies in arousing all unionists to become active, to energetically, continually call for action by all sections of the trade union movement on the vital questions of the day.

Active unionists can rally and mobilise the forces that can find a working class solution to the many problems.

It is with the aim of helping to develop greater knowledge of the trade union movement, and thus assisting to increase the number of active unionists that this booklet is published.

UNIONS, WORKERS' DEFENCE AGAINST INJUSTICE

Unions were formed many years ago in the face of employer and Government persecution, to enable workers to combine together and use their combined strength to fight against their exploitation by the employing class.

In Australia, the first unions were formed in the 1840's, and grew rapidly in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Many fierce struggles were waged by the trade union pioneers of our country and a number of important victories won.

The Australian trade union movement is, in proportion to the population, among the largest numerically in the capitalist world.

Unions are combinations of workers, comprising people of many different individual political and religious views joined together on the basis of industry or trade, with the object of defending and advancing workers' basic interests and rights, of increasing wages, of improving working conditions, of organising against price increases and inflation, of joining in common action with other unions for the attainment of a peaceful happy future for mankind.



The various Workers' Compensation Acts in Australia were introduced as a result of trade union action. Each year the unions win millions of pounds for workers in contested compensation cases. On many occasions the worker concerned would not have received any payment at all were it not for the active support given by his or her union. There are cases where an employer has refused payment, and when the union has acted on the workers' behalf a payment of thousands has been won for the worker. Some unions have their own compensation department and employ a special official, others join together in a Trades and Labor Council Compensation Department.

Forms Of Union Organisation

JOB DELEGATES

There are a number of different forms of organisation in the various unions.

Some basic forms of organisation are common to a large number of unions.

The first and most important is the union organisation on the job.

It is on the job workers are brought together each day and where the struggle for decent working conditions is conducted directly with the employer.

It is on the job that it is most necessary to show the employer that he is dealing with an organised body of workers.

Job organisation is vital to ensure that the gains made by trade union struggle are not only protected, but are observed by the employers.

Experience has shown that unions can win award improvements, have a good safety, annual holiday or other Act passed by Parliament, only to find many employers ignoring and failing to extend such improvements to their workers.

Where there is good union organisation on a job, this can be quickly and effectively dealt with.

There are a number of forms of job organisation.

The most usual one, is to elect a job delegate.

Job delegates are elected by fellow unionists on the job.

Most unions then issue a union authority and receipt book so that the job delegate represents not only the workmates who elected him or her, but carries the power and authority of the whole union, on the job.

In this way, the employer is made aware that he is dealing not only with the number of workers on his job, factory or workplace, but the organised strength of the trade union movement.

Job delegates are a most important part of trade union organisation.

They are the direct link between the union leadership and the membership.

They act as the spokesmen for the men in taking up with the boss complaints about working conditions, and in putting forward proposals for improved conditions of employment.

Delegates arrange meetings of members to discuss all aspects of union policy, and to put forward ideas on the questions the union is, or should be dealing with.

JOB OR SHOP COMMITTEES

With the development of modern industry, on almost every job, factory or workplace, now there are members of more than one union.

This is also contributed to by the fact that the Australian Trade Union Movement is mainly organised on the basis of craft unionism.

Unions exist to cover workers in any trade or calling.

This form of organisation has its limitations in this period of modern industry.

To overcome this limitation the trade union movement aims to eventually replace craft unionism with industrial unionism, that is one union for each industry.

An industrial union embracing all workers in an industry irrespective of their trades or callings would strengthen unity.

In the meantime the division into different unions can be overcome by forming combined union organisations of different kinds, where representatives of the unions meet and discuss matters of common interest, and decide on a common approach.

On the job the best form of such combined union organisation is the job or shop committee.

The job or shop committee can be organised on several different lines.

It can be a committee consisting of a delegate from each of the unions on the job, it can be a committee elected at a mass meeting of all workers and agreed upon by all as being representative of everyone.

If there is a number of departments in an establishment, it is a good idea to have each department hold a meeting and elect a rep, from that department to the committee.

