

DETROIT REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT RECORDS

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FOLDER 16

CC CASS-TRUMBLE
COLLECTIVE

To: The Continuations Committee

From: The Cass-Trumbull Collective

During the past few years the Cass-Trumbull Collective (CTC) has been involved in day-to-day practical work and ongoing theoretical study. In recent months we have concentrated our studies on the question of party building, and related questions as to the process of party building.

Our discussions in the past few weeks have been partially directed toward making a decision about joining the Continuations Committee (CC). We have decided not to join. There are two main reasons for this. First, it is clear we cannot unite around all four principles of unity as they were explained to us. The second is that we have some basic disagreements with the process of party building as it was outlined by the CC.

We are in agreement with the first three principles of unity. That is, we could unite in a principled way around the principles of Marxism-Leninism as a science, struggle against revisionism, and the central task of building the party now. But we could not unite in a principled way around the fourth point of unity, that is, accepting the essence of "Marxist-Leninists Unite." This is partially due to our own development at this time. As a collective, we have not yet fully studied many of the important questions raised in this document. Therefore we have not yet developed positions on all of these questions to the point where we can make intelligent decisions as to where we stand. We will continue our studies, but we will not join the CC. To join now could be very divisive and disruptive to the CC later on if, in fact, we discover that we cannot reach unity on the fourth principle. In the course of our future studies, we hope that we can call on members of the CC to share their understanding of these questions with us.

More importantly, our differences stem from different assessments of our particular historical period. The CTC believes that the revolutionary movement in this country is in a period of transition. Collectively we have a solid body of concrete practice and developing theoretical understanding. It is with this basis that we have now moved into a period which demands intense ideological struggle and understanding of our role in the international communist movement. The movement as a whole in this country is still embryonic, and no one organization has the absolutely correct line at this time. There are good and bad aspects to the various lines of Marxist-Leninist organizations that exist today. This is a period of summing up past work and theoretical study, and sharing and struggling around these summations--as equals. Conferences, forums, and theoretical documents should be developed on a local, regional, and national level, all aimed at party building. This is a necessary first step. In this way, important practical and theoretical work can be

discussed and struggled around. This will help lead to regional understandings of particular conditions as well as the development of a national party program. Individuals and collectives around the country should be struggled for and encouraged to participate.

The organizations identifying with the CC apparently share with us the conviction that this must be a period of intense struggle aimed towards developing real clarity and unity around line. Where we differ is in how this struggle must be carried out.

It is our assessment that while the general tendency within the communist movement has been to make right errors--a tendency towards reformism-- the specific danger presented by the CC is to elevate sectarianism and dogmatism to revolutionary principles. Either tendency rests in corruption of the science of Marxism-Leninism; either tendency is revisionism.

To begin with, the principles of unity put forth by the CC were developed at Communist League (CL) initiated conferences involving very few of the developing Marxist-Leninist organizations and individuals that have emerged from the struggles of the past few years. While we realize that large numbers of people alone are not of key importance, we also realize that a conference that is laying the basis for our vanguard party must be representative of the broad areas of experience among honest Marxist-Leninist forces. A great deal of important work and theoretical understanding was not represented at CL's conferences. This is a major error, especially considering that the material conditions exist for wide participation in party building. Not only are many of the honest left forces becoming more developed at this time, but the working class in general is engaged in rapidly growing struggles, and it is a given that the advanced sections can be organized to actively participate in developing line, the party, its program, and revolutionary strategy.

We emphasize the initial CL conferences because the tone for the entire process was set here. It was at these conferences where equal participation by a large number of groups and individuals should have taken place. The principles of unity should have been developed on the basis of equal sharing of experience and learning from each other.

