

Part Four: Party and Class

Introduction

BY THE END of the nineteen-twenties all the political parties which were supposed to bring about the emancipation of the working class had become instruments of workers' oppression.

Before the First World War, the Social Democratic parties had been pledged to oppose the coming war in the name of working class internationalism. When the war came, in virtually every country, without hesitation, they broke this pledge and lined up behind the imperialist war aims of their own ruling class. In the post-war revolutionary wave, the social democrats were in the front ranks of the counter-revolutionary forces. Finally in Russia, where the revolution at first seemed to have succeeded, the Bolshevik Party gradually consolidated its bloody dictatorship over the working class.

Nowadays, when a cynical distrust of politicians is taken for granted, perhaps it is hard to appreciate the shock that these betrayals caused.

The small left communist organisations, struggling to rebuild the communist movement, were forced to ask themselves how far were these betrayals the inevitable fate of all political parties. In other words, was the revolutionary party now obsolete, as useless to the working class in the new revolutionary period as parliament and the trade unions were already recognised to be? If the revolutionary party was obsolete, what was to replace it?

These questions were the subject of a fascinating debate which took place in the pages of *Solidarity* during the Second World War. The various texts from this debate make up the bulk of the fourth and last section of this pamphlet.

The first text, 'Leadership', was written some years earlier and outlines the basic council communist approach to the question. The time when workers could get by relying on leaders is gone. The period of 'normal capitalist development' is at an end. Now, capitalism is disintegrating, and the time has come for the working class to make the revolution. Revolution will be made by the masses themselves or not at all. It depends on workers learning to organise themselves and lead themselves, throwing off the 'traditional bourgeois mentality' which allows them to be subservient to the leadership of a minority.

These ideas can be found developed in more detail in such texts as Pannekoek's *World Revolution and Communist Tactics*¹. The essence of his argument is as follows. The old mass parties were necessary at the time. But being based on the passive rather than active support of the masses at a

time when revolution was objectively impossible, the temptation for the leadership to sacrifice principles for the sake of short term gain was overwhelming. The growing conservatism of the leaders was inevitable; as was the subsequent conflict between the leadership and the rank and file. The example of Russia shows what happens when revolutionary leadership passes into the hands of a political party. However, if workers in Europe, where the ruling class is immeasurably stronger than in Russia, continue to rely on their leaders, the revolution is defeated before it has even begun. A new kind of party is required which, with no thought of taking power for itself, will never need to compromise its principles, nor develop a bureaucratic hierarchy. The task of the party is 'advance propagation of clear knowledge'. Its main objective should be 'to raise the masses to the highest level of activity, to stimulate their spirit of initiative, to increase their self-confidence, enabling them to decide for themselves the task they must fulfil and the means to do this'².

This was written when Pannekoek was a leading theoretician of the Communist Workers Party of Germany (KAPD), a party which, though small by nineteenth century standards, still numbered tens of thousands of members. By the nineteen thirties, as the scale of the defeat of the working class became more apparent, he had grown much more pessimistic. The article which provoked the debate in *Solidarity*³ (mistakenly attributed to Paul Mattick) presents the same basic argument, but now talks not about a party, but of 'small groups of revolutionaries'.

This article also omits much of the historical element of his analysis. This allows Frank Maitland, in the second article in the series, to make the valid point that Pannekoek dismisses the old parties too easily. Maitland, a Trotskyist member of the Independent Labour Party, and a regular contributor to *Solidarity*, defends a more or less traditional Leninist view of the party. The revolutionary party, he says, is a historic creation of the struggles of the working class. It is needed, now as in the past, to do what the class struggle *in itself* cannot do, that is educate and organise the masses. Just because previous parties have failed is no reason for ducking the question. On the contrary it makes it even more urgent to discover how to 'use the party in the correct manner'.

Mattick himself now enters the debate in order to defend Pannekoek. But in doing so he takes up an 'anti-party' position far more extreme than in Pannekoek's original article. The working class, he says, can learn the necessity for revolution directly from experience. In fact

the whole question is quite simple, but workers are blinded by bourgeois ideology and above all by their 'trust in parties'. *All* political groupings, by claiming to be 'specialists', reinforce this trust in parties. They are therefore not only unnecessary but reactionary.

The final contribution is from Abraham Zeigler on behalf of the DeLeonist SLP. He agrees with Maitland that revolutionary consciousness does not arise directly from the experience of struggle. The party is essential, but has only an educational role. How exactly this process of education is to lead to revolution is left obscure.

The APCF's own comments, interspersed between the different articles, generally attempt to bring the debate down to earth. They reject the extremist 'anti-party' position. Whether one likes it or not 'parties' of one sort or another exist, and many of them are obviously doing good work for the cause of revolution. 'We extend the comradeship to the rebel workers of all parties or none'. On the other hand to advocate a single all-powerful party to direct the revolution is not only dangerous, it is simply utopian.

The APCF's position is elaborated in two further articles: 'Where We Stand' and 'For Workers Councils' (the latter by Maitland, whose views appear to have changed somewhat in the 18 months since his article on the party appeared). 'Where We Stand' quite simply disposes of the false alternative of *either* the party *or* experience of class struggle being the source of revolutionary consciousness. The working class learns to be revolutionary through its experience but revolutionary political organisations are an essential part of this process.

In general the APCF's comments exemplify their admirably straightforward approach towards theoretical questions.

Leadership

by James Kennedy

Capitalist economic development and its corresponding political changes, are moving with a velocity that far outstrips the Labour Party policy and this party can no longer give adequate expression to the Working-class struggle. The Working-class has reached an indecisive stage in its development, which always precedes its search for new forms, mirroring its struggle, and making the class polarisation more distinct.

Leadership is a product of tradition – the past. The Chartist Party (1838–48) was the first form of leadership claiming to solve the economic needs of the workers, and following this there arose the Trade Unions. In Germany, a similar political party – the Social Democratic Party (1860) – came into being, led by Lassalle, and in accordance with the degree of Capitalist development on the continent and America, political organisations of like character sprang up.

Wage-labour, the basis of Capitalism, supplanted feudal-tenure, the basis of Feudalism. There arose the need, with the new Capitalist economy, to grant to the proletariat political privileges denied the workers under the preceding order.... Parliamentarism, the new political edifice, was an ideal mechanism for administering the class needs of the bourgeoisie, and at the same time SPREADING THE DECEPTIVE DOCTRINE OF 'FREEDOM, EQUALITY AND JUSTICE'

The co-ordination of the proletariat as a political factor, with the bourgeois State, enabled the proletariat to adjust itself to the dynamics of bourgeois economy by organising into Trade Unions. As long as skilled labour still held monopoly, the Trade Unions could 'bargain' around increased wages, and in the early stages of large scale industry the workers could resist encroachments made on their standard of living by the employers, while the national rivalry between individual capitalists was still predominant. Party politics, therefore, became a game primarily suited to cope with bourgeois interests, and the proletariat took part in the game because of the apparent ameliorations that could be procured within bourgeois boundaries. Parties of the proletariat assumed bourgeois forms, and became limited associations trading in 'bread and butter', and shifting about for political positions. Leadership came before class, and when the mass was thrown into struggle, the leaders resigned themselves to their status as 'bargainers', and kept the struggle inside Capitalist barriers. Managers, Superintendents and Foremen in the factories, were counterposed by Presidents, Organisers and Secretaries in the Labour movement; Boards of Directors were counterposed by Executive Committees.