There is no rigid and inflexible rule for election of these important job or shop committees, the main thing is for all workers to be satisfied that the method of election and the method of functioning of the committee gives proper and democratic expression to all sections.

DUTIES OF JOB OR SHOP COMMITTEES

Job or shop committees are not a substitute for, nor opposition to, the trade unions.

They strengthen the ties between the unions and the workers on the job, and between the unions in the same industry, when they are functioning correctly.

Officials in some Unions oppose job or shop committees, regarding these committees as being in competition with the Union.

This is a mistaken idea, for the effective development of job or shop committee organisation supplements and greatly strengthens the Union.

A measure of the value of job or shop committees can be gained by the fact that employers fear and oppose them, in much the same way that they opposed the formation of Unions.

The first aim of job or shop committees must be to deal with matters of immediate concern to all workers on the job.

The question of every worker being a financial union member, that safety regulations are fully observed, that job amenities are provided and kept in a clean and hygienic condition, must occupy an important place in shop committee activities.

In addition to such basic duties the committee can play an important part in co-ordinating union activities on many broader issues.

Job or shop committees do not deal with Award questions as these are handled by each Union in accordance with its rules and customs.

When asked to do so by the Union leadership, the committees can arrange job meetings and activities on demands for improved Awards, for general union campaigns such as the margins and basic wage claims, full employment,—to rally support for workers in struggle in other industries (i.e. the recent B.H.P. dispute), for participation in actions in defence of world peace, and many other matters of union policy.



Building workers at a mass meeting to discuss an important wages campaign. In each State the building unions work closely together, and meet regularly to plan common policy and activity on issues of general concern. The meeting shown above consists of workers from every union in the industry. The A.C.T.U. Building Unions Subcommittee has drawn up a program for the industry which is taken as a guide to activity by the building unions in each State.

How Union Policy Is Made

To many workers, the way union policy is made remains somewhat of a mystery.

Trade union officials and other speakers come to jobs, factories and workplaces and speak of union policy on various issues.

Here is how Union policy is made.

Most Unions' rules and practices enable the membership to play its full part in deciding its policy.

Some Unions provide that members can attend meetings of sub-branches on an industry and district basis, others provide that a central meeting in the main centres is held regularly.

Some Unions have regular State conferences which are attended by delegates elected from the various sub-branches, general meetings in the main centres, or from job meetings.

Whichever method is adopted, the main point of it is that a trade unionist, by attending his union meeting must have the right to say what policy his Union should carry out.

The Union's aim is to draw together the members from the many different work places and decide upon a policy which has the general approval of, and is in the interest of, its membership.

LABOR COUNCIL FORM OF ORGANISATION

There are many questions which affect more than the members of an individual union.

So in the course of its development, the trade union movement set up trade union organisations

which enabled the viewpoint of every Union to be expressed.

This is the Trades and Labor Council form of organisation.

Trades and Labor Councils are organised to draw together representatives of the Unions in each State or District.

Unions affiliate to Labor Council and elect delegates according to the numerical strength of the Union.

Most States in Australia have a State Trades and Labor Council.

This is the ruling body for unionists in all parts of that State.

It is the State Branch of the Australian Council of Trade Unions.

In most States there are also Provincial Labor Councils which are usually affiliated to the particular State Labor Council.

The Delegates attending these Labor Councils are elected by their Union, either by vote of members at their annual conference, by ballot of the entire membership, by vote of members at general meeting, or by any other form considered best suited to the organisational set up of the Union.

The viewpoint expressed at Labor Council meetings, and in individual Unions covers many questions, some affecting only the particular district, or the State as a whole or affecting the national questions of Australia as a whole.

When national questions are involved, they are usually discussed by the Australian Council of Trade Unions.

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF TRADE UNIONS

The A.C.T.U. is the organisation which coordinates the activities of the vast majority of Australian trade unionists.

Every two years an Australian Council of Trade Unions' Congress is held.

Delegates to Congress come from the affiliated Unions and the State and Provincial Labor Councils.

Delegates are elected to the Congress by the national organisations of their Union, that is, by a Federal Conference, some by general vote of their State organisations or by the various Labor Councils.

