

Whither the Process?

In recent weeks it has become clear that the process is at a cross-roads. It seems to me that there are three options open to us - one impossible, one bad, and one good. Our impossible option is to continue on our present course, shuffling along "without definite plan or direction" - this is the road to complete collapse through demoralization and attrition. Our bad choice is to attach ourselves to this or that wing of the Marxist-Leninist movement before we really have a conscious appreciation of what that wing or tendency represents - I am speaking here primarily of the PWOC tendency or "the Trend." The third possibility, and, in my opinion, the only real choice is the road towards an independent, class-conscious Marxist-Leninist collective.

Undoubtedly the first two alternatives (and especially the second) require some serious discussion in their own right, but it is my purpose in writing this paper to lay out some of what I see as the essential aspects of the third alternative and this is where the focus of this paper will be directed.

I.

The thing which distinguishes communists from all other "progressives" is their goal of a classless society in the real world. This goal, which consigns all bourgeois societies to the dust-bin of history, has earned us the undying enmity of a ruling class whose sole mission in life is to profit at the expense of the exploited masses.

Marxist-Leninist theory combined with the bitter (and sometimes triumphant) experience of the last 100 years has taught us that for the proletariat and their allies to succeed in the war against Capital it is essential that they be led and organized by a genuine Communist Party of the democratic-centralist type. Such a party does not now exist in the United States.

II.

It may be argued that the absence of a revolutionary situation in this country (or even something remotely resembling a revolutionary situation) precludes the necessity of forming a communist party. But I do not think many of us would agree with that.

The only consequences which the absence of a revolutionary situation can have for us are that the work cut out for us is harder and will be more prolonged than we might wish. But that is all. Our fundamental tasks remain the same.

With this in mind I make bold to say that until there is a genuine Communist Party worthy of the name in this country, it is the central task

of U.S. Marxist-Leninists to build such a party.

III.

The best way to get an understanding of our present tasks is to first define what a genuine Communist Party is, and then work backwards to where we are now. I think this approach simplifies what can otherwise be a complex conceptual problem of the first rank.

Basically, I see three criteria which must be fulfilled before a genuine Communist Party can be said to exist. These criteria are: 1. that it be guided by a correct political line and led by experienced Marxist-Leninist leadership; 2. that its organizational structure be democratic-centralist, that the leadership be responsible to the cadre, and that the relationship between democracy and centralism within the Party accurately reflect the needs of the party members inside and the masses outside in any given historical situation; 3. that it actually be leading and/or attempting to lead the workers and oppressed peoples in a revolutionary manner and in every aspect of their struggles against Capital. A corollary to this last point is that to the greatest extent possible the Party should actually consist of people from working-class backgrounds - with due regard to race, sex, etc.

With these three criteria thus explicitly laid out it becomes clear that we have a long way to go.

IV.

As a Marxist-Leninist collective on the local level we will have the responsibility of developing ourselves in all three of these ways, vis., ideologically, organizationally, and in practice. In so doing we will be contributing to the larger goal of party-building both directly and indirectly. Directly, by allowing us to test and develop our analyses in practice, and engage in ideological struggle with other Marxist-Leninists. Indirectly, in that by fusing with the masses on the local level we will be building a base in the Bay Area which we can eventually link up with similar organizations in other parts of the country, and upon which the Party with its larger resources will be able to build.

On the ideological front we need to develop, to the maximum extent possible given our limited resources, a thoroughly consistent Marxist-Leninist world view. This will include analyses of local, national, and international conditions, as well as an analysis and strategy for dealing with the presently chaotic U.S. communist movement.

Organizationally we will doubtless be experimenting for some time

before we come up with a workable form of democratic centralism. Thus far it seems apparent that no real leadership exists, but hopefully it is developing. The quality of our membership, and the level of unity and discipline we need will also have to be dealt with honestly, forthrightly, and shortly.

The realm of practice offers us big opportunities to develop the experienced and responsible leadership we will need, as we merge ourselves with the struggles of the workers and their allies. Organized practice will also indirectly improve the class and racial make-up of the process (or whatever name we eventually decide to give ourselves) as we attract and recruit the most advanced workers from the factories and communities.

V. Concrete Suggestions

It should be apparent that all three of the tasks I have outlined above are inextricably bound together in a thousand and one ways. Without theory we cannot possibly be successful in practice, without organization we cannot possibly divide our theoretical work up in a productive way, without practice our theory will remain sterile and lifeless - separate from and useless to the masses, and so on.

It is with this in mind that I make the following suggestions:

- that two sets of study groups be set up, one focusing primarily on theoretical work, the other on practical work, and that active participation in one or the other or both be a minimum criteria for membership in our group. (Perhaps the presently existing study groups, if they are still bearing fruit, could maintain some sort of independent or peripheral existence, but I am suggesting here that they should not be allowed to remain in the center of our activity).
- that a group of politically advanced and responsible people be elected at a General Meeting to chart out a course for our theoretical work and that a special General Meeting be convened to discuss their proposal.
- that the practice "study groups" be based on commonality of interest to the extent possible, and that a special committee be elected at a General meeting to set this up, with final approval reserved, as before, for the group as a whole.
- that the group as a whole get involved in one specific mass struggle, for example, the Jarvis-Gann Fight Back, and that at least interim

leadership for this campaign be elected at a General Meeting - possibly with recommendations from the Coordinating Committee.

- finally, that we dump the baggage, stop our interminable wrangling over small details, adopt a bold, fresh approach and pursue our work in an honest, principled, and disciplined, Marxist-Leninist manner.

RR

[Faint, mostly illegible text follows, appearing to be a continuation of a letter or document.]