

**The
C.P.G.B.
and
Trade
Unions**

NOTHING exposes the bankruptcy of the present leadership of the British Communist Party more completely than the role it plays within the trade union movement. The disclosures of the activities of their trusted yes-men who held power in the Electrical Trades Union — spotlighting the greatest and most shameful fraud ever perpetuated upon trade union members — will forever remain the most damning indictment of the administrators of the trade unions. Tammany Hall in King Street. It is worth while remembering that the people who in the main were responsible for bringing about the exposure of these frauds were themselves products of the same school and fitting examples of the type of mentality engendered by the attitude adopted towards the trade unions by the C.P. leadership.

One would imagine, as a result of the E.T.U. affair, that the Party leadership, in particular its Industrial Department, would have seen the writing on the wall. But, even within that union they still attempt to foist upon the membership the card carrying members of the C.P.G.B. and their supporters who were responsible for the inglorious state of affairs which existed before the High Court judgment. The Gollans, Kerrigans, Goodwins and Mahons continue in business as if nothing had happened; steadfastly refusing to accept the fact that they and their policies are totally and utterly discredited.

COMPETITION FOR OFFICE

The root cause of the failure of the Party to give effective leadership within the trade union movement can be found in its approach to the question of holding office. It sees the main struggle within the movement as a struggle between left and right for election to the highest offices in the various unions. Some comrades might consider that there is something to recommend this attitude. One might argue that union officers can and do determine policies on day to day issues and can exert a considerable influence on overall policy.

This of course is as the right wing see it. If the approach of the C.P. leadership were a similar one to that of the right wing there might be something to be said for it.

Since, however, the C.P. are more concerned with the prestige value of office holding than with the practical application of Communist ideas, the election of Communists to office is of little or no advantage to the union members concerned or the working class generally. As the pursuance of all their policies within the unions is secondary to and directed towards the winning of office, so also having achieved office do all policies and principles become bent towards retaining that office, at all cost. It is this approach which brought about the E.T.U. fiasco. It is this approach which has brought about a state of affairs where it is impossible to say whether any given union official is Communist or anti-Communist, unless one happens to know from other sources. Certainly their public pronouncements and their attitude on policies give no clear-cut indication. Respectability must be preserved.

FRUITS OF OFFICE

This situation applies at all levels in the trade union movement. If office is held at national level the degree of "responsibility" and "respectability" is at its highest. Any progressive movement or struggle in which rank and file members participate, if not directly inspired and encouraged from above, is irresponsible, calculated to embarrass the leadership and must be crushed. Such "communist" leadership will seldom instigate any form of struggle itself for fear of (1) falling foul of the T.U.C.; (2) being isolated by public opinion; (3) provoking the right wing element within the union, which might lead to loss of support in future elections and consequent loss of office.

Perhaps the most pathetic figure in the whole of the trade union movement is the local communist official in a right wing dominated union. No slave or serf could ever have lived a more humiliating life. After all, one must conclude that somebody who has joined a Communist Party and been elected to full time office within a union has got some spirit plus a desire to see the working class advance.

Unfortunately, the most docile and most servile officials in such unions are those who hold Party cards. They will

explain that since they are members of the Party, it is all the more necessary that they loyally carry out all duties imposed on them even though they personally are in disagreement with the policies involved. They will go on to say that the only solution to the problem is the removal of the leadership.

WAY FORWARD

The question of how the problems of office holding will be overcome needs very careful examination. However, one thing is certain. The correct path for Marxists and a Marxist-Leninist organisation is quite clear. The primary function must be to raise the level of the class consciousness of the workers, to give leadership on all issues which affect them both on and off the job. To expose and battle against all elements within the trade union movement which activate against the interests of the working class. This would include ruthlessly exposing all tendencies towards careerism on the part of individuals who claim to be communists.

The question of office holding would be subject to the pursuance of these policies and only a secondary consideration. Leadership of the working class is not dependent upon the holding of offices in any union. However, as a result of the correct pursuance of these policies office would be achieved. Having achieved office the important consideration would be that the class struggle, far from being won, would have to be fought more vigorously than ever before if we are to achieve a Socialist system of society.

This stage will never be reached while those who claim to represent Marxism but who have abandoned all Marxist-Leninist principles are allowed to fool and mislead the working class. Only a return to these principles and a determination to pursue them regardless of immediate gains or losses can effectively lead the working class to Socialism. The revisionist leaders of King Street are incapable of giving this lead. Let us hope that there are sufficient uncorrupted communists left to fulfill this task.

There can be no doubt that the workers will respond when given the correct lead.

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