

The Way Forward In

Re~building

The Communist Party

Stockport

Communist Group

(Formerly Communist Unity)

15p

Introduction to the Resolution of the Stockport Communist Group on the
Question of Party-Building.

The Marxist-Leninist movement in Britain has been struggling for sixteen years to lead the working class in re-building its party. After these sixteen years, the number of communists in Britain is only a few hundred, the influence of the communists among the working class and people is minimal, the working class is still overwhelmingly dominated by reformism, and the communists themselves are divided up into a dozen different 'parties,' organizations, groups and circles. The main theoretical reason for this sorry state of affairs is that until now not one communist organization has correctly grasped the object of party-building - the political development and political organization of the working class - nor the nature of the principal contradiction in party-building - that between the working class movement and scientific socialism.

Failure to grasp this principal contradiction lies at the very root of the stagnation of the British Marxist-Leninist movement and therefore of the political impotence of the British working class movement. In Britain we have a well-organized, experienced and class-conscious working class movement, but it is a movement which does not possess scientific consciousness and which therefore cannot emancipate itself; we also have a Marxist-Leninist movement which understands, to varying degrees, the necessity for socialist revolution and the transition to communism. The main task of the communists at present therefore is to unite scientific socialism (which they are the bearers of) and the working class movement: and only this process can further the political development and the political organization of the working class. This was the experience of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, and the process of party-building in Britain in the 1970s is in general the same as that of the Russian proletariat around the turn of the century. Lenin described the process of party-building as follows:

"Social-Democracy is not confined to simple service to the working class movement; it represents 'the combination of socialism and the working class movement'...the task of social-democracy is to bring definite social ideals to the spontaneous working class movement, to connect this movement with socialist convictions that should attain the level of contemporary science, to connect it with the regular political struggle for democracy as a means of achieving socialism - in a word, to fuse this spontaneous movement into one indestructible whole with the activity of the revolutionary party."
(19).

The pre-requisite for the emancipation of the working class and the construction of socialism is the seizure of political power by the working class and this in turn cannot come about if the working class is not educated politically and is not led in political struggles (i.e., when the proletariat fights as a class, nation-wide) and particularly in political struggles against the structure of state power.

The economic struggle is important and the communists should lead it, for in struggle on the economic terrain, as in all class struggles, there are two lines, bourgeois and proletarian, in combat for the leadership of the struggle. Unless the proletariat frees itself from opportunist ideas of class collaboration it will be hampered even in its struggle for limited economic aims. We have witnessed time and again how the opportunists betray even struggles for the most limited aims. For their bourgeois line in these struggles is: - we will lead them in such a way as to bribe a few workers, split the rest and disillusion all of them. The communist line is to lead these struggles to "stop competition among the workers, so that they can carry on general competition with the capitalists." (20). The communists lead economic struggles to unite the workers and to increase their ability to wage class struggle, not to try to buy them off and pacify them. But the economic struggle is a struggle for better terms and condi-

tions for the sale of labour-power and the working class must be schooled in economic and political struggle if it is to overthrow the bourgeoisie and not just try to live with it. Communists who do not try to lead the working class in the political struggle are not worthy of the name of 'communist.'

Economism is the outlook which refuses to lead or resists leading the political struggle and is a serious form of opportunism in the British Marxist-Leninist movement. As far as party-building is concerned it is an error which denies the need for the working class to organize itself politically (of which the highest form is its organization as a political party) to overthrow the bourgeois state and which rests content with the spontaneous level of development of the working class struggle, i.e., the economic struggle against the capitalists. To demonstrate the points made so far we shall look briefly at the line and practice of the CPB(M-L) and the RCLB - the two best known organizations in the British Marxist-Leninist movement. Both of these organizations are distinguished by their persistent refusal to lead the working class in anything other than the economic struggle.

Marx pointed out that:

"The ultimate object of the political movement of the working class is, of course, the conquest of political power for this class, and this naturally requires that the organization of the working class, an organization which arises from its economic struggles, should previously reach a certain level of development.

On the other hand, however, every movement in which the working class as a class confronts the ruling classes and tries to constrain them by pressure from without is a political movement. For instance, the attempt by strikes, etc., in a particular factory or even in a particular trade to compel individual capitalists to reduce the working day, is a purely economic movement. On the other hand the movement to force through an eight-hour, etc., law is a political movement. And in this way, out of the separate economic movements of the workers there grows up everywhere a political movement, that is to say, a class movement, with the object of enforcing its interests in a general form, in a form possessing general, socially coercive force. While these movements presuppose a certain degree of previous organization, they are in turn equally a means of developing this organization.

Where the working class is not yet far enough advanced in its organization to undertake a decisive campaign against the collective power, i.e., the political power, of the ruling class, it must at any rate be trained for this by continual agitation against this power and by a hostile attitude towards the policies of the ruling classes. Otherwise it remains a play-thing in their hands, as the September revolution in France showed, and as is also proved to a certain extent by the game that Mr. Gladstone and Co. have been able to play in England up to the present time." (21).

But both the CPB and the RCL work very hard to try to ensure that the struggle of the working class remains at the level of individual groups of workers fighting individual capitalists or groups of capitalists. The economism of the CPB stands out very clearly in their founding document 'The British Working Class and its Party' which makes no mention of the necessity to train the working class in political struggles and which contains no demands to educate and train and mobilise the working class in the struggle against the bourgeois state. In the preface to this document Reg Birch writes: "The struggle in Britain so constantly denigrated as 'economic' is as organic and necessary to revolution as the gun, just as is the fight for land, bread and liberty for the peasant in other lands. It is corrupting only if it becomes an attempt to live with the opposite class, the capitalist class. This is not possible when Heath - in a covert declaration of war against our class - says the new danger to the fabric of society is Civil War." (p4). We would like to point out to comrade Birch that it is

not enough to write that economic struggle and military struggle are necessary; the relationship between them must be named, otherwise it is left open to interpretation as to whether perhaps the decisive battle - the actual revolution - may consist of a strike at one factory for a wage claim. And the relationship particularly needs to be explained at a time when the British proletariat is fighting economic struggles and is not fighting with "the gun." It is revealing that Birch refers only to the military aspect of the political struggle and to the political struggle itself. Could this be due to the fact that besides wages struggles he can only envisage a shoot-up, and has no clarity on the political demands and the political programme for which the proletariat would be prepared to lead the people in an armed revolution. It is quite possible that Birch thinks that the revolution will be a struggle for higher wages - enforced by the gun! He has left out the political substance of the proletariat's struggle. With reference to this quotation it is also a lie to claim that economic struggle cannot become an attempt to live with the capitalists on account of Heath's statement. Until the economic struggle is consciously led as part of the necessary preparations for the revolution, the economic struggle is always an attempt to live with the capitalist class, whatever Mr. Heath may be saying. Heath was of course quite right: Civil war is and always has been the danger to the fabric of capitalist society. The bourgeoisie's fear of civil war is as old as capitalism's rule and is certainly no extenuating circumstance which would suddenly invalidate Marx's and Lenin's observations on economism.

Even to lead the working class as a class in a struggle for economic demands, which is to lead a political struggle of a particular kind - even this on its own is not enough. To limit the political struggle of the working class to this particular kind - this too is a form of economism. As Lenin put it:

"Every class struggle is a political struggle. It is known that the opportunists, enslaved by the ideas of liberalism, have understood these profound words of Marx falsely and tried to interpret them in a distorted way. The opportunists included, for instance, the 'Economists,' the elder brothers of the liquidators. The 'Economists' thought that any clash between the classes is a political struggle. They, therefore, recognised the struggle for a 5 Kopeck per ruble raise as a 'class struggle,' not wishing to see the higher, more developed, nationwide class struggle as politics. The 'Economists' recognised the rudimentary class struggle and did not recognise it in its developed form. In other words the 'Economists' recognised in the class struggle only that which was most tolerable from the viewpoint of the liberal bourgeoisie, refusing to go further than the liberals, refusing to acknowledge the higher class struggle which is unacceptable to the liberals. The 'Economists' were thus becoming liberal workman politicians. They in this way, rejected the Marxist revolutionary concept of the class struggle.

Further. It is not enough to say that the class struggle becomes real, consistent and developed only when it embraces the sphere of politics. In politics, too, it is possible to limit oneself to petty details, or one can go deeper, right down to essentials. Marxism recognises the class struggle as fully developed 'nationwide' only when it embraces not only politics but also takes in politics the most essential thing: the structure of state power.

Conversely, liberalism, when the workers' movement has somewhat gained in strength, no longer dares to deny the class struggle, but tries to narrow, clip, castrate the concept of the class struggle. Liberalism is ready to recognise the class struggle in the sphere of politics but on the one condition that it does not include the structure of state power. It is not hard to understand what class interests of the bourgeoisie give rise to this liberal distortion of the concept of the class struggle." (22).

