

WORKERS' PRESS

THE POLITICAL ORGAN OF THE MARXIST-LENINIST COLLECTIVE

✓ WHY THE DISUNITY AMONG MARXIST-LENINISTS?

There is widespread agreement that party building is the central task of Marxist-Leninists and class-conscious workers today, not because communists have declared it so, but because objective conditions demand it. And yet the movement to build a genuine party continues to be riddled with splits, small-circle mentality, opportunism, sectarianism, and all forms of amateurishness. We believe that one of the fundamental reasons for the disunity among the honest forces in the communist movement can be traced to the effects of the split in the working class -- between a bribed, upper stratum and the masses of workers, who receive relative privileges from the spoils of US imperialism.

Since the total consolidation of revisionism within the CPUSA, there have been numerous efforts by revolutionaries to build a new communist party, a genuine vanguard of the working class. Without such a party, the working class and its allies, particularly in the national movements, are without the only leadership that can guide them in their daily struggles against capitalist exploitation and oppression, in preventing imperialist war, and making socialist revolution. The danger of a third world war is no empty threat-- it has its basis in the world-wide contention between the US and its social-imperialist rival, the USSR, for markets, raw materials, and cheap labor. At the same time, the capitalist ruling class is stepping up its attacks on the masses of working people and oppressed nationalities as the general crisis of capitalism grows deeper. More and more, relative privileges are being withdrawn. In some strategic industries (coal, steel), rank and file movements are emerging spontaneously against these attacks and in opposition to the reformist trade union leadership. Clearly, the objective conditions are overripe for leadership, in the form of a genuine communist party. And yet, twenty years have gone by, and a succession of groupings have declared themselves 'the party', but the vast majority of the working class remains under bourgeois influence and leadership. Why?

In the MLC's recently published pamphlet, 'Proletarian Revolution and the Split in the Working Class', we said: "The fact that there has been no thorough analysis to date of the split in the US working class is evidence of the strong influence of revisionism among Marxist-Leninists." (p 1) Revisionism (the revision of the philosophical, economic, and political foundations of revolutionary Marxism and the substitution of bourgeois theories of class conciliation) and opportunism (the sacrificing of the long term and vital interests of the proletariat to the momentary, passing, secondary interests) have found fertile soil in the US. Why? The unchallenged hegemony of the US after World War II resulted in the development of a large petty-bourgeoisie and a bribed upper stratum within the working class. This has been accompanied by the existence of relative privileges, given the masses of workers in the form of greater economic, social, and political rights than those workers in the colonies and oppressed nations. Small wonder that the bourgeois ideology of class collaboration, reformism and opportunism has infested the ranks of the workers and the communist movement. Amongst Marxist-Leninists there is a lack of understanding of the split in the working class and the effects of the split. The MLC contends that this split in the working class has played an important role in holding back the movement to build the party the proletariat so desperately needs. What is some of the evidence of this?

What's Inside

First, it is evident in the fact that party building is not being pursued with

*GM: Demand Healthy and Safe Working Conditions

*Land Question in the Oppressed Black Nation

real proletarian seriousness and discipline by many Marxist-Leninists. Let's take the question of the importance of theory, and the need to unite Marxist-Leninists in the formulation of political line, to take shape in a draft party programme. How, concretely, are Marxist-Leninists to be united? Clearly, through many forms -- through joint theoretical and practical work in bi-lateral meetings, forums, the building of communist cores at the workplace and in unions and mass organizations. And yet, the development of political line and the unity of Marxist-Leninists remains at a relatively low level. There is a strong tendency towards individualism and competitiveness between organizations. What is at the basis of this disunity? Genuine, principled differences? In some cases, this is certainly the case, but on the whole, we think there is another reason. Let's look at the status of polemics between groups. The reason for polemics in the first place is to try to draw definite lines of demarcation -- to unite those who uphold Marxism-Leninism, and to break with revisionism. Is this what polemics are accomplishing in the communist movement today? There are reams of polemics, and some of them are right on the mark in exposing opportunism and breaking with bourgeois ideology. In particular, polemics exposing the right opportunism of OLA party building efforts and the left opportunism of PRRWO-RWL, have clarified numerous questions for the movement. But have these polemics then been used to unite those who stand in opposition to incorrect lines? Has the question of the program been introduced into the polemics, as Lenin advised it must, in order to draw Marxist-Leninists together? For the most part, this has not happened. In fact, some polemics have been turned into their opposite. They have become subjective exercises that raise phony issues, and then fiercely demolish their mythical opponents, or raise tactical questions to the level of principle. (One example of what we think has been constructive, principled polemics, with the goal of uniting Marxist-Leninists, has been LPR's recent polemic with ATM in Resistance, Vol 8 #1 & 2) The very fact that this childish nonsense can go on and on has been due to the relative privileges and the existence of bourgeois democratic freedom, unknown in the oppressed nations and colonies. The fact that these relative privileges are being withdrawn as US imperialism goes deeper into crisis, and the bourgeoisie moves ever more quickly towards fascist rule has not been accompanied by a real change in the subjective factor. The urgency of the need for leadership in the proletarian movement has been clouded over by the influence of bourgeois ideology in the ranks of communists and class-conscious workers. The fact that the working class in the US is not under a reign of an open, fascist dictatorship, but instead lives under constant bombardment by bourgeois propaganda, propping up the bribery and relative privileges resulting from US imperialism, has had its effects on party building too. The refusal by almost all communist organizations to put forward concrete plans and take concrete steps in uniting Marxist-Leninists shows in practice that party building is seen as more of an abstract theoretical question, something that can be put off, than as a real theoretical and practical problem that must be solved!

