

COMMUNIST PARTY OF BRITAIN
(MARXIST - LENINIST),
155, Fortess Road,
Tufnell Park, LONDON NW5.

TO SECRETARIAT, ALL CONCERNED WITH
STUDENT WORK & BRANCH SECRETARIES.

Following on from Congress, the Student National Advisory Cmtee. (SNAC) at its last meeting in May decided to collate the experience the Party has gained thus far in the student field in short document form suitable for eventual distribution and sale outside the Party. A comrade was charged with drafting a document for discussion. This Draft is attached called " Student Struggle and the Party ".

In its circular after the may meeting SNAC asked that written contributions on what should be contained in such a document and about experience gained be sent to the comrade charged with the drafting. However so far none have been received, which is extremely bad. Therefore, SNAC is circularising this Draft before the the next meeting so that comrades can come having read it, and having thought about it in relation to work done.

The Draft attempts to put together the student experience reported and exchanged at the numerous meetings of SNAC itself, of the two meetings it arranged with the Secretariat in November and March last, and at Congress in the Student Report and Discussion. The final document itself will be ready it is hoped in time for the start of the Autumn 1971 term, subject to Secretariat approval and discussion of.

Next meeting of SNAC is on Saturday, 26th June 1971, 2.00 at the Centre. Main topic on the agenda ; this draft and the Main Congress document "The British Working Class and Its Party", the line of which as it relates to students we have now to implement. The purpose of this specific student document is to supplement and dovetail into the Main Document in every way .

SNAC hopes to organise its next Forum with the Secretariat for the start of the new term probably in September.

We have been asked by Party Teachers who are trying to look into this problem to look into how much is actually spent on education by British capitalism . If anyone has any knowledge on this please bring it to the next meeting.

STUDENT NATIONAL ADVISORY
COMMITTEE.

STUDENT STRUGGLE
AND
THE PARTY.

(Draft Discussion Document)

The past few years has seen the appearance of a new phenomenon that of student struggle becoming a regular occurrence. Once an extremely small and quiescent part of the population easily controlled, this transient section of society can no longer be generalised as such. Significant numbers of students have now been forced into conflict and ferment as they find themselves in growing contradiction with the system itself and the educational system in particular. A qualitative change has, and is, taking place among students; not so easy to control, they have begun to conduct struggle. And the system of capitalism is weaker for it.

No longer can students be used as a force to scab on worker's struggles, no longer can the ruling class expect and rely on students to operate as a reactionary shock force in times of social conflict and crisis, as they did as volunteers in the 1926 General Strike - though the bourgeoisie will try to develop such action. In this respect times have changed. Of course, the level and frequency of struggle, as well as the numbers of students involved, has varied from college to college and between the different types of educational institutions - the Polytechnics, the Colleges of Education, the Universities, the Technical Colleges and so on. In some places, maybe little or no struggle has yet occurred. However, the change is basic and continuing and growing struggle is the trend.

But a qualification is that they are relatively new to struggle, inexperienced in it, and further that they enter upon struggle with many disadvantages and weaknesses - which of course has never been argument not to struggle only to give more consideration and thought to it. In composition they are transient and continually changing each year. In power and bargaining strength, they appear seemingly weak; their organisations are young, embryonic and just getting off the ground if they are yet in existence; battles by students are sporadic, generally local, uncoordinated with little concerted effort, and it could be said that they are engaged in without enough understanding of themselves actually as a force in serious battle, with not enough involvement indeed of the student mass and without enough consideration being given to good tactics and the strategy.

To help and develop ^{further} the qualitative change taking place, we must have a clear understanding of the position of students in Britain, examine their contradiction as a force with the ruling class and capitalism, solve correctly how our Party involves itself in this student struggle and how it is to develop it so that this force (they) see themselves as a component part of the fight of the entire working class, the force that alone can destroy capitalism.

THE POSITION OF STUDENTS.

Before coming in detail to the struggle of students and the role of our Party in it, we must dispense with notions that have wreaked much confusion, the notions that students are petty-bourgeois and middle-class. The supporting argument to these notions is that students are privileged because they are getting education and also because of the opportunities it opens up in the way of employment and jobs. But this argument holds water only if it is left stated and unanalysed, and if reality is left out of the picturesomehow - which of course is impossible. What is the actual position of students in this the oldest and most proletarianised of capitalist countries, Britain. Britain has only two classes - those who

sell their labour power and those who exploit the labour of others. All those intermediate classes that were left over from feudalism have been absorbed into the proletariat, as has the peasantry. Students do not own the means of production and are not going to exploit the labour of others. While still students they are in an educational apprenticeship, acquiring and being taught skills for future employment and jobs. After finishing their education they are going to be wage slaves of capitalism, generally in the white-collar and professional areas where recently a growing trade union development has occurred, among draughtsmen, technicians, scientific workers, teachers and so on to name but a few. Many students are already seeing that they will be wage-earners pure and simple, and often badly paid at that. That is if they are lucky; for with the application of rationalisation and productivity workings by management to the white collar and professional areas, students are rapidly becoming a new unemployed, an overproduction of persons with degrees and certificates is extending the reach of that reserved army of unemployed that capitalism has created. Qualifications are no passport to success and out of the class struggle any longer, if they ever were.

