

# AMR

Australian Marxist Review – Journal of the Communist Party of Australia



#56 July 2014

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Reviving worker's education

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ISSN: 0310-8252

# 56 June 2014



Eddie Clynes.

## Editorial notes

In 2006, the late Eddie Clynes, as editor of the *AMR* wrote: “The fighting spirit of the recent CPA 10th Congress has encouraged the renewed production of the *Australian Marxist Review*”. Unfortunately, for a number of reasons, the *AMR*’s revival was short lived and new issues were released on an irregular basis. Just like in 2006, there is no shortage of challenges facing the Australian working class movement so with the 12<sup>th</sup> CPA congress successfully concluded, it is again time to dust off the *AMR* and restore it to its former glory.

This issue of the *Australian Marxist Review* is dedicated to Comrade Eddie Clynes who died last year.

He was an exemplary communist whose penetrating intellect and practical leadership were seminal within the Communist Party of Australia. His ideological and political leadership was fundamental to the development of Communist Party of Australia policies.

Comrade Eddie was crucial in the development of the party’s education programs and was respected and admired for his political education classes in which he was able to involve students, get them thinking, and make complicated concepts accessible. His class notes remain a valuable resource.

This issue of the *AMR* republishes a number of articles by Comrades Clynes as well as articles on the topic of education.

If our Party is to fulfill its historic mission then it will require advanced theory and correct policies. Lenin in *What is to be Done* said: “The role of vanguard fighter can be fulfilled only by a party that is guided by the most advanced theory”. The *Australian*

*Marxist Review* is a platform for the propagation of Marxism Leninism among our comrades. When combined with Party education, branch meetings and practical activities, it is a powerful tool for the ongoing political development of our members.

We live in a time where the rights and conditions our predecessors struggled for are being eroded at a growing rate. Now more than ever, our comrades need to be active in their workplaces and in the community. The need for practical struggle does not diminish the importance of theory, on the contrary: “*Practice without theory is blind. Theory without practice is sterile*”. As the need for action increases, so does the need for theory and correct policy. The *AMR* has an important role to play in equipping comrades with the theory that is so vital to our practical action.

The conditions under which we struggle are changing. Although old contradictions continue to exist, they change in form and intensity. The classics are not set in stone as timeless commandments to our movement. As Lenin said: “We do not regard Marx’s theory as something completed and inviolable; on the contrary, we are convinced that it has only laid the foundation stone of the science which socialists must develop in all directions if they wish to keep pace with life”.

Readers are encouraged to share their own insights and contributions by submitting them to the *AMR*. A widely distributed and read theoretical journal, filled with contributions from the membership, would be a powerful tool in our Party’s arsenal.

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# Party education – lessons from some personal experiences

Michael Hooper

Think back to the last time you talked to a member of the public in a political setting. It could have been someone on the sidelines of a demo, a passerby who took a leaflet and stopped to chat or a bloke on the train commenting on current affairs. What kind of comments did they make? How developed was their political level? What did you say to them? If you are like me you may have come away from the exchange slightly deflated and thinking: “what planet do these people come from?” or “do they really believe the nonsense that comes out of their mouths?”

Unsurprisingly, our fellow Australians are generally not Marxists with a fully formed and coherent worldview. The same thing can be said of most people who apply to join our Party. What kind of people apply to join the Party? How many people who applied to join your branch were fully developed communists? Most people who apply to join the Party are ordinary people who feel that something is wrong with Australian society. They know that the two major parties cannot fix whatever is wrong and they may even understand that the social structure itself needs to be changed. They may have read the *Communist Manifesto* and liked the sound of it or they may be trade union or political activists who worked with our members on united front campaigns.

Before they can become effective fighters of the working class they require training. These comrades need a comprehensive Marxist-Leninist worldview as well as training in the practical skills necessary to carry out Party activities. Education that successfully builds these qualities in our members is absolutely essential for our Party's success. In order for education to be successful, we need to grow out of some bad habits and develop new, better ones.

## Reading, reading and more reading

When comrades join the Party they are usually loaded up with a list of books to read. I remember Rex Munn (veteran Party member and wharfie from Port Adelaide) telling me that when he joined the Party he was told to go and read the “classics”. As a working man in the ‘40s and ‘50s he wasn’t a big reader and was totally overwhelmed by the classics.

Our branches today sometimes commit the same error and overload new members with hundred-year-old texts, full of obscure terms and outdated language. Reading is not as popular today as it was in the past and people’s attention spans are affected by new technologies such as the internet, twitter and microblogs.

Dictatorship of the proletariat, non-antagonistic contradictions, negation of the negation, commodity fetishism, the list of terms that seem impenetrable and arcane to new members goes on. New members may on occasion feel they are being bombarded with new terms in an unhelpful and formulaic manner. Complex terms are explained using technical phrases which are not always understandable. Even if the terms are explained clearly by tutors, the source materials often use language that is needlessly complicated.

This wouldn’t be as much of a problem if education cadres, executive members or even mentors were available to assist comrades and to ensure that they at least attempt the set readings. Due to present realities this is not always the case and a lack of supervision means that comrades struggling with such solid texts as *Capital* or *Fundamentals of Dialectics* may not receive the help they need. The end result is new comrades give up and lose a very important opportunity to develop their own political level, at the same time depriving the Party of much needed cadre.

## One size fits all delivery and content

When preparing a branch education class, how much do we take into account the different backgrounds and circumstances of our students? How often have classes been developed without enough thought given to students’ individual needs.

It is still the case in some classes that instead of relating Marxist principles to modern, daily life situations, the same examples from soviet textbooks are copied and given to students. When explaining the concept of quantity into quality, boiling water changing into steam is the go to example but I have never heard anyone use anything else in a class. If we are going to convince members that this principle is universal and happening around us all the time then shouldn’t we be able to come up with multiple examples that are occurring in our daily lives? For example we could use the small, gradual



Rex Munn.

changes to Medicare over the past decade with the ultimate goal of privatisation to demonstrate quantitative changes leading to qualitative changes.

## Stop/start education

How consistently do branches hold education classes? How well attended are our classes? In an ideal world every comrade would come to every meeting/class and it would be easy to organize dates. Unfortunately this is impossible. For one reason or another, not every comrade can come to every class and someone will always miss something. Fault can also lie with the person carrying out the classes, who may not be able to teach everything they had planned and presents fewer classes than expected. As a result of these conditions, Party education can become a stop/start proposition. Every once in a while a new education plan is drawn up and someone is made responsible for teaching the classes. They will begin at the beginning and cover very similar topics to the last education course. Unfortunately these classes can run out of steam before reaching more advanced content, so we should be asking ourselves what are the possibilities

of producing more advanced classes for more developed comrades?

## What is to be Done?

The issues raised above are important and where difficulties exist they should be acknowledged and we should deal with them. Over a decade ago our Central Committee began work to end what they called teaching dialectics metaphysically. Two particular features of this work were the development of schools for tutors and an emphasis on developing active instead of passive knowledge. However, we have to admit that the new approach to teaching is not yet entrenched throughout our Party.

I believe that regardless of their educational background, everyone has the potential to become a Marxist. The key point for us as teachers of Marxism-Leninism is to make the learning process more relevant, straight-forward and accessible to comrades' areas of work. There is no need to make learning more difficult, in fact we should be doing everything we can to help our members succeed and to help them improve.

Earlier I mentioned Rex Munn’s run-in with the classics. How did he deal with his situation? Rex told us that at first he couldn’t handle the classics so he began to read Soviet socialist realist novels such as “How the steel was tempered”. Later he began to work his way up to heavier and more difficult texts until he could handle the classics. We need to work with comrades to effectively judge their ability to handle certain texts and recommend suitable books for them.

## Accessible language

Comrades need to be introduced to the technical terms of Marxism with care. We need to take care that new terms are introduced slowly and explained thoroughly in easy to understand language. This way, the terms will be correctly understood and potential political errors are prevented before they develop. For example, the dictatorship of the proletariat does not mean dictatorship in the traditional sense of a military junta or a corporate backed strongman yet it would be easy for comrades to think that.

The term class in mainstream parlance can mean anything from how you dress and how you speak to what kind of culture you enjoy so when we talk about class with new members we need to make it absolutely clear

that this is a socio-economic category based on how you make your living.

Do you make a living by going to work and earning a wage or do you send other people to work and extract your income from them? With careful explanation the previous sentence makes a great starting point for explaining what ownership of the means of production means and making clear to comrades the role of ownership in class. Careful introduction of concepts with clear language and reference to daily life examples helps comrades to understand ideas more thoroughly and helps them to develop into better, more effective communists.

## Different strokes for different folks

Teaching adults is a different process to teaching children and requires a different approach. Unlike young children, adults already have a lifetime of experiences and perceptions built up over decades. These experiences lead to different interpretations of the world and so adults will react differently to exactly the same education class.

