

# ORIGIN OF THE CLP

The Communist Labor Party is presently engaged in the battle to get our party on the Michigan ballot. This struggle gives our party the opportunity to raise the call for socialism, and to provide a forum for the demands of the working class for jobs, peace and equality. In order to understand why the working class needs the Communist Labor Party, what the CLP is and where it came from, we must look at the historical development of the communist movement in this country.

Communists have always used the electoral form of struggle in order to put forward the ideas of socialism and rally the revolutionary workers against the capitalist state. Seventy years ago the electoral form of struggle was one of the main forms of the proletariat and its vanguard, communist party in many of the advanced capitalist countries. As conditions changed and the class struggle intensified, the tactics of the communist parties also had to change. The electoral struggle could no longer be a principal form. Instead, the main activity of the communists was the organization of the proletariat into a force capable of overthrowing capitalism and seizing state power from their real enemy, the capitalist class.

When World War I broke out, an important split took place in the communist movement, between those parties who continued to use the electoral struggle as the principal weapon of the proletariat, became an appendage of the bourgeois state, and thus ended up by supporting their "own" bourgeoisie; and the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin. The Bolsheviks advocated the necessity for a new party, a militant party, a *revolutionary* party bold enough to lead the proletariat in its struggle for state power, sufficiently experienced to find its bearings amidst the complex conditions of a revolutionary situation, and sufficiently flexible to steer clear of all submerged rocks in the path to its goal.

## Historic Deviations

The communist movement in the US parallels the history of the international communist movement. The incorrect theories and practices of the communist movement in this country can be traced to three main deviations: **syndicalism**, **parliamentarism**, and **sectarianism**. In order to understand what these deviations have meant, we must discuss the objective conditions of the development of imperialism in the United States.

The imperialists were amassing a tremendous amount of wealth in the early 1900's. They had plenty of money to carry out their political work within the revolutionary movement, especially in the newly established trade union movement. They immediately began skillfully developing the tactic of dividing the workers by bribing mainly the skilled sector. But they were also successful in dividing the employed and unemployed, the native and foreign born, and the national minorities from the Anglo-Americans.

By 1900 the biggest labor grouping in the US was the American Federal of Labor (AFL), under the leadership of Samuel Gompers. This grouping became fully committed to the support of the capitalist two-party system.

At the same time, the Socialist Labor Party had developed. The SLP later split to form the Socialist Party whose main proposition was that the trade unions could free the working class. This was one of the main forms of **syndicalism**. Syndicalism is the idea that the working class can free itself from the bourgeoisie through one big trade union; that the proletariat does not need to have an independent political party which can organize and lead the seizure of state power. Syndicalism does not see that the working class cannot liberate itself from capitalism unless it has taken over the state apparatus, and replaces the bourgeois state with the proletarian state—the dictatorship of the proletariat. Syndicalism overlooks the fact that the capitalists enslave the workers through their control of the state—the police, courts and army. The syndicalists in the long run end up reducing the struggle of the workers to improving conditions under capitalism.

Syndicalism also takes other forms. Today syndicalism is reflected in the view that each sector of the working class should organize itself; that Negroes should organize Negroes, students should organize students, women should organize women. Instead of uniting the working class into a mighty class conscious army for socialism, syndicalism divides the working class struggle into separate struggles and thus weakens it. Syndicalism is one of the most dangerous and harmful theories to the working class. This theory permeated the Socialist Party (SP) and later the Communist Party of the U.S.A. (CPUSA).

The SP periodicals were rabidly white chauvinist. Their pages were filled with proof of the inferiority of Negroes and called for

the extermination of Negro workers. Gene Debs (a leader of the socialist movement) was opposed to allowing Negroes into the Socialist Party.

The growing class struggle produced many groups claiming to represent the working class. The *Industrial Workers of the World* (IWW) was formed in 1905. The IWW insisted that the general strike, the trade union, and revolution by conspiracy would liberate the working class. Here syndicalism was accompanied with anarchism and sectarianism.

**Anarchism** is the philosophy which states that the workers do not need a state after the successful revolution. The anarchists do not understand that after the socialist revolution a period ensues which is most violent and bloody as the bourgeoisie fights even more ferociously. Thus the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat. **Sectarianism**, is a doctrine which claimed that revolutions are made by small groupings (sects) of revolutionaries. Sectarians do not see the role that the proletariat and its party must play. They do not see that it is the masses who make revolution, led by a vanguard communist party; revolution is not made by a small grouping of revolutionaries.