Indeed the whole idea that education was a privilege granted out by capitalism was superficial and mistook what was happening. Capitalism did not erect the educational system out of because it liked the idea of people getting cultured for the sake of it, out of altruism or philanthropy; rather because capitalism had need of it, it needed skilled workers, scientific and research workers, and people to be cogs in the evergrowing bureaucracy and administration and for the professional ranks. It is not a privilege bestowed upon us by capitalism for in its stage of monopoly its economy has need of education and has proletarianised it. The ruling class alone would like to see this notion of "privilege" have a continued existence, for it has been their strategy towards the developing struggle always to malign students as living off the taxpayers money. They want if they can to have students in isolation. At a time when more students are quite quickly realising the truth of their position as future wage earners in educational training, our job is not to lag or obstruct such a development but to lead and develop it further. This is important because other people and groups are spending their time giving students an incorrect perspective, and doing positively harmful work, by telling them they are middle class and ending up reinforcing the wrong subjective ideas some students still like to retain about themselves. With this argument struggles can be held back and peoples political growth stunted, for students come to see themselves/uninvolved being middle-class, being detached from the struggle going on in industry. Thus the growing contradiction students is ignored. Ultimately, it becomes a handy rationale for inactivity, a useful excuse for not getting involved in political work with students - "they're pettybourgeois and privileged, they won't struggle" - as well as being a stock superficial analysis when things fail and go wrong.

The "privileged student" must be got rid of as the hindrance to struggle that it is. For doing work with students is not a luxury we can afford somehow. It is necessary and essential; for monopoly capitalism in extremity is forced to suppress working class struggle more and more and is forced to find elements to do this. And although so far the bourgeoisie has found it at change and ferment has touched students, and that this force too is not secure - things could change. For it is true that students do have desires and expectations - instilled in them by capitalism - which capitalism is doing its best to dash into the ground, both while in college and out in working life. The disappointed among them could veer to fascism unless we do our work in this area. Our job is to develop the change and ferment that has touched students till the memory of their 1926 General Strike role is but an unrepeatable memory of their infant beginnings. Students should welcome that they are becoming part of the working class, the force for revolution, which in Britain has had a long experience of struggle. Not to accept it would be an evil.

APPRENTICESHIP IN STRUGGLE.

Taken together much struggle has happened among students in which there is a wealth of experience to consider. However, as unfortunately oft happens, those involved in these struggles have allowed them to pass by without analysis, without taking the lessons, being too caught up with the But this experience must be reviewed; not with the intention of presenting a blueprint for revolution, some universal panacea or formula that is going to solve everything - for none exists, there is no easy route that cut out the drudge of work and thinking. But to draw together from the practical experience we have acquired so far the general lessons absorbed and learnt, a collective theory of struggle so far. There will be more to say as we gain more experience. One desire we must shun is that of searching for a book where its all set out and the problems and answers are all explained. No such do-it-yourself revolutionary kit exists. We have to be adult enough to know we have to do some thinking.

INFANTILE.

It wouldn't be unfair to say that students as a whole and the Marxist Leninists in the area are still at the stage of learning how to conduct. Most of our early efforts were generally immature politically abounding with lots of youthful errors. Their greatest facet was that they were well-intentioned and most of the people genuine, so it proved possible to examine the efforts and try and go on to do better.

There was a ^{very} basic tendency to misunderstand what politics actually was to pervert the whole living nature of Marxism-Leninism. To vulgarise it somewhat, the more unrelated, unintelligible and packed with jargon an issue was the better because it meant it was harder to approach, the more exclusive, and therefore a revolutionary stand. Most often, as well as the things acted on were solely external to students, and appeared as such. For a long time anti-imperialist issues alone preoccupied the time, there being a fear all else would be unpolitical and reformist as well as the fact foreign struggles were easier to tackle than the more difficult British and student ones. A romanticism about all things foreign existed, every world struggle bar our own in Britain was talked about - which reflected that we were still fairly blind to the struggles of our working class, the revolutionary force in Britain. When struggles did come - or when they were forced - they were entered into with little forethought, with little consideration of the situation and to the balance of forces that existed in the particular institution and in education in generally. This resulted in confrontations and a whole stock of casualties and disciplinings, from fines to expulsion. Thus, the slogan of communist students putting politics in command came in practice to mean us acting in isolation and in disregard of the student body inviting the victimisations and casualties from the authorities. And the central question of the ideological of students was misconstrued into being an ideological war within the classroom, lectures and tutorials against your teacher to little purpose, instead of that political development of students that comes through practice and struggle. And when substantial numbers of students decided not to move in struggle, either because of the issues chosen and the way they were handled, or because they were not prepared to or yet convinced they had to, the "advanced" students retreated into their national "revolutionary, socialist" student organisations that only served the purpose of encouraging remoteness from the rest of the students, talking to each other with a great deal of ineffective rhetoric away from the mass. Much time and energy were wasted in propping up these paper organisations before they collapsed and disappeared.

