





HUNGARIAN PRESS SUMMARY No.124

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NÉPSZABADSÁG, No.128 of May 31, 1961.

Wednesday, May 31

Paper carries extracts from an article on Hungary written by Raymond Fletcher of "Tribune" and published in that paper on May 26. He describes in his article his experiences in Hungary.

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NÉPSZABADSÁG, No.126 of May 28, 1961.

One step forward - report on a conference at the editor's office of "Népszabadság" on the work of the factory councils.

The activity of factory councils over a period of nearly 4 years has settled an argument that not only preceded their establishment but also accompanied their first steps for a good time.

It is, however, still worth while to discuss the way in which factory councils could increase further still the participation of working people in management and how factory councils could become indispensable instruments of socialist management. This has clearly been shown at a recent conference at the Paper's editor's office.

Those attending the conference saw the main obstacle in the way of development in formality.

"We are often far behind events" - said comrade Károly Egressy, secretary of the party committee of the Gheorghiu-Dej Shipyards. "Because of the short time limit, for instance, it was not possible to discuss the yearly plan at a meeting. The same referred to the report on the balance which had to be passed on to the higher body without the observations of the factory council. The five-year technological plan, too, was submitted to the Ministry before it could be discussed by the factory council. Such things make the sphere of authority and rights rather formal affairs."

Article then says that such symptoms can be observed also elsewhere.

The struggle against formality must be fought in the first place in the factories. It is there that obstacles have to be overcome, which arise in the first place owing to the incorrect views of local managers, the adherence to deficient methods, and often also to fear of criticism. (Examples given)

The analysis and spreading of good experiences is, in our opinion, the task of trade unions and the press. Unfortunately, however, it is often the trades unions themselves which fail to pay regular attention to the work of factory councils - as it was pointed out at the conference by László Gál, secretary general of the union of chemical industry workers.

Agitation in this respect has still to make up for a great deal. What we have done so far has been merely restricted to providing an explanation of the difference between the present factory councils and the ill-famed workers' councils of the counter-revolution. Much more ought to be said about the necessity of utilising the experiences of workers in socialist management and their participation in the management of factories and enterprises, pointing out that it is the factory councils which are the most suitable forums for this purpose because their composition and sphere of authority provides the necessary opportunities for the mobilisation of all the strata of the working people and for the assertion of their opinions.

(overleaf)



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The sphere of authority and rights, however, only provide the possibilities of developing factory democracy. This was pointed out in an interesting way by Amalia Engi, secretary of the party committee of the Clothing Factory May 1. "If the party organisations fail to support the factory councils" - she emphasized - "and help them to avail themselves of these rights, we shall never be able to attain the desired aim, the development of factory democracy."

"If the members of factory councils fail to maintain close relations with their fellow-workers, if they do not discuss with them the questions figuring on the agenda of meetings, if they fail to represent the interests of their electors, and if, after meetings, they do not inform them about the resolutions adopted, democracy will not become stronger but rather weaker and, through factory councils, it will not be the large masses of the working people but only a small strata of them that takes part in management."

In the course of the debate also some proposals were made concerning organisational modifications.

"These proposals can and must be examined" - said János Brutyó, Secretary General of the N.T.U.C. - "and those we consider suitable will be put into practice. However, merely by changing the proportion of the members of factory councils or entrusting other people with their management (he referred here to proposals made to this effect) the work of these very important bodies will not be improved. They could do much more efficient work also in their present form, and the fact that we have not succeeded in making them do more efficient work is exclusively due to our weak work. Factory councils are not a cure-all, and no miraculous method of any kind has to be found to make them live up to their vocation. If the economic management comes to realise the help it may get from factory councils and if it is supported in this respect by the party organisations and trades union committees of factories, we shall not have to wait for results very long. Factory councils, if they work well, are not only helpers but also good training schools. Those who attend their discussions, workers and leaders alike, will hear many clever things and extend their knowledge. Consequently, they develop and learn to think on a broader basis". (Summary - article signed: Edit Sötör)