The wage slaves in the Labour movement left their affairs in the hands of leaders, as they left their industrial activities in the hands of bosses in the factories. The execution of proletarian initiative developed simultane-

ously with the economic activity of Capital, until the World War changed the normal and orderly expansion of Capital into chaos and disorder. The initiative of leaders, as a consequence, was transformed into mass initiative with the revolutionary upsurge in Russia, Hungary and Germany. This mass initiative was restricted in its historic mission by the economic backwardness of Eastern Europe and the political backwardness of the West. The revolutionary upsurge put the economic clock forward in the East and the political clock back in the West.

Leadership is a pre-war principle presupposing Capitalism in the process of normal development. It becomes functionless and obsolete in a resurgence of mass action and initiative. In a revolutionary situation, ONLY THE WIDEST AND FULLEST ACTION OF THE MASSES CAN SOLVE THE CONTRADICTIONS OF CAPITALISM – which reveal the real nature of the class struggle itself. With the retrogression of bourgeois economy, the ensuing revolutionary upsurge, the leaders surrender to the force of reaction, and are smitten with progressive paralysis. Real action is compelled from outside the traditional organisations. The powerful trend towards mass consolidation and mass action entails organisation of offence urging the principle of independent mass movement. Clarity precedes unity, and the transformation from the principle of leaders to the principle of independent mass action poses the question of re-organisation from a political basis to a social basis of society. The first fundamental principle is the abolition of wage labour, and the social ownership of the means of production and exchange will follow as a matter of course. This presupposes the rejection of ‘State Socialism’.

(December 1938)

The Party and the Working Class

by ‘Paul Mattick’

The first traces of a new labour movement are just becoming visible. The old movement is organised in parties. The belief in parties is the main reason for the impotence of the working class; therefore we avoid forming a new party – not because we are too few, but because a party is an organisation that aims to lead and control the working class.

In opposition to this, we maintain the working class can rise to victory only when it independently attacks its problems and decides its own fate. The workers should not unquestioningly accept the slogans of others, nor of our own groups, but must think, act and decide for

themselves. This conception is in sharp contradiction to the tradition of the party as the most important means of educating the working class. Therefore many, though repudiating the Socialist and Communist parties, resist and oppose us. This is partly due to their traditional concepts; after viewing the class struggle as a struggle of parties, it becomes difficult to consider it as purely the struggle of the working class, as a class struggle. But partly this concept is based on the idea that the party nevertheless plays an essential and important part in the struggle of the proletariat. Let us investigate this latter idea more closely.

Essentially, the party is a grouping according to views, conceptions; the classes are groupings according to economic interests. Class membership is determined by one's part in the process of production; party membership is the joining of persons who agree in their conceptions of the social problems. Formerly it was thought this contradiction would disappear in the class party, the ‘workers’ party’. During the rise of the Social-Democracy, it seemed that it would gradually embrace the whole working class, partly as members, partly as supporters. Because Marxian theory declared that similar interests beget similar viewpoints and aims, the contradiction between party and class was expected gradually to disappear. History proved otherwise. The Social Democracy remained a minority, other working class groups organised against it, sections split away from it, and its own character changed. Its own programme was revised or reinterpreted. The evolution of society does not proceed along a smooth even line, but in conflicts and contradictions.

With the intensification of the workers’ struggle, the might of the enemy also increases and besets the workers with renewed doubts and fears as to which road is the best. And every doubt brings on splits, contradictions, and fractional battles within the labour movement. It is futile to bewail these conflicts and splits as harmful in dividing and weakening the working class. The working class is not weak because it is split up – it is split up because it is weak. Because the enemy is powerful and the old methods of warfare prove unavailing, the working class must seek new methods. Its task will not become clear as the result of enlightenment from above, it must discover it through hard work, through thought and conflict of opinions. It must find its own way; therefore the internal struggle. It must relinquish old ideas and illusions and adopt new ones, and because this is difficult, therefore the magnitude and severity of the splits.

Nor can we delude ourselves into believing that this period of party and ideological strife is only temporary and will make way to renewed harmony. True, in the course of the class struggle there are occasions when all forces unite on a great achievable objective and the revolution is carried on with the might of a united working class. But after that, as after every victory, comes the differences on the question: what next? And even if the working class is victorious, it is always confronted by the most difficult task of subduing the enemy further, reorganising production, creating new order. It is impossible that all workers, all strata and groups, with their oft-times still diverse

interests should, at this stage, agree on all matters and be ready for united rapid and decisive further action. They will find the true course only after the sharpest controversies and conflicts and only thus will achieve clarity.

If, in this situation, persons with the same fundamental conceptions unite for the discussion of practical steps and seek clarification through discussions, and propagandise their conclusions, such groups might be called parties, but they would be parties in an entirely different sense from those of today. Action, the actual struggle, is the task of the working masses themselves, in their entirety, in their natural groupings as factory and millhands, or other natural productive groups, because history and economy have placed them in the position where they must and they only can fight the working class struggle. It would be insane if the supporters of one party were to go on strike while those of another continue to work. But both tendencies will defend their positions on strike or no strike in the factory meetings, thus affording an opportunity to arrive at a well-founded decision. The struggle is so great, the enemy so powerful that only the masses as a whole can achieve a victory – the result of the material and moral power of action, unity and enthusiasm, but also the result of the mental force of thought, of clarity. In this lies the great importance of such parties or groups based on opinions, that they bring clarity in their conflicts, discussions and propaganda. They are the organs of the self-enlightenment of the working class by means of which the workers find their way to freedom.

Naturally such parties are not static and unchangeable. Every new situation, every new problem will find minds diverging and uniting in new groups with new programmes. They have a fluctuating character and constantly readjust themselves to new situations.

Compared to such groups, the present workers' parties have an entirely different character, for they have a different objective; they want to seize power for themselves. They aim not at being an aid to the working class in its struggle for emancipation, but to rule it themselves and proclaim that that constitutes the emancipation of the proletariat. The Social-Democracy which rose in the era of parliamentarism conceives of this rule as a parliamentary government. The Communist Party carries the idea of party rule through to its furthest extreme in the party dictatorship.

Such parties, in distinction to the groups described above, must be rigid structures with clear lines of demarcation through membership card, statutes, party discipline and admission and expulsion procedure. For they are instruments of power, fight for power, bridle their members by force and constantly seek to extend the scope of their power. It is not their task to develop the initiative of the workers; rather do they aim at training loyal and unquestioning members of their faith. While the working class in its struggle for power and victory needs unlimited intellectual freedom, the party rule must suppress all opinions except its own. In 'democratic' parties, the suppression is veiled; in the dictatorship parties, it is open, brutal suppression.