The key to successfully educating adults is to find ways to use their life experiences to reinforce the message of our classes. Simply telling them that something is the





god given truth will not have much of an effect on them. If instead we take an example from their workplace and show them the Marxist principle that explains why that happens, then they will be much more interested and more likely to understand and remember the concept. Before teaching a class, we should take the time to find out about the students, what kind of background they come from and their areas of work. This makes it easier to create vivid examples that will convince them what you are saying matches their life.

Every comrade begins at a different level and learns at a different rate. It is very difficult to design classes that are suitable for everyone at the same time. Some content may be too advanced for some while being too simple for others. In order to address this issue, branches should choose experienced comrades to tutor new members. Tutors can work with new members in a one on one environment to help comrades read books they are having trouble with or to help explain concepts that classes may not have adequately covered.

## Tutors

Tutors are crucial to effective education programs.

Notes for a school for tutors in 2006 include the following points:

Tutors have to play a leading role in working things out. Education is a continuous process, for all party members, but especially for tutors. “Education for life” takes on a real meaning as tutors must develop a wide range of knowledge, so they can add to ideas raised, round them out, put them in theoretical and historical context. We are helping people adopt a new world outlook, in a society immersed in bourgeois ideology.

**Tutors should not dominate the discussion.** They must certainly lead, but not to the exclusion of healthy discussion and debate by the participants, although the tutor should also be able to stop discussion which is not relevant or off the topic. Sometimes it is valuable to let

a debate occur. It gets people involved and the tutor can often draw some conclusions from it or raise some questions, suggest reading material etc. The aim is to guide the participants in solving problems, in constructing knowledge, in exploring topics and processes.

**Participants in the class should be actively involved in the process.** Classes should be planned with an introduction, a question, discussion, explanation, another problem or question being posed, more discussion, explanation, clarification, more questions, etc. Active participation should be achieved, prompting students to think, to work things out.

A tutor’s job is to determine the key questions and plan discussion, reading, questions, examples to help participants assimilate those points; Ideological points must be illustrated and/or applied, with real life examples; Theory and practice should be closely linked. Theory must be brought to life.

Tutors must develop a problem-solving approach. Make it challenging. Develop a collective analysis. Bring out what the class (conclusions, knowledge) means in practice. Encourage clarification of ideas, which comes through discussion and debate.

## Conclusion

Education of new members and the continuing development of current members are some of the most important tasks that face our Party. All Party activities rely on capable, highly organised and politically developed cadres to carry them out. The word cadre comes from the French word meaning a “frame” and in terms of our Party you could say that cadres are the framework on which everything is built.

Without effective education we cannot train the cadres that our organisation needs to fulfill its historic duty. I hope that branches and committees at all levels of the Party will examine their current education activities and consider ways of improving them.

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# Cadre training

Eddie Clynes  
Congress Discussion Journal No 1, 1992

I welcome the inclusion of Rule 6 – Training and Education of Members – in our draft Constitution.

In the absence of any cadre training programs, we rely on the initiative and ability which members bring to the party when they join. Many other organisations have training programs to teach people how to carry out tasks.

Many of our new members are left in dark when it comes to learning what they're supposed to be doing and how they should do it. I think this is the main reason why newer members are reluctant to take on responsibility. Eventually they become older members, still reluctant to take on responsibility. This is an obstacle to the party's growth, to developing the party's influence.

Members often become "typecast", i.e. restricted to one type of party activity, because of lack of training which would give knowledge and confidence to take on greater responsibilities.

The need for cadre training was first raised in an extensive way in the *SPA Fifth Congress Document* in 1984. Unfortunately, very little has been done since then to develop cadre-training programs for party members.

The party relies on its cadres. "Party cadres play an extremely important role within the organisation at all levels. They serve to give an example to other members and prospective members, to give assistance to new members, to do special jobs for the party, to advance courageously party actions among the masses, to bear with difficulties in party work and so forth." <sup>(1)</sup>

There is a need to constantly develop new cadres. The ever expanding needs of the party demand this. There are many areas of work we need to become active in. We have to strengthen our existing party organisations, especially the branches, develop new leaderships and new branches.

There should be no artificial division between "party members" and "party cadres". Every party member should be afforded the opportunity to develop. Rule 6 makes this clear: "The development of cadres is a continuing task. The aim is to ensure that each member maintains the maximum level of activity with an increasing capacity to fulfill the tasks of a Party member,

maintaining high moral standards and a commitment to serving the working class." <sup>(2)</sup>

Of course cadre training involves understanding our party's ideological and political position, gaining familiarity with our policies and their rationale, public speaking, report preparation, paper selling, and many other aspects of party work.

I would like to raise some of the concepts I consider important to be discussed at cadre training sessions.

## Why the party exists; the necessity to develop a mass influence; orientation of the party to people outside the party.

In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels analysed the relationship between the Communists (Marxist Party) and the proletarians (working class). They wrote that communists do not have "interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole.

"They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement ...

"The Communists, therefore, are ... that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement." <sup>(3)</sup>

To use a well-worn phrase, "the party does not exist for itself". It exists for the people, to serve the people; in the first place, the working class.

That it is necessary for the party to develop a mass influence would be agreed on by all comrades, yet in our day-to-day party work I am of the opinion that time and again we miss opportunities to involve non-party people. There are many improvements we can make to better orient our activity towards people outside the party.

This should be the subject of discussion with party members. Developing contacts with non-party people has to be promoted as the principle method of doing party work. Members who are content to remain "hidden" and

only surface at party meetings are not fulfilling their obligation to build the influence of the party.

It must become a standard practice for party branches to develop a contact list of non-party friends and supporters and to seek ways to involve such people in party work e.g. selling the *Guardian* and supporting SPA social and political activities.

Most importantly, the party has an obligation to have discussions with party friends and supporters to ascertain how the party can help them.

## Connecting theory with practice

It is important that party members participate in the many struggles of the people, both by working in one of the many non-party organisations and by campaigning in the party's name.

If our work is to be successful and advance the movement, there are two main errors we should avoid. One consists of failing to appropriately introduce the necessary political and ideological aspects of the struggle in

order to give people a better understanding of the meaning and direction of their struggle. That is, we fail to apply our Marxist-Leninist ideology.

The other error is to try and rally people on the basis of general demands, assuming that the mere presentation of our political and ideological position is sufficient to win support and generate activity.

Both errors derive from an improper relationship between theory and practice. Party propaganda should be discussed and assessed in this light.

Within the party we have to develop a better understanding of how to put theory into practice in order to strengthen the unity of the party and make our work more effective.

We are united theoretically i.e. we share a common ideology and have a common analysis of political life and a common set of policy solutions to the major problems facing the people.

If we want to deepen the unity of our party and our application of democratic centralism, to ensure there really is a close contact between higher and lower bodies we have







to make explicit our common approach to struggling, in practice, for the implementation of party policy.

One useful way to achieve this is to examine the logical progression which leads us from the analysis of issues to the practical tasks of the day.

There are many ISSUES in the world which we examine as a whole. We formulate POLICIES to solve the problems raised by the issues. We set GOALS, usually more immediate ones, which highlight the need to achieve elements of our policies. We pinpoint CONCRETE TASKS which have to be carried out in achieving our goals. We allocate RESPONSIBILITIES for carrying out these tasks.

## Issues > Policies > Goals > Concrete Tasks > Responsibilities

In our party there is an artificial division between the steps in this progression. There is an accepted “division of labour” between the different levels of the party. In my opinion, this is an expression of the separation of theory and practice.

Policy is decided at Central Committee level and the lower party organisations have to implement it, i.e. set the goals, formulate the concrete tasks and carry them out.

It can be argued that this “division of labour” is to some extent a natural one as the more developed and experienced members of the party are better able to analyse issues and formulate policy. But surely the aim of building the party, building an alternate leadership for this country, necessarily includes ensuring every party mem-

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ber can analyse, develop policy, set goals, formulate concrete tasks and allocate responsibilities.

Yet as a party we accept this “division of labour” as fixed and unchangeable.

Reports at Central Committee meetings often present the results of analysis and policy formulation carried out at Central Committee Executive meetings. There is very rarely any suggestions of immediate goals or concrete tasks that party organisations should consider, in order to win support for the implementation of our policy.

This is reflected in some branch meetings where the work of the party is often conceptualised in unachievable terms, it remains at the level of issues and policy. We have to “win the working class” or “get our policies across” but these goals are not translated into concrete tasks for the organisation. The consequences of this approach are that we talk in abstract terms and never really develop good organisers who can see in detail how to develop struggle. This approach gives our party a “talkshop” and “isolated” image.

Formulating and achieving concrete tasks develops a realistic sense of achievement and fosters pride in the party when tasks and goals are successfully fulfilled.

At the other end of the spectrum we have party branches and party members who see their role as solely to carry out concrete tasks, which are very necessary, but in the absence of ever taking part in developing goals, formulating policies, analysing issues, fail to develop comrades who are able to give leadership to the many struggles of the people.