## October Revolution

In October, 1917, the great Soviet Revolution took place. This revolution proved the correctness of Lenin's teachings on the party of a new type and affirmed the truth of Marxism-Leninism for all to see.

The CPUSA, formed in the wake of the October Revolution, was a militant party and is an important link in the revolutionary heritage of our time. But the CPUSA was faction ridden; the leadership ran the party by cliques; there was no common line uniting the party.

In 1927 Stalin, leader of the Soviet Union, stepped in to try and establish unity among the leading members of the party on the basis of Marxism-Leninism. He exposed the factionalism destroying the CPUSA. As a result, Trotskyite elements were expelled and the party unified, but this unity was on the basis of syndicalism and not Marxism-Leninism.

Throughout this period the CPUSA refused to recognize the Negro question as a burning question for revolutionaries to solve. In 1928, the Communist International finally persuaded the CPUSA to accept a strong position on the question. But the CPUSA later abandoned any semblance of a Marxist position on this question—recognition of the Negro question as a national colonial question whose only solution is independence for the Negro Nation.

## Great Depression

With the great depression and the subsequent rapid growth of the CPUSA, it became clear that this was a syndicalist party, incapable of leading the struggle to emancipate the working class from capitalism. The CPUSA took up the banner of *reformist* work, which meant the fight for a better life under capitalism without regard to the struggle for socialism. They chose *reformism* rather than *revolutionary* work, which would have meant fighting to better the workers' lives under capitalism but with the goal of using this struggle to raise the fight for socialism and organize the working class to seize state power and build the dictatorship of the proletariat.

During this period another side of economism, **parliamentarism**, began to permeate the CPUSA. **Parliamentarism**, the use of the ballot box to legislate socialism into existence, became the main form of struggle. Using the ballot box, the CPUSA leaders thought (and many revisionist today still think (the workers could vote for the communists who would win and introduce socialism).

In 1941, President Roosevelt released General Secretary of the CPUSA, Earl Browder, from jail and had him to dinner at the White House. The fate of the CPUSA was sealed. Browder and the leadership put forward a "united front" which was nothing more than a "center-left coalition" with the Democratic party in control. To this day, the CPUSA cannot break its ties to the liberal bourgeoisie in the Democratic party.

## Party Building

By 1949, the CPUSA was falling apart. Faced with the anti-communist rampage of the McCarthy era, the CPUSA capitulated, and renounced all claims to the revolutionary heritage of Marxism. By then, many revolutionary elements in the CPUSA were already disappointed with the quality of their party. Khrushchev's famous denunciation of the great leader Joseph Stalin only legitimized the revisionism which had

characterized the CPUSA from its beginnings. Becoming a tail on the Moscow revisionists, the CPUSA openly betrayed the working class of the U.S.

In 1958 a small grouping of Marxist-Leninists left the CPUSA and formed the *Provisional Organizing Committee* (POC). The POC did some good work, but was unable to completely free itself of the strangling ideology of the CPUSA. They rapidly became a small sect isolated from the class struggle. They insisted that the working class was reactionary and could not be won to the goal of socialism. Registering 400 members when they began, 10 years later they were left with 42.

But from the POC emerged a small grouping of Marxist-Leninists who were steadfast in their struggle to build a real communist party, a Leninist party of a new type. From 1968 to 1974, a period of party building took place, where Marxist-Leninists from across the country carried on theoretical and political debate in order to re-establish the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism and to apply them to the conditions in the United States. In 1974, the **Communist Labor Party** was formed, a party determined to be the party of a new type, a party of Bolsheviks.

Workers and progressive people of Michigan. Our program, which analyzes

## History of Struggle

Continued from Page 1

intervention in the Middle East by the US and their Zionist goons. We have warned against the plans for new acts of aggression by the US in Korea, a situation where the imperialists have already committed themselves to use nuclear weapons.

Most recently the CLP has worked with many other people to oppose intervention in Portugal and the active intervention by the US in the liberation struggle in Angola. The situation in southern Africa is still explosive, and new designs and threats by the US are being exposed daily. Our work for peace will continue by supporting the just struggles of the peoples of southern Africa, and by supporting the efforts of the Cuban government to assist these struggles.

## Equal Rights

At present the greatest roadblock to the effective struggle of the working class against the dangers of fascism are the divisions among the workers based on national oppression, in particular the national oppression of Negroes, Mexican, Indian and Filipino national minorities. For the working class to be strong, for it to be victorious in the struggle against the capitalist class we must be united, and the basis of unity must be the struggle against all inequalities among the various peoples making up the US, the freedom of Puerto Rico, Negro Nation, the Philippines, regional autonomy for the Southwest and Indian peoples. This is the importance of the struggle for equal rights.