A notion very commonly held during these immature beginnings was that as education is bourgeois, nothing can be done here, the influence is corrupting, the task of political students is to "go to the factories." Not only was this wrong, it has led to the demoralisation and temporary loss of the movement of many. Arising from a misunderstanding of the Chinese Cultural Revolution where students went to the factories under socialist conditions it shows no humility - smacking of the "theory" that students are inherently more political than worker and will lead the struggle. Students must relate

to the proletariat where they are and with the skills that they possess. Its a question of real concrete identification, avoiding superficial gimmicks, by working where we are in a communist way, in political action. Going to the factories has harmed the development of many students - for though intermittent involvement in manual labour may be easy, it is hard when it is a permanent thing and you have to go to that prison of a factory to be exploited for the rest of your life and you don't want to do it. A factory worker has no choice if he wants to eat and live. But the student will always be aware that he could possibly be working somewhere else other than the factory floor. Besides going to the factories is often nothing more than a theoretical excuse to avoid the hard graft - academic and political - in the colleges; but life isn't easy anywhere. All students choose to come and study, can't idealistically reject it by saying it's bourgeois education. Of course it is, how could it be otherwise under capitalism. It's a most unproletarian attitude to take to say "I wish I hadn't come" and give up, or spend most of the time politicking and doing no study - we must finish our education and do our apprenticeship.

LEARNING HOW TO CONDUCT THE STRUGGLE.

In our work we are beginning to go beyond the errors of that infantile stage. We have learnt the hard way that our task is not one of imbibing people with Marxist-Leninist tracts nor one of praching or of quoting things we have learnt by rote as panaceas and formulas.- all of which are mechanical and dogmatic and have nothing to do with real Maxism. We are learning that genuine politics and ideological development comes through practice and struggle, and most important of all, the once widely held suspicion of getting involved in the bread-and-butter issues of students for fear of them being economist and reformist is being overcome. In the future struggle will affect more students precisely because it will centre around bread-and-butter concerns that affect all; the problems of getting accomodation, of the graduate unemployed and the right to work, of living on grants - when they are available - in times of rapid inflation, of the inadequacies in the education received, the bad working conditions and lack of facilities especially in the Technical Colleges and Polytechs, the failure rates and the human and financial wastage, to mention but a few notable concerns. In fact it is a condemnation that many militants can know all the ins-and-outs of anti-imperialist struggle or of the workers fight against the Industrial Relations Bill, and yet often knows relatively little about the situation of students, of the trends and prospects of education and the Education Acts. We must be in all the struggles, not stay outside of them. As Marxist-Leninists we cannot decide the issues or struggles to occur, nor can we define what students shall do. We must take students as they are, not as we would wish them, and develop them, or stand on the sidelines forever. In this manner we must relate to where we are. Otherwise, we will only end up phrasemongering or like "revolutionary monks", able to talk endlessly about the principles of communism but abstaining from real life and struggle to maintain political purity and to prevent getting corrupted

We must know our area and be conversant with what happening in education in general but also with what's occurring in particular institutions. Only through a deep knowledge of the general and particular situation we find ourselves in - for the different types of college have their own problems and no institution is ever alike and identical - shall we be adequately prepared for the increasing struggles coming and be able devise correct tactics for situations and relate our Marxist-Leninist politics to the mass of students. There will be much to learn in how to conduct these growing "economic" struggles properly, and it will only be found out in doing it, though error to begin with there will be. As well as providing good tactics, our task will be to relate these fights back to the central issue of class power and who holds it, make them a component part of the class struggle for revolution.

To be properly involved our Party has to be represented in the struggle by actual students, studying; There cannot be a situation where

people, not rooted, imagine they can like 'professional revolutionaries' rove from one place to another, from one trouble spot to the next. Only by having as much to lose or gain as anybody else can our Party be truly involved. Therefore in the battles ahead, those genuine and thinking students who emerge in the forefront must be recruited to our Party.