Both higher and lower party committees must have the perspective of extending their work to both ends of the above “progression” as much as is possible for them.

Good leadership must be able to see this dynamic of theory and practice in all we do and be able to “flesh out” all stages of the progression from issues to responsibilities.

I am not asking the Central Committee to be responsible for allocating particular comrades in each branch around Australia to sell the *Guardian*, but I do think it essential that the Central Committee bring its experience and knowledge to bear on how to implement policy, which goals to set, what concrete tasks party organisations could carry out, in winning support for the implementation of policy, which is, after all, policy decided by the Central Committee. We cannot maintain an artificial division between theory and practice and still claim to practice democratic centralism which ensures “close contact between higher and lower party organisations”.

Our *5th Congress Political Statement* spoke about the need to develop “action programs”, based on our policy.

It says when developing activity around party policy we should ask the questions: a) which targets, what demands b) to which groups is the program directed c) what form, tactics, organisation d) which party organisation, members, supporters, can be involved e) what evaluation do we make of our work

These are some of the questions the Central Committee and other higher party committees can begin to tackle when making decisions about policy.

If the Central Committee took more responsibility for how its decisions were implemented the real life connections between it and the State and District committees would multiply, giving the party a more developed unity and a greater sense of common purpose.

Similarly, the lower party organisations, especially branches must be encouraged to engage in analysis and policy formulation. The greater the responsibility the branches have for all aspects of their work, from policy making to implementation, the greater will be their commitment and sense of responsibility for implementation i.e. activity.

## Role of party branches

The party branch is the public face of the party in the many areas where the branch is active, be it a workplace, a locality, or a mass organisation. The party branch exercises this role more so than any other party committee, because branches have the most direct contact with non-party people.

The party branch must play its part in organising struggle, both in its own name and through non-party organisations. A major aim is to win support for party policy as the best way forward and in this process to win new members who are prepared to join us in party activity.

Branch life must be stimulating and action oriented, with discussion and planning of activities and allocation of responsibilities. There must also be follow up i.e. checking on decisions and planning of further activity based on the previous practice and the lessons learned.

An important topic for discussion at cadre training sessions is how to upgrade the party’s public profile, especially that of the party branch. What use does each branch make of means such as the *Guardian*, leaflets, petitions, stalls, the local media, the ethnic media, delegations to local members, house meetings and public meetings?

Branches should play a most important role in guiding the work of their members, those who work directly with the people on behalf of the party organisation and those who work in non-party mass organisations. Our



concept of criticism and self-criticism i.e. assessment of work done and guidance for the future should be central. Branches should also give back-up and support to members who work in non-party organisations.

## The branch executive

Our constitution places responsibility on a branch executive for “implementing decisions of the branch, preparing the business for each branch meeting, for the extension, development and strengthening of the branch organisation” and for “taking necessary steps to encourage the maximum participation of branch members in the activity of the branch.”<sup>(4)</sup>

How this is done, concretely, is rarely the subject of discussion. The fact that branch executives are still not very business like, do not pay attention to details of correspondence, leave things until the last minute etc. is proof of the need for such discussion about their role.

It is the branch executive’s task to ensure political reports are given at every business meeting – reports which deal with the issues of the day and are helpful for comrades both as part of their general political education and in their everyday work.

Branch executives must ensure that proposals for activity are put forward at branch meetings. The need to check on decisions has been raised for many years in our party. “Some party organisations do not do this. They have a discussion, make decisions and when they meet again have another discussion and make more decisions. Such a party organisation will almost certainly be standing still and getting little done except having a ‘good discussion’.”<sup>(5)</sup>

Improving the work of branch executives will overcome attitudes of liberalism, still prevalent in our party, and help to strengthen our practice of democratic centralism and thereby our party work.

## The function of branch officers

In the life of our party there have been tens of branch secretaries, chairpersons and treasurers. How many of these comrades have ever discussed what their role is? Very few, I suspect.

That’s not to say we haven’t had good branch officers. An amount of experience was brought into the SPA at its formation and passed on to newer members, but not in any systematic way. Branch officers also learned what to do through their own experience, integrating that with already established practices.

There are differing views on the role of branch officers in our party. This is not surprising, as we, as a party, have not developed a uniform definition of what is required of secretaries, chairpersons etc.

In my experience in the party, I have been in branches where the person in the chair has been regarded as the main political cadre, rather than the secretary as it should be in our party. In such branches, the secretary has been seen as “a secretarial worker”, answering correspondence etc., and not as responsible for ensuring the political direction of the party organisation.

In our party the branch secretary is responsible for all that happens in the branch, and therefore answerable to the higher party body for the work of the branch.

The secretary does not have to do everything personally, but must ensure that responsibility is allocated for all the necessary tasks to be carried out by the branch. The branch secretary must think of everything!

Branch programs of action (whatever the scale or scope) have to be formulated and in the first place the branch secretary should draft such programs, in discussion with the other executive members.

A branch secretary is primarily responsible for motivating others into activity. Again I will quote from our *Fifth Congress Document*: “Party members must not succumb to apathy or lack of political consciousness which is often widespread. It is the task of political leadership to overcome these difficulties and rise above them not capitulating to this or that mood which might prevail from time to time. The party must see further ahead and elevate the working class to its role of leadership of all the progressive forces.”<sup>(6)</sup>

Branch secretaries should see to it that there is constant contact between the branch executive and branch members, and the branch and party supporters. The secretary is also responsible for the development of all members, including the allocation of responsibilities to members of the executive and of the branch.

Chairing a meeting is not just a matter of “keeping comrades in order” as you will often hear the chairperson’s job described.

Their main function is to ensure a proper discussion around the proposals before the meeting and to ensure the meeting reaches some conclusion i.e. the proposals are accepted and/or amended (or rejected) and that responsibility is allocated for putting the proposals into effect.

There are other aspects of the role of the chairperson, including maintaining a good atmosphere in the branch

meeting and using initiative to overcome difficulties in the meeting.

One aspect which should be discussed at cadre training sessions is whether we should use the so-called “rules of debate” at party meetings, and if not, why not.

Other branch executive positions, include treasurer, *Guardian* officer, education officer and they too should be the subject of extensive discussion, and not be left to individual comrades to find their own way. That’s not an argument for stifling individual initiative, but a plea for a common, collective understanding of what comrades in these positions should be doing, to help party branches fulfill their role in the best possible way.

## Real life examples

I think it best if the role of branches and the function of branch officers are not discussed in an abstract way, but as much as possible real life examples and problems are used as the basis for discussion of what needs to be done and how it should be done.

Key points of our ideological and political platform should be integrated into the discussion at all stages where appropriate. For example, our attitude to other sections of society and the need for allies of the working class, our two-stage transition process, as well as our attitude to left and right opportunism should be constant themes when discussing how to upgrade the party’s public profile and build connections with the people.

Our attitude to unity and our strategy of building a political alternative are also important cornerstones of party policy which party comrades have to apply in their everyday work.

## Aims of cadre training

Our party should make cadre training a permanent feature of party life. There is always a need to replenish our cadre force. It’s not only people new to the political movement who we have to train, but those who come to us from different sources, such as other left parties or the ALP.

Cadre training should teach people how to carry out the many necessary tasks of party life, some of which are discussed above. In this process we should aim to build cadres with a devotion to the cause of the working class, comrades with a loyalty to the party and a commitment to develop and build the party.

We should avoid a narrow interpretation of what a party cadre is. Some years ago, Georgi Dimitrov wrote: “... in practice preference is very often given to a comrade who, for example, is able to write well and is a good speaker but is not a man or woman of action, and is not as suited for the struggle as some other comrade who perhaps may not be able to write or speak so well, but is a staunch comrade, possessing initiative and contacts with the masses, and is capable of going into battle and leading others into battle. Have there not been many cases of sectarians, doctrinaires or moralisers crowding out loyal mass workers, genuine working class leaders.”<sup>(7)</sup>

We have to develop comrades who can think for themselves, comrades who can work out solutions to problems which the party faces, problems which the people face, and who are not afraid to show initiative and to take on responsibility for decisions taken.

Cadre training should equip comrades to work among the people, to be able to give real leadership to the working class and other sections of the people.

1. *SPA Fifth Congress Document 1984*, p 107.
2. *SPA draft Constitution*, para 6.3.
3. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Progress 1986, p 47.
4. *Constitution of the SPA 1984*, p 25.
5. *SPA Fifth Congress Document 1984*, p 110.
6. *Ibid.*, p 107-108.
7. From G Dimitrov’s reply to discussion at the 7th World Congress of the Communist International held in Moscow, August 1935.

# Providing better compulsory education for China's rural children

The report to the Eighteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) set forth the goals that we must work towards in the years ahead. These goals include completing the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects by the time the Communist Party of China celebrates its centenary (2021); and turning China into a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, and harmonious by the time the People's Republic of China marks its centennial (2049). In addition to completing the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects, the report also proposed the goal of deepening China's reform and opening up in an all-round way.