Most of the Delegates are elected by the Federal Unions.

The biennial A.C.T.U. Congress is comprised of delegates representing more than 1,500,000 workers.

When the A.C.T.U. Congress discusses the many important questions confronting the workers, its decisions represent the highest Union policy on those questions.

Most questions of trade union policy stem from the needs of rank and file workers.

In between Congresses the Interstate Executive is the Governing Body of the A.C.T.U.

Some members of the Executive are elected at the Congress, others are elected by the various State Labor Councils.

Those elected at Congresses are the Industry Group Representatives.

Union delegates are grouped according to industry, i.e., Metal, Building, Transport, Food, Manufacturing, and Services Groups.

Each Group elects one representative.

One representative is elected from each State Labor Council, making an Interstate Executive of twelve plus the President, Secretary and two Vice Presidents elected by Congress.

There are regular meetings of the A.C.T.U. Executive, which has the responsibility of carrying out Congress decisions.

Executive meeting decisions are reported to the meetings of the State Labor Councils and on questions involving new policy only become effective if endorsed by a majority of the State Labor Councils.

From the A.C.T.U. are set up many national (or Federal) committees to deal with specific aspects of trade union activity.

Among these are the A.C.T.U. Youth Committee, the A.C.T.U. Building Industry Sub Committee and others.

WORLD UNION ORGANISATIONS

Most national trade union organisations are joined together, affiliated, in one of the three world trade union bodies.

The largest is the World Federation of Trade Unions, which has an affiliated membership of 104,000,000 unionists.

The WFTU was set up in 1945 at an international conference at which most of the then existing union organisations were represented.



Every year the May Day and Labour Day Processions are the occasion for a colorful display of the main policy demands of the trade union movement.

Australia was represented at this inaugural conference by an ACTU delegation led by its then Secretary, A. Monk.

He was elected as a member of the first WFTU Executive Committee.

In 1949 a split developed in the international trade union movement when the American, British and Dutch unions left the WFTU and formed a rival breakaway organisation.

This new body was called the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

At present it has an affiliated membership of about 60,000,000.

In 1949 the Australian Council of Trade Unions Congress disaffiliated from the WFTU and in 1951 joined the ICFTU.

The third international organisation is the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions, which has a membership of about 2,000,000.

There are also some national trade union centres which are not attached to any of the three international organisations.

The existence of three international federations holds back, the development of united action on the great questions of world peace, peaceful co-existence, economic advancement for the workers and other vital issues.

All progressive unionists look for, and work towards the ending of all divisions, towards one international trade union organisation embracing all workers, and leading them unitedly in actions for social and economic advancement.

Many Different Questions Discussed

There are many different kinds of issues dealt with at trade union meetings.

When a trade unionist attends his union meetings, he or she must have the chance to talk about all questions that concern him or her.

There are some people who say that Unions should only deal with what is called industrial questions.

By this they mean only questions about wages, working conditions, hours of work and similar job questions.

Most trade unions do deal with these questions.

All active trade unionists realise that this is a fundamental part of union activity.

Unions were formed to unite workers so they could more effectively fight against exploitation on the job and fight to improve their wages and working conditions.

But long and bitter experience has shown that if trade unions restricted themselves to these questions alone, they would not be carrying out their role of advancing the interests of the working people.

To be able to protect and advance those basic interests, the trade unions have to fight on all questions affecting the workers.

POLITICAL ACTIONS BY UNIONS

This means taking an active part in what are called political questions.

There are some trade unionists who say that Unions should not take part in politics.

These unionists are honest and sincere people, but they are mistaken in their views, views which were originated by the employers.

Facts show that only by participation in all aspects of life, including politics, can trade unions really fulfil their functions.

Many of the things enjoyed by workers today were gained by political action.

In their struggles for improved standards it became clear to unionists that economic action against individual employers or groups of employers was not enough to win general economic improvements.

So this action was supplemented by mass political action of various kinds.