Many workers already realise that the rule of the Socialist or Communist party will be but the concealed form of the rule of a bourgeois class in which the exploitation and suppression of the working class remains. Instead of these parties, they urge the formation of a 'revolutionary party' that will really aim at the rule of the workers and the realisation of communism. Not a party in the new sense of those described above, but a party as those of today, that fights for power as the vanguard of the class, as the organisation of conscious, revolutionary minority that seizes power in order to use it for the emancipation of the class.

We claim there is an internal contradiction in the term 'revolutionary party'. Such a party cannot be revolutionary. It is no more revolutionary than the creators of the Third Reich. When we speak of revolution, we naturally speak of the proletarian revolution, the seizure of power by the working class itself.

The 'revolutionary party' is based on the idea that the working class needs a group of leaders who vanquish the bourgeoisie for the workers and to construct a new government – (note that the working class is not yet considered fit to reorganise and regulate production). But is not this as it should be? As the working class does not yet seem capable of revolution, is it not necessary that the revolutionary vanguard, the party, make the revolution for it? And is this not true as long as the masses willingly endure capitalism?

Against this, we raise the question: what forces can such a party raise for the revolution? How is it able to defeat the capitalist class? Only if the masses stand behind it. Only if the masses rise and through mass attacks, mass struggle, and mass strikes, overthrow the old regime. Without the action of the masses, there can be no revolution.

Two things can follow. The masses remain in action, they do not go home and leave the government to the new party. They organise their power in factory and workshop, prepare for the further conflict to the complete defeat of capital; through the workers' councils they establish a firm union to take over the complete direction of all society – in other words, they prove they are not as incapable of revolution as it seemed. Of necessity, then, conflicts will arise with the party which itself wants to take over power and which sees only disorder and anarchy in the self-action of the working class. Possibly the workers will develop their movement and sweep out the party. Or; the party, with the help of bourgeois elements defeats the workers. In either case, the party is an obstacle to the revolution, because it wants to be more than a means of propaganda and enlightenment; because it feels itself called upon to lead and rule as a party.

On the other hand the masses may follow the party faith, and leave to it the further direction of affairs. They follow the slogans from above, have confidence in the new government (as in Germany in 1918) that is to realise communism and go back home and to work. Immediately the bourgeoisie exerts its whole class power the roots of which are unbroken; its financial forces, its great intellectual resources, and its economic power in factories and great enterprises. Against this the government party is too

weak. Only through moderation, concessions and yielding can it maintain itself. The excuse is given then that more can not be secured at the moment, that it is insanity for the workers try to force impossible demands. Thus the party deprived of class power becomes the instrument for maintaining bourgeois power.

We stated before that the term 'revolutionary party' was contradictory in the proletarian sense. We can state it otherwise: in the term 'revolutionary party', 'revolutionary' always means a bourgeois revolution. Always, when the masses overthrow a government and then allow a new party to take power we have a bourgeois revolution – the substitution of a ruling caste by a new ruling caste. It was so in Paris in 1830 when the financial bourgeoisie supplanted the landed proprietors, in 1848 when the industrial bourgeoisie supplanted the financiers, and in 1870 the combined petty and large bourgeoisie took over the reins.

In the Russian revolution the party bureaucracy came to power as the ruling caste. But in Western Europe and America the bourgeoisie is much more powerfully entrenched in plants and banks, so that a party bureaucracy cannot push them aside. The bourgeoisie in these countries can be vanquished only by repeated and united action of the masses in which they seize the mills and factories and build up their councils.

Those who speak of 'revolutionary parties' draw incomplete, limited conclusions from history. When the Socialist and Communist parties became organs of bourgeois rule for the perpetuation of exploitation, these well meaning people merely concluded that they would have to do better. They cannot realise that the failure of these parties is due to the fundamental conflict between the self emancipation of the working class through its own power and the pacifying of the revolution through a new sympathetic ruling clique. They think they are the revolutionary vanguard because they see the masses indifferent and inactive. But the masses are inactive only because they cannot yet comprehend the course of the struggle and the unity of class interests, although they instinctively sense the great power of the enemy and the enormity of their task. Once conditions force them into action they will attack the task of self organisation and the conquest of the economic power of capital.

* This article, mistakenly attributed to Mattick, was actually written by Anton Pannekoek.

COMMENT BY THE APCF

The APCF, like the Council Communists, repudiates the orthodox party conception. We see in the internecine struggle to 'capture the leadership' of the working class, one of the most potent forces of disruption and disintegration. Under cover of promoting ideological clarity – legitimate and necessary in itself – a bitter struggle for careers, leadership, and power, sows confusion, dissension and hatred. Loyalty to party – or self – takes the place of

loyalty to the working class, a distinction with a tremendous difference.

We of the APCF, whilst warning the workers against the above dangers, nevertheless welcome every leavening influence among the workers, every piece of revolutionary education and propaganda. We extend the hand of comradeship to the rebel workers of all parties or none, urging the ultimate absorption of every section in the all-in councils of the workers, and other organs of proletarian struggle. It is our mission to educate, agitate, and enthuse; perhaps even to inspire. We will gladly give service as propagandists, as advisers or as delegates. But we do NOT seek to boss or control. We would impel not compel, seeking the maximum self-initiative and direct action of the workers themselves.

(November 1940–January 1941)

The Party and the Working Class

by Frank Maitland

The historic role of the working class is the organisation of a new system of society, socialism, which will replace capitalism with a world of free, thinking men and women who command the organisation of the material means of life, a command over things which will free both society and the individual. The goal of the anarchist and the marxist is undoubtedly the same – the freeing of the individual from external authority. And this will become possible only when the individual regards his social tasks as a natural human function like sleeping or breathing and freely and generously gives his energies to increase the social means of existence.

But in working for that goal, the marxists and anarchists differ. The marxists say that the anarchists are utopian, unpractical, unscientific, sentimental, too much given to individualistic philosophy. The anarchists say that the marxists reproduce in new forms the evils of capitalist politics, particularly the party and the state – and worse, reproduce these authoritarian institutions under the revolutionary banner and in the name of freedom. The truth is that both sides come to exaggerate what they consider to be the defect in the other's position, and, inversely, to exaggerate in themselves the defect criticised, which inclines to become the rock upon which all may strain but none may move. While it would be stupid for us to minimise the wide divergence of opinion, it would be no less stupid for us not to see that the anarchists have something to learn from marxist science and

the marxists have something to learn from anarchist individualism.

In his article whose heading we adopt, comrade Mattick [i.e. Pannekoek] writes on a question vital for the working class, the question of the party, and Solidarity does a service in raising this for discussion at this time.