From the very beginning, the correct process would have been to involve the national organizations and the many collectives and individuals who have been engaged in years of practical and theoretical work. These forces should have been engaged in principled struggle over party building. Principles of unity developed out of these discussions would be a correct basis for the party congress. Instead, "unity" was achieved by a relatively small group of people in isolation from the rest of the movement. The CL and the CC's response to this fact is to dismiss it by saying that everyone knew about the conference, and it was

They say:
Content follows form(?)

their fault if they didn't come. First of all, not everybody did know about these discussions. More importantly, to arrogantly dismiss people because they didn't jump when told to doesn't get down to the real problems. A vanguard party can only develop out of the struggles of the entire working class; with the most advanced of these forces coming together in practice and theoretical struggle on a local, regional, and national basis. The situation we are faced with is ridiculous. While the CL and CC are calling for "unity" to build a party, they have developed no plan to insure real unity. They are willing to settle for "acceptance" of the principles. A real struggle for unity will lead to a revolutionary democratic-centralist party. To be content with "acceptance" will build a typical "new" left, potentially elitist organizations filled with factions capable of providing little, if any, leadership.

The direction taken by the CC comes from a line that separates theory from practice. At times it sounds as if it was practice, involvement in the day-to-day struggles against capitalism, that got in the way of the revolutionary movement, and our developing revolutionary consciousness. There is nothing in the science of Marxism-Leninism that allows for this fundamental error.

Dimitrov, in writing about party building, continually stressed the importance of close contact with the masses. Party cadre, he said, should feel the life pulse of the masses, and the masses should regard them as leaders. He rejected the idea that party cadre should only be the people who could give good speeches and write well. CL and CC have apparently ignored this sound advice from Dimitrov. The "advanced" forces that the CC is building the party around are in reality those individuals who have the ability (and the time) to engage in polemics at a high theoretical level. While they may regard themselves as leadership, there is no evidence that the masses do.

A case in point is the recent document entitled "Better to Die on Your Feet than to Live on Your Knees," distributed at Dodge Truck. It was correct for CL to propagandize around its line, but it is stupid and worthless if that line comes off in a style few can deal with, or if that line is not explained in such a way that folks can see how it relates to their day-to-day struggles. When the 3^{1/2}-day wildcat erupted at Dodge Truck, it was not the line of the paper, nor the CL-CC people in the plant who were turned to for leadership. More importantly, the consciousness and organizational awareness of many Dodge workers has taken a qualitative leap, and except for a bit of ^{isolated} bad-mouthing, CL-CC people have been strangely quiet. Dodge Truck is only one example of the very one-sided view being taken of practical work.

Past work has been characterized as completely spontaneous and worthless. The only solution offered by the CC is to drop practical work and engage in intense study to form the party. This is an undialectical approach. It was the combination of practical and theoretical

work in the past that led many people to the understanding of the importance of party building today. This important unity of theory and practice must be continued as the party is built. Theory must continuously be tested in the real world to determine if it is correct. Study alone, as the CC would have us believe, does not in itself produce the correct line.

The CC and its member organizations have given lip service to the importance of continuing practical work, but in reality it has been almost completely dropped, or its meaning distorted. For example, the CC has said that political study is a form of practical work. This is a gross distortion of what is meant by practical work. The intent here seems to be to rationalize an obvious error rather than to accept a valid criticism. This contempt for the spontaneous movement of the workers will only further separate the party from the masses. The CC should recognize the important advances made by workers, especially in recent years, and learn from this. The advances of the proletarian movement should be integrated with the theoretical development of the party.

To sum up, projection of a date for the formation of the new anti-revisionist Communist party, definition of revolutionary unity as being working only with those who already are in general agreement with the line of the CC, and theoretical study done in isolation from continuing practice can only result in an organization built on sand. The party built under these conditions is not only isolated from the masses and the rest of the left movement, but it is setting a dangerous precedent of centralism without democracy. The CTC has a long history of practical work and a rapidly growing history of theoretical study. We are not unique. There are collectives and individuals like us all over the country and the world. We will continue our work and study and engage in the struggle for building the party.