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 monstrous 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 process of creating class revolution: socialism, and communism were inevitable.

However, they warned that although capitalism was decaying 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 working class basis of individualism and anarchism within the ranks of revolutionaryaries. 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 Marxian-Leninist: proletariat 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 unwaveringly 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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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 cooperation. Karl Kautsky, a contemporary of Lenin’s who eventually betrayed the cause of working class revolution, wrote angrily of this contradiction, 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 the big and strong strength 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 the bourgeoisie 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.

"The principal vacillation on questions of discipline and the principal opposition to formal 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."

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

"The intellectuals do not fight by means of power, but by argument. His weapons are his personal knowledge, his personal ability, his personal convictions..."

The Pentagon

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

Layed off we went to the Gorton shipyard there they build the trabant and the kinsmen 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 heaped on me by the bosses and union hacks and coughing up the breathed down shit never 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. I did the same for the community cops for pushing for 30 hours work for 40 hours pay.

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 are supposed to fight.

The John Birch Jesus freak who tells me not to speak then the FBI--or something sacks my mom & dad's 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 are 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 paradise they want has time to check us all out.