Comrade Mattick opposes the party to the class, and is opposed to the party. He considers that the 'belief in parties' is the main reason for the impotence of the working class. He argues that we can choose – party or no party. But this is not the case. Parties do not arise by accident or by whim, but as the political expression of a class or section of a class; that is, as the conscious, written-down, propagated expression of the economic interests of a social class. He is right when he says that the party and factional strife cannot be the cause of dividing and weakening the working class. 'The working class is not weak because it is split up – it is split up because it is weak'. The existence of great parties like the Social-Democratic Party and Communist Party, the existence of scores of small groups, the emergence of a Fourth International – these are the products of the historic struggles of the proletariat for the conscious expression of its needs – the attempts, the failures, the new beginnings.

It is not permissible even for an anarchist to separate the economic and political struggles, which are indissolubly combined in real life. It is true that the masses are unaware of this combination and act politically without understanding. We must acknowledge the facts – that the great mass of proletarians live and engage in the class struggle, without being conscious of the struggle, without understanding it; and that a minority of proletarians – the most intelligent, active, honest, courageous – achieve consciousness of the struggle. The task becomes, how to integrate the conscious minority and unconscious mass? The conscious minority must come together to form an organisation for propaganda, education and organisation – a party.

According to comrade Mattick's argument, even his 'groups which might be called parties, but would be parties in an entirely different sense from those of today' would be in opposition to the working class. No matter how they are organised or how named, these propaganda groups or 'organs of self-enlightenment' would constitute a party, which would not incorporate the whole mass of the people until society had progressed far on the road to complete socialism and only incorporate a majority at moments of crisis, in a great revolution, and for every-day purposes remain confined to the most active and courageous proletarians. On this side of the revolution, the party can be nothing more than the conscious minority, for the conditions of capitalism stand in the way of educating the masses. The whole educational, propagandist and organisational means are in the hands of the enemy. The revolution will be well under way before the working class is able to seize these means and use them for the real education of the masses.

The class struggle by itself will not educate and organise the masses. If it did there would be no need for

comrade Mattick or us to busy ourselves with the question of the political party. It still remains for the conscious minority to enlighten the masses. The masses must learn to think before they act, in action, and after action. The revolution must be a conscious process. The idea that a group of actives, the vanguard, can accomplish a revolution without the assistance of the masses, or even with their momentary aid, is Blanquism, but not Marxism. How make the working class conscious of itself? How can tens of millions of people think and act? Only by means of meetings, newspapers, books, cinemas, radio, etc. – the material organisation of thought and action, which the anarchists themselves cannot do without. And this material organisation requires men to speak, write, study, work – these men must be organised – and you have the political party. A party is necessary as the brain of the class, the sensory, thinking and directing apparatus of the class, of tens and hundreds of millions of people. And it must represent millions who are unable individually to voice their needs, unable to think clearly, degraded and stupefied by capitalist exploitation.

If our problem is not one of – party or no party, it certainly is one of – what kind of party? The social-democratic conception of a parliamentary party and the communist idea of a party dictatorship stand opposed to our conception of the party, as well as to those of Marx and Lenin. Here we reach common ground with comrade Mattick, in spite of his fundamental error in flinging the conception of a revolutionary party against the revolution. What kind of party does the working class need? A party which represents the interests of the working class as a whole, and its future, historic interests before its immediate petty interests; a party which does not set itself up above and over against the class, but places itself at the service of the class; a party which puts its loyalty to the class before its loyalty to itself; a party whose policy in every situation represents the real, fundamental interests of the working class as a whole; a party composed of men and women, the most intelligent, active and honest of their class, absolutely devoted to the interests of the revolution. It was such a party that Lenin strove to create. The present debacle of the Comintern does not show that his conception is incorrect, it shows us the enormous difficulties which we must overcome in educating and organising the workers as a class. Marxism does not say that the party can replace the class, or do without it, or defy it and in this comrade Mattick agrees with marxism. The Communist Party is not the application of the marxist theory, but the application of a distortion of marxist theory. We are not justified in attacking this distortion and calling that a refutation of marxism.

The party is the material apparatus for integrating the conscious minority and unconscious mass. The relation between party and class varies with the ups and downs of the struggle, but it is the aim of the party to maintain its correct relation with the class, that relation being the fullest, most all-sided, thought-out-to-the-end expression of the developing needs of the class in its struggle. Further articles would be needed to explain in the necessary detail

our opinions on the relations between party and class, the structure of the party, the question of discipline, etc. Here it must suffice to say that the party and class must always be as closely integrated as is humanly devisable; that the structure of the party must be democratic, flexible, allowing for the inclusion in its ranks of many shades of revolutionary opinion, and at the same time sufficiently centralised and disciplined to obtain swift action on a mass and continental scale; that the discipline cannot be dictated from a central committee, for militarisation of the party is not in keeping with the conception of socialist organisation, and that the well-spring of discipline is the self-discipline of the party member, who is convinced that this is the best possible expression of his class, that this is his party in whose activity he fully agrees and fully participates.

It is useless for comrade Mattick to wait until 'conditions force the working class into action'. This means that the battle is lost before it is begun. Against the intellectual resources and material organisation of the bourgeoisie we must erect an organisation which cannot spring up overnight, because of the nature of things, but which must be created by the struggle of years and decades. We must bring consciousness to the class struggle. We must build the party, the only means of bringing that consciousness.

No marxist will deny that a conflict exists between party and class, the conscious minority and the unconscious mass. This is what comrade Mattick wants us to jump over by washing out the 'belief in parties'. But these two parts of the same thing cannot be reconciled by refusing to recognise one of them. The misogynist 'solves' the love problem by putting women out of his life. The bourgeois professor 'solves' the social problem by ignoring the class struggle. The pacifist 'solves' the war problem by saying, why fight? But marriage, the class struggle and war goes on. The party is a historic creation, which cannot be thrown aside. It has to be recognised as a part of the revolutionary struggle. The task is to use it in the correct manner, to really solve the opposition between party and class by finding the correct methods of integrating them, of obtaining a fruitful conflict instead of a devastating suicidal strife. And in this, the working class remains the deciding factor. It is the workers, by their free acceptance, and not the party, by its dictation, which will decide, which party? No, the task is not to get rid of the party, but to struggle for the control of the party by the working class, in opposition to the control of the working class by the party.

(February–April 1941)

Our Reply

by the APCF

We find it very difficult to maintain regular contact with the USA and we know that our readers – and comrade Frank Maitland – will bear with us until such time as we get a reply from the pen of Paul Mattick himself.

In the meantime, however, without committing comrade Mattick in any way, we append a rejoinder in the name of the APCF.

First, anti-parliamentarians are not necessarily obliged to accept the label anarchist, and second, if so, they do not on that account deny one jot of their socialism.

Further, in so far as our Bolshevik friends reject and defy capitalist and orthodox labourist conceptions, they also are as much 'individualistic' as the anarchist. Is it not boasted, for example, that on many occasions Marx, Lenin and Trotsky were prepared to be in a minority of one – if they thought they were more correct than all others on the question at issue? In this, like Galileo, they were quite in order. Where they and their followers, obsessed by the importance of their own judgement, go wrong, is in their tendency to refuse this inalienable right to other protagonists and fighters for the working class. The historical example of this is Russia – long before Stalin turned the tables on the Old Bolsheviks.