It is to the CPB's credit that at various times it has tried to lead the

working class as a class (as it did in the struggle against the Industrial Relations Act in 1971), but it has never (with the exception of its clear and basically correct stand against British imperialism in northern Ireland) made the slightest attempt to lead the working class on an issue which brings into question the structure of state power (for example; the replacement of the standing army by the universally armed people, or the election of judges). How could it do these things, when it has no political programme, no revolutionary democratic demands with which to mobilise the masses in struggle against the bourgeois state, and therefore no perspective whatever for combining the economic with the political struggle, the struggle for better wages and conditions with the struggle against the structure of state power. Thus we see that far from furthering the political development and political organization of the working class - which we re-iterate is the purpose of party-building - the CPB does its utmost to restrict the terrain of the proletariat's struggle to that of the struggle for economic aims.

The particular aspect of economism that is characteristically developed by the CPB is its attempt to force the attention of the working class exclusively on itself. Lenin writes: "Those who concentrate the attention, observation and consciousness of the working class exclusively, or even mainly, on itself are not Social-Democrats; for its self-realization is indissolubly bound up not only with a fully clear theoretical - it would be even more true to say not so much with a theoretical, as with a practical understanding, of the relationships between all the various classes of modern society, acquired through experience of political life. That is why the idea preached by our economists, that the economic struggle is the most widely applicable means of drawing the masses into the political movement is so extremely harmful and extremely reactionary in its practical significance." (23) The CPB's method is simple: it denies the existence of other classes! For the CPB there are no small shop-keepers (the classic example of the petty-bourgeoisie, owning property but working themselves and not exploiting wage labour), no small fishermen, owning a boat and net but going out to fish themselves, no schoolteachers for example earning a wage but producing no surplus value. No, as far as the CPB is concerned, there are only two classes in Britain - the working class and the capitalist class (see p5 of 'The British Working Class and Its Party.'). Lenin describes the political development of the workers which the communists will bring about by educating them about the other classes: "... the most backward worker will understand, or will feel that the students and members of religious sects, the muzhiks and the authors are being abused and outraged by the very same dark forces that are oppressing and crushing him at every step of his life, and, feeling that, he will himself be filled with an irresistible desire to respond to these things, and then he will organise catcalls against the censors one day, another day he will demonstrate outside the house of a governor who has brutally suppressed a peasant uprising, another day he will teach a lesson to the gendarmes in surplices who are doing the work of the holy inquisition, etc.. As yet we have done very little, almost nothing, to hurl universal and fresh exposures among the mass of workers. Many of us do not yet appreciate the bound-en duty that rests upon us, but spontaneously trail in the wake of the 'drab everyday struggle,' in the narrow confines of factory life." (24) But the CPB will certainly not contribute to this development with its attempts to fool the workers into believing that besides the capitalists there is only one other amorphous class (the Marxist definition of the working class is that class which by its exploitation produces not only material wealth but also its own opposite - capital. The CPB obviously prefers the classic revisionist 'alternative' definition - wage earners.) If the line of the CPB were successful the working class would in no way be prepared to lead the people (a concept which obviously must be meaningless to the CPB) to smash the bourgeois state, but on the contrary would be isolated from its allies.

The economism of the RCLB is more concealed, as indeed it has to be if it is to escape detection, following the widespread criticism of the econ-

omism of the CPB. The Manifesto of the RCL contains no such blätant economism as that to be found in the publications of the CPB, but there is one very important point in common - just like the CPB, the RCL put forward no programme of political demands with which to educate, mobilise and lead the working class, and, as in the case of the CPB, the reason is quite simply that the RCL has no intention of leading the working class in political struggle.

If the working class is to lead the whole people in overthrowing the bourgeois state, it must organise itself and the masses generally on each and every issue that that the bourgeois state attacks the people on - on the health front, on the educational front, on the question of police repression, on the oppression of racial and national minorities - and in order for it to do this the communists must propagate correct programmatic demands. The working class must also organise itself as a class to fight for its own economic interests - against piece-work, overtime, shiftwork, the length of the working day, and so on. The RCL though makes no attempt to lead the working class in either of these things. In its August 1979 issue of 'Revolution,' the RCL try to refute these accusations in the article 'The Anti-League Faction.' (which is their name for ourselves) and in so doing reveal how deep-rooted is their economism and how profound their ignorance of the elementary aspects of Marxism which we have just outlined. They try to dodge the accusation of economism by saying (in reply to our criticism that they work only in individual factories) "Of course the RCL does not work in all factories. It could not!" (p7). What utter bankruptcy this reveals! We do not criticise the RCL for not working in every factory in Britain - such a criticism would be absurdly idealist - our criticism of the RCL is that it makes no attempt to lead the working class as a class, but rather confines its practical activities to the individual economic struggles within whatever factories it works in. The RCL boasts that it is "a national organization with branches in over half-a-dozen towns and cities," why then, comrades of the RCL, don't you try to lead the working class nationally?

Our accusation that the RCL's line of 'directing all mass work to the working class' is in fact an economist attempt to dodge the question of state power is dismissed by them as a revisionist attack on the "general aim of ensuring that the revolutionary Communist Party will be a party organised primarily on factory branches." (p8). That the RCL could come to this conclusion shows very clearly that they have understood nothing as a result of the two-line struggle in the RCL. We are in full agreement with the aim of primarily organising in factory branches - but if these branches are to be organs leading the struggle for political power, i.e., the struggle for the conquest of state power, these factory branches must be bases from which the workers and the people are led in united political struggle against the bourgeois state, not mountain strongholds of individual groups of workers isolated from the rest of their class and from the people as a whole, which is the inevitable consequence of the RCL's practice of on the one hand leading only individual economic struggles and on the other hand ignoring the struggle of the people as a whole.

In similar vein, the RCL try to wriggle off the hook by pointing out that nearly all their factory bulletins carry material on various political issues. This is certainly true, but what use are articles, comrades of the RCL, if you don't try to lead the masses (i.e., if you don't try to organise the workers) in practical class struggle on the issues you raise in those bulletins? The whole point of Marxism is that it provides the theoretical insight into how to change the world; and it is to a large degree through actual practice of struggling to change the world that the working class will come to understand concretely how to change the world - it is only through their own experience that the masses will come to this understanding. These matters the RCL doesn't understand at all and tries to reduce the role of the communists to one of bystanders shouting from the touchline.

It is a fact as the RCL point in their article, that factories are

places where the workers learn to unite, but they are also places where the workers are subject to competition with other workers imposed on them by the bourgeoisie. What the workers learn spontaneously in factories is trade unionism; only practical leadership in political struggle, especially against the structure of state power, can teach them to fight for their independent class interests. In the words of the 'Communist Manifesto';

"Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battles lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever-expanding union of the workers. This union is helped on by the improved means of communication that are created by modern industry, and that place the workers of different localities in contact with one another. It was just this contact that was needed to centralise the numerous local struggles, all of the same character, into one national struggle between classes. But every class struggle is a political struggle. And that union, to attain which the burghers of the middle ages, with their miserable highways, required centuries, the modern proletarians, thanks to railways, achieve in a few years.

This organization of the proletarians into a class, and consequently into a political party, is continually being upset again by the competition between the workers themselves. But it ever rises up again, stronger, firmer, mightier. It compels legislative recognition of particular interests of the workers, by taking advantage of the divisions among the bourgeoisie itself. Thus the ten-hours bill in England was carried." (25)

A major contributory factor to the RCL's economism is their line that there is a 'contradiction' between "party-building and mass work." (see for example, p 12 of 'Revolution' November 1978.) A whole series of public meetings were organised in the RCL during the period of its two-line struggle, meetings to which the working class were not invited and at which the problems of the objective class struggle were not, by and large, discussed. Likewise, the RCL, in 1977 and 1978, organised demonstrations on the occasion of the anniversary of the Soviet Union's invasion of Czechoslovakia, which were not at all the culmination of mass campaigns to arouse and mobilise the masses (leaving aside the question of the opportunist content of the demonstrations) but which were simply sectarian demonstrations of a few dozen communists. This line is nothing less than the old Russian economists line of the political struggle for the intellectuals, whilst leaving the working class to get on with the economic struggle. We can think of no better way to end these few words on economism than with the following words of Lenin, which point out vividly the urgent need for the political development and political organization of the working class, a task which the RCL thinks is in 'contradiction' to party-building, rather than grasping that it is the purpose of party-building.

"...we are not children to be fed on the thin gruel of 'economic' politics alone; we want to know everything that others know, we want to know the details of all aspects of political life and to take part actively in every single political event. In order to do this, the intellectuals must talk to us less of what we already know, and tell us more about what we do not yet know and what we can never learn from our factory and 'economic' experience, that is, you must give us political knowledge." (26).

