

program on housing, the unity of material interests which are combined represents a stage in the necessarily uneven development of the united front of all workers. Fusions of workers who under the 'natural' conditions of capitalist society are separated according to race, skill, language, etc., etc., do not arise spontaneously but must be advocated and organized by revolutionaries to develop the unity and power of the working class.

The program of victory for the freedom fighters of Watts who boldly defied the cops' bullets is a program which arms the black men not simply with the means of self-defense, but arms him also with revolutionary theory. Only the working class, basing itself on this theory can finish the job begun in Watts.

LETTER OF RESIGNATION FROM PROGRESSIVE LABOR

To the comrades of Progressive Labor,

Pressure exerted by the members of the 3rd Street Lower East Side Club and the leadership of P.L. has left me no choice but to resign from the organization. I am writing this letter of resignation to describe my political development while in P.L. and to explain my present perspective toward the P.L.P. Although many of the conclusions I have reached may differ from those of the majority of comrades, the problems I faced in the organization are scarcely unique.

My first contact with P.L. came during the 1964 Cuba trip. At that time I possessed all the characteristics common to most young people attracted to radical politics. The sterility and hypocrisy of American society nauseated me. It was clear that a social revolution was necessary to replace reactionary capitalism with a rational society. In addition I shared with these young people a profound lack of acquaintance with Marxist theory and no previous experience with organized political activity.

The trip to Cuba offered not only the chance to see "the promised land" but also the opportunity to openly tell the U.S. government to go to hell. The possibility of such a gesture coupled with the chance to see first hand the real state of the Cuban revolution proved irresistible. The Cuban experience was a revelation. Although I was somewhat disturbed by the lack of real political control by the working people and the danger of distortion inherent in government by a small group of decision makers, I returned with an overwhelming faith in the unlimited potential of a revolutionary people. After the exhilarating Cuban air the stench of decaying capitalism was unbearable. No choice remained but to become organizationally involved in revolutionary politics.

P.L. appeared to be the only group really trying to make connection with the working people. It was actually going

out into the streets and attempting to involve itself in struggle. Perhaps it was a trifle adventuristic but it also appeared young, dynamic, open to all sorts of ideas and experiments and absolutely unafraid to openly confront the ruling class. It had a healthy working class orientation and it seemed that its sheer audacity might succeed in electrifying the masses. Essentially I was attracted because the organization had guts. Unfortunately this was all the political agreement necessary for membership.

I literally hurled myself into the activities of the Lower East Side Club. This began a round of ceaseless activity, meetings, protest demonstrations (one even took place in a blizzard), distributing leaflets, selling "Challenge", attempting to make rent strikes, parties and more meetings. Later there were innumerable demonstrations in support of the grand jury victims. I was whisked into membership with a group of other people at least a month before our three month trial period was up. I was appointed to a temporary executive committee because our club president was forced to be absent. In all this time there was almost no political discussion or education. Whenever political discussion did take place the attempt was always made to insist that basically we all agreed. Today I realize that political disagreements cannot be dealt with by locking them in a box marked unity. Organizational maneuvers and attempts to substitute activity for discussion can only avoid political problems temporarily. All political confusion or disagreement must be aired as quickly as possible. The political roots of all problems must be exposed and examined minutely. Unless such political penicillin is administered the symptoms will be ignored and when the disease breaks out no one will understand its origin or treatment. The enormity of such a task made doubly difficult by pressing external work cannot be minimized. Artificial horror sessions of criticism and self-criticism simply will not do. We must seek to understand the Leninist method if we are to deal with these problems. It was Lenin's mastery of the method of dialectical materialism that enabled him to ruthlessly expose the weaknesses of his opposition and to build a revolutionary party.

No Theory, No Direction

The lack of interest in theoretical clarity was disturbing. The activity merry-go-round was spinning faster and faster. Only a whirling dervish could remain for long on such a ride without becoming dizzy. The organization offered no plan or direction. Consultation with the leadership resulted in the master plan of giving everyone "Challenge" paper routes. If only we sold enough papers the revolution would come closer. But what were we to tell the customers? Even when we did attract workers we were unable to keep them. Dozens of people came around and then disappeared into the woodwork. We had nothing to offer them. No analysis and no program. People who worked with us for a while vanished when they discovered the revolution wasn't coming in 3 months.