For example in the 40 hour week struggle the strike actions of the printers, metal, building and other workers were backed up by mass processions through the main cities, deputations to Parliamentarians, petitions to Governments and other forms of general workers' activity.

It was mainly because of this activity that the N.S.W. Government introduced the 40 hour week legislation.

But even with this advantage it was only after the A.C.T.U. Congress decided to call a nationwide 24 hour stoppage by all workers that the Federal Court introduced the 40 hour week to other States.

Also it is necessary to refer only to the Workers' Compensation Acts, Annual Leave Acts, safety

regulations, Long Service Leave Acts, and the provision for basic wage adjustments in N.S.W., to illustrate the importance of mass political action for the achievement of basic economic demands.

There are also many other important points of political action.

Many wider political actions have been taken by the Trade Union Movement, to win improvements for the people generally, such as action to secure and later improve invalid and aged persons' pensions, child endowment, adequate education, health and recreation facilities and constantly improving community services; actions to defeat all kinds of repressive legislation; for an end to colonialism being forced on the Papua-New Guinea people and actions to end all forms of racial discrimination.

If trade unions are to fight against the effects of economic crisis and employers and Government actions in the field of employment they must engage in actions designed to compel a Government policy which curbs the profit hungry monopolies and carries out a policy in the interest of the working people.

PRICE PEGGING AND CONTROL

When the employers take away the wage gains by price increases, workers and their Unions must take political action.

They must fight for a system of price pegging and control.

If the boss cut wages, immediate trade union action would result, but insidious price increases call for a different type of retaliation.

Experience has shown that the employers constantly try to take away the democratic rights of the working people.

Employers use the press, radio and other propaganda media and also their influence with Parliamentary Representatives to achieve this.

Employers continually attack the democratic rights of workers, to hamstring them in union struggles.

While demanding freedom to sell or withhold their own commodities at will the employers deny workers the right to withhold the workers' commodity—labour power.

So penal powers, restriction of the use of Press, radio and television, denial of meeting halls, refusal of street and park meetings are methods used by the employers and Governments to limit workers' democratic rights.

So the trade unions continually fight for the preservation and extension of the democratic rights of the people.

All this is political action by the Trade Unions.

It is necessary.

If Trade Unions do not organise politically as well as industrially, the economic gains made by united struggle will be taken away by political action by the employers.

So the Trade Unions do and must, engage in a wide field of activity.

In the political field they constantly strive to have trade union policies implemented.

SAFETY



Many unions take a most active part in safety campaigns. Compensation laws have been introduced and improved as a result of union action, but no matter how good compensation laws may be, it is far better to prevent accidents. Attention is paid to improving safety laws, and to the observance of existing ones. In the interest of greater profits many employers ignore safety regulations. Every unionist should be active on this question and insist that safe working practices are observed.

In this way the economic welfare of the workers has been defended and advanced over the years.

There are also other political questions which Trade Unions take up.

An important aspect of this further political activity is the demand for world peace.

WORLD PEACE

Unions well know that their efforts to advance the interest of the membership, and the self sacrificing work of unions would be futile if the outbreak of a third world war destroyed the achievements of the people and in the process, killed millions of people.

Therefore the policy of the trade union movement on the need for World Peace, total world disarmament and peaceful co-existence is very clear.

At the Australian Congress of Trade Unions in 1959 the following Declaration was made:

“The Australian Trade Union Movement having declared—that the attainment and preservation of peace is of supreme importance; that all trade unionists should support to the utmost the ideal of peace; that unless peace is securely established, other problems, whether social, economic, political or industrial, are not possible of solution.

“Congress is of the opinion that any responsible and sincere movement—as determined from time to time by the A.C.T.U.—devoted to the cause of peace, should receive the support of the workers of Australia and the endorsement of the A.C.T.U.”

BROAD OUTLOOK

This Declaration clearly shows that the Australian Trade Union Movement has a broad outlook on all the problems confronting mankind.

It does not hesitate to state in a forthright manner its opinion about basic issues.

It is important for all active unionists to know that the Australian Trade Union Movement does not hesitate to declare that its objective is for the advancement of society to a higher stage of human development.

