

DRAFT PLATFORM OF THE WORKERS' SOCIALIST LEAGUE

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DRAFT PLATFORM

Capitalism is inseparable from the exploitation by the bourgeoisie of the working class 'at home' and (since 'advanced' capitalism became imperialist) of the workers and peasants in the neo-colonies and colonies abroad.

It is a vicious system geared to buttressing the strong against the weak, to serving the handful of capitalists against the millions of workers, and to keeping many millions in poverty so that a few may prosper. Capitalism exalts property and degrades life. It is at the root of the racialism which poisons and divides worker against worker. It is a system of massive waste and social disorganisation, and at the same time it forces the working class to fight every inch of the way to better or even maintain its wages and conditions.

Having once been progressive, in that it at least developed, in the only way then possible, the productive resources of humanity, it is now a totally reactionary force in history. Its expansion after World War 2 gave it merely the appearance of health. By the late '60s, the boom had given way to creeping stagnation, followed in the '70s and '80s by the biggest crises since the 1930s.

Today the ruling class can keep their system going only at the cost of large scale unemployment and attempts to cut the living standards of workers in the 'rich' parts of the world; of massive starvation and bloodshed in the 'poor' two-thirds of the world; and of the ever-present threat of the destruction of humanity through nuclear war.

The only way out is for the working class to take power and bring the resources of the modern economy under a rational working class plan. Having overthrown capitalism and established social ownership of the means of production, the working class will build towards a truly communist society, in which at last the principle will be: 'From each according to his or her ability, to each according to his or her needs'.

THE CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP

The working class is the locus of all real progress. But the present condition of the labour movement prevents it from playing the role - which it alone can play - of revolutionary reorganiser of society. The existing Labour organisations are under bourgeois domination in varying degrees: in particular the domination of bourgeois ideology and the bourgeois state.

This crisis of leadership manifests itself absolutely in times of decisive clashes, in the defeat of the class. It manifests itself relatively at other times in a loss of effectiveness in struggles on wages and conditions.

The continued existence of world capitalism to its present over-ripe stage is the direct result of this crisis of leadership. Time after time in the past decades, in country after country, in tune to the convulsions of what could have been capitalism's death agony, the workers have moved against capitalism. Each time the conservative apparatus of the Labour organisations, political parties and trade unions, has held the class back, demoralised it, derailed it, deflected its blows.

from the weakest points in the enemy's defences: in every decisive clash the workers have been misled to bloody defeat.

The Communist Parties were founded after World War 1 to oppose the renegade Social-Democratic apparatus which had become the hangman of the European revolution. But the results of the Social-Democratic betrayal of the post-war revolutionary upsurge were to mean the isolation and degeneration of the one victorious workers' revolution, and within a decade, under the influence of the burgeoning Stalin dictatorship in Russia, the new Communist Parties began to play the same sort of role, ever more openly, ever more treacherously - and far more effectively for, after all, they carried the banner of the October Revolution.

Despite their successive acts of renegacy it has required a whole historic period, the experience of the Hungarian Revolution and the break-up of the Stalinist monolith, to present again the opportunity for the solution of the crisis of proletarian leadership in the building of a new mass workers' international and of new national sections of this international revolutionary party.

Capitalism, the most dynamic and adaptable system in human history, has survived despite the murderous crises by which it has been wracked throughout most of this century. If circumstances permit it to pay the necessary price in an ever-increasing toll of proletarian blood and degradation, there are no insoluble crises for capitalism. The bourgeoisie will not fall automatically into history's abyss. It is a highly conscious force, struggling for its positions, capable of defeating the proletariat time after time and even of dragging it down into nuclear war: the victory of the proletariat depends on conscious preparation, on its ability to struggle effectively and successfully to deliberately take control of society out of the hands of the bourgeoisie. (And this consciousness is the necessary prelude to the scientific control of nature which is the pre-requisite for socialism).

In immediate practical terms it depends on our ability to construct a world revolutionary organisation, with strong national sections, as a solution to the crisis of leadership. The WSL will play its part in resolving this crisis.

THE TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMME

In the epoch of social democracy, before the international labour movement collapsed into national fragments at the feet of the warring bourgeoisies in 1914, socialists operated with a minimum programme and a maximum programme.

The maximum programme was the millennium, the unseen goal in the far distance, the subject of abstract propaganda, holiday speeches and moral uplift; the theoretical property of an elite within the loose parties of social democracy. The minimum programme consisted of limited practical goals and the immediate aims of the everyday struggle of the working class. The failure of social democracy to link the daily class struggle with the goal of socialism led to its gradual accommodation to capitalism and eventual collapse.

The communist movement, reorganising itself during and immediately after world war 1, resolved to have done

with the minimum/maximum division, with its inescapable consign-ment of the masses to passivity vis-a-vis the struggle for socialism, which the leaders would talk of and History would take care of.

It declared: "The alternative offered by the Communist International in place of the minimum programme of the reform-ists and centrists is:- the struggle for the concrete needs of the proletariat, for demands which in their application undermine the power of the bourgeoisie, which organise the proletariat, and which form the transition to the proletarian dictatorship, even if certain groups of the masses have not yet grasped the meaning of such proletarian dictatorship".

The Stalinists abandoned the method of transitional demands. The communist rearguard, organised in the Fourth International, in 1938 adopted a Transitional Programme, based on this method and summarising a whole epoch of revolutionary experience.

The demands of the Programme have been widely misunderstood, ignored, or opportunistically distorted in the 40 years since they were formulated. But in today's class struggle, with the growing contradiction between the readiness of the working class to fight and the determination of their official leaders to betray, the struggle for these demands and for the kind of independent working class organisation to which they lead, offers the most effective way of challenging and exposing the labour bureaucrats.

Future cadres of the revolutionary party will be found among the fresh layers of workers thrown into conflict with their misleaders in the course of the class struggle. But forces drawn from a middle class milieu will become a drag on the building of the movement if they do not acquaint themselves at first hand with day-to-day struggles and problems of the workers' movement.

Day-to-day struggle alone however does not create communists, and a fight against middle-class dilettantism must go along with opposition to any tendency towards syndicalism and nationalism among worker comrades. It is in this process of struggle that the selection of communists takes place.

A readiness to fight for the demands and methods of the Transitional Programme, and to give leadership in all struggles - no matter how partial - must be the general orientation of the Trotskyist movement.

Interventions of a qualitative character must flow from an understanding, given the deep crisis of leadership, of the political significance of even some apparently minor class battles. In the course of the fight our understanding of the programme must be deepened and developed - particularly the knowledge that its correct application is not a formal question, but derives essentially from a correct understanding of the period through which the workers' struggle is passing.

Whatever the struggle - whether it be for transitional demands or simply on basic union rights - Trotskyists must resolutely draw the lessons from the conflict with the trade