

State Conference 1980

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On the work of CPA locality branches.

The locality branch is an essential element of the base organisation of a party such as the CPA. As our party became smaller and more aged over the years, locality branches tended to become stagnant or to die out. Aside from the important work of finance raising they filled little more than a social function.

A somewhat cynical and negative view has developed that locality branches can never again fill the important role they did in the past. The fact that new growth in the CPA has come from areas of campaign work (civil liberties, abortion etc.) has helped reinforce the view that locality organisation is no longer important.

The Election Committee has discussed and refuted this notion. We believe that the decline of the work of the locality branches reflected precisely the decline in the CPA, with an ageing membership that became increasingly uninvolved in mass political work.

These conditions are rapidly changing. The Election Committee believes that its own experiences show the need to re-establish serious locality work, as one necessary facet of our overall mass work. Indeed, an overconcentration on campaign work alone, has led to a situation where comrades work as individuals, rather than as cadre, reflecting a clear CPA point of view. (Not to be confused with the rigid "line" of some left groups).

Further, we believe that to re-establish locality work, it is not enough to simply talk about it. We must lay down a basis for the type of work required and then pursue it. Consequently, we propose the following resolution, not as an end in itself, but as a real start which should be updated with experience.

RESOLUTION:

"That each locality branch attempt serious work in the local community and that this work take at least the following forms:

- Periodic distribution of leaflets and posters. As well as those leaflets and posters which appear for various campaigns, branches should commission the production of leaflets specific to their own area from time to time.
- Public meetings should be called on certain issues of importance that may arise (e.g. Afghanistan, abortion).
- All branches should see that Tribune is regularly sold in their locality.
- Branches should seek out local progressive movements on issues such as rents and housing or the local environment and attempt to work with and build such movements.

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Because branches cover such vast areas, a particular electorate (State or Federal) should be picked out for intensive work. This would serve both to direct work into a manageable area where contacts could be built up and to provide the basis of future electoral work.

State Committee meetings should hear regular reportbacks from all branches on the success of such work."

- Moved by Election Committee.
(Endorsed by Central Branch)

Political Program for Queensland

This proposal was floated around the time of the last State Conference, in the final stages of the civil liberties campaign. The defeat of the Queensland Government will remain for some time our main political goal and the role of broadly based, extraparliamentary movements, along with the industrial movement, will be crucial. The civil liberties movement and other "left" movements (e.g. the women's movement through the abortion campaign) have always adopted a wider anti-government line and have seriously weakened the Government.

Although the above questions have been discussed "on the left" we need to sharpen our analysis of the Government and Queensland politics and try to spread the message more widely. If this had happened during the civil liberties campaign, it might have been more widely viewed as more than a "street march campaign".

RESOLUTION:

"That the Party promote debate within the C.P.A. and sympathetic forces outside, around a C.P.A. program for Queensland, focussing on:

- 1/ The political base and strategy of the State Government and each of the Coalition Parties.
- 2/ The impact on the Queensland economy and political life of the growing economic dominance of monopoly mining capital.
- 3/ The relationship between these developments and Australian politics as a whole (similarities with Western Australia; relationship between State and Federal Government etc.).
- 4/ The character of the forces opposing the State Government (unions, ~~XXXXXX~~ the A.L.P., political movements) and the building of an extraparliamentary opposition movement.

That this program be published either as a general statement or series of articles from the Party, in a booklet for wide distribution.

- Moved by Peter Davidson.

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Committees

RESOLUTION:

"That the existing composition of State Committee meetings with 15 elected members plus two representatives from each branch be abolished and that the CPA revert to a permanent State Committee of 20 members".

- Moved by Queensland State Committee.

COMMENT:

"Comrades who are nominated to fill positions on Party Committees should not accept unless they are genuinely prepared to expend the required time and effort".

- North West Branch.

RESOLUTION:

"That if a comrade is absent without having offered reasonable excuse, from three meetings of a CPA committee to which (s)he is elected, his/her membership automatically lapses and nominations are called to fill the position".

- Moved by Queensland State Committee.

The Party has recently recruited a large number of new comrades, from a range of backgrounds, and is growing. It is important that its structure be open and democratic and that initiatives are encouraged at branch/fraction level.

It is also important that a visible and accessible leading body - the State Committee and its Executive - works to pull together the work of Party branches and fractions to give a sense of purpose and direction to Party work in general. Unless the State Committee is both effective and accessible to the membership, there is a danger that crucial decisions will be made by a few, on the spur of the moment, and that a few people will end up doing all the work.

If the delegate system hasn't worked, this means either the branches and fractions "aren't working" or that they can't see much being achieved ~~thru~~ through the State Committee. We won't resolve these problems by sidestepping them (i.e. eliminating the delegate system). The structure is sound because it allows a wide representation of Party activists in different areas of work.

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RESOLUTION:

"That the State Committee consist of 15 people elected from Conference plus two delegates from each branch or fraction."

- Moved by Peter Davidson.

RESOLUTION:

"That the State Committee meet monthly on a regular basis, receive brief reports from Party organisers, branches and fractions and formulate policy on general Party work and affairs."

- Moved by Peter Davidson.

RESOLUTION:

"That quarterly cadres' meetings be held in conjunction with every third State Committee meeting."

- Moved by Peter Davidson.

RESOLUTION:

"That the State Executive meet regularly, on a fortnightly basis."

- Moved by Peter Davidson.

Party Organisers

At a time of rapid political change and hopefully continued growth of the Party, we should always encourage new people to take a leading role. If there is no "rotation" of Party organisers, then we encourage a permanent concentration of influence and possibly in the long run, a kind of Party conservatism (no matter how effective and flexible our organisers are). Limited tenure forces the Party to change at the top and promote new people.

RESOLUTION:

"That there be two Party organisers elected from this Conference and responsible to the State Committee and its Executive. That the division of labour between organisers be based on their political experience and priorities, with an equal sharing of general office work."

- Moved by Pat Mc Nair. .

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RESOLUTION:

"That there be limited tenure of office for Queensland Party organisers, unless no new and suitable candidates are found. That this be three years from this conference onwards."

- Moved by Pat Mc Nair.

Finance

RESOLUTION:

"Finance raising needs to be better handled and to include future budget projections. In view of this, a joint finance/fair committee should be established with a responsible comrade elected as organiser/treasurer".

- Moved by North West Branch.

Passed

Political Programs

RESOLUTION:

"That all CPA fractions draw up a basic program which spells out CPA policy in their area of work".

- Moved by Election Committee.

Carried

Union Membership

RESOLUTION:

"That all CPA members ^{are encouraged} join and attempt to work in the union or progressive organisation relevant to them e.g. Unemployed Workers' Union and Pensioners' League".

- Moved by Central Branch.

Carried