This is expressed in the objectives of the Australian Council of Trade Unions.

SOCIALIST AUSTRALIA

The objective calls for the achievement of a socialist Australia.

This objective is not only that of the A.C.T.U. and its affiliated Unions but is also the objective of both Australian working class political parties, the Australian Labor Party and the Communist Party of Australia.

By socialism, we mean the elimination of production, distribution and exchange of private profit, and utilisation of the great riches of modern technical development for the benefit of all people.

Socialism would introduce planned production in place of the present unplanned nature of capitalist production.

The huge profits of large scale agriculture and industry would be used to fully develop our national resources, with our people able to develop their creative abilities to the full extent.

Socialism would remove the harrowing fear of unemployment and insecurity and guarantee to all citizens the right to work with complete freedom from the economic restrictions imposed by the profit hungry monopolies.

Socialism is no longer a dream of the future or a noble idea of some Utopian writers and socialist theorists.

It is today an actual fact on one-third of the world surface embracing a population of 1,000 million people, and many Australian unionists have visited Socialist Countries.

Reports made of the living conditions of Socialist Countries show a rising living standard, with workers enjoying reduced hours, plus increased wages with rising purchasing power, while the social and economic problems associated with ill health, unemployment and old age have been removed forever.

There are differences of opinion in our country on the best way to achieve the socialist objective, but that question will be resolved at the appropriate time by the Australian people themselves.

United Action Vital

Clearly the trade union movement is able to unite its membership and the people generally on all questions that concern them.

The most important question for every unionist is, how to unite the forces of the working class and following that, the people, to achieve these grand and noble objectives and policies.

Three things are basic. They are—

- (1) The knowledge and understanding of how to unite workers and people in action,
- (2) The ability to develop the individual person's capacity to present and develop progressive ideas.
- (3) When people have been drawn together, the crystallising of the different thoughts into a united decision and thence to united action, or to put it more simply—how do we conduct meetings of workers and people.

On the first question of how to unite the working class.

The first thing is that whatever the differences between people, there are many things on which everyone is in agreement.

POINTS OF AGREEMENT

An active unionist must always seek the issue or issues upon which everyone agrees, or almost everyone agrees.

The next step is to bring the workers into action on such issue or issues.

For example on many jobs working conditions are unsatisfactory.

Any one or more of the following may exist on the job: the dressing accommodation is poor and unhygienic, safety regulations are not being observed, correct wages are not being paid.

These and many other issues may be matters of concern.

An active trade unionist should help draw the workers together in combined action on such questions.

A meeting of workers should be called and decisions made to present a united demand to the employer.

When workers organise and unite around common issues like this they are usually successful.

Such successes inspire the workers and give them knowledge of their organised strength.

They understand that united together they can win.

Such united action on what might seem to be ordinary issues paves the way to united action by the workers on all the issues affecting mankind.

Naturally there are points of disagreement both as to policy and tactics.

An active trade unionist will seek the points of agreement.

A general rule which brings results is to follow the formula—

“Let us act on the things we agree upon, let us discuss the points we disagree upon.”

UPHOLD WORKING CLASS PRINCIPLES

On some jobs, factories or work places sometimes are workers who come out strongly against union policy.

An active unionist while seeking to reach agreement of all workers will not compromise on working class principles.

There are many issues on which the correct viewpoint is clearly laid down.

Some examples of these could be—

- (a) Refusal of unionists to perform the work of other workers who are on strike.
- (b) The need to protect union delegates from victimisation by employers.
- (c) The requirements of workers to carry out a majority decision of a job or workplace meeting, or a properly constituted decision of the trade union organisation.

A good guide to remember when considering the issues on which to stand firm on principle is to remember that the working people have only their labour power to sell and are exploited by the employing class.

So the true unionist always tries to adopt principles which advance the interests of the working class, not do anything which exposes his work-mates to attack by the employer.

The true unionist always tries to resolve all questions of difference between workers within the ranks of the working class movement.

Experience has shown that when these principles are consistently followed by active trade unionists, it is much easier to unite workers around union policy.



