

BOLSHEVIK

INTERNAL BULLETIN OF THE YOUNG COMMUNIST LEAGUE

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EDITORIAL

This is the first issue of *Bolshevik*, internal bulletin of the YOUNG COMMUNIST LEAGUE. We propose that it should be an irregular duplicated bulletin edited by the Central Committee and circulated among members only. It will contain YCL documents together with members' articles. By publishing different views as to policy and tactics as well as theoretical matters we can ensure that all members will think carefully about the points at issue. People's ideas become much more concrete and coherent if they have to put them down in writing, so it would probably be better for polemics to be thrashed out mainly through *Bolshevik* rather than at meetings. In any case we hope to do away with general meetings as soon as possible and then this bulletin would become the main means of internal communication. Back issues can be a useful means of introducing the YCL to that fairly large group of future members who will miss out on the initial meetings as well as for those who for one reason or another will remain isolated from the rest of the membership.

For the time being the League's existence is being kept completely secret so it is absolutely essential that copies of *Bolshevik* be strictly restricted to members only, and that they be not left lying around carelessly. In the future it may be necessary to show some items to prospective members but even this should only be done after a specific decision and not on any individual members initiative. As an internal bulletin only it will be possible for us to much franker in discussing policy and tactics, but even so we should avoid giving damaging information and *noms de plume* will be used for signatures.

As this first issue is being produced rather hurriedly in the hope of being available for members at the first meeting (to be held today), it consists mainly of a rather eclectic collection of thoughts by the editor. All members are invited to start contributing immediately. Indeed, *this should be regarded as one of the duties of membership*. We need concrete articles expressing people's opinions as to how the YCL should be organized, its immediate tasks, policies for work in various fields and so on, as well as polemics over the general line to be taken. Once the League is established as an organization we would expect to see articles and reports summing up experience in particular spheres of work etc. When we are ready to partially come out into the open by publishing an external organ, some of the more theoretical articles from this bulletin could be republished in the first issues.

Unless today's meeting decides otherwise, it is proposed to continue publishing *Bolshevik* with the same aims, format and editor approximately weekly or fortnightly for the next couple of months. Deadline for next issue is Wednesday February 3rd, 1969.

Peter Collins, EDITOR

THE NEED FOR CELLS

by Peter Collins

Since our main base will be at Monash it is important to decide what kind of organization we are going to establish for mass work there. Of course some group will be required for work in the Labor Club and Monash students will also participate in non-University League organizations such as those required for work in the anti-war movement and internal groups such as those concerned with publications. However the main role for students must be in intensive mass work among their section of the student body.

The true test of a revolutionary is not his ability to mouth revolutionary slogans but his willingness to do real revolutionary work among the masses - to patiently win their respect and confidence, to put forward socialist and anti-imperialist propaganda, to agitate in support of their demands and to lead their struggles in the direction of revolution. This is not an easy task - particularly in a non-revolutionary period and environment. It is far easier to just talk about revolution with a few left wing friends, go to a few demonstrations and perhaps distribute a few leaflets. Nevertheless mass work is the decisive task both inside and outside the University.

It is true that one reason for forming a YCL is to end the present organizational chaos at Monash and extend our contacts outside the University. We need an effective machinery for reaching correct decisions on tactical questions and ensuring that these decisions are implemented, we need a center of leadership for the Labor Club and so on. It is also true that another reason for forming a YCL is to have a ginger group - a propaganda circle putting forward Marxist ideas within the student and youth movement and perhaps publishing its own magazine. It would be worth forming some sort of new organization just for these purposes. But it would be a parody to describe such an organization as "Bolshevik" or "Communist". The idea of centralism and discipline has nothing particularly Leninist about it - it is simply a matter of elementary organizational common sense. Disciplined organizations can be established in given circumstances by people of any political persuasion from fascist to Social-Democrat. What characterizes a Bolshevik group is not simply that majority decisions are taken and enforced but that it is a revolutionary group *following a mass line*.

Communist discipline and "ideological purity" does not come from administrative decrees or the endless study of classical works. It comes from the conscious commitment of members to the cause of socialist revolution, from their class stand and outlook, from their correct application of theoretical ideas in practical work, from the constant political struggle going on within the organization over questions of line, from their integration with mass work. From the very beginning therefore, we should aim for an organization capable of doing mass work. We would defeat our own objects if the YCL's formation led only to the establishment of yet another left bloc - splitting the Labor Club and isolating the revolutionaries still further.