Spontaneism naturally goes hand-in-hand with economism. Economism in political life is but an expression of worshipping the spontaneous level of development of the working class movement. Needless to say, the CPB and the RCL - the two ugly sisters of the British Marxist-Leninist movement - have much in common on the question of spontaneism as they do on the question of economism. The spontaneism of the CPB has been thoroughly criticised over the years and at present it is unnecessary for us to go into great detail on this matter. What is necessary is to show how, with the exposure of the spontaneism of the CPB, the RCL have taken upon them-

raise questions in practice until the masses themselves raise the questions is the RCL's escape-hatch from the awful necessity of having to fight against bourgeois ideological influence in the working class movement; influence which can be defeated only by fighting in word and deed for revolutionary politics. This question has a particular importance in the present period when party-building is the central task. An essential aspect of party-building is to organise the advanced elements of the working class in the ranks of the communists. This is a task which requires practice - what else do we organise for? How do the advanced workers come forward except in the course of practice? The policy of the RCL boils down to belittling the conscious element and worshipping spontaneity, in particular it refuses to give leadership to the workers to organise themselves. The RCL believes that sooner or later the workers will decide for themselves to organise themselves on the question of Zimbabwe and then the RCL will organise factory collections etc.. But in reality to refuse to raise these burning questions of politics in word and in deed is to ensure that the working class movement will remain at the level of trade unionism. In Lenin's well-known words:

"Since there can be no talk of an independent ideology being developed by the masses of the workers themselves in the process of their movement the only choice is: either the bourgeois or the socialist ideology. There is no middle course (for humanity has not created a 'third' ideology, and moreover, in a society torn by class antagonisms there never can be a non-class or above-class ideology). Hence, to belittle the socialist ideology in any way, to turn away from it in the slightest degree means to strengthen bourgeois ideology. There is a lot of talk of spontaneity, but the spontaneous development of the working class movement leads to its becoming subordinated to the bourgeois ideology, leads to its developing according to the programme of the Credo, for the spontaneous working class movement is trade unionism, ...and trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie. Hence, our task, the task of Social-Democracy, is to combat spontaneity, to divert the working class movement from this spontaneous, trade-unionist striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary Social-Democracy." (29).

Even in their propaganda, the RCL fail miserably to carry out systematic education to imbue the working class with a scientific understanding of their position, of that of other classes and of what to do about it. The RCL (as do the CPB) liquidate propaganda, treat the working class with contempt and assume that the role of the workers' newspaper is that of a simpleton's guide to Marxism. To take one concrete example from 'Class Struggle:' in every issue of this allegedly mainly propagandist paper, the word 'bosses' is used to describe each and every form that the bourgeois class enemy manifests itself in. The RCL think that they are popularising Marxism by doing this, but in reality they are vulgarising it. Part of the process of party-building is to give the advanced workers the theoretical understanding that will enable him to become a communist. The advanced worker needs to understand that the class enemy is far more than the 'boss' who directly exploits him: he needs to learn how capital is created by the accumulation of surplus value squeezed out of his class and how daily exploitation of the working class means daily reproduction of its enemy - capital and the capitalist class; he must understand above all that the bourgeoisie have a state - the ideal collective body of all the capitalists - which oppresses him through the army, the policeman, the Department of Health and Social Security, the social worker, the teacher, etc., (and of course he must understand many other things about many other things). Without this understanding the advanced worker cannot become a communist, and if the advanced workers do not become communists, a workers' party cannot be built except in name. In the period when party-building is the central task, it is vital, if we are to build a workers' party and not a sect of intellectuals, that the workers are imbued with a comprehensive scientific consciousness, as Lenin said: "In order to become a

selves the task of peddling this pernicious doctrine, albeit in necessarily subtler form. (We make no apologies for criticising at length the RCL - it is necessary to do so as no systematic criticism such as that which has been written on the CPB yet exists on the RCL; and we, as an organization whose origins lie in the RCL, have a particular responsibility to undertake this criticism).

The CPB, contrary to the teachings of Lenin and the whole experience of the international proletariat, which shows that the working class, left to itself, can develop only trade union consciousness, declares that: "Our party, founded by industrial workers, must be a part of our class, must in every sense belong to our class. If we say such a party is based on the working class as it must be to be revolutionary, then it cannot be above the working class, an intellectual force based on the theory of Marx separate from the working class. In fact the intellect and the leadership must come from the working class, for it is this class force that makes revolution possible. In a word, Marxism is not a separate theory, an intellectual force to be bestowed on the working class but is in fact, a derivative of that class." (27). This outlook has profoundly influenced the practice of the CPB in the years since its founding - why else has it not produced a programme, why else does it not publish a theoretical journal and why else does it refuse to educate scientifically the working class in the pages of its paper 'The Worker' and instead rest content with banal, trite and superficial articles which educate nobody and lead nowhere.

Superficially, the RCL is quite different. Hasn't it published a Manifesto? And doesn't it produce a theoretical journal? But - and here's the rub - these things are not for the consumption of workers, after all, there's a contradiction between party-building and mass work. When we examine the 'mass work' of the RCL, we see that it too refuses to take scientific consciousness to the working class and thus perpetuates the bourgeois political domination of the working class movement. The parrot-cry which the RCL use to try to justify their faint-heartedness, pessimism and cowardice in mass work, their persistent refusal to go beyond the economic struggle, is the 'mass line.' The 'mass line' is an excuse used by the RCL to justify tailing behind the spontaneous level of development of the working class movement; it is spontaneism in the form of tailism which is the RCL's forte. The mass line can certainly tell us what the masses feel and think, it can help us to formulate correct tactics, it can never, by itself, tell us what the correct line is. Do we need the mass line to tell us that we must expell the US bases? That we must fight in solidarity with the people of Zimbabwe? That we must demand an end to immigration controls? The mass line will certainly tell us what particular erroneous thinking is preventing the masses from embracing these correct policies and therefore tell us in what particular direction we must aim our propaganda and agitation, but never can it tell us that these policies are incorrect, no matter what the masses think. As Lenin put it: "... a revolutionary Marxist differs from the ordinary philistine and petty bourgeois by his ability to preach to the uneducated masses that the maturing revolution is necessary, to prove that it is inevitable, to explain its benefits to the people, and to prepare the proletariat and all the toiling and exploited masses for it." (28). This the RCL refuse to do and cringe before the task of taking up the struggle against the bourgeoisie for the leadership of the working class movement.

For example, during the RCL's Zimbabwe campaign, the majority on their political committee pushed through a minute which said that factory collections should only be organized (these were collections for raising the money necessary to send a Land-Rover to Zimbabwe) if they were "in conformity with the level of consciousness of the workers." (we regret that we must quote unpublished minutes, but we are forced to do so as the RCL have not dared to explain publically why they abandoned their Zimbabwe work). How on earth do the RCL propose to raise the level of consciousness of the workers, except by raising the question of Zimbabwe practically in the factories? The most generally and widely applicable way of raising the question is precisely factory collections. This spontaneism of refusing to

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Social-Democrat, the worker must have a clear picture in his mind of the economic nature and the social and political features of the landlord and the priest, the high state official and the peasant, the student and the tramp; he must know their strong and weak points; he must see the meaning of all the sophisms and catchwords by which each class and each stratum camouflages its selfish strivings and its real 'inside workings'; he must understand what interests certain institutions and certain laws reflect and how they reflect him." (30). The low theoretical level of the workers - even the advanced workers - does not at all mean that we should pander to it and lower the theoretical level of our propaganda; quite the opposite, only by making demands on these workers, by helping them to and insisting that they study, can they raise their level and then the level of the mass of workers, again to quote Lenin:

"The newspaper that wants to become the organ of all Russian Social-Democrats must...be at the level of the advanced workers; not only must it not lower its level artificially, but, on the contrary, it must raise it constantly, it must follow up all the tactical, political, and theoretical problems of world Social-Democracy. Only then will the demands of the working-class intelligentsia be met, and it itself will take the cause of the Russian workers and consequently, the cause of the Russian revolution, into its own hands... The average worker will not understand some of the articles in a newspaper that aims to be the organ of the Party, he will not be able to get a full grasp of an intricate theoretical or practical problem. This does not at all mean that the newspaper must lower itself to the level of the mass of its readers. The newspaper, on the contrary must raise their level and help promote advanced workers from the middle stratum of workers." (31).

