

Monthly Supplement

June, 1976



Part I

Democratic Centralism

The Progressive Labor Party is organized for the purpose of leading a revolution to obliterate the dying, rotten private profit system and the major scourges produced by it: the exploitation and degradation of workers and millions of others, the murderous racist oppression of minorities, the special oppression of women, fascism, and the genocide caused by capitalism's inevitable world wars.

Our party's goal is to destroy the state apparatus of the handful of bosses who rule us and to replace their dictatorship with socialism, the dictatorship of the proletariat. Accordingly, our aims, our efforts, and our aspirations must take firm root in the working class.

Over 100 years ago, Marx and Engels discovered the principles of scientific socialism. In their writings, they unmasked the economic secret of capitalist exploitation (surplus value), exposed its connection to the bosses' state apparatus, and proved that the processes of working class revolution, socialism, and communism were historical inevitabilities.

However, they warned that although capitalism was decadent and dying, it would never leave the scene of world history voluntarily. Marx pointed out that no social class has committed suicide or will do so. He and Engels repeatedly showed that although capitalism produces its own grave-digger in the working class, the workers themselves must kill the capitalist class, thrust it into the grave, nail the coffin shut, and stand guard with ruthless vigilance to ensure that the corpse does not resurrect itself.

In short, Marx and Engels showed that although revolution is absolutely and universally inevitable, particular revolutions can succeed only as the result of conscious effort and organizing by millions of workers.

Lenin, who led the Bolshevik party to the first successfully consolidated working class dictatorship in history, further developed the Marxist theory of revolution and showed that the embodiment of the proletariat conscious movement towards socialism is the development of the revolutionary workers' party. In the course of protracted and bitter struggle with



ment. It is the lifeblood of the revolutionary party and hence of the revolutionary process. It is the scientific theory of organization upon which the Progressive Labor Party is founded.

In the following series of articles, we hope to clarify the principal features of democratic centralism and to show how it works in practice.

As we pointed out above, democratic centralism is the Leninist theory of revolutionary party organization. The classic presentation of this theory is set forth in Lenin's book: *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*. This work was written to expose the anti-

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various opportunists, counter-revolutionaries and armchair scribblers, the Bolsheviks succeeded in establishing programmatic unity on the questions of socialism and workers' power and tactical unity on the question of violence and illegal activity. However, they also discovered that without unity of principle on questions of organization, program and tactics were meaningless and that political practice would degenerate into childish squabbles, sterile debates, or inertia. Therefore, under Lenin's leadership, they developed the theory of party organization.

This theory is called democratic centralism. Democratic centralism is not a set of arbitrary, mechanical rules. It is the diametric opposite of this. Democratic centralism is grounded in objective reality and determined by the dialectical laws of develop-

working class basis of individualism and anarchism within the ranks of revolutionaries. We believe that its major general points are still universally valid for revolutionary working class parties today. We shall attempt to summarize them in modern terms.

1) The working class needs a revolutionary party in order to win socialism. The overthrow of the bosses' dictatorship is inconceivable within the political limits set by capitalism. Therefore, the party must serve as the general staff of the working class. To do so, the party must recruit to its ranks leaders and members who can become professional revolutionaries. A professional revolutionary regards the party, the working class, and socialism as the main things in life. This does not mean that family, friends, home, or stability are insignificant: all these aspects of life and

the responsibilities that accompany them form a part of one's class outlook. However, to a professional revolutionary, nothing can ever be more important than the working class as a whole, its needs, and its aspirations.

Thus, the party must view itself as a part of the working class army. But all armies have many parts, many detachments. The specific role of the party is to serve as the *vanguard* detachment of the working class. The development of class consciousness cannot unfold spontaneously from the daily ups and downs of the workers' battles for reforms. Socialist consciousness is not a matter of chance or pragmatism but of science. Only a party of professional revolutionaries can guide this process because only such a party can be armed with a knowledge of the objective laws of social development and class struggle.

Therefore, as a vanguard detachment, the party belongs to the working class, but it should not be confused with the working class: they are not one and the same thing. To see them as absolutely identical is to deny the party's vanguard function. The party's role is not to hop on every political bandwagon that rolls along but rather to fight consistently and uncompromisingly to win millions of workers to the universals of Marxism-Leninism: proletarian dictatorship, the need for the party, socialism, the inevitability of violence in class struggle, etc.

The fact that it is organized on this restricted basis in no way renders the party an exclusive club in the bourgeois sense of the term. On the contrary: only by unswervingly pursuing and preserving its revolutionary line, can the party guarantee that socialism becomes the property of the masses. If the party doesn't fight for socialism above all and always, who else will? Hence, clarity on the questions and the universality of the Marxist-Leninist party is the first

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Centralism

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feature of democratic centralism.