In Kronstadt 20,000 of the cream of the working class were needlessly slaughtered in 1921. Yet one of the main slogans of the heroic Kronstadt sailors – in conjunction with thousands of workers in Petrograd – was 'All Power to the Workers'.

We agree with Comrade Maitland that every revolutionary individual should have due regard to his social duties. Anarchists like Durruti and Alex Berkman give the practical and theoretical confirmation that this was likewise their posture.

Just as Comrade Maitland disagrees with non-revolutionary Marxists, so do we repudiate non-revolutionary Anarchists.

We are told we cannot choose party or no party, but it appears to be as big a difficulty which party to choose! However, we ask the workers to choose the principles and methods in harmony with their fundamental class interests. They will find much that is helpful – and, alas, much that is not – in many parties, however satisfied they may be with their – exclusive – correctness.

Comrade Maitland must note that there are intelligent, active, courageous workers in several revolutionary groupings. He must, also, never forget no party can fail to have a proportion who are prone to develop a bureaucratic or power complex, and the larger the party grows, the greater the proportion of such potential renegades or dictators. The ideology of these people is easily changed by changing economic needs. They soon use their influence for the party rather than for the class and finally exert

it for themselves rather than for even the party. This is an historic phenomenon.

The analogy of the party being the brain of the working class is unsound. The first difficulty is the number of sections claiming to fill this post, each giving different yet more or less pontifical directives. To the extent that our opponent believes that any single party could direct millions of workers on a continental scale he appears to us strangely utopian for a Marxist. Centralisation of such a character – even if possible or desirable – would be a simplified target for the ruling classes.

We have consistently advocated – and participated in – a revolutionary alliance for common objectives. This seems to us to afford the maximum possibility of using as many brains as possible and the highest degree of courage and class loyalty. The fruits of the best in the propaganda of all sections tends to fructify, the crisis rendering obsolete or clarifying many of the errors previously held.

Not that we discourage internationalism. Our campaigning for the Spanish workers, including the POUM, made that clear. But precisely because we are not utopian we know, in advance, the magnitude of the problem. The task is so great that the brains of all revolutionary socialists will be required. Whether we like it or not, and all attempts at clarification notwithstanding, these most genuine elements will be in many different parties.

In the final crisis however, as Maitland agrees, the workers will be the deciding factor – though he here negates his previous assumption that the party (and not the class) is the brain.

And as in 1926 – and Spain in 1936 – workers through their own committees will show a surprising degree of brain, ingenuity, courage, etc. And many of the political pretenders may be found wanting, if not in brain, then in guts!

Like Comrade Maitland, we desire the maximum extension of solidarity in any crisis. It is utopian, however, to expect this to result from either a Ukase or an appeal from any one section.

Solidaric action is more likely to result from a joint appeal by all revolutionary sections. It is still more likely to succeed – in fact only likely to succeed – when similar economic conditions throw up workers' committees simultaneously and reciprocal action taken in the name of the working class roused to action, not alone by propaganda, but by economic necessity.

The only guarantee of final success is that we sow as much socialist propaganda as possible, together with a minimum of party sectarianism. To impregnate the workers so that they will be as immune as possible to the danger of the various types of Fuehrers, who, on the promise of solving the problems they must ultimately solve themselves, will but change the form of slavery.

All useful factors are more than necessary for such a stupendous task as the emancipation of mankind. To aim at being the most important factor – or a cog in it – is understandable and to be praised. But let us beware lest a false sense of our own or our party's importance causes us to spurn others equally necessary, thereby hindering the

realisation of our mutual ideal – the conquest by the workers of economic and social equality.

(February–April 1941)

The Party and the Working Class

by Paul Mattick

Our custom of omitting names has led to a misunderstanding. The article, 'The Party and the Working Class', which, after it had appeared in *Council Correspondence*, was reprinted by the APCF and discussed in *Solidarity* (Nos. 34–36) by Frank Maitland, was written by Anton Pannekoek. The latter is at present in no position to answer Maitland's critique. Being in some way responsible for the contents of *Council Correspondence*, I will try to answer some of Maitland's questions.

The problems raised cannot be approached in an abstract manner and in general terms, but only specifically in regard to concrete historical situations. When Pannekoek said that the 'belief in parties' is the main reason for the impotence of the working class, he spoke of parties as they have actually existed. It is obvious that they have not served the working class, nor have they been a tool for ending class rule. In Russia the party became a new ruling and exploiting institution. In Western Europe, parties have been abolished by fascism and have thus proved themselves incapable either of emancipating the workers or of raising themselves into power positions. (The fascist parties cannot be regarded as instruments designed to end the exploitation of labour). In America parties serve not the workers but the capitalists. Parties have fulfilled all sorts of functions, but none connected with the real needs of the workers.

Maitland does not question these facts. Like the Christians who reject criticism with the argument that Christianity has never been tried in earnest, Maitland argues that 'the problem is not one of party or no party, but of what kind of party'. Even if it is true that hitherto all parties have failed, he thinks that that does not prove that a new party, his 'conception of the party', will also fail. It is clear that a 'conception of a party' cannot fail merely because real parties have failed. But then 'conceptions' do not matter. The party of which he speaks does not exist. His arguments have to be proven in practice; but there is no such practice. All parties that have thus far functioned started out with Maitland's conception of what a party ought to be. This did not hinder them from violating this conception throughout their history.

The party 'Lenin strove to create', for instance, and the party he actually created were two different things because Lenin and his party were only parts of history; they could not force history into their own conceptions. There are other forces in society besides conceptions that shape events. Maitland may be right in saying that the 'present debacle of the Comintern does not show that Lenin's conception of the party was incorrect', but the debacle certainly shows that, independent of his conception, the party was indeed 'incorrect' if measured by Maitland's ideas and the needs of the international working class.

The party, Maitland maintains, 'is a historic creation, which cannot be thrown aside'. Unfortunately that was true in the past. History has also shown, however, that parties were not what they were supposed to be. They are the historic creation of liberal capitalism and within this particular setting they served – for a time – the needs of the workers, but only incidentally. They were chiefly involved in building up the group interest and social influence of the party. They became capitalistic institutions, participating in the exploitation of labour and fighting with other capitalistic groups for the control of power positions. Because of general crisis conditions, the concentration of capital, and the centralisation of political power, the state apparatus became the most important social power centre. A party that got control over the state – either legally or illegally – could transform itself into a new ruling class. This is what parties did or tried to do. Wherever the party succeeded, it did not serve the workers. Just the opposite occurred: the workers served the party. Capitalism, too, is a 'historic creation'. If the 'party cannot be thrown aside because it is a historic creation', how is Maitland going to abolish capitalism now that it is identical with the one-party state? In reality both must be 'thrown aside'; to end capitalism today implies the ending of the party.

