

In the first article of this series, we attempted to deal briefly with the question of democratic centralism as the general theory of revolutionary organization and to examine two of its specific features: the vanguard political character of Marxist-Leninist parties and the need for formal party organization and discipline. In this article we will continue our attempt to examine other key features of democratic centralism.

3) As we mentioned, the party is the vanguard detachment of the working class and, as such, it must be organized. However, the working class has many organizations: trade unions, parents' associations, self-defense groups, tenants' unions, etc. All of these organizations seek to improve workers' conditions on the job, in the community, or at home. They are limited by their reformist outlook: they can never go beyond wrestling specific concessions from the capitalists. Reformism, by itself, cannot bring workers closer to state power and socialism. When united fronts are led by reformist forces over a prolonged period of time, two things inevitably happen: first, the bosses are able to reverse the reforms. This has happened in our country with free public education, the eight-hour day, medical care, and many other necessities of life. Second, left to their own devices, even honest reformist forces pass into the enemy camp. The living proof of this law is the official leadership of

party with workers and others enables the party to determine objective reality, to carry out its line under all circumstances, to create the opportunity for breakthroughs, to win leadership of the mass movement, to identify and correct mistakes with a minimum of damage, to advance when possible as far as possible, and to retreat in orderly fashion when necessary.

Bourgeois theoreticians believe that truth resides ultimately in books. Marxist-Leninists understand, on the contrary, that objective reality is created by the daily practice of millions in the class struggle, and that understanding and, hence, transforming

collective.

The fourth feature of democratic centralism, building a base in the working class for the party and for socialism, is therefore the highest, most advanced form of political science.

5) **In order to function with a united will, to guide the mass movement scientifically toward socialism, and to build a base for its revolutionary line, the party must operate on the principle of centralism. Centralism implies one program and general line, one set of rules, uniform discipline, one leading organ—the party convention and, between conventions, one leading collective, the National Committee. Other features of party centralism include the following:**

a) **EVERY PARTY MEMBER MUST BELONG** to a collective. The basic collective of the Progressive Labor Party is the club. Clubs must meet regularly. Their main job is to put the party line into practice and to recruit to the party.

b) Decisions of higher bodies (section committees, city committees, the National Committee) are binding on lower bodies. A lower body may appeal a decision to a higher body or the National Committee. The appeal should always take into account the importance of the issue and its relevance to the party's overall work.

c) After decisions are reached, the minority must subordinate to the majority. Once the party's political and tactical lines has been set, every member is responsible to carry it out. Inner party struggle is necessary to move the work forward; it must never be used as a smokescreen for sabotage.

d) Differences must never be taken outside the party. They must always be taken upward to the appropriate leadership group.

e) Factionalizing inside or outside the party is grounds for immediate expulsion.

f) Leadership appointments must be evaluated by at least the next highest body.

g) The discipline of the party is voluntary. It is

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the U.S. labor movement today. Meany, Wurf, Shanker, Chavez, Fitzsimmons, Woodcock and their lieutenants, all act consciously to block class struggle for concessions and have become willing allies of ruling class fascism.

These developments are inevitable unless the party becomes the ultimate leader and guide of the reform movement and all the organizations in it. Under capitalism, only two class outlooks can contend for dominance: the capitalist ideology or the socialist ideology. Reformist leadership is capitalist in essence. Under the best conditions, it is like Sisyphus, the character in Greek mythology whom the gods condemned to push a heavy rock up a steep hill only to have it roll perpetually to the bottom, before reaching the summit. Only under socialism can the working class get to the top of the hill. Clearly, then, the reform movement must be transformed into a movement for revolution. This process requires the hegemony of the party.

The third feature of democratic centralism is the law that requires the party to lead the united front under all circumstances.

4) The key determinant of the party's ability to provide this leadership is its relation to the masses of workers and their allies. A party that does not develop and expand solid ties with millions beyond its own ranks is bound to wither and die or turn into its opposite. One of the Progressive Labor Party's major slogans is: Build a Base in the Working Class.

Only a large and growing base enables the party to examine society scientifically, to determine the main and secondary contradictions in specific situations, and to develop the correct line for advancing the class struggle. Attempting to do so without a base is like wearing a blindfold to target practice.

Truth is always concrete. Therefore, the universal aspects of Marxism-Leninism must be applied to living reality on the job, in the community, or at school. This cannot happen if party members and leaders isolate themselves from their fellow workers, neighbors, or students. **The Lone Ranger approach to revolutionary political work inevitably leads to subjectivity, idealism, and the failure to put the party and the working class on the offensive against the enemy.**

On the other hand, the thorough integration of the

this reality are inconceivable without an organic relationship to this practice. Having unbreakable ties to the working class is the essence of inner-party democracy. As we pointed out, close ties, and carrying out the line determines objective reality. Many people influenced by ruling class ideas consider democracy to be what is in their own mind—not objective reality. To them, democracy means giving forth one's own ideas, unrelated to the masses, or unrelated to carrying out the line. In



other words, the world to many people is what is in their minds. To be sure, the party encourages and needs debate and discussion of the party line. But these discussions about the line or formulating the line, must be based on reality. This means having a base in the working class, and above all **PRACTICE IN CARRYING OUT THE PARTY LINE.** Without these prerequisites, democracy is of the bourgeois character—my opinion, my ideas, therefore, my decision, not the decision of the party, i.e. the

predicated on the commitment of members and leaders to the working class and socialism. A positive, constructive attitude that limits and combats individualism is essential to democratic centralism.

h) Party discipline is binding on all members both leaders and rank and file. The party cannot function with a double standard of centralism for the many and individual license for the so-called

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## Hidalgo, Tex.: Farmworkers

# Melon Strike Begins



(Taken from El Cuhamil, newspaper of the Texas Farmworkers Union)

The Texas Farm Workers' Union announced at a rally, Sunday May 16, 1976, at Hidalgo, Texas, its plans to strike against the Lower Rio Grande Valley melon growers as it did last year.

