

Section 7 is the part of the programmatic document most directly relevant to the class struggle today, and the part which will be amended and adopted at the Second Congress. It gives our programme of action for building the party and shows what Marxism-Leninism has to offer in the current crisis. While it is a bad thing that we will not be able to adopt a systematic programmatic document at the Second Congress, at any rate we must have section 7 as a focus for our unity in action.

This is the section which, (apart from the line on Ireland) contains the most fundamental differences from the old Manifesto of the RCL. Looking back at that Manifesto, we can see that its argument developed in a funny way. Proceeding from an analysis of the capitalist system in Britain, it went straight on to deal with "the struggle against bourgeois ideology and opportunism within the British working class". There is very little about how, concretely, Communists should act in the class struggle, so the line of argument seems to be: since bourgeois ideology and opportunism are the stumbling block, we have to sort them out before we can think concretely about much else. True, it does call for the anti-opportunist struggle to be waged "in the course of struggling against the monopoly capitalist bourgeoisie" (D16), but this is not the message which comes across overall.^X

There are errors here, both in the assessment of the situation, and in the manner of drawing conclusions from this assessment. The Manifesto on the whole does not find much good to say about the working class; yet actually the class has a healthy historical tradition of struggle which we have to build on in order to weaken the opportunist aspect. Nor does the Manifesto deeply grasp the fact that the class can only develop its organised fighting strength through learning in practice. It is correct to call for a party which is "the vanguard of the working class; at the same time an inseparable part of the working class." (E1) But in actual fact the Manifesto's line is one of fighting opportunism by asserting certain abstract correct principles, and would tend to lead to a 'vanguard' isolated from the class (its 'advanced' character determined by the purity of its line), hence not really a vanguard at all - in a word, the errors were ones of dogmatism and sectarianism. Moreover, the idea of party-building developed in section E was largely internalised within the M-L movement.

How did things develop on the way to getting the present text? The struggle for unity between the RCL and CWM produced the crucial proposal to amalgamate the existing sections D and E of the Manifesto into a new final Party-Building section which would contain a new element (and moreover this new element would be its focal point) - mass work in the context of the real struggles of the working class, the real issues affecting the lives of the class. The Unity Committee got out a very rough text which spliced together elements from the Manifesto, the CWM Programme and some new material. This is the version (which I am now referring to as the intermediate text) which was circulated to the membership some months back for reference. This is now superceded by the present text, but ~~it's~~ it's useful to say a word or two about the intermediate text, in order to explain the process of transition.

In the intermediate text, the goal of party-building is put at the beginning (7.1-2) and mass work is taken as the first aspect, on which emphasis is placed (7.4-8 - much of this subsection really just states in skeleton form what ought to be in the PD). Then we come onto a part dealing with the struggle against opportunism. This is largely based on the Manifesto Section D, but the reordering of the material is significant. Primary stress is now placed on the political aspect of opportunism as a hindrance to the advance of the working class' real struggles; there is also some important new material, particularly 7.28 which puts relatively more emphasis on isolating the main opportunists, and, connected with this, it is pointed out that Communists must themselves avoid being isolated politically. Further new elements introduced in an embryonic form in this text are: the defence of democratic rights (7.27), the wider revolutionary movement around the vanguard party (7.29) and the stress on the unity of the working class (7.31). Material largely based on the CWM programme deals with the struggle for reforms and the question of united front work; and a new final section sets out in a positive way some of the major characteristics of the style of work of our movement.

The intermediate text, then, opened up a direction in which we could move in developing a more all-round statement on party-building.

The CC held a fairly thorough discussion of this text, and the responsible comrade was then detailed to rewrite it completely on the basis of the views expressed. A further new text was then circulated to the CC only, two further rounds of discussion were held, and amendments voted on. The present text is the result. In moving forward from the Manifesto, the following steps have thus been gone through so far: Manifesto secs. D and E → UC proposals → Intermediate text → CC text → Present revised text. We are now entering into the next and most important step, that of discussion in the whole organisation leading up to the Second Congress.

Now some of the main features of the present text in comparison with earlier ones, together with major difficulties and points of contention on which attention will have to be focussed during the current stage.