These targets have provided us with a clear direction for the reform and development of education. In the first meeting of the newly elected Party leadership with the Chinese and foreign press, General Secretary Xi Jinping listed better education as the first of seven major public expectations. Moreover, Premier Li Keqiang also highlighted the establishment of a safety net that covers all the people and ensures their basic wellbeing, including education, during the first full session of the State Council. Therefore, in order to meet these new expectations, more will be required of our initiatives in education.

Education and rural areas hold the key to achieving the goals established by the report to the Eighteenth National Congress of the CPC, which include accomplishing the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects and realizing the modernization of the country. In a certain sense, rural education can be viewed as the foundation for the rejuvenation of the nation, and the key to ensuring the wellbeing of the people.

As such, rural education has an important bearing on China's overall social and economic development, and also on social fairness and justice. As the longest continuous stage of education that we attend, nine-year compulsory education lays down key foundations in our lives, having a decisive influence on our future and happiness. In China, rural schools account for over 85% of all schools providing compulsory education, while rural students account for more than 70% of students in compulsory education. Therefore, the provision of sound education in rural areas will ensure our success in the modernization of education by the year 2020. Rural compulsory education also represents a key link in the coordination of rural and urban development.

Only by providing fair and quality education for China's hundreds of millions of rural children will we be able to narrow the development gap between urban and rural areas and safeguard social fairness. And only by doing that will we be able to train the talent we need to achieve the simultaneous progression of industrialization, IT application, urbanization, and agricultural modernization, and thereby complete the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects.

During a visit to Fuping County, Hebei Province, following the Eighteenth National Congress of the Party, General Secretary Xi Jinping said, "If we want the next generation to live a better life, we must educate them well. We need to deliver a good performance in compulsory education, so that our children can receive a quality education." Therefore, the importance of compulsory education in rural areas is something that cannot be overemphasized.

In recent years, the Chinese government has carried out a series of large-scale, practical, and beneficial programs to promote the development of compulsory education in rural areas. By increasing expenditure, enhancing development, deepening reform, and improving mechanisms, we have been able to make significant advances with regard to the fairness and quality of rural compulsory education.

For example, free compulsory education has been achieved in all urban and rural areas; public expenditure per student in rural primary and middle schools has been increased by a significant margin; the central government and local governments have allocated more than 300 billion yuan in funding to improve the safety of school buildings, making school the safest place for children and setting parents' minds at ease; since being launched in China's most impoverished areas, schemes to provide better nutrition for rural students have already benefited more than 30 million students; the overall quality of the rural teaching workforce has been improved through several initiatives, namely, a plan to place university graduates in special teaching positions in rural schools in western regions, a national plan to train primary and middle school teachers, and a policy of free tuition for teacher-training students; and benefits for rural teachers have been improved through measures such as introducing performance-based pay, providing temporary housing at subsidized rates or for free, and reforming the accreditation system for teaching professionals. Owing



to these efforts, we have managed to change the face of compulsory education in rural areas. Now, compulsory education in rural areas is showing new signs of sound development.

The universal coverage of nine-year compulsory education, which was achieved in 2011, has ensured that all children are able to attend school. But now that universal coverage has been achieved, what will our next goal be in the development of compulsory education? In fact, clear requirements for the development of compulsory education have already been set out in the report to the Eighteenth National Congress of the CPC, the report on the work of the government, and at the first full session of the State Council. In other words, our next requirement is to promote the balanced development of compulsory education.

By balancing the development of compulsory education, not only will we guarantee that all children are able to attend school, we will also ensure that they are able to

receive a quality education. Therefore, in accordance with the requirements of the CPC Central Committee, Party committees, governments, and related departments at all levels are required to view the balanced development of compulsory education as a strategic task, formulate clear roadmaps and timeframes for these initiatives, and ensure that the balanced development of compulsory education on a regional basis can be attained by the year 2020.

The balanced development of compulsory education embodies the expectations of the public for fair and quality education. For this reason, balancing the development of education is a more arduous and complex task than attaining the universal coverage of nine-year compulsory education. Efforts to promote the balanced development of compulsory education must begin in our vast rural areas. This is because China's urban-rural gap, a result of the dualistic urban-rural structure that has emerged in China over the long term, has caused the development



of education and other social programs to be the weakest in rural areas.

In ascertaining how well education has been implemented in any given local area, what we need to look at first is how well compulsory education has been handled. And in ascertaining how well compulsory education has been implemented, what we need to look at first is how well rural compulsory education has been handled. With the close attention and care of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council, government expenditure on education was able to reach 4% of the GDP in 2012, standing in excess of 2 trillion yuan in total, or 20% of overall government expenditure for that year. This hard-earned result can be attributed to the efforts of Party committees, government authorities, and financial departments at all levels.

At present, the central government still views spending on education as fixed expenditure, even though our economic growth is coming under increasing downward pressure and the growth of fiscal revenue has declined significantly. Moreover, the government will continue to increase government expenditure on education, although it has also required that education funding must be used more effectively. These commitments bear testament to the special importance that the central government attaches to education.

This has also been the subject of significant public attention. Guided by a strong sense of responsibility and mission, Party committees and local governments at all levels must devote more energy to compulsory education in rural areas, increase the level of spending that goes to rural compulsory education, and ensure that this money is used where it is needed. By tilting government expenditure towards outlying poverty-stricken areas and ethnic minority areas, they must come to the aid of those in need, weave a solid safety net, address weak areas, provide basic guarantees, and promote fairness. During the current term of government, we must step up our efforts to improve conditions in schools offering compulsory education, raise the quality of education, and narrow the gap between urban and rural areas. Through these efforts, we must seek to achieve tangible change that can be felt by the public, and lay down solid foundations for the healthy development of hundreds of millions of rural children.

## I. We will make continued efforts to improve nine-year compulsory education

The universalisation of nine-year compulsory education was a major undertaking that began with the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. The results that we have gained in this regard have captivated the world. At present, the net enrollment ratio for primary school is 99.58%, the gross enrollment ratio for junior middle school is 102.1%, and the retention rate of nine-year compulsory education is 92%. In addition, the proportion of children dropping out of primary and junior middle school has dropped below 1% and 3% respectively, the red line set by the government.

However, the development gap between urban and rural areas in compulsory education is still considerable, with impoverished regions, outlying regions, and ethnic minority regions lagging even further behind. Some areas are only just managing to provide and maintain the provision of compulsory education for all children, and still have a great deal to do in order to bolster and build on what has already been achieved. Therefore, we cannot let up in our efforts just because we have achieved universal access to compulsory education.

In accordance with the Constitution of the People's Republic of China and the Law on Compulsory Education, all children of the prescribed age must attend compulsory education, which should be obligatory, free of charge, and universal. The government is legally obliged to provide compulsory education, while parents are legally obliged to ensure that their children attend compulsory education. Despite these provisions, however, the problem of children dropping out of school is still present in certain regions. In the past, most school dropouts were the result of families experiencing financial difficulties.

However, the situation now is more complicated. A small number of parents, believing that school is pointless, force their children to leave school and find a job. In certain areas, some children drop out of school because the distance between school and home is too great. Some children drop out due to a lack of interest, while in some families, a lack of adequate supervision results in unattended children playing truant.

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These problems demand a high level of concern. China's outline for the reform and development of education states that the retention rate of nine-year compulsory education should reach 93% by 2015 and 95% by 2020. This is a binding and non-negotiable target that must be met. First, the responsibility of the government should not be reduced. The responsibility for controlling the drop-out rate should be assumed by the government in the place of schooling, and ensuring attendance in school should be integrated into the performance appraisals of local governments and education authorities.

Where a child drops out of school, the local government and related departments are obliged to arrange for that child's return to school in the same area. Second, schools must be run practically and meticulously. Management in schools needs to be strengthened, teaching standards need to be improved, and schools should nurture students' talents with a strong sense of responsibility. With regard to students who experience learning difficulties, or who play truant due to a lack of interest, schools should place an emphasis on stimulating their interest and building up their confidence in learning. Third, concerted efforts

need to be made throughout society. Negligent parents should be urged to fulfill their responsibilities. Any and all cases involving the illegal employment of minors will be investigated and followed up resolutely. In addition, all sectors of society should be called upon to take various measures to reduce the number of vagrant children living on the streets, with a view to eradicating this phenomenon entirely.

In our efforts to bolster and improve the coverage of compulsory education in China, there are two groups that deserve special attention: children who move around with their parents, and children who stay behind in the countryside while their parents leave in search of work. Owing to their long-term separation from their parents, children whose parents leave the countryside in search of work often lack the care and affection that they need. In some cases, this may cause them to experience psychological, emotional, behavioral, and learning problems. Children who move around with their parents encounter difficulties getting into school and integrating into cities. Therefore, we need to show greater care for these children by engaging in a major effort to provide



better access to education. Boarding schools should give priority to children whose parents do not live at home. Government-run schools in cities should offer more places to children that have moved into the city along with their parents. At the same time, we should put a social care and services mechanism in place to provide stronger mental and health guidance for these children. Through these efforts, we need to make our schools warm homes for children whose parents have left in search of work; we need to make our cities happy places to grow up for children who migrate with their parents; and we need to make our teachers the closest people that these children have, thereby ensuring that they are able to find interest in learning and live happily.