The situation was becoming intolerable. We had a leadership that was not providing political and theoretical guidance. The cadres were confused and not developing politically. (It must be emphasized that many were serious people deeply committed to struggle for socialism) The various clubs seemed to be functioning in a virtually autonomous fashion and to make things worse a great infusion of petty-bourgeois elements (myself included) was endangering the working class orientation of the movement. The entrance of petty bourgeois intellectuals can be a fine thing for a movement if it is capable of assimilating them and orienting them towards the working class. This cannot be done by creating various segregated departments and shoving intellectuals into one for theory production, into another for research service, into a third for student work, etc. A revolutionary organization is extremely sick when it must separate the workers from the intellectuals for fear of contamination. Neither can the problem be solved by forcing all the intellectuals to 'proletarianize' themselves by tortuous factory work. (Marx managed to produce "Capital" without working on an assembly line).

"...With a petty bourgeois it is worse. There are, of course, petty bourgeois elements organically linked with the workers, who go over to the proletarian view without an internal revolution. The matter is quite different with the academically trained petty bourgeois. Their theoretical prejudices have already been given a finished form at the school bench. Inasmuch as they have succeeded in gaining a great deal of knowledge both useful and useless without the aid of the dialectic they believe they can continue excellently through life without it. In reality they dispense with the dialectic only to the extent they fail to check, to polish, and to sharpen theoretically their tools of thought, and to the extent they fail to break practically from the narrow circles of their daily relationships. When thrown against great events they are easily lost and relapse again into petit bourgeois ways of thinking."

(Leon Trotsky - In Defense of Marxism)

The vanguard party must be capable of making revolutionaries of its intellectuals. These are the people who will develop the theory necessary to attract the advanced workers to the party. Marx, Engels and Lenin were intellectuals capable of giving revolutionary leadership. Lesser mortals must also seek to transform themselves similarly. The party must enable its petty bourgeois recruits to intellectually assimilate the method of Marxism.

The Bulletin of International Socialism

Fortunately during all of this chaos I became acquainted with the Bulletin of International Socialism and attended a series of classes on the history of socialist

struggle in the U.S. given by the American Committee for the Fourth International. I saw a group seriously grappling with the problem of using and developing Marxism to understand the world; seeking to develop theoretically in order to present the program necessary to give leadership to mass struggles. Through the committee I learned of the Socialist Labor League in Britain and its publication, the "Newsletter." Starting with a tiny group the S.L.L. has managed to build a large party with a mass youth group. The process of theoretical development which enabled them to win working class youth to their program can provide valuable lessons for us. These are people who will engage in serious discussion with a group, no matter how small, anywhere in the world if out of that discussion the proper working class perspective can emerge. They know that such groups can grow very quickly when the time is right.

I didn't hide my attendance at these classes or my interest in Trotskyism. I tried to bring up Trotskyist ideas. Soon I was being called a Trotskyite wrecker or a counter-revolutionary Trotskyite. P.L. was only willing to deal with Trotskyism on the level of epithets but not politically. Even when the national convention passed a resolution instructing the National Committee to bring out a statement on revisionism and Trotskyism, no statement was forthcoming (will it take a witchhunt to bring this out?). These are not the actions of serious Marxists. P.L. must seek to cope theoretically with the ideas of Trotskyism. It is not sufficient on the one hand to label ideas counterrevolutionary and on the other to express admiration for these same ideas expressed by Gilly in his articles on Cuba and Guatemala simply because they are not labelled Trotskyist.

The National Convention

The National Convention was obviously an attempt to deal with what was becoming an increasingly anarchistic situation. Once again organizational solutions were the order of the day. Rosen's article on democratic centralism revealed an inability to understand that discipline cannot be imposed by imperial edict. People do not submit to party discipline simply because it is written in a constitution that they must do so. They only submit on the basis of clear political agreement. Rosen only succeeded in abstracting out the struggle and development so essential to Lenin's concepts of democratic centralism. Factions cannot be banned with a written statement. They must be dealt with in a Leninist manner. Factions are not desirable in themselves but when they arise they indicate political differences which must be exposed and resolved.