- (a) There is now a guiding thread, the idea of an imperialist society in crisis. Thus instead of just saying we need to build a party, we take as our basis the material conditions which make this necessary and which determine the struggles through which it will be built.
- (b) It is pointed out that the situation is a defensive one, faced with the onslaught of capitalism; but within this defensive context the working class has to try to win the initiative.
- (c) Clearer prominence is given to the economic roots of opportunism in an imperialist society. But exactly how this operates is still a difficult question, on which there are differing views.
- (d) The line of giving full play to mass struggles now features prominently.
- (e) There is now in comparison with the intermediate text and very much in contrast to the Manifesto an idea that rather than fighting opportunism in general we should concentrate attacks on the handful of dangerous opportunists, struggling against opportunism mainly through the positive conviction in the correctness of our revolutionary line which the masses acquire in the course of practice. But there is already an important minority opinion which holds that this text underestimates the direct struggle against opportunism, and thus carries a rightist danger. This is undoubtedly the most significant line of demarcation which has emerged so far.
- (f) Another consistent theme is the vital role played by the revolutionary press. But the way the press keeps getting brought into the text has been criticised by some comrades as being somewhat forced and mechanical.
- (g) The orientation of stressing work among the industrial working class is maintained; but it is pointed out that this doesn't just mean work in industry, because there are other fields of struggle in which working class people are involved, in the community etc. But there will be differences regarding the relative weight to be given to these different fields.
- (h) The role of unemployed workers in the class struggle at last begins to be recognised in this text, but so far not very concretely.
- (i) The text reflects an understanding that advanced workers include both those who are active in existing working-class struggles and those who have seen the limitations of existing struggles but haven't yet found an alternative. But there are differences about which of these categories is the more important, and a minority view challenges the orientation of "going lower and deeper" which is still contained in this text.
- (j) The question of democratic rights is taken to a new level and treated as a field of work in its own right.
- (k) We refer for the first time to the multi-national British working class, and give a more thorough treatment of the national question in a context of affirming national minority rights rather than just negating racism. There is already an important controversy about the content of this section.
- (l) There were strongly differing views about the relative importance of class and national contradictions in Wales and Scotland. At the moment the text follows the approach of not being very specific.
- (m) There is for the first time a systematic treatment of anti-imperialist solidarity; three priority areas are mentioned; and there is likely to be considerable discussion around these.

(n) On the question of Ireland, there will be a fairly substantial statement in the revised text of Sec. 3, which seems the appropriate place, but it is likely that Ireland solidarity will still have to be developed more systematically in Sec. 7, and the present references in 61 and 41 are only skeleton ones.

(o) The new text argues the need for a M-L party by criticising the weaknesses of existing 'left' organisations, not in the sense that they transgress certain abstract dogmas but in the sense that their policies and practice don't offer long- or short-term solutions to real problems. It recognises the sincere aspirations for change which motivate a number of people to join some of these organisations. But a minority view holds that the present text is still sectarian, notably on the Labour Party.

(p) Following from the previous point, we now try to define the characteristics of the ML movement and the organisation we are building in a positive and concrete way.

It will be seen that the majority of the above points are related in one way or another to the question of our understanding of opportunism and how to fight it. Partly because of the complexity of this question, the present text is still quite wordy and repetitive, and it is hoped that a fairly thorough debate on it will - by clarifying our ideas - help to tighten up the text.

At the moment we are not sure how specific to be about the reforms we are calling for, and comrades are likely to argue for the inclusion of a number of specific policies which fall into this category.

There is also the tricky question of 'division of labour' between this section and the others. For example, the demands on the national question have been transferred to this section from Sec. C of the old Manifesto, but some other demands, for example on the international situation, are at present still to be found in other parts of the Programmatic Document, and there may be strong arguments for bringing them into Sec. 7.

Finally a word about the general relationship between Section 7 and the Programmatic Document as a whole. As I understand it, Section 7 is the part which determines policy. The process of consciousness advances through summing up perceptual knowledge to the level of concepts and then using this conceptual knowledge to change the world. This is the stage which requires formulating and carrying out policies - general and specific political lines. In acting to change the world, the most important element is building the party, and this is a basic theme of Sec. 7. The Programmatic Document as a whole should set out our analysis of the situation (historically, in Britain today and in the world) and Sec. 7 in particular should say what we intend to do about this. The original plan for programmatic study was to start with this basic analysis and then go onto Sec. 7, which seemed a logical way of doing things; in retrospect, though, this plan had an important weakness because after all our starting point is the desire for change, and by leaving this element to the last it probably tended to make the rest of the study seem abstract and academic. Now Section 7 will be the first to be discussed systematically and adopted. But it will still be important to develop the whole of the programmatic document as a framework explaining the reasoning behind our policies. When we are struggling over different formulations of points of policy for Section 7, in the background there will also of course be a struggle between different basic ways of analysing problems; thus many of the points which are implicitly raised in the discussion over Section 7 should help to clarify the issues in the programmatic Document as a whole.