In line with the eight requirements of the CPC Central Committee with regard to improving styles of work and maintaining close ties with the people, the Ministry of Education should make plans to look back on the achievements that have been made in our effort to

provide nine-year compulsory education for all. These activities should be carried out alongside efforts to promote the balanced development of compulsory education, alongside efforts to inspect and oversee education, and alongside efforts to encourage the involvement of various social sectors in the supervision of education. By looking back on what we have achieved, we will be in a better position to ascertain the current situation, identify problems, and take effective measures to solve those problems. In turn, this will allow us to effectively consolidate our achievements in the universalization of nine-year compulsory education and bring about new rises in the standard of compulsory education.

Originally appeared in *Qiushi Journal*, Chinese edition, No.12, 2013

Author: Vice-Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China



# Rereading What Is To Be Done?

Eddie Clynes  
*Australian Marxist Review*  
 No 43 January 2006

In 1902, Lenin published *What Is To Be Done?* It has remained the most definitive exposition of the tasks of a communist party. In it, Lenin did battle with those in the working-class movement who objected to “outsiders” foisting their views on the workers; those same people criticised the Marxists for “belittling the significance of the objective or spontaneous element of development.”

In exploring the relationship between the ideology generated by the spontaneous struggle of the working class and the ideology of class (and socialist) consciousness, Lenin formulates some of the fundamental propositions which guide the work of communist parties.

Lenin contrasts “revolts” by the Russian working class with “systematic strikes”, saying the latter “represented the class struggle in embryo, but only in embryo.” “Taken by themselves,” he says, “these strikes were simply trade-union struggles, not yet Social-Democratic struggles. [guided by communist ideology]” Lenin indicates the workers were becoming aware of the antagonism between themselves and their employers, but “could not be conscious of the irreconcilable antagonism of their interests to the whole of the modern political and social system.”

Such consciousness, says Lenin, “would have to be brought to them (the working class) from without.” The history of all countries shows, he continues, “that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade-union consciousness i.e. the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers, and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation, etc.”

Lenin explained that the theory of socialism was developed from philosophical, historical and economic theories elaborated mainly by intellectuals who had the means and time to study and critically assess existing knowledge and develop new theories to arm the working class in its quest to reconstruct society. He notes that Marx and Engels themselves were members of the bourgeois intelligentsia.

The main task of the time, as Lenin saw it, was to “unite the strike movement with the revolutionary movement against the autocracy.” This was the basis of the

formation of the Bolshevik Party. In Australia, the Communist Party of Australia was founded in 1920 “as the issue of a marriage between sectarian socialists and militant industrial workers” as Australian Marxist historian Edgar Ross writes in *Of Storm and Struggle*.

Once the Bolshevik Party was established, Lenin’s overriding concern was that the working class gain a thoroughgoing class and indeed socialist consciousness. The working class must realise that it is a well defined group, whose interests were opposed to those of the employers, irreconcilable in fact with the interests of the employers.

The working class must know how capitalist society works; that it is exploited by the capitalists, the landlords, the bankers. The working class must have a real political understanding of the class and social forces in society, who lines up with whom, and why. It must be able to see the actions and interests of other classes and strata and groups in the population in each specific struggle, know their interrelationships and be able to discern their political motivation. It has to understand the role of the press, the police, the courts, the university professors, and, if they were around in Lenin’s time, the talk-show hosts.

The working class must be firmly convinced there is a better way to organise society, a socialist way, and that they have the major responsibility in getting there and bringing others along too. This duty is known as the leading role of the working class.

One of the main barriers was what Lenin called “economism”, the idea that only issues related to the economic struggle of the working class, i.e. their immediate workplace issues, should be taken up by the trade unions.

Lenin was scathing of economism, noting that economic concessions are relatively easy to win and when granted, often “win the confidence of the working masses”.

For this reason he said, “we Social-Democrats [communists] must not under any circumstances or in any way whatever create grounds for the belief (or the misunderstanding) that we attach greater value to economic reforms, or that we regard them as being particularly important, etc.”

In 1981, the NSW Industrial Committee of the then Socialist Party of Australia committed precisely this economist mistake. In the pamphlet *Strategy for Workers Action* in 1981, the committee wrote: “While conservative forces in the community are trying to belittle the

importance of the wage struggle and convince workers that it is not worthwhile, in reality it is the most fundamental issue in the class conflict between the interests of capital and labour.”

In justifying this view, the committee added: “It is the exploitation of workers’ labour power and the subsequent appropriation of surplus value by employers that creates profits and provides the economic basis of our capitalist society.”

Lenin was convinced the economists were wrong. He branded their view, that the economic struggle was the best way to involve the masses in the political movement, as “erroneous and reactionary”.

It’s not that Lenin thought a wages struggle or a “factory exposure” to be wrong in principle, but when prosecuted as purely economic struggles, all the workers learned, as sellers of labour-power, was “to sell their ‘commodity’ on better terms and to fight the purchasers over a purely commercial deal.”

“These exposures” he added, “could have served (if properly utilised by an organisation of revolutionaries) as a beginning and a component part of Social-Democratic activity; ...” The way the economists fought struggles was to limit the working class to “narrow parochial interests”.

Lenin thought it necessary to organise the political education of the working class on the basis of the exposure of all aspects of the existing system. Social-Democratic [communist] propaganda should expose the maltreatment of workers by individual capitalists; it should disclose police oppression and “autocratic outrages” in all spheres of life, be they industrial, civic, scientific etc. Lenin wanted every conscious worker to react to the “tyranny of landlords, corporal punishment of peasants, bribery among officials, harassment by the police, the regimentation of soldiers, and the persecution of students.” Workers must develop a responsibility towards all oppressed strata.

Communists had to be genuine political fighters. According to Lenin, the ideal Social-Democrat [communist] should not be the trade-union secretary but “the tribune of the people, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects; who is able to generalise all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation; who is able to take advantage of every event, however small in order to set forth before all his socialist convictions and his democratic demands, in order to clarify for all and everyone the world historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat.”

Such an extensive understanding and practice of “political education” benefited not only the workers, but also the broad masses, highlighting a most important aspect of communist work – what we today call “building alliances” with nonworking class sections of the population.

The economists faced a major “dilemma”. If we have to undertake nation-wide exposures of the government, how will the “class character” of our movement be expressed, they asked. Lenin gave a clear answer. “... we Social-Democrats will organise these nation-wide exposures; all questions raised by the agitation will be explained in a consistently Social-Democratic [communist] spirit, without any concessions to deliberate or un-deliberate distortions of Marxism; the all round political agitation will be conducted by a party which unites into one inseparable whole the assault on the government in the name of the entire people, the revolutionary training of the proletariat, and the safeguarding of its political independence, the guidance of the economic struggle of the working class, and the utilisation of all its spontaneous conflicts with its exploiters which rouse and bring into our camp increasing numbers of the proletariat.”

A most characteristic feature of economism, says Lenin, is “its failure to understand this connection, more, this identity of the most pressing need of the proletariat (a comprehensive political education through the medium of political agitation and political exposures) with the need of the general democratic movement.”