For Maitland 'the party should be the material apparatus for integrating the conscious minority and the unconscious mass'. The mass is 'unconscious', however, for the same reason that it is powerless. The 'conscious' minority could not alter the one situation without changing the other. It cannot bring 'consciousness' to the masses unless it brings them power. If the consciousness and the power depend on the party, the whole class struggle question takes on a religious character. If the people that constitute the party are 'good' people, they will give the masses power and consciousness; if they are 'bad' people they will withhold both. There is no question of 'integration' involved here, but only a question of 'ethics'. Thus we may trust not only in abstract conceptions as to what a party ought to be but also in the good will of men. In brief, we must trust our leaders. What parties can give, however, they can also take away. Under conditions as they are, the 'consciousness' of the minority is either meaningless, or it is connected with a power position in society. To increase 'consciousness' is thus to increase the power of the group that incorporates it. There arises no 'integration' between 'leaders' and 'led'; instead, the existing gap between them widens continuously. The conscious group defends its position as a conscious group; it can defend this position only

against the 'unconscious' mass. The 'integration' of the conscious minority and the unconscious mass is only a pleasanter-sounding description of the exploitation of the many by the few.

The fact that Maitland sees the party as the 'material instrument' that co-ordinates thought and action reveals that his mind is still in the past. That is why he advocates the party of the future. The material apparatus (meetings, newspapers, books, cinema, radio, etc.) of which he speaks has meanwhile ceased to be at the disposal of such parties as Maitland has in mind. The stage of capitalistic development in which parties could grow up like any other business concern and utilise the instruments of propaganda to their own advantage has ended. In present-day society, the development of labour organisations can no longer follow traditional paths. A party that 'develops class consciousness in the masses' can no longer arise. The propaganda means are centralised and at the exclusive service of the ruling class or party. They cannot be used to unseat them. If the workers are not able to develop methods of struggle beyond the control of the ruling groups, they will not be able to emancipate themselves. A party is no weapon against the ruling classes; they do not even exist in fascist societies. Against the present power of the state-party-capital combination only the 'conscious action of the whole mass of people' will help. As long as that mass remains 'unconscious', as long as it needs the 'brain' of a party, this mass will remain powerless, for that 'brain' will not develop.

Yet, there is no reason for despair. We can raise another question: what is this 'consciousness' that parties supposedly have to bring to the workers? And what is that 'unconsciousness' which demands the support of the masses by a separate 'brain' – by the party? Is that kind of consciousness that we find in parties really necessary in order to change society? What has been really dangerous hitherto for the masses and their needs is precisely that 'consciousness' that prevails in party organisations. The 'consciousness' of which Maitland speaks, as it was experienced in practice, has nothing whatever to do with a 'consciousness' needed to rebel against the present, and to organise a new society. The lack of that sort of consciousness that is nourished by parties is no lack at all as regards the practical needs of the working class.

The workers' job is essentially a simple one. It consists in recognising that all previously-existing ruling groups have hindered the development of a truly social production and distribution; in recognising the necessity for doing away with production and distribution as determined by the profit and power needs of special groups in society who control the means of production and the other social power sources. Production has to be shifted so that it can serve the real needs of the people; it has to become a production for consumption. When these things are recognised, the workers have to act upon them to realise their needs and desires. Little philosophy, sociology, economics and political science are needed to recognise those simple things and to act upon the recognition. The actual class struggle is here decisive and determining. But in the prac-

tical field of revolutionary and social activities the 'conscious' minority is no better informed than the 'unconscious' majority. Rather the opposite is true. This has been proven in all actual revolutionary struggles. Any factory organisation, furthermore, will be better able than an outside party to organise its production. There is enough non-party intelligence in the world to co-ordinate social production and distribution without the help or interference of parties specialised in ideological fields. The party is a foreign element in social production just as the capitalist class was an unnecessary third factor to the two needed for the carrying on of the social life: the means of production and labour. The fact that parties participate in class struggles indicates that those class struggles do not tend towards a socialistic goal. Socialism finally means nothing more than the elimination of that third factor that stands between the means of production and labour. The 'consciousness' developed by parties is the 'consciousness' of an exploiting group struggling for the possession of social power. If it would propagate a 'socialist consciousness' it must first of all do away with the party concept and with the parties themselves.

The 'consciousness' to rebel against and to change society is not developed by the 'propaganda' of conscious minorities, but by the real and direct propaganda of events. The increasing social chaos endangers the habitual life of greater and ever greater masses of people and changes their ideologies. So long as minorities operate as separate groups within the mass, the mass is not revolutionary, but neither is the minority. Its 'revolutionary conceptions' can still serve only capitalistic functions. If the masses become revolutionary, the distinction between conscious minority and unconscious majority disappears, and also the capitalistic function of the apparently 'revolutionary consciousness' of the minority. The division between a conscious minority and an unconscious majority is itself historical. It is of the same order of the division between workers and bosses.

Just as the difference between workers and bosses tends to disappear in the wake of unsolvable crisis conditions and in the social levelling process connected therewith, so the distinction between conscious minority and unconscious mass will also disappear. Where it does not disappear we will have a fascist society.

'Integration' can only mean helping to do away with the distinction between conscious minority and unconscious mass. Within classes and within society differences will remain between people. Some will be more energetic than others, some cleverer than others, etc. There will remain a division of labour. That these real differences froze into differences between capital and labour, into differences between party and mass, is due merely to historically conditioned specific production relations, to the capitalist mode of production. This distinction as regards social activity must be ended in order that capitalism may be ended. If one sees the need for 'integration' he has to approach the problem in quite a different manner from Maitland. The 'integration' has to go on not from the top down – where the party brings consciousness to the mass – but

from the bottom up, where the class keeps all its intelligence and energy to itself, and does not isolate and thus capitalise it in separate organisations.

Production is social. All people, whatever they are or whatever they do, are, in a socially determined society, equally important. Their actual integration, not the 'ideological integration' through the traditional party-mass relationship, is required. But this real integration, the human solidarity that is necessary in order to put an end to the misery of the world, must be fostered now. It can be developed only by destroying the forces which operate against it. Class solidarity and class action can arise not with, but only against, groups and party interests.

(August–September 1941)

Do the Workers Need a Party?

by Abraham Ziegler

Pannekoek, Mattick and Maitland, despite their polar differences, all proceed from the same erroneous premise of traditional Marxism, i.e., the inevitability of Socialism. However, while Maitland continues to follow the 'orthodox' application of the theory of inevitability, Pannekoek and Mattick have diverged. Maitland espouses the Marx-Engels thesis that the inevitable victory of Socialism is not an automatic product of the class struggle, but demands the intervention of a party with the will to power. Specifically, Maitland defends the Leninist 'leadership' whose function it is to stimulate the movement of the workers along the revolutionary path and guide them to victory. Pannekoek-Mattick, on the other hand, conceive of Socialist consciousness arising out of the class struggle itself. For them revolutionary consciousness is not merely inevitable, it is spontaneous, and comes into being when the social temperature reaches 212 degrees – like water turning into steam.

Starting from this premise, Pannekoek and Mattick reject the party as a necessary element for proletarian victory. Mattick holds that parties can only play a bourgeois role and are essentially anti-working class in character. To Pannekoek, the existence of parties and the workers' belief in them is the main reason for working class impotence.