Secondly, the effect of the bribe and privileges is evident in the 'flip flops' made within the Marxist-Leninist movement, from 'left' to 'right' and back again. It is nothing new to recognize that all communist movements go through two-line struggle within its ranks, and that this sometimes takes the overall form of a struggle against the 'left', and sometimes against the 'right'. But in the US, this 'see-saw' motion have been exaggerated and drawn out in the movement to build a party precisely because of the effects of the split in the working class. How so? Again, because for over thirty years, the ebb and flow of the spontaneous working class movement has taken place within the context of US imperialism's position as a superpower capable of 'bourgeoisifying' a section of its proletariat. At the same time the revisionist degeneration of the CPUSA has left the working class without the leadership of a revolutionary party. The result has been that scientific socialism has been isolated from the working class for years, while revisionism, opportunism and reformism have become dominant. For communists isolated from the working class movement, there has been the danger of reaction to the apparent 'passivity' of the US working class in the form of ultra-leftism. This was true of PLP, CLP, and now the PRRWO-RWL. On the other hand, when communists attempt to participate in and lead the day to day struggles of the working class, the tendency to give in to tailing the movement has been extremely common, especially given the long-standing, deep influence of revisionism. This tendency to 'bow to spontaneity' appears to be going through a renewed upsurge at present -- both in response to the ultra-leftism of PRRWO-RWL, and due to increased

spontaneous militancy among working people. The result is that the importance of theory as a necessary guide to action is being belittled, thus further putting the movement to build a party in danger. Here we must again emphasize that within the US communist movement, right opportunism is the main enemy.

Related to the previous examples is the tendency to cling to amateurish methods of work, and to small-group mentality in particular. Small collectives are not the only carriers of small-group mentality (glorifying subjectivism and seeing the whole through the eyes and practice of one narrow circle). Larger, national organizations who refuse to meet and work with smaller groups, who refuse to help prepare the conditions for the final dissolution of all these separate circles, are just as guilty of amateurishness. As a small, local collective, the MLC is acutely aware of the dangers of small-group mentality. We have made numerous attempts over the past year to contact other Marxist-Leninists and set up channels for engaging in joint theoretical and practical work. We recently published several proposals (see Workers' Press, Vol 2 #12 and Vol 3 #3) calling for joint work around forums and in building communist cores, and sent copies to several Marxist-Leninist organizations, asking that they respond and publish our proposals. We have had little response to these proposals. The point is, from our limited experience and from our reading of the various Marxist-Leninist press, it is apparent that our failure to generate response is common to most organizations, large and small. As LPR recently pointed out in Resistance, Vol 3 #1, there are numerous small collectives and individual Marxist-Leninists throughout the country, and yet what is being done to unify them? If the small circles are making a genuine effort to break with small circle narrowness, then can't the larger, national organizations, also have a responsibility to move that process forward? Of course they do, and their refusal to actively take up the task of seeking out other Marxist-Leninist individuals and organizations is a concrete reflection of the effects of the objective conditions of life in the US on the party building movement.