For these reasons I believe that the basic structure of the YCL should consist of small cells containing those members working in a particular sphere. These could have as few as two or three members and could overlap with each other. At Monash we should not be restricted by the formal structure of the University with its Faculties and Departments but should form cells wherever we have a group of YCL members among a section of the student body. For example Halls of Residence, Clubs and so on.

Unfortunately we must face the fact that our sectarian left bloc tendencies have been so great in the past that most of the left at Monash have very few contacts or activities outside the left itself (and the most 'committed' leftists often have the least contacts). In addition we must recognize that for most students, academic study is the center of their lives at Monash. For these reasons I think we should concentrate at first on establishing Faculty or Department cells.

Such cells would form the nuclei for the Labor Club groups that will be established to agitate against the Departmental administrations and to put forward a radical critique of the courses themselves where possible. Much of the cells work would be concerned with leading these groups but I think this subject is worth discussing separately. In this article I will put forward my views only on how the cell and its members should themselves function and leave aside the question of how this ties in with the work of other left students in the Faculty or Department groups.

The main role of a cell is to bring its members together regularly or irregularly for the purpose of discussing policy, exchanging experience, assisting each other in developing correct methods of work and deciding on a correct line on the basis of integrating theory with practice. The cell can only co-ordinate the work of its members and assist them with their studies, it cannot substitute for them. It is up to each member to actually do the work to actually study the theory and so on. Similarly it is the Central Committee's job to coordinate the work of the whole league, but no amount of officially sponsored "YCL activity" can substitute for actual hard work by the members and cells themselves. We must avoid the sectarian trap into which much of the left's work at Monash has fallen where "Labor Club activities" clearly identified as such are our main task and these 'activities' are in fact carried out by only a few people at the organizations centre.

What then are the concrete things that YCL members and cells should do? First of all, no matter what section we are dealing with we should stress "Winning friends and influencing people". Getting to know the other people in a tutorial group or lecture and what they are really thinking. Without ramming our ideas down people's throats, comments about administrative bureaucracy or Vietnam, or even football and sex can all be used as opportunities to find out what people are thinking and to put forward revolutionary ideas. Of course in arguing with people our aim is not to score points or expose the reactionary nature of their ideas (unless they are enemies and there is an audience) but to bring them round to us. Progress achieved in this sort of work can be discussed with other members of a cell.

We must get over the present concept of preaching to the whole of Monash at once. People do not like to be thought of as just one of "the masses" and will not be convinced by listening to generalized speeches or reading generalized articles, no matter how well presented. We have to treat people as individuals and must listen to their views as well as putting forward our own. We should be at a stage now where cells could discuss how to influence a particular individual who shows signs of interest (for example what books or articles he should be lent to read and who should discuss things with him) or how to isolate a particular reactionary as well as putting forward a general line for the group they are working among. This does not mean that we want some vast card index system where every student at Monash is listed from enrolment together with monthly scores for sympathy with socialist ideas, joining the Labor Club, opposition to Vietnam war, attendance at meetings or demonstrations etc. But it does mean that we should expect each cell to be fully aware of the situation among the people it is working with - who the supporters and potential future members are, the sympathizers and fellow travellers, the reactionaries and the apathetic, and to have decided on what approach to take with each. Cells should know what people are thinking about various current issues and how that thinking can be influenced. They should work out on the basis of this knowledge what campaigns should be launched, what slogans should be put forward, what arguments should be used for particular groups and individuals and who should be approached for which aspects of this work. The Central organization can only take correct decisions as to what line should be taken in various struggles if the cells have this kind of detailed knowledge of the situation.

An important aspect of the cell idea is that we could have a really adequate communication system for the first time. When a meeting is being called or a demonstration organized we can be sure that everyone who is worth telling about it is told. When the University Administration pulls one of its fortnightly classic blunders we can

quickly work out what line to take and then spread the news all over campus together with out interpretation and our call for action. As well as word of mouthcells can be responsible for ensuring that all areas are adequately plastered with posters and blackboard notices, that announcements are made in lecture theatres and so on. By having a well disciplined cell structure we will always know where to lookwhen some particular job has to be done and we will have people ready to do it. In times of crisis we can be sure that our line is being spread among every accessible group of students - in the caf, in the library, the pub and so on and this also applies to whispering campaigns. In this way we can run rings around the Administration and student bureaucrats.