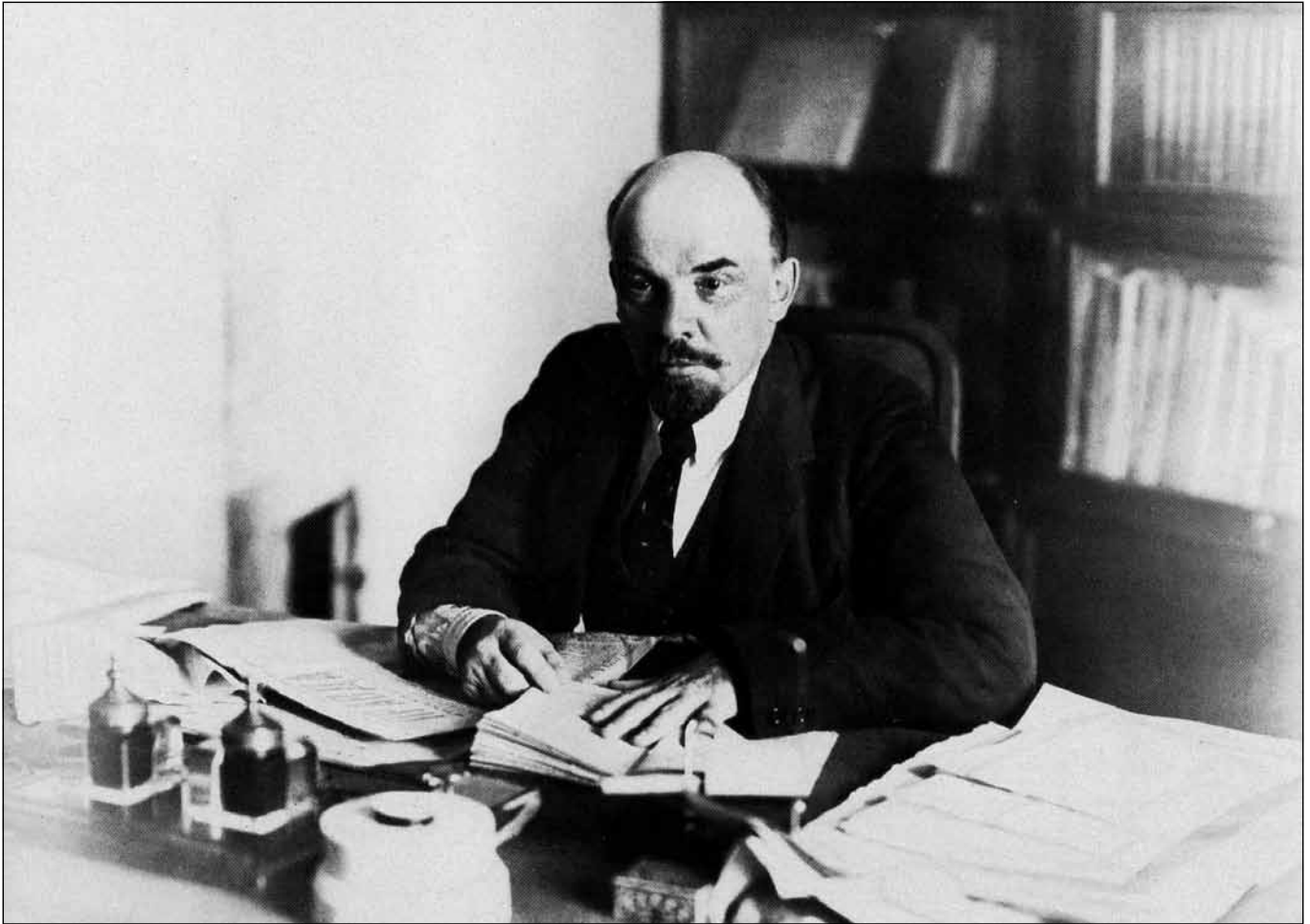
Lenin takes up the question of going “among all classes of the population” to comprehensively develop the political consciousness of the proletariat. “This gives rise to the questions”, says Lenin “... is there a basis for such work among all the other classes? Will this not mean a retreat, or lead to a retreat, from the class point of view?”

In answering these objections, Lenin observes that most communists would agree that the conditions of all classes need to be studied theoretically, but that “extremely little is done in this direction” compared with the work carried out around the “specific features of factory life.” Lenin concludes by noting that: he is no communist “who forgets in practice his obligation to be ahead of all in raising, accentuating, and solving every general democratic question.”

It is clear that Lenin did not think any issue more important than any other in the political education of the working class; it all depended on what was made of each issue, how it was handled politically.

Indeed, the historical experience of the working class movement and the many successful struggles for socialism illustrate this point. The Russian Revolution itself was built on the demands of “Peace, Bread and Land”. They were issues for all the oppressed people struggling





Vladimir Lenin.

against the Kerensky Government and the capitalist class it represented and the remnants of the autocracy.

In the light of Lenin's analysis in *What Is To Be Done*, I strongly disagree with some main propositions in SA's "*The working class and the people*", in Discussion Journal No. 2, published prior to the CPA 10th Congress.

He writes: "... it is important to avoid the tendency of focusing on "people's issues" in a way which assumes that "people's issues" (better education, health, etc) are the same as working class issues. Equating people's issues with working class issues obviates the need for a working class movement and a working class party. The main focus must be on those issues which directly concern the working class, with emphasis given to issues associated with labour exploitation."

Further to this theme, he writes: "A 'people-orientated' approach sets policies on social and economic issues at a general level in a way that class forces operating in Australian society are not exposed. The consequence is

that the Australian capitalist class is left unchallenged and class struggle is inhibited."

Besides smacking of economism, (not working class issues but people's issues) such views misrepresent the manner in which our party has tackled the issues of health, education, environment, peace and war. We have consistently said for example, that Star Wars is the military arm of globalisation, a very dangerous addition to the arsenal of imperialism. Is this not a class approach?

Health, education, social welfare etc are massive issues for the working class. They embrace issues of government budget allocation, privatisation, user pays, exploitation, the reserve army of labour, the role and responsibilities of governments and the need for a new type of people's government with working class representatives at its core.

The CPA has always raised these issues by exposing class interests. Such issues are issues for the working class; they are issues for the people; they are issues for





1966 May Day rally.

the Communist Party. There is no contradiction involved. Those who present them as contradictory will only cause division between the working class and the people.

Yes, the working class should be able to analyse wages issues, but it should also see the relevance of the struggle against war and for peace. It should know why the monopoly mass media says what it does. It should understand why students are fighting against voluntary student unionism. The working class must know the issues involved in the fight for a decent public transport system. It should understand why the health system is under attack, via privatisation. It should understand the issues on the land, the crisis which small farmers (those who are left) face. It should see the connections between a host of issues.

Our party does not give “exclusive attention to “the people” in a way which “renders a class approach to social change redundant” as is implied by SA’s article.

What is the purpose of creating feelings of alienation, estrangement, even hostility by the working class to

certain issues, deemed by SA Anthony to be “people’s issues”? As if the working class can afford in its overall struggle, to neglect health, education, peace or environmental issues. Can the problems of these areas be solved outside of the arena of working-class struggle? Does anyone seriously suggest this?

What underpins this schematic division between “working class” and “people”? It is the understanding of what comprises the working class.

SA writes: “One of the problems is the tendency to characterise all wage earners as or all working people as working class, and thus artificially inflating working class numbers. If it is taken that 90% of those engaged in the economy are wage earners and therefore working class, then our policies can be validly directed at virtually all the people without differentiation. This is a serious error. Many wage earners are not in any way working class. CEOs, academics, judges, bureaucrats, social workers, police and politicians receive wages!”

In contrast, Lenin's definition of class does away with such simplistic distortions, which are, again, designed to divide the working class, by rejecting the concept "working people" and justifying this with some spurious examples.

Lenin says that "classes are large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated in law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organisation of labour, and, consequently, by the dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring it. Classes are groups of people one of which can appropriate the labour of another owing to the different places they occupy in a definite system of social economy." (A Great Beginning, 1919)

Lenin insists we must analyse, among other factors, the role people play in the "social organisation of labour". It is therefore quite wrong to say CEOs, judges, politicians and others who earn their money administering capitalism on behalf of the ruling class, are part of the working class. SA misleadingly implies the CPA makes such a

claim, in order to bolster his case that the party commits a "serious error" in talking of "working people".

Rereading Lenin's definition makes it clear in my mind who is committing the "serious error"! SA's argument that the party's recognition of and representation of classes (or strata) other than the working class equates to the party losing its class orientation and therefore the reason for its existence is quite at odds with communist practice the world over and especially with Lenin's characterisation of communists as "tribunes of the people".

The narrowing down of the concepts "working class" and "working people" and the subsequent division of issues into "working class" and "people's" issues are born of metaphysical thinking, cut the working class off from major political battles and lead to economism.

The Communist Party is correct to talk of the "working people". It is no contradiction to say the party is based on the working class but must represent the interests of (and help the working class form alliances with) all those oppressed by monopoly and imperialism. That is certainly how Lenin saw things. In liberating itself, the working class liberates all humanity (from the system of capitalism).

AMR

# Social Democracy

Eddie Clynes

The following editor's notes were used to introduce *AMR* issue 51, which was published in March 2010. The author, the late Eddie Clynes, drew out a theme from a number of the contributions to the International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties, which had taken place in New Delhi, India, the previous November. The theme, that of social democracy, is a very contentious one and of great importance to Australian Communists given how dominant the Australian Labor Party has been in the labour movement of the country since the ALP's foundation in 1891.

A number of important changes impacting the ALP have taken place since the notes were written. Debates about internal democracy and the relationship with the trade union movement are prominent in the news at the moment. Whenever the topic of the class nature and role of the ALP is raised in forums of the Communist Party, a lively discussion ensues. Is the ALP a social democratic party any more? Is it simply a second major party of big capital? Is there a successor to the ALP as the reforming, social democratic party? Is that the Greens or some other party?

The editorial board of the *AMR* has included these notes from Comrade Eddie alongside some of his other writings to pay tribute to his contribution as editor but also to stimulate more discussion about social democracy and its manifestations in Australia, in particular. We would welcome contributions on this theme and look forward to carrying them in the pages of future issues of the *Australian Marxist Review*.