Indeed, Pannekoek's concession of a certain useful function to 'ideological groupings' serves only to undermine his confusion on this score.

We find ourselves in basic disagreement with both the 'orthodox' position of Maitland and the Pannekoek-Mattick deviation. It is true that parties have played a not

inconsiderable role in reducing the proletariat to its present sorry plight. But Pannekoek confuses cause and effect when he attributes to the party *per se* the primary responsibility for the debacle of the proletariat. Belief in, or reliance upon, parties is an *effect* of the acceptance of capitalist ideology by the working class. As Pannekoek himself points out, 'they (the workers) cannot yet comprehend the course of the struggle and the unity of class interests,' which is but another way of saying that the workers lack an independent class ideology. Under such circumstances it follows that today, parties with any sort of following will necessarily reflect the confusion of the working class. However it is not the parties that are responsible for the confusion; quite the contrary, only a party, based upon correct principles, is capable of providing the light necessary for dispelling confusion. Pannekoek glimpses this truth when he demonstrates that the party need not be a power vanguard organisation, that it can also function as a non-power, non-leadership, ideological grouping in the interests of working class enlightenment. His failure to grasp the vital role to be played by such a party stems from his erroneous concept of the nature of Socialist consciousness.

Basically, Mattick and Pannekoek confuse trade-union consciousness with Socialist consciousness. Trade-union consciousness is to the proletariat what class consciousness was to the bourgeoisie. Just as it was clear to the rising bourgeoisie that they were being 'unjustly' hemmed in by feudal restrictions, and that they ought to have political representation commensurate with their growing economic power, so it is equally apparent to the working class that they need unions to defend themselves against ruthless capitalist exploitation. But there they stop; unlike the revolutionary bourgeoisie of old, the workers regard the system which enslaves them as the best of all possible systems, the system of 'free' enterprise, individual liberty and democracy. In short, the working class has not developed an independent class ideology but continues, in that sphere, an appendage of the bourgeoisie. As Lenin has pointed out in his *What Is To Be Done?* –

'The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, i.e. it may itself realise the necessity for combining in unions, to fight against the employer and to strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation, etc.'

'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 founders of modern scientific Socialism, Marx and Engels, themselves belonged to the bourgeois intelligentsia.'

Before Lenin, Kautsky made the same distinction:

'... In this connection Socialist consciousness is represented as a necessary and direct result of the proletarian class struggle. But this is absolutely untrue. Of course, Socialism, as a theory, has its roots in a modern

economic relationship in the same way as the latter emerges from the struggle against the capitalist-created poverty and misery of the masses. But Socialism arises side by side with the class struggle and not out of the other; each arises out of different premises. Modern Socialist consciousness can arise only on the basis of a profound scientific knowledge. Indeed modern economic science is as much a condition of production as, say, modern technology and the proletariat can create neither the one nor the other, no matter how much it may desire to do so; both arise out of the modern social process. The vehicles of science are not the proletariat but the *bourgeois intelligentsia*. It was out of the heads of the members of this stratum that Modern Socialism originated, and it was they who communicated it to the more intellectually developed proletarians who in their turn introduce it to the proletarian class struggle from without and not something that arises from within it spontaneously.'

The limitations of trade union consciousness and the inability of Pannekoek's 'conditions' and Mattick's 'real and direct propaganda of events' to spontaneously transform the class instinct of the proletariat into Socialist understanding and consciousness is underlined by the failure of the 'revolutionary situations' which have developed from time to time, to materialise. We need only mention the 1920 seizure of the factories in Northern Italy, the 1926 British General Strike, the 1936 French 'Lock Out' movement, etc. Here we had spontaneously developed social crises which overnight transformed the placid social-economic atmosphere into one charged with revolutionary dynamite. The social barometer rose to an alarming degree. The very foundations of capitalist society heretofore considered impregnable, were threatened. But the storm blew over. 'Order' and social calm were restored. Wherein lay the reason for the overwhelming defeats suffered by the workers on these historic occasions? We are told that the proletariat was betrayed by the treachery of the Labour Leaders acting in conjunction with the party. True, the Labour Leaders and the party played a Judas role. BUT IT WAS ONLY BECAUSE THE WORKING CLASS LACKED AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE BOURGEOIS CHARACTER OF THE PARTY AND THE LABOUR LEADERS THAT IT WAS POSSIBLE, IN THE FIRST PLACE, TO BETRAY IT.

This is not to deprecate the importance of the role of 'conditions' and of the social pressure, which the 'real and direct propaganda of events' generate. These forces play an important part in developing Socialist consciousness in that they help to bring forth the latent class instinct of the proletariat. But class instinct is purely a negative factor, it cannot of itself (sans education and organisation) develop into Socialist consciousness by means of the warmth and pressure of the increasing temperature. To borrow an analogy from the field of electricity. To complete the revolutionary circuit it is necessary to link up the negative pole of class instinct with the positive pole of Socialist understanding and consciousness.

In opposing the Pannekoek-Mattick thesis, we by no

means accept Maitland's defence of the traditional 'power-vanguard' party. However, Maitland is on solid ground in taking issue with Pannekoek and insisting that the class struggle by itself will not educate and organise the workers: that the 'conscious minority must bring consciousness to the class struggle'. But Maitland's consciousness consists of blind faith and obedience to a sacrosanct Party. He conceives the masses as incapable of independent action and bluntly denies that they can be educated this side of the revolution and even after the revolution 'is well under way.' Hence, according to Maitland, there is the need for the party to act as the 'protector' of millions of workers 'who are unable to think clearly, degraded and stupefied by capitalist exploitation.'

Paradoxically, Maitland and Mattick have a common bond. Both reject *education* – as distinct from experience obtained in the course of the class struggle – as a primary factor in the development of Socialist consciousness. Maitland considers the proletariat incapable of education, while Mattick dismisses education as of little or no importance. He reasons that the experience of the class struggle will supply the proletariat with what 'little philosophy, sociology, economics and political science' they lack.

Maitland and Mattick constitute the obverse and converse of the same medal. The former stresses the 'ideological' character of the party, obscuring the real nature of his Leninist ideal in a cloud of democratic phraseology. Mattick, on the other hand, pictures the party as exclusively an anti-working class, power instrumentality. He, for his part, obscures and ignores the role of the party as an ideological grouping.

In contrast to the Pannekoek-Mattick concept of 'automatic' Socialist consciousness, and Maitland's power vanguard party, we submit the DeLeonist concept of the role of the party.

DeLeon conceived the party as a teacher, not as a leader over the working class. Long before the bankruptcy of the traditional party, at a time when it was in the heyday of its popularity, DeLeon as a Socialist pathfinder discarded the power-vanguard concept. To DeLeon the party was an educational-propaganda organisation for the distilling of Socialist ideology. He violently disputed the Maitland-Leninist concept that the working class was incapable of carrying out its own revolution, and its corollary, that the workers were in need of a power party to 'guide' and 'protect' them. DeLeon never tired of pointing out that the revolution must be the conscious act of the workers themselves, functioning through their own economic organs. 'No bunch of office holders can emancipate the workers', was one of his favourite texts. To DeLeon, the party was transitory in nature, its role limited to the period prior to the revolution. After the revolution it was the Industrial Union composed of the entire working class, which was to function as the government. He never tired of repeating that any attempt upon the part of the party to perpetuate itself after the revolution would constitute a usurpation.