Hand-in-hand with the economism and spontaneism of the RCL walks the grossest sectarianism - a matter on which it has nothing to learn from the CPB. The RCL's theory that there is a contradiction between party-building and mass work is in diametrical opposition to Lenin's correct thesis that party-building is "uniting the working class movement and scientific socialism." The RCL wish to emulate not the Bolsheviks who built up their party in inseparable connection with the working class movement, but the nineteenth century socialist sects such as Hyndman's Social-Democratic Federation who refused to take Marxism to the working class movement. Lenin summed up much experience of the working class movement in Europe when he wrote:

"At first socialism and the working class movement existed separately in all the European countries. The workers struggled against the capitalists, they organised strikes and unions, whilst the socialists stood aside from the working class movement, formulated doctrines criticising the contemporary, capitalist, bourgeois system of society and demanding its replacement by another system, the higher socialist system. The separation of the working class movement and socialism gave rise to weakness and underdevelopment in each: the theories of the socialists, unfused with the workers' struggle, remained nothing more than utopias, good wishes that had no effect on real life; the working class movement remained petty, fragmented, and did not acquire political significance, was not enlightened by the advanced science of its time. For this reason we see in all European countries a constantly growing urge to fuse socialism with the working class movement. When the fusion takes place the class struggle of the workers becomes the conscious struggle of the proletariat to emancipate itself from exploitation by the propertied classes, it is evolved into a higher form of the socialist workers' movement - the independent working-class Social-Democratic party...He who does not wish to recognise this fusion, he who tries to draw some sort of artificial line of demarcation between the working class movement and Social-Democracy in Russia renders no service but does harm to workers' socialism

The consequence of the RCL's belief that there is a contradiction between party-building and mass work is their attempt to build up the party as an irrelevant sect of intellectuals, totally divorced from the struggle of the working class. The objective of party-building is to organise the best elements of the working class as a political party, only then can the theory of scientific socialism become a material force and change the world. But the RCL, in Lenin's words try "to draw some sort of artificial line of demarcation between the working class movement and Social-Democracy." The RCL is on the one hand sublimely unconcerned with the objective needs of the working class struggle and makes no attempt to formulate correct policies and demands to lead the working class against the capitalists and their state, matters on which 'Class Struggle' gives no concrete guidance whatsoever (there are of course articles in 'Class Struggle' concerning, say, the health system, but the line of these articles is no way directed against the state. As all economists inevitably do, where the RCL takes up a political issue, it adopts a reformist position in defence of the imperialist state apparatus and its organization of the oppression of the people - for example, in the issue of 'Class Struggle' for June 14th. to 27th. 1978, showing such touching faith in the bourgeois state as to say "...who cares about the National Health Service. Who cares? We care! Its our health service and health workers and action groups are fighting fiercely to save it." - instead of attacking this apparatus by means of revolutionary democratic demands for, in this instance, peoples' control of the health system.) On the other hand the RCL organises cliquish activities of itself and a few other communists. Typical of such activities were the 'party-building' meeting of April 29th 1978 of the RCL and the QWM, and the demonstration in January this year against the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea - all of which took place with no attempt to mobilise mass support - whilst on the objective requirements of the class struggle in Britain and the world the RCL will do nothing. The particular contribution the British working class could make to the people of Kampuchea fighting for national liberation would be to expose and attack the attempts of the British government to get their claws into Kampuchea, but this does not occur to the RCL and we look in vain for the RCL to organise a mass campaign for a withdrawal from NATO, to organise a demonstration against Muzorewa and Smith on their visit to London, to give a concrete lead to the working class fight against the government's vicious attacks on the working class and their unions. No, the RCL is a sect, a sect in the true sense of the word, a clique of 'true believers' who exist purely for ideological self-cultivation, who are totally irrelevant to the working class and people, who have neither the desire nor the ability to further the political development and political organization of the working class, which is what party-building is all about.

The purpose of this introduction has been to elaborate, in greater detail than would be appropriate in our resolution, one fundamental point - that the principal contradiction in party-building is that between the working class movement and scientific socialism. We have shown that the political errors of the CPB and the RCL on the question of party-building, their economism, spontaneism, and in the case of the RCL, its sectarianism, stem theoretically from failing to grasp the nature of party-building and the principal contradiction in the process of party-building.

The resolution we publish here, and also this introduction, mainly concern themselves with this question, and so do not have much to say about more specific political questions. But as we have amply shown, opportunism on the question of party-building is inseparably bound up with opportunism on those concrete questions, both national and international, which confront the working class of Britain. Those who bow down in awe before the spontaneous level of development of the working class movement, who refuse to lead the working class in political struggle, who isolate themselves from the working class movement, are inevitably those who practice social-chauvinism and who embellish and defend the bourgeois state. The way

out of all these errors, the way to build a party which is inseparably connected with the working class movement and which leads it in a revolutionary struggle to overthrow the bourgeois state is to fight for the programme of the British communists. We intend therefore to produce systematic criticism of the social-chauvinist and revisionist political line of both the CPB and the RCL. These will be major contributions to the programmatic struggle which is presently the key link in the struggle to rebuild the communist party of the working class.

THE WAYFORWARD IN RE-BUILDING THE COMMUNIST PARTY.

The necessity of the communist party.

The fundamental process of our epoch is the process of proletarian world revolution. In Britain there is a national process which is a part of the international one. It is the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The underlying contradiction is the one between the productive forces and the relations of production. This brings forth and will be resolved by revolution. The main protagonists and the principal contradiction as long as the process in Britain last is that between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

The concrete nature of the principal contradiction determines the nature of its resolution.

The revolution that the proletariat will lead is distinguished not only in content, but also in form, from the previous revolutions. The proletarian revolution has the content or task of sweeping aside the capitalist relations of production holding back the productive forces. These capitalist relations of production consist of private ownership of the means of production - i.e. private producers, producing independently of one another, whereby the social character of labour only asserts itself indirectly via the exchange of products. The aim of the proletarian revolution is to replace these relations of production with the conscious, directly social labour of the freely associated working people. Hence the following remarks by Stalin on some main differences between the proletarian and the bourgeois revolution:

"The bourgeois revolution usually begins when there exist more or less finished forms of the capitalist order, forms which have grown and ripened within the womb of feudal society prior to the open revolution; whereas the proletarian revolution begins when finished forms of the socialist order are either absent or almost completely absent. 2. The main task of the bourgeois revolution consists in seizing power and making it conform to the already existing bourgeois economy, whereas the main task of the proletarian revolution consists in seizing power in order to build up a new socialist economy. 3. The bourgeois revolution is usually consummated with the seizure of power, whereas in the proletarian revolution the seizure of power is only the beginning, and power is used as a lever for transforming the old economy and organizing the new one." (1)

In form the proletarian revolution involves destroying the old state apparatus, instead of merely occupying and modifying the old apparatus, and putting in its place a new type of state like the Paris commune "the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economic emancipation of labour." (2).

Now any class in the course of pursuing its interests needs a party. But how much more then does the proletariat need a party in the light of the supreme role that consciousness plays in the proletarian revolution. Whereas capitalism developed spontaneously and dragged the bourgeois revolution in its wake, the proletariat will only succeed in creating the preconditions for socialism (the revolution) and in constructing socialism when it does so consciously.

The nature of the communist party.

The nature of the communist party is determined by its tasks.

The communist party is partisan. It understands that only socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat can emancipate the working class and pave the way to the future classless, communist, society which will liberate

all mankind. The communist party therefore explicitly takes its stand on the basis of the principles of Marxism-Leninism, the theory of scientific socialism, the only theory which can successfully lead the struggle of the proletariat.

The communist party is a vanguard party. The communist party marches at the head of the working class movement and represents the interests of the movement as a whole, and must not limit itself to fighting for what the masses already feel and think. The communist party has therefore within its ranks only the most conscious elements of the proletariat and the other revolutionary people, those who understand theoretically the necessity for revolution. It is therefore an organization of revolutionaries which maintains the strictest distinction between itself and the non-party masses in order to prevent the party's scientific consciousness being swamped by theoretical and political distortions, which is the inevitable consequence of failing to maintain such a distinction.

As the party's task is to lead the masses in a revolution which must be the act of the masses themselves and not of a conspiratorial sect, it is essential that at every stage of the revolutionary struggle the party is inseparably bound up with the masses and leads them forward to revolution, relying on the experience of the masses themselves. Democratic-centralism is the organizational principle which will make this possible. Only an organization with cells functioning where the proletariat and the people work and live can systematically assimilate the experience of all parts of the proletariat and people. The communist party cannot lead the masses if the decisions of its leading bodies are not based on a sound knowledge of the masses at any given time.

In order that the party can actually lead the proletariat and the people against the bourgeoisie along the line laid down by its leading body on the basis of Marxism-Leninism applied to the concrete situation in class struggle, other aspects of democratic-centralism are of vital importance. The party must be the embodiment of organization and discipline. A member of the communist party must work actively in the party, and the party as a whole practices a system of democratic-centralism, with higher and lower leading bodies, with subordination of the minority to the majority and with practical decisions being binding on all members of the party, whilst practicing the widest possible democracy inside the party. In order to fulfill its tasks the communist party must possess unity of will - factions are impermissible in the communist party. The party's essential unity of action is inconceivable unless all party members share the same aims. The party's aims are crystallised in the party programme which all members must support without reservation. The source of factionalism in the party is opportunist elements which must be purged if the party is to achieve unity of will and action. The party grows strong by purging itself of opportunist elements.

The decisive process at present.

The proletariat must build a party and this is the decisive process taking place now - the party-building process of the proletariat.

There are other contradictions forming part of the major process in Britain from imperialism to socialism, from the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie to the dictatorship of the proletariat, but it is the party-building process of the proletariat which is the decisive process at present. The principal contradiction in this process is the contradiction between the working class movement and scientific socialism. There is struggle and unity in this contradiction.

The unity between the working class movement and scientific socialism.

In the 'Communist Manifesto' Marx and Engels write of the communists:

"They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole. They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement ...theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement ...the theoretical conclusions of the communists are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented, or discovered by this or that would-be universal reformer. They merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from an historical movement going on under our very eyes." (3).

Later, in the same text, they write:

"When people speak of ideas that revolutionize society, they do but express the fact, that within the old society, the elements of a new one have been created, and that the dissolution of the old ideas keeps even pace with the dissolution of the old conditions of society." (4).