Many of the speakers at the 11th International Meeting of the Communist and Workers' Parties, contributing to the theme *The International Capitalist Crisis, The Workers' and Peoples' Struggle, The Alternatives and the Role of the Communist and Working Class Movement*, naturally discussed social democracy and its attitude to the capitalist crisis.

There is much mythology surrounding the role of social democracy. Here in Australia it's not uncommon to hear people reminiscing about the days when the Australian Labor Party (ALP) was "for the workers".

In 1913, Lenin wrote *In Australia*, analysing Australian politics. He thought it peculiar that "workers' representatives" were plentiful in Parliament yet "the capitalist system is in no danger." A strange and incorrect use of party names prevailed, with the "Australian Labour Party ... a liberal-bourgeois party, while the so-called Liberals in Australia are really Conservatives."

Lenin was perfectly clear that the ALP was not a socialist party. "The leaders of the Australian Labour Party are trade union officials, everywhere the most moderate and "capital-serving" element, and in Australia, altogether

peaceable, purely liberal." The ALP was (and still is) overwhelmingly concerned with Australia's development as a capitalist country and doing all that is necessary to ensure this proceeds smoothly.

In 1952, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Australia, Lance Sharkey, wrote *The Labour Party Crisis*, setting forth the party's analysis of the ALP. Sharkey states that the ALP's goal then was "an independent capitalist Australia", a "pro-Australian" policy which "won widespread mass support" as opposed to the "Tory parties which were more closely connected with the economic and financial institutions and interests" of British imperialism.

Sharkey says: "This primary role of the ALP was supported by some concessions to the working class and reforms of some benefit to the masses generally."

Sharkey also recognised the changed situation after WWII in which "the ALP leadership has forsaken the cause of an independent Australia and today assists the monopolists in converting Australia into a dependency of US imperialism." This, he says, "proves how important it is to raise the banner of our national independence

and wage the struggle against Wall Street penetration and domination of our country by aggressive US imperialism.”

Since then there has not been any qualitative change in the ALP’s role, despite present-day ALP leaders seeming to be more assertive, more independent, more self-activating. They nonetheless remain thoroughly pro-capitalist and pro-imperialist in all major policy areas. Indeed the ALP leadership shifted decisively to the right in the early 1980s with the embrace of economic rationalist policies. These days, any policy difference between the ALP and the conservative Coalition is more often than not, just a matter of nuance.

Social-democratic parties have traditionally worked to win the allegiance of the working class. Concessions have been granted (and also taken back), but that should not lead us to think social-democratic parties are workers’ parties. They sometimes sound like workers’ parties but that is a key element of their modus operandi.

Social-democratic parties have always competed with the traditional conservative parties to be seen as better managers of the economy (capitalism), but they also have a special role in the labour movement i.e. to ensure that the working class supports the main direction of capitalist development.

Such a conception of social democracy serves to clarify the often one-sided assessments of social-democratic parties as either “workers’ parties” or “bosses’ parties”. The mixed class composition of the membership of social democratic parties also fuels the misconception that their real nature is open to contest, dependent on whether the working class or the bourgeois “pole” becomes dominant in practice.

No social-democratic party has ever seriously prosecuted the struggle for socialism. In that sense social-democratic parties are parties of and for capitalism. They are not workers’ parties, as ultimately they ensure that capital prospers. The current economic crisis well illustrates this.

Despite this, reliance on social democracy to be the main vehicle for progressive, even socialist change, is still common on the left worldwide, including in the communist movement. Strengthening social democracy’s political support base only multiplies the ties that bind the working people to the fortunes of capitalism.

Our task is to wrest the political leadership away from social democracy, by putting class struggle back on the agenda. Building class-consciousness and developing socialist consciousness underpin the struggle to change the direction of politics in this country and are fundamental in the fight to win a socialist Australia.



Social-democratic parties sometimes sound like workers’ parties but that is a key element of their modus operandi. 1969 May Day rally in Brisbane.



# Timeless advice on Party education

Many comrades would be familiar with the words of Dimitrov of the Communist International, particularly his famous speech to the 7th World Congress of the Communist International in 1935 on the role of the united front against fascism. Among the many oft-quoted gems in the report is the following about Party education:

“It is not pedants, moralizers or adepts at quoting that our schools must train. No. It is practical front-rank fighters in the cause of the working class that should graduate from there, people who are front-rank fighters not only because of their boldness and readiness for self-sacrifice, but also because they see further than rank-and-file workers and know better than they the path that leads to the emancipation of the working people.”

Elsewhere in the report he says:

“Comrades, we Communists are people of action. Ours is the problem of practical struggle against the offensive of capital, against fascism and the threat of imperialist war, the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism. It is precisely this practical task that obliges Communist cadres to equip themselves with revolutionary theory, for theory gives those engaged in practical work the power of orientation, clarity of vision, assurance in work, belief in the triumph of our cause.”

Those words have inspired generations of Communists worldwide. However, readers may be less familiar with the works of Liu Shaoqi, a leading Chinese Communist who wrote extensively on Party education, methods of work and Party building. Although his works on party building were widely read and influential before the 1960's, he eventually fell foul of the ultra-leftists during the Cultural Revolution and died in prison.

Continuing the theme of Party education of this issue of the *Australian Marxist Review*, an excerpt of one of his most famous speeches, *How to be a Good Communist*, has been reproduced here. The lecture was delivered at the institute of Marxism-Leninism in Yan'an, China, during the war against Japanese occupation. Other parts of his speech (not included here) cover topics such as the need to adhere to proletarian ideology, to put the interests of the Party above personal interests as well as the specific, practical and ideological problems that faced the Communist Party of China in 1939. The circumstances were certainly different to Australia in 2014, but the lecture still offers sound advice to those striving to end capitalism and imperialism and to build socialism.

## I. Why Communists must undertake self cultivation

Why must Communists undertake to cultivate themselves?

In order to live, man must wage a struggle against nature and make use of nature to produce material values. At all times and under all conditions, his production of material things is social in character. It follows that when men engage in production at any stage of social development, they have to enter into certain relations of production with one another. In their ceaseless struggle against nature, men ceaselessly change nature and simultaneously change themselves and their mutual relations. Men themselves, their social relations, their form of social organization and consciousness were all different from what they are today, and in the future they will again be different.

Mankind and human society are in process of historical development. When human society reached a certain historical stage, classes and class struggle emerged. Every member of a class society exists as a member of a given class and lives in given conditions of class struggle. Man's social being determines his consciousness. In class society the ideology of the members of each class reflects a different position and different class interests. The class struggle constantly goes on among these classes with their different positions, interests and ideologies. Thus it is not only in the struggle against nature but in the struggle of social classes that men change nature, change society and at the same time change themselves.

Marx and Engels said:

Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration that can only take place in a practical movement, a *revolution*; the revolution is necessary, therefore, not only the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class *overthrowing* it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew.<sup>2</sup>

That is to say, the proletariat must conscientiously go through long periods of social revolutionary struggles and, in such struggles change society and change itself.



Liu Shaoqi.

We should therefore see ourselves as in need of change and capable of being changed. We should not look upon ourselves as immutable, perfect and sacrosanct, as persons who need not and cannot be changed. When we pose the task of remoulding ourselves in social struggle, we are not demeaning ourselves; the objective laws of social development demand it. Unless we do so, we cannot make progress, or fulfill the task of changing society.

We Communists are the most advanced revolutionaries in modern history; to day the changing of society and the world rests upon us and we are the driving force in this change. It is by unremitting struggle against counter-revolutionaries<sup>3</sup> that we Communists change society and the world, and at the same time ourselves.

When we say Communists must remould themselves by waging struggles in every sphere against the counter-revolutionaries,<sup>3</sup> we mean that it is through such struggles that they must seek to make progress and must

enhance their revolutionary quality and ability. An immature revolutionary has to go through a long process of revolutionary tempering and self-cultivation, a long process of remoulding, before he can become a mature and seasoned revolutionary who can grasp and skilfully apply the laws of revolution. For in the first place, a comparatively immature revolutionary, born and bred in the old society, carries with him the remnants of the various ideologies of that society (including its prejudices, habits and traditions), and in the second he has not been through a long period of revolutionary activity. Therefore he does not yet have a really thorough understanding of the enemy, of the people or of the laws of social development and revolutionary struggle. In order to change this state of affairs, besides learning from past revolutionary experience (the practice of our predecessors), he must himself participate in contemporary revolutionary practice, and in this revolutionary practice and struggle against all kinds of counter revolutionaries,<sup>3</sup> he

must bring his conscious activity into full play and work hard at study and self-cultivation. Only so can he acquire deeper experience and understanding of the laws of social development and revolutionary struggle, acquire a really thorough understanding of the enemy and the people, discover his wrong ideas, habits and prejudices and correct them, and thus raise the level of his political consciousness, cultivate his revolutionary qualities and improve his revolutionary methods. Hence, in order to remould himself and raise his owl level, a revolutionary must take part in revolutionary practice from which he must on no account isolate himself. Moreover, he must strive to conduct self-cultivation and study in the course of practice. Otherwise, it will still be impossible for him to make progress.