Let us take the distribution of Print for example. As a weekly agitational newsheet, with a circulation of about 1500, Print has been the Labor Club's main voice over the past two years. By spreading news and political analysis quickly and widely, Print has been quite successful in stirring up discontent and mobilizing students around political and University issues. In times of crisis Print's editorial policy has been carefully thought out in order to present what is hoped to be the correct line for advancing the struggle and avoiding diversions. The result is that Print has won a certain amount of respect as well as well as some bitter opposition, and it is at least looked at by a fairly large number of students. There are of course a number of thingswith Print's style, content and production quality that are wrong. In particular the trend towards long articles instead of agitational material should be reversed. All these questions should be discussed in detail and the League organization at Monash should take responsibility for ending the present haphazard production of Print and ensuring a better version is produced next year.

However I think it is worth discussing the question of Print distribution and the use made of Print in this article. At present all we do to distribute Print is leave it in the boxes left so conveniently by the administration at Monash. In fact we often do not make use of all the boxes outside the Union building and it is only when someone feels exceptionally energetic that we make sure it is available in the Science library or actually hand out copies to people eating in the cafeteria! It sometimes appears as though we produce Print out of habit or for the sake of it rather than with the aim of having it read (and this attitude is symptomatic of much of our work at Monash). All this completely negates the purpose of Print as an agitational newsheet. It allows most students to completely ignore it

while those that take a copy only glance through it and those that read it do not have to think about the contents. The whole point of an *agitational* newsheet is to serve as a *weapon for agitators*. Print should put forward a line on day to day events and arguments in support of that line so that these arguments and facts can be used to help bring home the message. Certainly we should make still greater use of all available facilities to distribute Print, we should also hand it out in lecture theatres and so on. But the important thing is to make sure that its articles are actually discussed. Each member of the YCL (and as many as possible of the non-League Labor Club supporters)

..should regard it as his personal responsibility to distribute Print among friends and acquaintances or at least to make sure that they have a copy and to *talk about it with them*. As with every other aspect of left-wing activity, we have to work at it. We cannot continue to allow Print to try and sell itself. It is well known that the effect of any leaflet is increased at least 10 times when the reader discusses its contents with someone who agrees with its position. The same attitude should be taken with any other material we distribute.

For most of the work I have been describing we would of course, not rely on YCL members acting in isolation but would work through the wider ranks of Labor Club sympathizers and in particular through the open Faculty and Department groups. The role of our members and cells would be to give leadership and guidance and to serve as examples for others. Indeed, in the near future we will not even be in a position to establish many Monash cells at all and will have to rely on individual members playing an active role within Labor Club groups and preparing the ground for a future cell by recruiting supporters from among the more advanced Labor Club activists. The most important thing is not a change in organization but in outlook - from cliquism to "serve the people". This cannot be acheived in one blow but it must be done if we are to advance.

STUDENT-WORKER ALLIANCE

by Len Coleman

What should be the line of development of SWCC?
Let us be clear at the outset that we will not be trying to direct workers. What we are trying to do is form an alliance between workers and revolutionary students. Since a student (or any intellectual) is revolutionary only if he is "willing to integrate himself with the broad masses of workers...and does so in practice"¹, what this means is that SWCC should be a medium through which students can integrate themselves with the masses of workers.

This alliance is very important in direct practical terms because it provides the possibility of tackling two different problems. The first problem is one facing the student movement, namely, "What happens to student radicals when they leave university?". The second problem is the central one of promoting communist consciousness among the working class. We cannot hope to have success here without commitment to the masses of workers and without a thorough knowledge of the conditions, attitudes and the general level of workers.

Hence I suggest the following course.

1. Demonstrate by word and action that we accept leadership by the working class, "the most farsighted, most selfless and most thoroughly revolutionary" class.²
2. Lose no opportunity of showing, by action based on reliance on the masses, the possibility of a revolutionary movement going beyond the confines of trade unionism.
3. Convince other sympathetic students and progressives of the desirability of accepting proletarian leadership.

(Some comrades have been doing things along these lines, and have sometimes been hindered by various kinds of monsters)

When we have something definite to say, something we know about, we should of course say it straight out; but the first job will be to listen and observe, make contacts with rank-and-file workers. Without a good knowledge of the whole situation it will be impossible to find the correct line and we will be isolated. Note how the mass line guards against various errors.³

It seems a long job and a difficult one, especially in the early stages when the alliance is weak and under attack, and we have little experience of the overall situation. But it is very important.