Scientific socialism expresses theoretically the insight into the nature of the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, into the way it must develop and into the method for resolving it. Just as the development of history is on the side of the proletariat, so this objective, scientific theory is a theory which takes side with the proletariat. It expresses the essential interests of the working class movement. In this sense there is unity between the working class movement and scientific socialism.

The struggle between the working class movement and scientific socialism.

The development of bourgeois society forces the working class to struggle spontaneously.

"The proletariat goes through various stages of development. With its birth begins its struggle with the bourgeoisie...But with the development of industry the proletariat not only increases in number; it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows, and it feels that strength more...Thereupon the workers begin to form combinations...Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battle lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever-expanding union of the workers ...This organization of the proletarians into a class, and consequently into a political party, is continually being upset again by the competition between the workers themselves. But it ever rises up again, stronger, firmer, mightier...The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the labourers, due to competition, by their revolutionary combination." (5).

But the spontaneous development of the working class movement has limits, as the following remarks of Lenin's regarding 'Social-Democracy' (the term used to describe communism at that time) make clear:

"We have said that their could not yet be Social-Democratic consciousness among the workers. It could only be brought to them from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness...The theory of socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical and economic theories that were elaborated by the educated representatives of the propertied classes, the intellectuals...the theoretical doctrine of social-democracy arose quite independently of the spontaneous growth of the working class movement, it arose as a natural and inevitable outcome of the development of ideas among the revolutionary socialist

intelligentsia." (6).

Lenin quotes Kautsky on the same topic:

"The vehicle of science is not the proletariat, but the bourgeois intelligentsia; it was in the minds of individual members of this stratum that modern socialism originated...This socialist consciousness is something introduced into the proletarian class struggle from without and not something that arose within it spontaneously...the task of social-democracy is to imbue the proletariat with the consciousness of its position and the consciousness of its tasks. There would be no need for this if consciousness arose of itself from the class struggle..."

Lenin continues:

"Since there can be no talk of an independent ideology being developed by the mass of the workers themselves in the process of their movement the only choice is: either the bourgeois or the socialist ideology...There is a lot of talk about spontaneity, but the spontaneous development of the working class movement leads to its becoming subordinated to the bourgeois ideology..." (7).

We can see from this that the working class movement and scientific socialism developed historically independently of one another and also that the spontaneous ideology of the working class movement is bourgeois and therefore diametrically opposed to scientific socialism. In this much it is obviously correct to speak of struggle between the working class movement and scientific socialism.

Party-building.

The party-building process of the proletariat consists in uniting scientific socialism with the working class movement.

When the theory of scientific socialism was first elaborated by Marx and Engels it was they who were the first to scientifically demonstrate that on the one hand socialism requires the struggle of the working class for its realization and that on the other hand only socialism can emancipate the working class. Where the process of the unification of socialism and the working class movement has been successful, great historical advances have been made, most notably in the Russian socialist revolution of 1917. Where this process has been unsuccessful, for example in the imperialist countries of western Europe, the bourgeoisie has continued to dominate the working class movement ideologically and in general confine its activities to those of narrow trade unionism - the mere struggle for better terms and conditions for the sale of labour-power. Until the working class is led by scientific socialism it cannot emancipate itself.

A false understanding of the relationship between the working class movement and scientific socialism is, on the one hand, economism, spontaneism and tailism, errors which have plagued the movement in Britain. Economism - the line of "lending the economic struggle itself a political character" (8) and the consequent refusal (or inability) to lead the working class in struggle against the most important thing in politics, the structure of state power - has manifested itself as calling the wages struggle a "guerill - a struggle against capitalism" (9) and as 'base-building' - leading the workers in the economic struggle only and splitting them off from the people as a whole. Spontaneism - the belief that the working class will arrive spontaneously at an understanding of scientific socialism - exists in the form of the open avowal of this reactionary theory and in the more subtle form of proposing to do only what the working class already wants to do. Both of these errors - often justified by an opportunist misuse of the 'mass line' - deny the responsibility of communists to propagate a leading line to the working class and attempt to justify tailing behind the

spontaneous development of the working class movement and thus perpetuate the separation of the working class movement and scientific socialism. The other side of this medallion is sectarianism - the attempt to build a party of 'true believers' isolated from the working class movement. One manifestation of this is 'party-building meetings' (as opposed to mass meetings) and demonstrations to which the working class is not invited and where the real problems of the real working class and the tasks of this class in real class struggle are not discussed. This sectarianism is justified on the grounds of an arbitrarily conceived-of 'contradiction' between 'party-building and mass work' and leads to ideological and organizational self-cultivation of the communists and again to the continued separation of the working class movement and scientific socialism.

Theory and practice.

At this point it is necessary to state our position on the relationship between theory and practice. First we must define whose theory and practice we are talking about. If we are talking about the real British proletariat today, then we must note that as a class, nationally, it has no independent coherent practice. Nationally, i.e., as a whole, the proletariat is being led by bourgeois ideology, and it only acts independently, i.e., for itself, in that there are strike waves, i.e., waves of rebellion. But even these strikes for limited economic aims are perverted, misused and misled under the leadership of bourgeois ideology and a bourgeois political line. And it is the first tenet of bourgeois thinking that the proletariat may not act as an independent force. Where the proletariat does act in this way it is not national but in isolated instances, and this is due to leadership by proletarian., i.e., communist theory. There is always a theory behind the practice of any class - the question is whose. Our position is clear: it coincides with the views we have just expounded on scientific socialism and the working class movement. That is what our usefulness consists in - of taking scientific socialism to the working class movement.

If we are talking about the practice and theory of the communists this is a different question. On the basis of the fact that in general 'practice is primary' some communists believe that this justifies them doing something, any activity, as long as it involves being busy in connection with workers. This is a caricature of the statement that practice is primary. And in fact to harp about the primacy of practice at a time when the practice of the working class movement is a bourgeois practice (trade unionism) and when scientific socialism is in a state of theoretical chaos, is, as Lenin put it "like wishing mourners at a funeral 'happy returns of the day!'" The statement that practice is primary means only that theory comes from and serves practice. It is a statement about the relationship between theory and practice and does not serve to choose between them as if they were two alternatives. For this very reason those communists who shut themselves up, claiming that at present theory is primary, producing document after document but doing nothing to see that the class struggle of the working class and people is actually led by proletarian theory have understood the relationship equally badly. It is essential that the communists see not only what is primary in a given contradiction - between theory and practice in the case in question - but also the relationship between the two aspects of the contradiction. If this is not done a metaphysical separation of the two aspects will ensue. There can be no doubt, given the the concrete historical and political of Britain - of an historic contempt for theory, a long tradition of economism, spontaneism and tailism, a workers' movement dominated by reformism, a communist movement dominated by opportunism and revisionism, and where the communists are confronted with the task of drafting the programme - but that it is particularly important to grasp Lenin's well-known words that "...without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement," and that "the role of vanguard fighter can be fulfilled only by a party that is guided by the most advanced theory." (10). It is of greater importance to grasp that the significance of Lenin's thesis lies in the fact that the purpose of theory is to guide practice. As Stalin put it:

"...theory can become a tremendous force in the working class movement if it is built up in indissoluble connection with revolutionary practice; for theory, and theory alone, can give the movement confidence, the power of orientation, and an understanding of the inner relations of surrounding events; for it, and it alone, can help practice to realize not only how and in which direction classes are moving at the present time, but also how and in direction they will move in the future." (11) (our emphasis).

The proletariat needs what theory we now possess and needs it now. Whilst it is essential for the communists to do theoretical work, study and research and generally try to grasp and develop Marxist theory to answer the questions that the proletariat's class struggle is faced with, in as much as we have any answers that will serve the class struggle we must take them to and fight for them in the working class movement. Although without the programme mass work will necessarily be limited in effectiveness, it is essential for the communists to undertake vigorous mass work and to lead the masses to the best of their ability. Unless this done, the communists are not leading the masses to strike what blows it is possible to strike against the bourgeoisie, they are not winning for the revolution the advanced elements of the working class and people, they are not heightening the consciousness and fighting strength of the working class and people, they are not testing their line in practice and they are not training and tempering themselves in battle. To want to do these things is part of class consciousness - to want to hit and weaken the bourgeoisie as much as we can. Those who call this petty-bourgeois impetuosity are imbued with a bourgeois world outlook. An organization that does not want to contribute to actually dealing blows at the bourgeoisie has not got an ounce of class consciousness.

The effect of imperialism on party-building.