Today the trade union movement conducts a good deal of research into the many industrial and political questions confronting the people. In all the campaigns, whether for higher wages and improved conditions, for an independent Australian foreign policy of peace and friendship, for a better safety and health legislation, for improved social services, or any of the many other issues, there is a continual need for all the facts to be placed before the people. The employer-owned daily press and other propaganda mediums often conceal the truth, and independent union research and publicity by way of leaflets, union journals, job meetings, etc., are necessary.

Hints On How To Conduct Meetings

While agreeing on the need to strengthen the unions there are many unionists who seek assistance in conducting meetings and in developing their capacity to speak at meetings.

There is no magic quality to conduct meetings or to speak on union policy.

What is needed is the confidence and sincerity to make a start and the rest follows from practice.

In the conduct of a meeting there are certain basic rules to be observed.

The person responsible for the conduct of a meeting is the Chairman or President.

His or her main aim should be to see that the meeting, whether it is held on the job, in the Union rooms or elsewhere, is so conducted to allow everybody the opportunity to state their ideas and opinions.

The trade union meeting should always be a forum of democracy, where all members have full and equal rights.

Of course there are certain rules of conduct to ensure democracy and prevent licence.

These rules have been developed over the years.

CHAIRMAN IN CHARGE

Rules provide that the Chairman of the meeting is in charge, subject to certain limits to his authority.

When a meeting discusses matters then it is a question of common sense that only one person should be allowed to speak at a time.

It is necessary for the meeting to be discussing a particular question, not just engaged in idle talk or involved in any old question.

To enable discussion to be regulated the rules provide that a motion must be moved before any discussion takes place.

This motion must be seconded, that is two people, the mover and the seconder, must express their support for a particular idea before discussion can take place.

Where there is a shortage of time or a lot of business to be transacted, provision is often made that no more than two speakers either for or against may speak in succession.

For instance if the person moving a motion speaks and the person seconding the motion also speaks then the Chairman must ask if any person opposes the resolution.

If no one speaks in opposition then the motion is placed before the meeting for all present to vote for or against the proposal.

Upon that question being decided the next matter is placed before the meeting.

AMENDMENTS

Union rules provide for amendments to be moved to motions.

A member may agree substantially with a motion moved but may consider that some alteration is necessary.

For example a job meeting may have before it a motion that the employer be approached for a £2 a week wage rise.

Another member may think £2 is not enough.

He is entitled to move an amendment that the employer be approached for a wage rise of £3 or some other sum.

When that happens the Chairman must allow discussion on both proposals.

When the time comes to move, the Chairman must put the amendment first.

If a majority vote for the amendment then it displaces the original motion, or in usual terms "becomes the motion."

So that a formal decision can be made, the new motion, that is the amendment which became the motion, is then put to the meeting.

Usually if an amendment is carried by majority vote, it is usually also carried when put as the motion.

It is possible for an amendment to defeat the motion and then as the motion, to be defeated.

Sometimes a number of amendments are proposed.

In that case the Chairman asks the meeting to vote on the amendments in the order in which they were placed before the meeting.

When a motion has been duly moved and seconded it becomes the property of the meeting and can only be withdrawn with the agreement of the meeting.



Films on matters of vital concern to the people are produced and shown in halls and on the jobs. Picture is of the job premiere of the union film "The Housing Problem and You" at the workshop of shopfitting firm F. G. O'Brien, in September, 1957. This film was shown throughout Australia, including a television screening by the A.B.C.

HOW REPORTS ARE DEALT WITH

Business is often placed before meetings in the form of reports.

This can be a report of a job conference, of a deputation to Parliament, of a Union conference or meeting, or any of the many issues dealt with by the Unions.

When the report is concluded a motion is moved "that the report be received."

This is regarded as a formal matter.

When the report is received questions may be asked of the reporter about the subject matter of the report.

Some reports contain recommendations.

For example, the report may be of a job conference at which the employer may have agreed to the job delegate's proposals.

In reporting back the delegate would recommend that the result be accepted as satisfactory.

