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COOPERATIVES AND TRADE UNIONS*

Prepared by

V. Pisigin

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Cooperatives protect their interests by means of their structures: associations, federations, unions of regional and interregional, sectoral and intersectoral character, operating on the city and district, republic and all-union basis. Their number may be unlimited, and the orientation of their activities may vary greatly. Such associations may include not only cooperative members but also rented enterprises and individual workers, all those who are usually referred to as independent manufacturers.

By means of those public organizations and inside them cooperative members form their special and any other policy.

Neither cooperatives, nor leaseholders need their own even most independent trade unions. A trade union is an organization set up for the protection of the rights of an employee as opposed to the employer. A free manufacturer has nobody to protect his labour from.

It is the right of wage workers inside a cooperative to establish or not to establish a trade union organization.

It is not our wish to warn cooperative members about possible consequences in case the cooperative members and wage workers belong to the same trade union organization.

In many cities cooperative members have taken the way

of establishing their own "independent" trade unions, the way of implanting "their own" men in such trade unions, thus meaning to solve the problems of social protection of cooperative members. This process may develop more or less successfully in various cities and regions of the country but conceptually the process is wrong and threatens to put one more "bridle" on both cooperatives and cooperative members.

Let us say it again, free manufacturers should work out their own social and other policy with the help of their own structures, banks, funds, etc. It is not only an effective way, it is the future of the country.