The development of capitalism to the stage of monopoly capitalism, of imperialism, has made the struggle to unite the working class movement with scientific socialism more difficult. The objective factors for revolution are over-ripe: the capitalist relations of production have long since become fetters of the productive forces. But the subjective factor, the consciousness of the proletariat and the working people as it expresses itself in the main through the working class movement, is weakened by reformist and revisionist ideas. The prevalence of these ideas in the working class movement has itself an economic basis. This basis is the superprofit extracted from the oppressed nations. With a part of these superprofits the imperialist bourgeoisie bribes and buys the upper stratum of the labour aristocracy and the labour leaders. These bought traitors are pillars of opportunism within the working class movement. It is in their interests to preach class collaboration because class collaboration is a remunerative business for them. They are the principal social prop of the bourgeoisie in the working class movement. It is not in the interests of the working class as a whole to heed such bourgeois ideas. Nonetheless these ideas do influence the working class movement. There is also an economic basis for the influence of the treacherous minority on the great mass of workers. This basis consists in the - compared with the living conditions of the oppressed peoples - favourable living conditions of sections of the proletariat in the imperialist countries which conceal during the short periods of seemingly calm development the immensely increased rate of exploitation of the labour of society. It must be emphasised that it is only the upper stratum of the labour aristocracy and the labour leaders who have actually been bought off by the bourgeoisie. We utterly repudiate the position that the whole of the working class of imperialist Britain is being bribed. Those who hold this theory are denying that the basis of imperialist capital is the exploitation of the working class of the metropoles.

The pivot of the tactics of the communists in the working class movement must be based precisely on the difference between the interests of the bribed labour aristocracy and the great masses of the working class. Lenin summarises:

2On the one hand, there is the tendency of the bourgeoisie and the opportunists to convert a handful of very rich and privileged nations into 'eternal' parasites on the body of the rest of mankind...On the other hand, there is the tendency of the masses, who are more oppressed than before and who bear the whole brunt of imperialist wars, to cast off this yoke and to overthrow the bourgeoisie. It is in the struggle between these two tendencies that the history of the labour movement will now inevitably develop." (12).

Lenin re-iterates, with emphasis:

"Engels draws a distinction between the 'bourgeois labour party' of the old trade unions - the privileged minority - and the 'lowest mass', the real majority, and appeals to the latter, who are not infected by 'bourgeois respectability.' This is the essence of Marxist tactics!...and it is therefore our duty...to go down lower and deeper, to the real masses; this is the whole meaning and whole purport of the struggle against opportunism. By exposing the fact that the opportunists and social-chauvinists are in reality betraying and selling the interests of the masses, that they are defending the temporary privileges of a minority of workers, that they are the vehicles of bourgeois ideas and influences, that they are really allies and agents of the bourgeoisie, we teach the masses to appreciate their true political interests, to fight for socialism and for the revolution through all the long and painful; vicissitudes of imperialist wars and imperialist armistices." (13).

Those who consider the whole working class to be bribed, and who cannot distinguish between the bribed minority on the one hand and the exploited majority on the other, have of course no pivot for their tactics. Frankly, they have no basis for revolutionary activity at all. If the capitalists could buy off the whole working class, then the existence of the capitalist class would be compatible with the interests of the working class, so there would be no revolution. Our position is clear. The socialist revolution is in the interests of the great majority of the working class. The economic basis for victory over opportunism is the exploitation of the working class. The economic basis for the influence of the bribed minority on the majority is weak because it is temporary and partial. Each crisis undermines the basis of their influence by increasing the burden of imperialism on the working masses. It is on this basis that the communists must take up the fight against opportunism in the working class movement in order to prepare the working class to lead the whole people in overthrowing the bourgeoisie.

What phase of the development of the relationship between the working class movement and scientific socialism are we at?

The communist party is the conscious, organized embodiment of the theory of scientific socialism which alone can emancipate the working class. The whole history of the international proletariat shows that without the leadership of the communist party the working classes of the various countries cannot emancipate themselves and the people.

The British working class has had no party to lead its struggle for nearly forty years. The old Communist Party of Great Britain, after years of vacillation, finally succumbed to imperialist pressure, in the form of social-chauvinism, in 1941, when it propagated the reactionary theory of 'defence of the fatherland.' It systematized its revisionism after the last world war with a class collaborationist line and abandoned the task of leading the working class to the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

We have shown that the nature of the contradiction between scientific socialism and the working class movement is such that there cannot be a social-

ist revolution in Britain until this contradiction is resolved by the working class consciously embracing scientific socialism as embodied in the working class vanguard, the communist party. But at present in Britain there is no communist party. The working class is not led by scientific socialism and its vanguard does not stand as one organization organized on the basis of scientific socialism. The class is still dominated by bourgeois ideology and its vanguard is either not organized or is split up in various organizations. Potential members of the future communist party are in part not organized, in part still organized in reformist, revisionist and Trotskyist organizations, and in part in small communist circles. Rebuilding the communist party is presently therefore the central task in the British revolution.

The key link at present in rebuilding the party is the struggle for the programme.

We have already named the two poles in the process of building the party - the working class movement and scientific socialism. To define the specific key task facing us we must ask what is preventing the working class movement from embracing scientific socialism. Can the communists blame the working class movement and claim that party-building is not making decisive strides forward because the British working class do not struggle enough? No, the working class in Britain has a splendid history of struggle and the working class movement has developed as far as it can when left to its spontaneous development. No, the problem lies in the development of scientific socialism, with the communists. Theoretical weaknesses amongst the communists have time and again allowed opportunism to gain the upper hand over scientific socialism, from the lurch of the CPGB into 'defence of the fatherland' in 1939, to the present situation where scientific socialism is being distorted by opportunism in particular in the form of social-chauvinism but also in the form of revisionist notions about the state. Communism is being dragged through the mire. It is this distortion of scientific socialism which is the decisive factor holding back party-building.

To raise scientific socialism out of the mire of opportunism and revisionism as a banner around which to build the party cannot mean to study any aspect of Marxism-Leninism, to write treatises on any aspect of dialectical materialism, to retreat into academic study circles with the intention of remaining in retreat until all conceivable questions have been solved. No - the task is quite specific. What is missing at present is scientific socialism in the form of a document which will serve to lead the working class and people of Britain in the struggle for proletarian revolution. What is needed is the Communist Programme for Britain. The programmatic struggle is the key link because it is a struggle for the ideological and political line for the British revolution. Without this line there will be no communist party. The communist party can be recognised organizationally by two characteristics: on the one hand it unites the Marxist-Leninists, and on the other hand it actually leads the masses. Neither of these tasks can be accomplished without the ideological and political line for the British revolution. For around what should the communists unite? And what will the communists lead the masses with - and where to? It is vital that those who recognise the importance of theory apply themselves to the right task. And this task is to study and fight for the formation of the communist programme. It is not originality that is of importance in this task. What matters is to hold up an accurate, succinct statement on the essential nature and development of present society in Britain and on the resulting epochal aim of the British proletariat as part of its struggle for communism and on the strategy necessary and possible to achieve this aim.

The publication of such a document (and only of such a document) - the communist struggle programme for the working class and people of Britain - will serve in various ways the task of building the party. It will serve to unite those who already make communism their aim, to win back those communists who have been fooled by revisionism and to hold up the banner of communism to the working class and people. The key link at present consists in

the struggle for the formulation of this programme and not for example in 'practice,' 'building a base in the working class,' or any other form of narrow practical activity (concepts which beg the issue altogether, because the content, the politics, of the bases is not explicit. Besides which, what is not explicit is always opportunist, because all spontaneous, implicit, unconscious policies tend to strengthen the bourgeois status quo; it is only possible to defeat the bourgeoisie consciously). Nor can the key link be found in leading any particular struggle of the working class and people. It is not the leading of any one particular struggle which will serve as the key link in uniting the communists, winning the misled away from revisionism and reformism and in holding up a banner for rallying the working class and people to fight for socialist revolution. Nor is it theory in general which is the key link. Nor is 'uniting the communists' which is the key link in building the party. Those who puzzle over whether it is mass work or uniting the communists which is the key link in party-building are posing a false question. They are posing the question formally instead of in terms of content. What can we unite the communists and lead the masses with? On what basis can we unite the communists, on what basis can the masses be led in such a way as will prepare them for and lead them to revolution. The programme is the key link. Each step forward in the struggle towards the programme will help to unite the communists and to lead the masses. Of course it is true that an organization cannot claim to be the communist party until it has united the communists into one organization. And of course it is true that an organization which does not actually lead the working class and people cannot claim to be the communist party. Both of these features are essential to the communist party. But that is not the point at issue. The point at issue is how do we get to the position of uniting the communists and leading the masses. What has to be done to give the process of party-building a decisive blow in that direction. And the answer is the programme.

How do we come by the programme?

By definition, if the process of party-building consists of uniting the working class movement and scientific socialism, then the task of drafting the programme must be shouldered by those who already embrace scientific socialism, i.e., the communists. The task of drafting the programme is essentially one of integrating the universal truths of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of the British revolution. The basic theoretical work - the study of commodities, of capital, of classes, of imperialism, of the strategy of revolution - has already been done in the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao Tsetung. We must study these texts and study also British society in order to apply this indirect experience to the particular conditions of the British revolution. We must study also the programmes of the communists of other countries, recognising that we are but a detachment of the international proletariat.

But this alone is not enough, we must study also the programmatic statements of other Marxist-Leninist organizations in Britain. There is a Marxist-Leninist movement in Britain. There are various communist organizations and there are differences of political line between them. In the final analysis the matters which divide the different communist organizations represent the interests of classes - it cannot be otherwise in a class society, i.e., we are not looking for a party in a vacuum. It is a question of struggle against opportunist currents for a revolutionary programme. This struggle must set the Marxist-Leninist movement in motion and must result in the formulation of the revolutionary programme.