The CLP has directed itself toward three main struggles to unite the working class—the struggle around busing, the battle against the harassment and deportation of undocumented workers from other countries and the fight against the fascist gangs such as the KKK, Nazi Party, ROAR, and Posse Comitatus.

From the very first hours of its existence our Party has been clear on the question of busing. Busing for the purpose of integration must be supported as one of the chief means of uniting the working class and winning equality for the Negro people. In every major city where the CLP is based our members have worked with NAACP's, PTA's, neighborhood groups, and unions around this question, and fought to expose and resist the attempts by fascist groups and reactionary politicians to incite the workers to violence against one another around this question. Boston, New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Detroit have been the scenes of the battle, and in each place the CLP has worked long and hard to unite the workers and prevent fascist-inspired violence. Most recently, the completely peaceful busing in Detroit's schools was in large part due to the political leadership of the CLP which united with hundreds of progressive workers in this effort. This struggle is still raging with new confrontations developing in Chicago and Los Angeles and in these and others the CLP will be there.

Particularly hard hit by the economic crisis have been the workers from other countries forced to come here in order to survive. These workers have been forced to live in miserable poverty and in constant fear of physical attacks and deportation raids. The capitalist class has attempted to stir-up hatred against these workers by saying that they are holding jobs rightfully belonging to "Americans" and are wasting tax monies by having welfare and using other social services. It is US imperialism which has plundered the

capitalism and puts forward solutions to the problems which face the working class, is your program. It is a program which represents the hopes and needs of workers across the country. The Communist Labor Party is *your* party. It is the only *independent proletarian* political party which can consistently represent the interests of the masses of workers.

But in order to fulfill its historic tasks, our party must grow. We need people like yourselves, who fight day in and day out against the injustices and misery of capitalism.

We urge all the workers and progressive people of the state of Michigan to register the CLP on your ballot so that the workers in Michigan and across the country will have a forum, a tribune from which to speak and organize this mighty proletariat into an army that can lead the final battle against the capitalists. The communists never have and never will be able to do it alone. Only the masses of workers can win the decisive battle. But without the leadership of a real communist party, the proletariat can only repeat the tragedies of history. Put the CLP on the ballot! *Join* the Communist Labor Party and *fight* for the only system which can provide the working and toiling masses of the world with a better life for themselves and their children—socialism.

homelands of these workers and forced them to flee in order to survive, and it is the capitalist class which gleefully exploits these workers in the dirtiest, low-paying jobs in order to make huge profits. The CLP through its press, in leaflets, and in its active work takes every opportunity to expose the real conditions of the undocumented worker, and to take active steps against deportation raids in factories and neighborhoods, in organizing legal defense for undocumented workers.

In order to keep the working class divided the capitalist class has sponsored the revival of fascist gangs who rely on the tools of terror and national prejudices to weaken the workers. The CLP has learned the lesson of Germany, Italy and Japan; the most reactionary sections of the capitalist class will never be able to take power without first engaging in a reign of terror against the progressive and militant sections of the working class. If this reign of terror and the gangs which carry it out is stopped, then fascist rule can be stopped. For this reason, and because the main targets of the fascist gangs have been the national minorities, the CLP opposes these gangs. The Party has steadfastly supported the struggle of the miners in Kentucky against the Ku Klux Klan, and in Boston, New York, Baltimore and Philadelphia, we have worked in opposing Klan and ROAR inspired violence. The CLP has adopted the stand of tit-for-tat battle against these gangs so that when the Nazis demonstrated in Chicago, the CLP along with other groups organized counter-demonstrations, when the Nazis lynched a Negro minister in Pasadena, California, the CLP immediately raised the call of protest and retaliation, and in Detroit where groups like MAD and the Klan threatened violence to prevent busing, massive popular opposition was organized.

Because the unity of the working class is vital for any successful struggle against fascism, the Communist Labor Party welcomes the efforts by groups across the country to form an Equal Rights Congress which can direct the many different battles against discrimination and for equality.

## A Small Step Forward

While the CLP, through its press, members and Party organizations has been extremely active; there are many more battles which need to be fought. We have made many mistakes in trying to give the workers' struggle direction and leadership, but we learn from mistakes. Now emerging is the historic struggle between the working class on one side and the capitalist class on the other, in this struggle the working class must have a Party to lead it. This is the Party the CLP is trying to build, and the revolutionary work done so far is the foundation on which such a Party will be built!

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