For example, on the occasion of the Brest-Litovsk peace controversy those in favor of revolutionary war constituted a faction with its own central organ. Lenin did not bring about a split in the party or attempt to expel them. The Party engaged in a process of discussion and explanation until the political agreement necessary to dissolve the faction

was obtained.

I might add that I first began to see the need for an understanding of Leninism, not in P.L. which constantly proclaims its Leninism, but in discussions with the American Committee. They constantly stress the importance of Lenin's teaching not as a mass of abstractions but as a method of analysis. Trotskyism is stressed as the continuation of Lenin's method after Lenin's death. The same people who invented all the epithets about the counterrevolutionary and even fascist nature of Trotskyism, are the ones who brought the U.S.S.R. to the point P.L. now recognizes as revisionist.

The reliance of P.L. on bureaucratic measures will not save it. Groupings will still form, splits and upheavals will still take place. A dense fog will cover all such formations. The comrades will not obtain the political clarification to withstand the pressures of the bourgeoisie. Potentially good people will become inactive and drift away.

International Questions

The convention did not even touch on international questions. P.L. will never develop the program necessary to lead the working class if it bases its line on the latest issue of "Peking Review." The revisionism of the U.S.S.R. will never be understood by laying it at Khrushchev's door. P.L. will have to examine deeply the counterrevolutionary nature of Stalinism. It is there that the roots of Khrushchevism are to be discovered. The motivations for China's defense of Stalinism will also have to be held up for scrutiny.

It is not enough to say that we are interested in making the revolution here at home. Capitalism is a world system and the struggles of workers all over the world and the quality of their leadership is of direct concern to revolutionists here at home. Of course we are all concerned with the struggle of the N.L.F. in Vietnam. We must seek to understand the reason for U.S. involvement and we must also recognize that the sellout of the Vietnamese revolution engineered at Geneva was also the responsibility of her so called friends. Unless we understand the nature of her "friends" we will be unprepared for future surprises.

Are we interested in Vietnam because U.S. troops are involved and indifferent to Algeria because they are not? Lisa Armand's shameful apologetics (defending China's line on Algeria) in "Challenge" only serve to obscure the truth from the working class. China's opportunism cannot hide the gleeful reports in the business section of the New York Times on the new oil deals signed by France with Boumedienne's government and the new openings now available for U.S. capital. Ben Bella's "socialism" was propped up by Boumedienne's

army, U.S. wheat and French money. It is the duty of all revolutionists to expose this. The defeat of the Algerian working class is also a defeat for us at home. There may be many more Algerian surprises for P.L. Perhaps Indonesia and yes, maybe even Cuba unless it seriously attempts to develop an international perspective. Only by dealing with the most unpleasant of questions will P. L. develop the people capable of going to the working class and explaining the significance of the events affecting their lives and giving leadership to their struggles.

The Growing Crisis

At this point P. L. is at a very critical juncture. It is no longer recruiting at its former rate. People are becoming demoralized or are withdrawing from political activity. It is reacting to the witchhunts by turning inward and developing its own witchhunts. It is no longer leading struggles but is beginning to tail-end them. The mantle of anti-war work is passing to S. D. S. The sectarian turn in the election campaign (refusing to endorse the S. W. P.) shows not only confusion but also a paranoiac fear of other groups. P. L. cannot afford to withdraw and ignore good elements in other groups. It must seek to intervene, to engage them in dialogue, to find areas of common work in order to turn them in a revolutionary direction or to expose those whose policy is counter to the interests of the working class.

I am deeply concerned that the many fine elements that P.L. has attracted will be lost to the revolutionary movement. I announce my intention to collaborate with the American Committee for the Fourth International while maintaining that I seek readmission at any time. I will seek to aid P. L. in any way I can. At present the Committee has been distributing leaflets for the Epton campaign. I would maintain that P. L. has forced my political course upon me by its inability or unwillingness to deal with political questions. As I was informed that P. L. does not feel it necessary to publish my letter of resignation I am publishing this in the form of an open letter to P. L.

For the Socialist Revolution,

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