Any attempts to define our task independently of political line are idealist. Those who want to club together, to pool resources (whether by a premature 'commision' or by 'uniting to form larger democratic-centralist organizations' or whatever) to write the programme are trying to cover up the political struggle actually taking place in Britain today - i.e., the struggle between revolution or class collaboration, civil war or defence of the imperialist fatherland, the struggle for revolutionary democracy or support for state oppression. At present the main thing is to actually get

on with the task of propagating and criticising political lines - this is an essential prerequisite for serious programmatic work. The struggle against opportunist currents for a revolutionary programme must be open and public. This is the necessary method in order to draw all possible forces into this struggle. It is liberal and sectarian to avoid criticising the wrong political line of any communist circle. It is only through the struggle between right and wrong that the right line can develop fully and assert itself. This struggle should not take place behind drawn curtains. The course of this struggle should be visible to all who are interested. All who are interested should participate. The lines of unity and demarcation should be visible to all, so that all can control and all can decide.

Opportunist proposals on party-building.

Having stated our views on the struggle to build the communist party it is necessary for us to criticise briefly the views of others on this matter. We cannot at present deal with all the proposals that have been made, but as they all without exception put forward lines which fail to deal with the principal contradiction in party-building - that between the working class movement and scientific socialism - it will suffice for the present to criticise only the most important of them.

The Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) (CPB(M-L)).

This organization stands indicted by the fact that after ten years of existence it has published a programme. It has not done so because it considers, and indeed openly declares, that the working class movement will arrive spontaneously at an understanding of scientific socialism; it therefore disarms the working class by refusing to take to them the most important weapon of the working class, scientific socialism. The other main errors of the CPB - its economism and social-chauvinism - all stem from this fundamental error of refusing to fight to unite the working class movement and scientific socialism, because they refuse to fight for a revolutionary line and therefore succumb to bourgeois ideology. Because the CPB has a complete contempt for ideological and political line it also refuses to criticise the lines of other communist organizations and indeed even to recognise their existence, but this is not its fundamental error, it is merely the consequence of its spontaneism.

The Revolutionary Communist League of Britain (RCLB).

In 1976 the Communist Federation of Britain (M-L) (the predecessor of the RCLB) proposed to the Marxist-Leninists that they should take party-building as the 'central task.' This is correct and the RCL's insistence on this point has had the positive effect of concentrating the minds of the communists on the necessity for a party, but when we ask the RCL to define their terms, i.e., to say what they mean by 'party-building,' we quickly see that their line on the question is not one whit less opportunist than that of the CPB. That this is the case is easily demonstrated by subjecting to close scrutiny the three specific policies with which the RCL propose to build the party. In June 1978 in 'Revolution,' the RCL updated as follows its three specific policies for party-building first put forward in its Manifesto: 1. Unite with the RCL to form the single leading centre for party-building; 2. Criticise the revisionist Birch clique; 3. Continue to criticise small-group mentality. (18).

"Unite with the RCL." For what? To fight in solidarity with the people of Zimbabwe? To expell the US bases? To fight the bourgeoisie's attacks on the working class? NO - to "form the single leading centre for party-building." Here we see how the RCL posits the task of party-building in a manner totally unrelated to the needs of the objective class struggle. This is why the RCL fills page after page of 'Revolution' with incestuous articles on the doings of itself and other communist organizations. This is why at the notorious public meeting of April 29th 1978 a speaker from the floor was ruled out of order on the grounds that it was a 'party-building meeting' when he tried to raise the question of the theory of the

three worlds. The central political questions - of whether to struggle against the structure of state power by mobilising the masses with revolutionary democratic demands such as the replacement of the standing army and the police by the universally armed people; of whether to unconditionally support the liberation struggles of those peoples and nations oppressed by British imperialism or to regard this duty as subordinate to fighting for 'national independence' (i.e., British imperialism); of whether to expell the US bases or to support NATO - all of these questions appear either not at all or only as bit-players in the RCL farce called 'party-building.' This gross sectarianism exists because the RCL sees party-building as something in contradiction to 'mass work' and therefore, instead of getting to grips with the tasks posed by the objective class struggle and thereby uniting the working class movement and scientific socialism, the RCL proposes that the Marxist-Leninists should study their navel and fight only to unite themselves. For the RCL, uniting the communists is the whole of party-building and not merely an aspect of it. The inevitable consequence is the RCL's sectarianism which proposes to build the party in isolation from the mass struggle, and thus, formally different, but in essence exactly the same, the RCL, just like the CPB, proposes to perpetuate the seperation of the working class movement and scientific socialism.

It hardly needs adding that such an opportunist line is as incapable of uniting the communists on a principled basis as it is of leading the masses. The policy of 'unite with the RCL...' is a re-working of the policy first proposed in the RCL's Manifesto of 'unite to form larger democratic-centralist organizations,' updated to take account of the RCL's opinion that it is the leading Marxist-Leninist organization. If two organizations find that they are in fundamental agreement then let them unite, but this really cannot be put forward as a serious method of uniting the communists. It puts forward what is essentially an organizational approach and will therefore not unite the communists, except on an opportunist basis of a 'desire for unity.' The approach denies the importance of struggle and change. It implies that two organizations already with the same line merely join forces to achieve a quantitatively larger organization. Without open struggle between different lines there will be no progress and change, or rather the only change would be quantitative.

"Critcise the revisionist Birch clique." This is a re-hash of the policy first put forward by the CPB in May 1977 of "protracted struggle against incorrect ideological and political lines on the British revolution." (14). This is not wholly wrong - it is necessary to criticise incorrect lines, but a call to struggle against incorrect lines in the abstract is no use (which is the fundamental reason why the call has not been taken up) no, we must struggle against incorrect lines as part and parcel of the concrete aim of drafting the programme of the British communists. From this point of view, the revision of the original policy which narrows the target of attack at the CPB is a step backwards because it has the objective of allowing other lines, equally erroneous, of evading detection. What is needed is a great debate, an open struggle, amongst those who already make communism their aim for the programme which will lead the masses in revolution. But the RCL's policy is to cover up the struggle for the correct line (which in practice at present means the programme) with its method of bilateral struggles for unity with other organizations. We all know that the RCL is 'struggling for unity' with the CWM - why then has the RCL not openly criticised the line of the CWM? In general, the reason is because the RCL considers that the process of development which will lead to the drafting of the programme is one of quantitative change, not of a qualitative leap forward as a result of class struggle in the realm of theory. The RCL is frightened of open struggle and considers that it would be 'splittist' to openly criticise the CWM. But the reality is quite the contrary - only criticism of incorrect lines (no matter how near and dear those who hold them) will lead to the triumph of the correct line - what is correct can only emerge in struggle against what is wrong. It is of course a fact that the RCL has a lot to be frightened about - an open struggle for the correct line will quickly sweep the RCL's social-chauvinist line into the dustbin

where it belongs. We say to the comrades of the RCL: if (for example) you are so convinced that your line that the British communist party should be built in northern Ireland is correct and that the views of the CWM who (rightly, in our opinion) consider that this line is social-chauvinist are "petty-bourgeois moralist," (as you have said to them) then battle this question out in the pages of your journals. What are you so afraid of?

"Continue to criticise small-group mentality." Only those who see party-building as something which is "in contradiction" to the mass struggle could seriously put this forward as a major task in party-building. The purpose of communist unity is to lead the masses more effectively. This is why we must put the struggle for political line, the line which shows the way forward in the living class struggle, as crystallised in the programme, to the forefront of party-building. As Lenin said; "In order to build the party, it is not enough to be able to shout 'unity,' it is necessary, in addition, to have some sort of political programme, a programme of political action." (15.) It is quite possible that at some future date, when the programme is drafted, it will become necessary to struggle against what Lenin called the 'circle spirit,' but to put this forward now, when there is no programme, and indeed to put it forward as a substitute for the programme, is the grossest sectarianism; and idealism, a sectarianism and idealism which tries to build the party on abstract ideological principles, not on the burning political questions of the day, and which divorces the struggle of the communists for unity from the struggle of the masses.

Under the banner of 'criticising small-group mentality,' the RCL try to cover up the actual class content of the differences which divide the communists into their various organizations, by pretending that the reason for the division of the communists is 'bourgeois individualism' (which of course may be a contributory factor) and not in the first place differences of political line, and they do this in order to further the influence among the communists of opportunism and revisionism in general and of social-chauvinism in particular. The communists are split into different organizations because of imperialist pressure resulting in revisionism within scientific socialism. The split in social-democracy in 1914 was as a result of the majority of social-democrats going down the path of social-chauvinism at the outbreak of the imperialist world war. The split in the international communist movement in the 1960s was as a result of the majority of the old communist parties' revisionist degeneration over the previous twenty years. Splits are the result of bourgeois ideology gaining the ascendancy in the communist organizations in one form of revisionism or another. It is therefore a caricature of Marxism to portray those who refuse to go along with the revisionist tide as 'splitters.' Today, when social-chauvinism is gaining (however temporarily) the ascendancy in the communist movement, it is imperative that those who uphold internationalism maintain their split with the social-chauvinists, for, as Lenin said, unity with them means:

"subordinating the working class to 'its' national bourgeoisie, alliance with it for the purpose of oppressing other nations and of fighting for great-power privileges, it means splitting the revolutionary proletariat in all countries." (16).