In conclusion, we'd like to point out that many communists are fond of quoting Lenin on the need to break with opportunism and draw firm lines of demarcation. But this cannot be done consistently or successfully without recognizing the material basis of revisionism and opportunism, without recognizing the split in the working class, and understanding it in relation to uniting Marxist-Leninists and winning advanced workers to communism. If this fundamental problem of modern socialism is not grasped and applied to our theoretical and practical work, then the movement to build a genuine communist party will continue to suffer the setbacks we've outlined.

UNITE MARXIST-LENINISTS
WIN THE ADVANCED WORKERS TO COMMUNISM
BUILD THE PARTY OF THE WORKING CLASS

DEMAND HEALTHY & SAFE WORKING CONDITIONS

In July, 1976, at the General Motors (GM) plant in Van Nuys, California, a worker was killed by falling through a hole in his line and was crushed between exposed gears and rollers. This worker had filed an overwork grievance the week before. In 1975, ten workers under the ages of forty and all in the same department, suffered heart attacks at GM's Tarrytown, NY plant. At the Fremont, California GM plant, last year, accidents occurred at the rate of one in every five workers. In 1973, four Michigan auto workers were killed and 621 severely injured by power press accidents. Of these, 307 were amputations. These are but a few specific examples of the wholesale slaughter of the working class by the capitalist system of exploitation and oppression. In the US, 7 million

workers are injured on the job yearly; 14,000 workers die each year in industrial accidents and an additional 100,000 die from illnesses caused by physical stress and/or exposure to the 50,000 toxic chemicals used by industry.

It is clear that the bourgeois class will spend as little as possible on health and safety in order to maximize profits. Why is this especially true today? During the economic crisis, the capitalist will try to shift the burden of the crisis on to the working class. This results in lay-offs, with speed-up and forced overtime used in order to increase the productivity of the remaining workers. In California, this was shown to increase the rate of industrial accidents by nearly 6% during 1973-4. These were the worse years in terms of unemployment, yet more workers than ever suffered from accidents in their work place. What can workers do about these appalling conditions? Clearly, the state, both local and federal, is not above classes, but rather represents the capitalist class. This is revealed by the fact that the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) did not even levy fines in 40% of the violations found, and the average for fines, when imposed, was \$15! The trade unions, in the hands of the labor traitors, are clearly props for the capitalist class, fighting for the interests of the capitalists over those of the workers they profess to represent. This was shown in the UAW negotiated contract which did nothing to stop forced overtime and the continued speed-ups which contribute so much to the high rate of accidents and disease in GM plants all over the country.

As communists and class-conscious workers, we must expell from our ranks these labor traitors. We must win back control of our union and put forth at least these minimum demands to General Motors:

1. Nonforced overtime
2. No lay-offs
3. Authority of rank and file health and safety committees to stop production when violations of rules occur
4. Free and complete medical check-ups for all workers every 6 months with full access to all records

Ultimately, under socialism, workers will be fully protected in the workplace. We must begin to prepare ourselves now for the long struggle to overthrow the capitalist class and establish the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat, where the working class controls the state in the interests of the masses of people.

LAND EVICTION THREATENS FARMER : OPPRESSED BLACK NATION

Joe Woolridge, 62-year-old Black Belt farmer, faces foreclosure and eviction on his 131-acre Aliceville, Alabama, farm, unless he can make debt payments of \$155,000 to the estate of deceased Circuit Court Judge EF Hildreth.

In 1952, Woolridge borrowed \$3,000 from Hildreth. Repayment began that very first year with Woolridge's entire crop -- 500 bales of cotton -- going to the judge. The debt entrapment began its vicious cycle -- more money was borrowed, payments in cotton were

continued yearly (from 300-500 bales per year, with an estimated accumulated value over the 20 plus year period of \$1 million). No receipts or records of the debt or the payments were ever kept. As Woolridge put it, "In those days a black man didn't ask a white judge for no receipt." When he did ask for some kind of written record of payment, the judge threatened to evict him from his land.

In 1970, Hildreth foreclosed on the farm, forcing the Woolridges to buy it back for \$30,000. A mysterious second mortgage note for \$133,000 was supposedly signed at the same time, but Woolridge and his wife do not remember it. It is this mysterious second mortgage note that is the basis for Woolridge's present 'debt' to Hildreth's estate.