It is true not only in China but everywhere that:
"the revolutionary forces cannot be successfully organized and revolutionary work cannot be successfully conducted without the participation of revolutionary intellectuals. But the intellectuals often tend to be subjective and individualistic, impractical in their thinking and irresolute in action, until they have thrown themselves heart and soul into mass revolutionary struggles, or made up their minds to serve the interests of the masses and become one with them. Hence although the mass of the intellectuals in China can play a vanguard role or serve as a link with the masses, not all of them will remain revolutionaries to the end. Some will drop out of the revolutionary ranks at critical moments and become passive, while a few may even become enemies of the revolution. The intellectuals can overcome their shortcomings only in mass struggles over a long period."⁴

REFERENCES

1. Mao Tse-tung, "The Orientation of the Youth Movement" (Vol II p246)
2. " " "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship" (Vol IV p421)
3. " " Little Red Book, Chapter 11.
4. " " "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party" (Vol II p322)

There are two attitudes towards theory which have done a great deal of harm in the revolutionary movement. One is the attitude of "Book Worship" and the other is that of pragmatism.

The dogmatists try to separate Marxism from reality. They read a large number of different learned books and articles by various authors without critically absorbing anything, and then they invent all sorts of new and wonderful theories. They are interested in theory for its own sake so that they can gain a purely intellectual satisfaction from their wide reading in the same way that others do so with art collections. They like to quote obscure authors in order to intimidate people but they are not interested in applying their theory to the revolutionary movement. Even when they study Marxist-Leninist classics they miss the essence and produce only distorted quotations. They refuse to make a concrete analysis of concrete conditions and generally take an anti-revolutionary stand on questions of practical policy. They know all about the 1905 revolution in Russia, or the different revolutionary groupings in Latin America but they are not interested in Australia at all... This kind of thinking is particularly prevalent among 'New Left' intellectuals but it has also been a recurring feature of the international communist movement and has been subjected to attack by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao.

As it did particular damage to the Chinese revolution during some periods I hope no-one will object to my 'dogmatically' reproducing here some quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung. The excerpts are taken from the chapters on "Methods of Thinking and Methods of Work" and "Study" in the Little Red Book, and I think they assist in deciding a correct approach to study:

The Marxist philosophy of dialectical materialism has two outstanding characteristics. One is its class nature: it openly avows that dialectical materialism is in the service of the proletariat. The other is its practicality: it emphasizes that theory is based on practice and in turn serves practice.

Marxist philosophy holds that the most important problem does not lie in understanding the laws of the external world and thus being able to explain it, but in applying the knowledge of these laws actively to change the world.

Whoever wants to know a thing has no way of doing so except by coming into contact with it, that is by living (practising) in its environment... If you want knowledge, you must take part in the practice of changing reality. If you want to know the taste of a pear, you must change the pear by eating it yourself... If you want to know the theory and methods of revolution, you must take part in revolution. All genuine knowledge originates in direct experience.

We are Marxists, and Marxism teaches that in our approach to a problem we should start from objective facts, not from abstract definitions, and that we should derive our guiding principles, policies and measures from an analysis of these facts.

Idealism and metaphysics are the easiest things in the world, because people can talk as much nonsense as they like without having it based on objective reality or having it tested against reality. Materialism and dialectics, on the other hand, need effort. Theory must be based on and tested by objective reality. Unless one makes the effort, one is liable to slip into idealism and metaphysics.

If we have a correct theory but merely prate about it, pigeonhole it and do not put it into practice, then that theory, however good, is of no significance.

Some people have read a few Marxist books and think themselves quite learned, but what they have learned has not struck root in their minds, so that they do not know how to use it and their class

feelings remain as of old. Others are very conceited and having learned some book-phrases, think themselves terrific and are very cocky; but whenever a storm blows up they take a stand very different from that of the workers and the majority of the peasants. They waver while the latter stand firm, they equivocate while the latter are forthright.

As a reactõpm to the 'intellectual' or dogmatist approach to theory a pragmatist attitude has developed among many revolutionary youth. This amounts to the dismissal of theory as 'of no direct importance to the practical struggle'. These people say that classical theory is useless simply because some people who have read Marxist literature manage to make no use of it; and on this ground they actually reject all the rich lessons that can be gained from a study of the history of the international revolutionary movement. Such rationalizations as "theory is best learnt through practice" or "the cops can teach us about the reality of state power" are absurd - they only reflect the low level of theoretical knowledge existing at present. In fact it is essential to at least grasp the Marxist method of analysis if we are to have any success in understanding Australian reality from a revolutionary standpoint; and this simply doesn't just accumulate from experience. To quote Mao again:

The theory of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin is universally applicable. We should regard it not as a dogma, but as a guide to action. Studying it is not merely a matter of learning terms and phrases but of studying Marxism-Leninism as the science of revolution. It is not just a matter of understanding the general laws derived by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin from their extensive study of real life and revolutionary experience, but of studying their standpoint and method in examining and solving problems.