Unity is a grand thing, but we must unite only on the basis of the principles of Marxism-Leninism - as the CPC put it:

"the genuine revolutionary unity of the proletariat can be attained only by upholding principle and upholding Marxism-Leninism. Unity bought by forsaking principles and by wallowing in the mire with opportunists ceases to be proletarian unity; instead as Lenin said 'it means in practice unity of the proletariat with the national bourgeoisie and a split in the international proletariat, unity of lackeys and a split in the revolutionaries.'" (17).

We are not therefore in favour of uniting in one organization whilst 'reserving minor differences;' this policy is nothing less than the old

opportunist policy of 'defeating' opportunist elements by ideological struggle within the party, the theory of 'overcoming' them within the confines of a single party. These 'minor differences' may well represent the difference between Marxism and revisionism, and the RCL's line which advocates 'reserving' them is an opportunist line which tries to sneak bourgeois ideas into the communist movement under a false flag of 'unity.' The way to correctly resolve this contradiction is to struggle for unity by struggling for the programme and therefore scientifically deciding which views can be reserved and which views absolutely cannot be reserved. The programme is the minimum necessary level of unity necessary for revolution. A tighter criterion would lead to a sectarian clique and could never lead to revolution; a lesser criterion would mean opportunism and a sell-out to the bourgeoisie. This means that the programme must crystallise the strategy to defeat the bourgeoisie - no more, no less.

The Communist Workers' League of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) (CWLB).

In June 1976 the CWLB published a document entitled 'Hey! Its Up To Us!', which contained their proposals on party-building. These proposals are, as far as we know, still upheld by the CWLB, and have been publically supported by the Nottingham Communist Group. For this reason, and also because similar proposals have surfaced from time to time from other quarters, it is necessary to criticise them.

In essence, the proposals are idealist, an idealism which takes the form of schematicism. The CWLB propose a grand scheme to build the party without concretely examining the particular conditions of Britain today. Thus the necessity for a party is postulated abstractly without examining why this party is needed, what its nature is, or what the present stage of development of the process of party-building is. The most obvious manifestation of this idealism is the proposal for a party-building commission. This proposal does not take into account the present concrete conditions where there are several communist organizations which have political lines. We are not in principle against a commission and when a minimum level of unity has been reached between different organizations it will be necessary for them to work together on a commission, a committee or whatever, but such a step is premature in the absence of systematic criticism by the various communist organizations of the lines which the other communist organizations already have. It is quite idealist to imagine that the different communist organizations can sit down together to draft a programme without first settling accounts with existing lines.

The CWLB has not grasped that theory is a two-pronged struggle. On the one hand it is a struggle between mankind and nature, i.e., a struggle between mind and reality. On the other hand it is a part of class struggle, i.e., it is a struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat. The CWLB do not refer to this second aspect and thereby tear the first aspect out of its context and distort it. It is an error of idealism because (rather like the German idealist Hegel) they are thinking in terms of a 'pure scientific mind,' instead of seeing that science exists in the minds of classes. There is no 'pure' scientific mind, independent of classes. This is not to say that the proletariat does not need science, and that we can be contented with loud mouthed phrases about revolution instead of doing theoretical work. On the contrary the proletariat is the only class in our society which has an interest in really understanding scientifically the nature of this society, for the simple reason that it is the only class which can change it. It is only from the standpoint of the proletariat that society can be analysed scientifically, the bourgeoisie's class interest puts blinkers on its ability to grasp the essence of capitalism and its inevitable overthrow. Scientific socialism is partisan and scientific. The CWLB tries to divorce science from the class struggle. Towards the end of 'Hey! Its Up To Us!' (pp37/38) the CWLB list what it considers to be the five main attributes of a genuine communist party; undoubtedly a communist party should possess the characteristics the CWLB refer to, but the CWLB's schematicism has led them to postulate utterly abstract political principles without amking the slightest

attempt to locate them concretely in the actual class struggle going on before our very eyes. The task of the communists is to fight for scientific consciousness, to take that consciousness to the working class movement, and thereby unite that movement with scientific consciousness. But the CWLB's schematic approach fails completely to deal with this principal contradiction in party-building; they rather propose that the communists should shut themselves up in an ivory tower and study and debate whilst the objectively existing class struggle rages all around them.

The fight for the programme is not a battle of abstract theoretical principles (which is how they are presented in the CWLB document) but a battle which must take place concretely on the actual political issues which confront the proletariat in its preparation for the British revolution, and this concrete struggle necessarily involves a fierce struggle against those who want to drag the working class movement along various opportunist paths. On these matters the CWLB have little or nothing to say. We cannot unite the working class movement with scientific socialism unless we address ourselves to the actual problems faced by the working class movement - to fight for 'defence of the fatherland' or to turn the imperialist war into civil war; to expel the US bases or to support NATO; to 'defend the National Health Service' or to fight for revolutionary democratic demands against the bourgeois state. It goes without saying that to solve these problems requires study of philosophy, political economy and socialism, but for the purpose of solving these problems; and it is on these questions, and on the analysis of British imperialism on which the answers to these questions must be based, that the struggle for the programme - which is at present the decisive question in party-building - must be fought out.

Immediate consequences.

In view of the position we have developed in this document it is our intention to participate in the open national struggle for the programme and to try to lead the struggles of the working class and people locally to the best of our ability. We consider that the position stated in this resolution justifies our herewith changing our name. We consider that 'Communist Unity' smacks of sectarianism because it is of course the unity of the people of Britain led by the working class and its vanguard which guides our theory and practice. The limited nature of the lead we can give to actual class struggle makes a locally limited name more correct. Henceforth we will be active under the name 'Stockport Communist Group.'

RESOLUTION OF THE STOCKPORT COMMUNIST GROUP ON PARTY-BUILDING.

Adopted 6th. September 1979.

Notes and References.

1. 'On the Opposition,' the article entitled 'Concerning Questions of Leninism.' Peking ed., pp276/277.
2. Marx - 'The Civil War in France,' Peking ed., p74.
3. Peking ed., pp47/48.
4. Ibid, p56.
5. Ibid, pp41-46.
6. 'What Is To Be Done,' Peking ed., p37.
7. Ibid, p48.
8. See Lenin's remarks in Chapter III, Section A of 'What Is To Be Done.'
9. See the pamphlet of the CPB(M-L) 'Guerrilla Struggle and the Working Class' by Reg Birch.
10. 'What Is To Be Done,' Peking ed., pp28/29.
11. 'The Foundations of Leninism,' Peking ed., p22.
12. 'Imperialism and the Split in Socialism,' Moscow ed., p14.
13. Ibid, p17.
14. 'Revolution' Vol. 1, no. 5, the article entitled 'Call to the British Marxist-Leninist Movement.'
15. Quoted in 'Lenin on the Revolutionary Proletarian Party of a New Type,' Proletarian Publishers, San Fransisco, p5.
16. 'Socialism and War.' (Contained in the collection of articles 'Lenin on War and Peace,' FLPH, Peking, p20.
17. 'The Polemic on the General Line of the International Communist Movement,' original edition, p317.
18. 'Revolution' Vol. 3, no. 2, the article entitled 'Fight on to Unite the Marxist-Leninist Movement.' Despite the title, the article is in fact an article on the RCL's party-building line, as is quite evident from the text. The restriction of the scope of the article implied in its title is merely a reflection of the RCL's view that party-building and uniting the Marxist-Leninist movement are the same thing, and in fact at the end of the article the three policies are explicitly referred to as policies 'to rebuild the revolutionary Communist Party.' (p8).
19. Collected Works, Vol. 4, p217. The article entitled 'Our Immediate Tasks.'
20. Marx - 'The Poverty of Philosophy,' Peking ed., p168.
21. Marx to Bolte, 23.11.1871.
22. Quoted in 'Lenin on the Struggle against Revisionism,' FLPH Peking, p28.
23. 'What Is To Be Done,' Peking ed., p86.
24. Ibid, pp87/88.
25. Peking ed., pp42/43.
26. Lenin - Op. Cit., pp90/91.
27. 'The British Working Class and its Party,' p11.
28. 'The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky,' Peking ed., pp84/85.
29. 'What Is To Be Done,' pp48/49.
30. Ibid, pp86/87.
31. Collected Works, Vol. 4, p281. The article entitled 'A Retrograde Trend in Russian Social-Democracy.'
32. Ibid., pp257/258.

Other Publications Available from the Stockport Communist Group.

1. Exposure and Defeat of the RCLB's Social-Chauvinism is a Major Task in Party-building. 15p.
2. The Present International Situation and the Tasks of the Proletariat. The Contribution of the British Proletariat to the World Proletarian Revolution. 10p.