In the burgeoning struggles to come we know that it is not just a question of us, but a question of the force, of the students as a body, and it is to them that we must go with our Marxist-Leninist line. This is the only way to survive, the only way to develop and grow. Our dialogue and exchange must be with the students-for we are not a sect or an exclusive group, and not with the mish-mash of "left" groups, who we need not concern ourselves with. Past political work has been superficial precisely because it had little or no root in the student mass, to whom no more than lipservice was often given as being the force. Consequently, what can then develop is a form of revolutionary posturing where small bodies of students indulge in terroristic violence on their own because they have failed, not done their basic political work, and want a short cut to revolution by extrovert acts. Work among students is particularly hard and slow, in fact, calling for great stamina. Posturing and calls for superficial violence need to be guarded against as they have already resulted in many needless victimisations and casualties. What is needed is to correct this anxiety for short-cuts is persistent grass roots political work among students which entails a lot of personal work, especially in the fights that and battles, a lot of unglamorous drudgery but which is nonetheless essential. For the person ranks above the printed word in convincing others of the correctness of the line we advocate, in our propaganda; we will be judged by what we do, by how we acquit ourselves in practice, and not by what we may write. We must be a genuine development, springing out of students with their needs for they have had their fair share in short time of establishment careerists, dilettantes, and egotrippes of people poncing on their struggles and organisations. An unpretentious breeze would be welcome.

A GUERRILLA STRUGGLE.

THOUGH a visible change among students has occurred and they are not so easily controlled, in terms of struggles so far the bourgeoisie has tended to have the upper hand, in terms of casualties in struggle and in terms of who holds the initiative. Though they have shown they are no soft-option, student struggle is a weak growth, great care and consideration must be taken in the future struggles to foster the growth of this force, for the ruling class has closely watched its development and is out to derail it. Our Party's involvement is going to be very necessary in the years ahead when students under attack and relatively new to struggle, will have to show not only can they fight, but that they can fight well.

How can students with little economic strength in the sense of labour power to withdraw, in many ways raw and unorganised with the odds against them change their position in the balance of forces with the ruling class. First their fight must be seen as a protracted one, as the position cannot be changed all that quickly, overnight as it were. And this must not just be clear to us but to students as a whole as they enter struggle and start to think on it. For "guerrilla" should not be misconstrued as a few in a roving band; it applies to all. Secondly, within this long protracted offensive it should be our intention in all the struggles that come up to be arguing for tactics that will preserve the force, keep it in tact for battle. Rash acts and senseless, ill-planned confrontations avoided. We are not after punch-ups for the sake of them. And here there is much experience to be evaluated by those who have been in them, of long static and martyrous occupations and take-overs of buildings with sit-ins. Did they focus us on purposeless residence in which we forgot the real aims of the struggle? Did they tend to separate the few that had been involved thus far from the rest? Certainly a bad

feature

of many incidents has been their longevity.

Though overall the student position is inferior and weak and the revolutionary forces are small, we are still at the outset and the situation can be changed in protracted struggle through a war of attrition waged not in a final do-or-die fashion but over a protracted period where the object . in each particular battle that comes along (whether it is about accomodation,files, union autonomy) is by providing good tactics and strategy, by keeking forces in tact for next battle and prepared for it, to develop in all these struggles students ideologically; this is the primary purpose. The knowledge that it is a continuous struggle has to be conveyed as the growing contradictions impel students indeed into more battles - a continous struggle going on still on leaving eduazation, only ending with the end of capitalis m. Whereas they undertook conflicts and fights irregularly in the past, believing their sporadic,unconnected engagements to be the exception rather than the rule, struggle will grow in the future and it needs take a reasoned and guerrilla development to survive government attacks. Bit-by-bit local superiorities will have to be fought for, till as they extend together with the whole revolutionary movement, students will change from weak to strong in the balance of forces

The . . . tasks facing us are daunting, but we have begun and must persist, though the going is hard.

Particular care must be given to securing continuity in colleges once we gain membership and influence there. This is particularly difficult . Students go to college, spend only threey years there on average, find it largely unorganised usually at the beginning ,help develop something when they have to leave. Because of this continual transiency time must be given yearly to ensure traditions and customs of struggle do not die out because of the departure of some in the forefront. The fruits of political work among students does not . . . stop within the colleges; it is carried into the many areas of the working class that students pass into. Correct political work in the colleges can help prepare many for when they enter the class struggle as white-collar workers, and be a valuable contribution to building our revolutionary Party. We are not pàaying at a game and being revolutionaries for 3 years; in it for life.

In the struggles to come, students will learn greatly, and there in the clleges our Party must recruit their apprentices of Marxism-Leninism, who come out tempered, to become part of the working class. Students will learn if they haven't grasped already that education is not a privilege, but that they are in a training for employment as wage -slaves. Our task is to develop this particular force dideologically and so contribute to the revolutionary awakening of the working class as a whole.

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THINK ABOUT THIS IN RELATION TO WORK DONE. BRING EXPERIENCES TO SNAC MEETING. SECTION ON GUERRILLA STRUGGLE PARTICULARLY NEEDS MORE DONE ON IT.