...If we actually forget the Party's general line and general policy, we shall be blind, half-baked and muddle-headed revolutionaries, and when we carry out a specific line for work or a specific policy, we shall lose our bearings and vacillate now to the left and now to the right and the work will suffer.

Those experienced in work must take up the study of theory and must read seriously; only then will they be able to systematize their experience and raise it to the level of theory, only then will they not mistake their partial experience for universal truth and not commit empiricist errors.

In short the revolutionary movement requires, not dogmatism or pragmatism, but the *integration of theory with practice*. This cannot be accomplished in one blow or by proclamation but it should be kept firmly in mind as a goal. When we have achieved some basic grounding in Marxist-Leninist theory we should be able to study with specific problems in mind and apply our theory to revolutionary practice. We should develop our own theory by making a Marxist analysis of the realities of the student and youth movements in Australia. This requires both research into facts and history and also a constant summing up, in the light of Marxism, of experience gained in the various struggles in which we are engaged. This must be approached conscientiously as a serious task, for it is only in this way that we can develop a correct line for work. We must advance to the point where for example, in deciding tactics to be followed at a particular student meeting on a particular issue, the discussion can be at a fairly high theoretical level on the basis of commonly accepted principles. We can only become an effective, united and disciplined force if we have a clearly understood common line which each member applies in his practical work; and this can only be achieved if all members participate in the widest and deepest possible discussions of policy and tactics. These discussions should be intended to promote unity rather than to encourage factional disputes, and if a correct line is to come out of them they should proceed together with the study of the appropriate Marxist-Leninist works.

There is also another aspect to theoretical study and that is the question of its effect on individuals. We have not only to decide on correct policies for an organization but also to remould our own personal attitudes in order to become better revolutionaries. Each of us

has certain bourgeois ideas which are reinforced by the pressures of capitalism and which hold us back in the revolutionary struggle. These ideas can only be combatted by opposing Marxist-Leninist ideology to them.

For these reasons I think that we should treat theoretical study as far more than the reading of a few books and attendance at a few discussions - it is something integral to every activity of the YCL. I think that the proposed reading list and seminars are a reasonable approach to getting a basic grounding in Marxist theory even if variations in detail have to be made. It should be possible for everyone to finish reading most of the material listed within a month or two and there is no harm in those who have read things before doing so again - we need to appropriate the material rather than just glance through it. However we must go far beyond this to establish theoretical study as a basic aspect of the League's life. More seminars are not the answer; it is too easy to have one person spout material he does not understand while others listen without interest. Each individual and each cell has to work in its own environment and each has to develop its own understanding. The ability to think independently and find one's own bearings is far more important than memorizing material prepared by others for formal courses. Also, each individual has to fight the wrong ideas in his own mind and this cannot be done for him. For these reasons we should emphasise the need for serious individual study of Marxist-Leninist works in the light of current problems. Discussions, courses and seminars can be very helpful in clearing up points of difficulty and they should definitely be organized - both through the YCL and through the 'Revolutionary Socialists'. But they can only be helpful if those participating have already thoroughly studied the material being discussed; they can never substitute for this study.

As soon as possible members should start preparing their own individual reading lists on the basis of views exchanged as to interesting material available and gaps in particular people's background. Once the initial period is over we should aim to decentralize theoretical study to the cells as much as possible - that theory can best be integrated with practice and even matters of general interest or controversy are better discussed in small groups than large meetings. Our internal bulletin and external journal can be used as forums in which to develop theory.

In the meantime we have to establish priorities and a time-table for our study of basic theory. I propose that this be approached as follows (this represents purely my personal opinion so please don't resent it):

1. We should start by reading Mao's "Reform Our Study" and "Rectify the Party's Style of Work" in order to take a correct approach to study; and also "On Contradiction", "On Practice", Lenin's three articles on Marxism (l(h,i,j)), "The State" and "The Communist Manifesto" for some fundamental Marxist principles. Only a week or two should be allowed for this (since there is not a great deal of material) before a general discussion is organised. (See reading list for references)

2. "The Polemic on the General Line of the International Communist Movement". I think it would be appropriate to study parts of this book because the issues involved in the split cover the entire field of revolutionary strategy and tactics and useful discussion will result.

3. Discuss Leninism using 1(g,l,m) and 2(a).

4. Discuss trade-unionism, parliamentarianism, mass-line, sectarianism using 1(f,n) and 3(c,d).

By this time we should be ready to draw up further reading lists.

Finally a quote from Lenin's: "What is to be Done" (1902)

"Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. This cannot be insisted upon too strongly at a time when the fashionable preaching of opportunism is combined with absorption in the narrowest forms of practical activity".