A motion is then moved "that the report be adopted."

If carried it also includes endorsement of the reporter's recommendations.

If the report contains no recommendation then any motion on the subject may be moved by any person present at the meeting.

The same principles relating to motions generally also apply in motions arising from reports.

DISSENT FROM CHAIRMAN'S RULING

There are occasions when a member challenges the Chairman's ruling.

In that case, the Vice-Chairman asks the person disagreeing with, that is dissenting from, the Chairman's ruling to state his reasons for doing so.

After he has done so the Chairman is invited to give his reasons.

These are the only two speakers allowed on the question of dissent from the Chairman's ruling.

After the Chairman has spoken, the Vice-Chairman then puts the vote to the meeting in the following form—"that the Chairman's ruling be upheld."

Those agreeing with the Chairman's ruling, vote in favour of the motion, those disagreeing with it vote against.

In this way, the control of a meeting always remains in the hands of the meeting.

The trade union movement fully recognises that democracy must be expressed in the delegation of authority and therefore elects members to be Chairmen and to conduct meetings in such a way as to ensure that the majority wishes of the workers present are properly and democratically expressed.

STUDY UNION RULES

Rules of debate vary from Union to Union, so active trade unionists should always study the rules of their own Union and become thoroughly familiar with them.

In this way it is possible to spread an understanding of the basic rules of democratic conduct and to encourage more workers into active participation in Union affairs.

Develop Ability As Speaker

Often the question of how to develop ability as a working class speaker is raised.

Everyone can speak, so it is only a matter of practice to learn to speak to numbers of people.

The first important quality needed is sincerity and desire to advance the interests of the working people.

The rest comes with practice and study.

In the trade union movement there are many avenues of practical experience.

The first and most important starting point is at job discussions.

Here the opportunity should be taken to state opinions about the matter before the job meeting or in lunch time discussions with work mates.

Very important training is also gained at union meetings, at branch, sub-branch, district and general meeting places.

In such meetings the feeling of mateship develops and workers who may feel shy about speaking to numbers of people feel much more inclined to speak.

Workers who want to develop as working class speakers must continually develop their understanding of correct union policy and keep abreast of day to day activities.

The present situation calls for workers who can in a simple and straightforward way, explain the various points of union policy.

How to acquire the ability to do this is no secret.

PREPARATION AND PRACTICE

Careful preparation and constant practice is essential.

Nobody is a born speaker.

Nothing can take the place of a thorough knowledge of the subject which the speaker is to speak about.

A speaker should always examine the subject of his speech and not try to range over everything.

The ground intended to be covered should first be decided upon.

Decide on the main point you aim to make and develop your speech around that.

Anyone speaking in support of trade union progressive policy is certainly not on the defensive.

Progressive Union policy—which calls for improved wages, for price pegging and control, for protection and extension of democratic rights, for world peace and friendship between all peoples—is in the interests of the people.

An active unionist when he sets out to win support for progressive policy is working completely in the interests of the people.

The aim of the active trade union speaker must be to encourage those around him to become active—*really* active, and to strengthen and unite them around progressive Union policy.

While it is necessary, at times, to express criticism of policies and actions of other organisations or people it should never be done in a negative or destructive way.

When criticisms are offered it is important to be constructive and to show the way forward to a solution of the problem.

By making criticism in this way active trade unionists will win further support for correct policy.

NOTES

Practice will also show the importance of jotting down ideas in the form of notes before making a speech.

It is not possible to give exact advice on this question—everyone who speaks finds his or her own best method.

Some like to write their notes out very fully, others use just a few brief words to set a whole train of thought in action.

The best general advice that can be given is practice! practice! practice!

The Trade Union Movement is rich in opportunities for the development of the talents of the working people.

It is an organisation that arose from the struggles of the workers.

It was formed to enable workers to bring those struggles to a successful end.

The Trade Union Movement relies upon the working people to give it vitality and strength, to supply the developing forces to continue the progressive aims of the movement.

All workers who in their hearts support the ideals of the brotherhood of man can find in the trade union movement the opportunity to give full expression to those ideals.