Mattick states an inescapable truth when he points out that the proletariat's organisational opportunities are rapidly contracting. The party-intoxicated Maitland speaks of the party of the future being the product of decades of struggle. This is the sheerest nonsense; the working class hasn't got decades at its disposal to perfect its organisation. Mattick scores a telling point in pointing this out, but the shortness of time available does not defeat our contention that the class struggle of itself does not create Socialist consciousness. If anything the short time remaining in which the working class may act decisively, is only added reason for Mattick, Pannekoek *et al.*, to abandon the traditional Marxist inevitability complex – the basic premise for all the bankrupt tactics which have led the working class from one defeat to another, until today we face the absolute victory of Fascism and the burial of the proletarian revolution for this historical period.

(February–April 1942)

For Workers' Councils

by Frank Maitland

Socialism has established that the working class cannot organise a new social system by means of the political and economic organisations of capitalism. The working class must create new forms of organisation, socialist forms, bodies new in form and content and method.

The joint stock company, the trust system, these triumphs of the organisation of capital, must be replaced by the workers' organisations, works councils and industrial unions. Municipal councils, parliament, churches, university system, charitable, scientific and educational bodies and all the political and semi-political organisations of capitalism must be replaced by the organs of the proletarian revolution. The state machine itself must be replaced. First it is necessary to destroy the old in a revolutionary fashion, breaking it to pieces under every form of attack, reducing it to its component parts, rescuing those which are useful to a socialist society and cleaning them of the capitalist dirt still clinging to them, destroying the useless with implacable thoroughness.

The institutions of capitalism must be abolished and the institutions of socialism created.

The groups in the revolutionary movement argue fiercely the question of the organisation of socialism. There is no need for confusion or dismay at this conflict. It is good. Indeed, there is not enough of it, and it is not sufficiently based on a study of the examples already produced by proletarian revolutions and of the experi-

ences, rich in lessons, of the working class in the period from 1917 to 1939. It is not sufficiently worked out and there is not enough drive to put it into practice. Discussions of every problem arising on socialist organisation must be encouraged.

MINIMUM AGREED

In spite of disagreements, we are able to lay down a number of basic propositions in regard to the new socialist organisations.

1. They will be universal – they will organise *all* workers, of whatever race, sex, religion, age or opinion.
2. They will be industrial – they will be organised in units of factory, workshop, store, yard, mine or other enterprise.
3. They will be proletarian – they will be the workers' *own* organisations, representing only the working class.
4. They will be democratic – they will be organised in the simplest possible way, with the participation of *all* workers and with all offices held on the basis of democracy, that is, no special privileges whatsoever for office holders.
5. They will be revolutionary – they will struggle for the overthrow of capitalist authority.
6. They will be educational – one of the main tasks of the councils is to educate the workers in the job of 'ruling' i.e. of running the country ourselves.

The basis of the revival of the struggle for a revolutionary party on a national and world scale is the recommencing of the struggle for working class organisation in industry.

It is the duty of all revolutionary groups, while they continue to argue out among themselves the details and to struggle around the party question, to carry out the widest propaganda for workers' councils, to explain over and over again to the workers the historical basis, the organisational need and revolutionary role of workers' councils, to encourage and help the workers in every way to organise and develop the workers' council system.

All groups can co-operate in this general class propaganda and commence a really effective campaign. Anarchists, ILPers, Fourth Internationalists and revolutionary socialists of all groupings can agree on the basic points outlined. Here let us emphasise point 3, which stresses the *independence* of the workers' councils, and this is meant, not only in the sense that they must be independent of capitalist control and must inoculate themselves against bourgeois opinion, *oppose* themselves to capitalism, but also in the sense that they must be *class* organisations, that is, not councils initiated or controlled by a particular party or subscribing to a particular programme or financed by a particular union – they must represent the workers *as workers*. The universality of the councils, their class character, is the foundation of their strength. If the emancipation of the proletariat is the work of the proletariat itself, it must have class organisations to accomplish that

emancipation. These are the Councils.

A C T N O W !

Let a general campaign be started now. A million leaflets, a series of pamphlets dealing thoroughly with the theory of workers' councils and their practical organisation, a chain of meetings, the maintenance of constant propaganda in industry, the nation-wide popularisation of the idea of workers' councils, the creation of a discussion organ for the exchange of theoretical opinion – these are some of the tasks which can be undertaken immediately and in which all tendencies can participate without violating their independent attitudes. If every group or party produced a leaflet – a small group may duplicate 1000, a factory cell may produce 200 for that enterprise alone, a large branch may print 10,000, a party like the ILP, 100,000. If every group produced the maximum it could effectively distribute, we would be able to add up to a million in a short time. The benefit of such a campaign to the groups themselves – increased interest, membership, support – are obvious.

Let the campaign for Workers' Councils be launched.

(October–November 1942)

Where We Stand

by the APCF/WRL

We repudiate party politics and the popular conception of parties. We claim that party politics and sectarianism have betrayed the fundamental principles of socialism, and have brought about a state of confusion and political bankruptcy in the ranks of the working class movement.

To the professional politician and party theoretician the proletariat exists merely as objective phenomena, to be used merely as pawns in a game to prove their particular sociological theories, and to be manipulated manually in the making of history. We denounce this attitude as opportunism and adventurism of the worst possible kind, and declare that we, the workers, have a much higher conception of the destiny we shall fulfil.

We assert in the light of the materialist conception of history that it is the historic mission of the proletariat to emancipate society and the forces of production from the thralldom of class domination and exploitation by the act of social revolution and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

We claim that this is not the work of any one party or parties, who consider themselves distinct and apart from the masses of the workers.

However, we realise that political clarity and understanding do not develop simultaneously with awakening class-consciousness; that spontaneity of action and revolutionary fervour do not always embody the necessary knowledge of proletarian strategy and tactics.

We claim therefore, that it is the duty of those already class conscious and politically advanced workers to come together in common unity; not as another party, but as the vanguard of the workers themselves, for the purpose of organising propaganda to offset the reactionary tendencies of the professional and party politics.

Utilising their knowledge of the past history of the movement and trained in the correct method of organisation to give a clear cut and directive lead to the social aspirations of their less politically advanced fellow workers.

Towards this end the Workers Revolutionary League has come into being to express the need for workers unity in the face of the present political debacle.

(October–November 1942)

NOTES

- 1 In Bricianer, *Pannekoek and the Workers' Councils* (Telos Press, Saint Louis, 1978) pages 175–210.
- 2 Bricianer, *op cit*, page 186.
- 3 A different translation of this article appears in Bricianer, *op cit*, pages 261–267.