Woolridge's predicament bears close resemblance to the problems faced by Black freedmen and many poor Anglos after the Civil War in the Black Belt South. First, the same debt-slavery and white chicanery that plagued poor Blacks and Anglos in the post Civil War days continues. The tactic of debt-slavery (or debt-entrapment) was used by the ex-slaveholders to keep the Black freedmen and many of the poor Anglos tied to the land under semi-feudal conditions. No person or family owing any money to the landowner or to the local merchant could leave the land until the debt was settled. Of course, no records were ever kept, so the debts often lasted forever. Essentially, the same debt-slavery tactic now threatens the Woolridges with the loss of their land and the possibility of being forced into sharecropping or tenancy -- the semi-feudal remnants from Reconstruction days.

Second, the struggle for land, which marked the post Civil War days, is still going on. During Reconstruction, the break-up of the plantations and the redistribution of this land to the Black freedmen and poor Anglos was the democratic task of the day -- the task which would best insure freedom and equality for all (within the limits of capitalism). The masses of ex-slaves and poor Anglos fought long and hard to get the land that they wanted and needed, and that was rightfully theirs. However, the northern capitalists, once they had consolidated their economic and political control over the South, did not find it in their interests to redistribute the land. Instead, they teamed up with the defeated slavocracy and replaced the chains of chattel slavery with the semi-feudal bondage of sharecropping and tenancy. Given the economic nature of growing cotton, and considering the fact that a large number of small, independent farmers would be a threat to the power of the capitalists, the northern bourgeoisie found it in their best interests to unite with the ex-slaveholders and keep the mass of Black freedmen and poor Anglos landless and powerless. It is exactly the semi-feudal conditions and slave remains in the South -- caused by the failure to resolve the land question -- that has laid the economic basis for the denial of rights to Blacks and many Anglos, Jim Crow segregation, terror, and the subsequent formation and oppression of a nation in the Black Belt region.

Although the Woolridge family forebearers were exceptions in that they were able to get land during the post Civil War period, they still have to wage a battle to keep it. The Woolridge case is fairly typical of many Blacks in this area who have lost their land. It is estimated by the Emergency Land Fund (ELF)* that Blacks have lost over nine million acres of land during the past 60 years under similar circumstances that now threaten the Woolridges. This nine million acres of lost land represents over 60% of the total amount of land once owned by Blacks in the area.

The Woolridge case is a blatant example of the oppression in the Black Belt South and it helps to point out the root cause of it -- the lack of land ownership by Blacks in that region. The Woolridges' struggle to keep their land must be supported as should all struggles for freedom and democratic rights in that oppressed nation. Currently Woolridge's case is being appealed by the ELF in the US District Court of Birmingham, Alabama. We are awaiting more information from the ELF on the case, and will publish it in the Workers' Press as soon as we learn more.

It is our duty to support our allies in the oppressed nation of the Black Belt South. We must break down the racial and national barriers that have for so long been used to divide the working class. Only by building the unity of the multinational, US proletariat, guided by a real communist party, can we overthrow the capitalist system which perpetuates the national oppression.

* Emergency Land Fund is an Atlanta, Georgia-based organization, established in 1971, to help Blacks retain their land. For more information, or if you wish to send donations, write: Emergency Land Fund, 834 Beecher Street, S.W., Atlanta, Georgia

* The MLC is currently reviewing its position paper on the Black Nation and will soon have a revised paper available.

NEW WAVE OF STRIKES

Since the beginning of this year, workers in Western countries have continued holding strikes, rallies and demonstrations to renew their struggle against the shifting of the economic crisis on to them by the monopoly capitalists.

USA. Coal miners in eastern and midwestern United States have persisted in their spontaneous strikes since early February. The strikes had cost mines a production loss of 1.5 million tons by the end of February, which was a heavy blow to monopoly capital.

Auto workers in the plants of General Motors, Ford Motor and Chrysler have downed their tools since mid-February to protest the capitalists' rejection of the workers' reasonable demands made in negotiations.

About 1,000 textile workers and trade unionists demonstrated on March 2 outside the headquarters of JP Stevens, the No 2 US textile group employing 45,000 people in 85 factories. In recent years, workers of the firm have waged incessant struggles for the right to form trade unions and to collective bargaining.

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WHO WE ARE

Workers' Press is written and published by the Marxist-Leninist Collective. We are a communist organization based on Marxist-Leninism, the science of the revolutionary class struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. We are part of the international struggle to end exploitation and oppression by overthrowing capitalism and establishing socialism. We aim to bring communist ideas to the proletariat and to arm workers with proletarian class consciousness so that together we can lead the struggle against all forms of oppression and exploitation. To do this we must organize ourselves into an independent political party to concentrate the resistance of the proletariat into a single fighting force. Send correspondence, criticisms, articles to:

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