2) If the party is to become the vanguard of its class, it must develop a system of organization and discipline. In the absence of these, the party could never act with a united will, ensure the execution of its decisions, or lead the daily struggle of the working class towards the goal of socialism.

The bosses understand the need for organization in every phase of life. They know that without it, class rule is impossible. However, they are thereby confronted with one of capitalism's sharpest contradictions. On the one hand, preserving capitalist dictatorship requires a conscious attempt to disorganize the working class politically. The bosses try to accomplish this with anti-communism, racism, anti-working class mis-education, terror, and other weapons in their arsenal. On the other hand, however, the capitalist system cannot exist if the working class is not organized physically and economically at the point of production. As Marx, Engels, and Lenin all pointed out, the practical activity performing industrial labor teaches the working class both discipline and collectivity and trains it to understand the absolute necessity of organization and co-operation. Karl Kautsky, a contemporary of Lenin's who eventually betrayed the cause of working class revolution, wrote stirringly of this contradictions, while he was still a positive factor in the workers' movement:

"As an isolated individual, the proletarian is nothing. His whole strength, his whole progress, all his hopes and expectations are derived from organization, from systematic action in conjunction with his fellows. He feels big and strong when he forms part of a big and strong organism. This organism is the main thing for him; the individual in comparison means very little. The proletarian fights with utmost devotion as part of the anonymous mass, without prospect of personal advantage or personal glory, doing his duty in any post he is assigned to with a voluntary discipline which pervades all feelings and thoughts."

Our party's own experience and the history of the international communist movement show that once workers decide to become members, they welcome party discipline and staunchly defend the concept of discipline and the principal opposition to formal



tions It is only with difficulty that he submits to being a part subordinate to the whole, and then only from necessity, not for inclination. He recognizes the need of discipline only for the mass, not for the elect minds. And of course he counts himself among the latter."

strategy is the worker-student-intellectual-professional alliance. This alliance is possible because of the contradictions between intellectuals and capitalism. It is necessary because the working class needs support from other sections of society. But it must be realized under the leadership of the party and the hegemony of the working class. Intellectuals can serve the cause of revolution and socialism only by proletarianizing themselves and discarding the specific class characteristics with which their bourgeois training has imbued them.

Party organization, therefore, is the opposite of petty-bourgeois individualism. In its most elementary sense, democratic centralism requires every party member to belong to a specific party collective.

In this article, we have attempted to clarify two features of democratic centralism: the concept of the Marxist-Leninist party as the vanguard of the working class and the need for formal party organization and discipline. In following articles, we will discuss other features of democratic centralism: the party's relationship with other working class organizations, the party's need for ties with masses of workers and others, the theory of internal party organization, the universal character of voluntary party discipline on all party members, criticism, self-criticism and the subordination of the part to the whole as an international.

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organization both within and outside the party come from the ranks of petty-bourgeois intellectuals, who have been trained by the bosses to revere their "individuality" and to regard collective action as beneath their dignity. As Kautsky says:

"(The intellectual) does not fight by means of power, but by argument. His weapons are his personal knowledge, his personal ability, his personal conviction"

To this Lenin added: ". . . it is precisely its individualism and incapacity for discipline and organization that in general distinguish the *intelligentsia* as a separate stratum of modern capitalist society."

History abounds with and our party has already known many cases in which intellectuals have played exemplary revolutionary roles in serving the working class. A key feature of the Progressive Labor Party's

The Pentagon

THE PENTAGON

Well they said the Pentagon was a big
five sided bunker
Filled with wheeling and dealing brass
making deals breaking ass.

Layed off we went to the Groton shipyard
there they build the submarine
four kids, broke and hungry they wanted to
know
If I was a commie.

No not yet
but I hadn't met the Pentagon.

I worked a while and sucked their abuses

abuses heaped on me by the bosses and
union hacks
and coughing up the breathed down shit
spewing out in dark light spit,
I decided to make a fight.

Meeting with brothers and sisters
writing flyers
got bounced from the union by the Company
cops
for pushing for 30 hours work for 40 hours
pay
jobs for all
is a commie plot
so I joined the commie P.L.P.
to fight for the liberty for workers **only**.

Then up comes

the John Birch Jesus freak
who tells me not to speak
then the FBI—or something sacks my mom &
dads house
and the cops are arresting me for going to
my union meeting
while super rat SCREAMS this is a free
country.

And a security dude calls me up
the pentagon wants to check you out
after being out on strike and fighting for
liberty
for workers only
they want to see if you are "subversive" to
the national interest of big business which
you aint
supposed to fight.

They forgot to mention the other 12,000,000
of my class
on their ass
unemployed,

They want to check my eyes and ears
my nose and mouth to see
where we get our fighting spirit

Over 3,000,000 workers with shot out lungs
working the asbestos circuit
no wonder they are scared shitless
of some commies who want national security
for workers against the boss parasite
they wont have time to check
us all out.