More than 100 persons, many of them strikers from last year, gathered to hear union speakers announce that the union would focus its strike activities against three of the largest melon growers in the Valley—Griffen and Brand, El Texano Ranch, and La Casita Farms. The Union is asking all the area's

farm workers to recognize the strike and respect its picket lines.

It is especially making an appeal to all the workers who cross the border from Reynosa, Mexico not to break the strike.

Union organizers also said that picketing would begin this week and that at least three different groups would be picketing the melon fields.

After listening to the speakers the rally participants formed a line and marched

## Centralism

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"chosen few." Leadership must set an example in its accountability to the collective and the working class.

**These features of centralism are not arbitrary rules. They are the necessary conditions for the scientific formulation and execution of the party's line. The only alternatives are anarchy and failure. Bourgeois spokesmen who are bribed to conjure up justifications for capitalism always prattle about democratic centralism as a destroyer of "individual rights." They yap about 'totalitarianism' and "monolithic communism."**

**IN THE FIRST PLACE, THE MOST LIBERATING, democratic, individually fulfilling activity in the world is the fight for socialism. We have had enough of bosses' "democracy" with its race wars, unemployment, industrial murder, starvation, and degeneracy. Individual rights under capitalism have only one meaning: the "right" of the owning class to suck mammoth profits from the labor power and misery of the working class, the "right" of maintaining the status quo, the "right" to get ahead of others, etc. Democratic centralism enables the party to fight for socialism, for the abolition of private property, for collective unity, and the full political and cultural development of the working class.**

In the second place, no science has ever developed unless its methodology incorporated some of the principles of democratic centralism mentioned above. Imagine a chemist whose experiments departed anarchistically from his predetermined plan and who proceeded on the basis of "a pinch of this and a pinch of that." He'd probably blow up the lab. How long would a neurosurgeon last if he decided to leave the amphitheater for the golf course in the middle of a delicate operation? What happens to the process of production if a section of the assembly line goofs off? What happens in the middle of a battle if a general decides off the top of his head to retreat when the plan calls for advance?

When the bosses and their sycophants attack democratic centralism, they expose their narrow class outlook, their hatred of workers, and their fear of science. Workers, on the other hand, have nothing to fear from objectivity and collective action around a line that serves their class interests. Viewed in this context, the centralism built upon voluntary party discipline appears as the guiding ray of light in a sea of darkness.

In this article, we have attempted to clarify three features of democratic centralism: the vanguard party as the leader of all working class organizations, the need for unbreakable, organic ties between the party and the masses of workers and their allies, and centralism at all levels as the basis of internal party organization. We will conclude our series in the next segment.



NYC. PLP members and friends demonstrate against fascist Rev. Moon. (See Week of Struggle)

## NYC Docs Vote To Support Hosp. Workers

NEW YORK CITY, May 18—At the May delegates meeting of the Committee of Interns and Residents (CIR), representatives of the 6,000 member union voted to support the strike announced by AFSCME Local 420. The motion was introduced by Progressive Labor and passed 38 to 3.

The resolution stated full support for the demands set for the strike—no layoffs and keeping 2 hospitals and a health center from closing—while outlining a plan to close down the hospitals by transferring and discharging all patients. District 1199, another hospital union, and the nurses offered no support.

The doctor introducing the motion argued that only the workers' union had the strength to stop the health crisis about to overtake NY City. He went on to explain that this crisis was already general in nature, not just confined to city hospitals—pointing out that training programs are cutting back, foreign doctors are being forced out of the country, Medicare/Medicaid funds are being frozen, insurance companies are claiming more of the health dollar through malpractice, private hospitals are dropping services, etc. The weakest link, however, care for minority workers and poor people, is being attacked the hardest and must be defended above all else.

Active support for the strike at a local level is difficult to judge. Kings County and Montefiore, the only hospitals with local meetings so far, agreed overwhelmingly with the spirit of the resolution. At Montefiore a further resolution was passed unanimously condemning the administration's plan to cut staffing at Morrisania, the affiliated city hospital. The doctors refused to work on the private wards if any changes were made in staffing for the city hospitals.

The doctors' strike with the last contract, and the potential of another strike this fall, have brought many doctors to the understanding of the need for strike support. The campaign by PL in the CIR to put the needs of working class patients first has also generated a political climate more favorable to fighting the city's racist cuts.

Unfortunately (as reported previously in CHALLENGE), Vic Gotbaum and the leadership of AFSCME in NY have no intention of getting into a fight with their friends at City Hall. The doctors will be forced to sit by and watch more patients die unless they lead an independent action themselves, which seems unlikely at this point, or a rank and file movement within the hospital workers local is able to pull off a wild-cat. The experience of the CIR has shown that with communist leadership progressive qualities can be brought out in younger doctors, however, without the leadership of workers and the trade union movement doctors remain incapable of acting decisively.

### Quote of the Week

The following taken from the NYTimes, May 30 indicates how at least one postal worker feels about the president of the National Association of Letter Carriers decision to step down.

And yet, one member of the rank and file from New York City, hearing of Mr. Rademacher's announced intent to step down later this year, wrote him in a letter: "I haven't been so elated since Adolph Hitler was killed. Too bad you couldn't take the honorable way out, like the Japanese generals did."