For example, several Communists take part in a revolutionary mass struggle together and engage in revolutionary practice under roughly the same circumstances and conditions. It is possible that the effect of the struggle on these Party members will not be at all uniform. Some will make very rapid progress and some who used to lag behind will even forge ahead of others. Other Party members will advance very slowly. Still others will waver in the struggle and, instead of being pushed forward by revolutionary practice, will fall behind. Why?

Or take another example. Many members of our Party were on the Long March; it was a severe process of tempering for them, and the overwhelming majority made very great progress indeed. But the Long March had the opposite effect on certain individuals in the Party. After having been on the Long March they began to shrink before arduous struggles, and some of them even planned to back out or to run away and later, succumbing to outside allurements, actually deserted the revolutionary ranks. Many Party members took part in the Long March together, and yet its impact and results varied very greatly. Again, why?

Basically speaking, these phenomena are reflections of our revolutionary ranks of the class struggle in society. Our Party members differ in quality because they differ in social background and have come under different social influences. They differ in their attitude, stand and comprehension in relation to the revolutionary practice, and consequently they develop in different directions in the course of revolutionary practice. This can clearly be seen in your institute as well. You all receive the same education and training here, and yet because you differ in quality and experience, in degree of effort and self-cultivation, you may obtain different or even contrary results. Hence, subjective effort and self-cultivation in the course of revolutionary struggle are absolutely essential, indeed, indispensable for a revolutionary in remoulding himself and raising his own level.

Whether he joined the revolution long ago or just recently, every Communist who wants to become a good politically mature revolutionary must undergo a long period of tempering in revolutionary struggle, must steel himself in mass revolutionary struggles and all kinds of difficulties and hardships, must sum up the experience gained through practice, make great efforts in self-cultivation, raise his ideological level, heighten his ability and never lose sense of what is new. For only thus can he turn himself into a politically staunch revolutionary of high quality.

Confucius said “At fifteen, my mind was bent on learning. At thirty, I could think for myself. At forty, I was no longer perplexed. At fifty, I knew the decree of Heaven. At sixty, my ear was attuned to the truth. At seventy, I can follow my heart’s desire without transgressing what is right.”<sup>4</sup> Here the feudal philosopher was referring to his own process of self-cultivation; he did not consider himself to have been born a “sage”.

Mencius, another feudal philosopher, said that no one had fulfilled a “great mission” and played a role in history without first undergoing a hard process of tempering, a process which “exercises his mind with suffering and toughens his sinews and bones with toil, exposes his body to hunger, subjects him to extreme poverty, thwarts his undertakings and thereby stimulates his mind, tempers his character and adds to his capacities”.<sup>5</sup> Still more so must Communists give attention to tempering and cultivating themselves in revolutionary struggles, since they have the historically unprecedented “great mission” of changing the world.

Our Communist self-cultivation is the kind essential to proletarian revolutionaries. It must not be divorced from revolutionary practice or from the actual revolutionary movements of the labouring masses, and especially of the proletarian masses.

Comrade Mao Zedong has said:

Discover the truth through practice, and again through practice verify and develop the truth. Start from perceptual knowledge and actively develop it into rational knowledge; then start from rational knowledge and actively guide revolutionary practice to change both the subjective and the objective world. Practice, knowledge, again practice and again knowledge. This form repeats itself in endless cycles, and with each cycle the content of practice and knowledge rises to a higher level. Such is the whole of the dialectical-materialist theory of knowledge, and such is the dialectical-materialist theory of the unity of knowing and doing.<sup>6</sup>

Our Party members should temper themselves and intensify their self-cultivation not only in the hardships, difficulties and reverses of revolutionary practice, but



also in the course of smooth, successful and victorious revolutionary practice. Some members of our Party cannot stand the plaudits of success and victory; they let victories turn their heads, become brazen, arrogant, and bureaucratic and may even vacillate, degenerate and become corrupted, completely losing their original revolutionary quality. Individual instances of this kind are not uncommon among our Party members. The existence of such a phenomenon in the Party calls for our comrades' sharp attention.

In past ages, before the proletarian revolutionaries appeared on the scene, practically all revolutionaries became corrupted and degenerated with the achievement of victory. They lost their original revolutionary spirit and became obstacles to the further development of the revolution. China's history over the past century, or to speak of more recent times, over the past fifty years, has shown us that many bourgeois and petty-bourgeois revolutionaries in the past and by the nature of earlier revolutions. Before the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia, all revolutions throughout history invariably ended in the suppression of the rule of one exploiting class by that of another. Thus, once they themselves

became the ruling class, these revolutionaries lost their revolutionary quality and turned round to oppress the exploited masses; this was the inexorable law.

But such can never be the case with the proletarian revolution and with the Communist Party. The proletarian revolution is a revolution to abolish all exploitation, oppression and classes. The Communist Party represents the proletariat which is itself exploited but does not exploit others and which can therefore carry the revolution through to the end finally abolish all exploitation and sweep away all the corruption and rotteness in human society. The proletariat is able to build a strictly organized and disciplined party and set up a centralized and at the same time democratic state apparatus, and through the Party and this state apparatus, it is able to lead the masses of the people in waging unrelenting struggle against all corruption and rotteness and in ceaselessly weeding out of the Party and the state organs all those elements that have become corrupt and degenerate (whatever high office they may hold), thereby preserving the purity of the Party and the state apparatus. This outstanding feature of the proletarian revolution and of the proletarian revolutionary party did not and could



not exist in earlier revolutions and revolutionary parties. Members of our Party must be clear on this point, and – particularly when the revolution is successful and victorious and when they themselves enjoy the ever greater confidence and support of the masses – they must sharpen their vigilance, intensify their self-cultivation in proletarian ideology and always preserve their pure proletarian revolutionary character so that they will not fall into the rut of earlier revolutionaries who degenerated in the hour of success.

Tempering and self-cultivation in revolutionary practice and tempering and self-cultivation in proletarian ideology are important for every Communist, especially after the seizure of political power. The Communist Party did not drop from heaven but was born out of the Chinese society. Every member of the Communist party has come from this society, is living in it today and is constantly exposed to its seamy side. It is not surprising then that Communists, whether they are of proletarian or non-proletarian origin and whether they are old or new members of the Party, should carry with them to a greater or lesser the thinking and habits of the old society. In order to preserve our purity as vanguard fighters of the proletariat and to enhance our revolutionary quality and working ability that is essential for every Communist to work hard to temper and cultivate himself in every respect.

These are the reasons why Communists must undertake self-cultivation.

[Liu Shaoqi went on to discuss the criteria for Communist self-cultivation – ed.]

## Notes:

1. A lecture delivered at the institute of Marxism-Leninism in Yan'an. It was included in the *Documents for the Rectification Movement*, Published by the Liberation Press in 1943 and was reprinted by the People's Publishing House in 1962 after revision by the author.
2. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "The German Ideology", *Collected Works*, Eng. Ed., Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1976, Vol. V, pp. 52-53.
3. When this article was reprinted by the People's Publishing House in March 1980, the following editorial note appeared in the Chinese edition: In the 1962 edition, after the word "counter-revolutionaries" was added "and reformists". This addition was not by the author himself, but by the editors with the approval of the author. We are now publishing it in accordance with the 1949 edition.
4. Confucius (551-479 B.C.) was also known as Kong Qiu or Zhongni. A native of Zouyi in the state of Lu (now Qufu County, Shandong Province) in the Spring and Autumn Era, he was the founder of the Confucian school of philosophy. This quotation is from the *Confucian Analects*, "Wei Zheng".
5. Menicus (372-289 B.C.), known as Meng Ke, was a native of Zou (now south-eastern Zouxian County, Shandong Province) in the era of the Warring States. He was the main proponent of the Confucion doctrine after Confucius. This quotation is from *Menicus*, Book VI, "Gao Zi", Part II.
6. See "On Practice", *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Eng. ed., FLP, Beijing, 1975, Vol. I, p.308.

# Reviving worker's education is a must

Bob Crow and Tony Benn knew the importance of teaching socialist ideas, writes ALEX GORDON

Tomorrow the Marx Memorial Library and Workers' School [in London] will hold its 81st annual general meeting since its foundation in 1933.

The house on Clerkenwell Green will welcome library members from across the working-class and socialist movement to remember former members, among them Tony Benn and Bob Crow who died this year, and to agree our programme of work for the coming year.

We will take forward proposals to develop the MML's educational work in order to fulfil our aims for "the advancement of education, knowledge and learning by the provision of a library of books, periodicals and manuscripts relating to all aspects of the science of Marxism, the history of socialism and the working-class movement."

It is worth reminding ourselves just why a conference held on March 11 1933 at Conway Hall founded what communist journalist Robin Page Arnot described as "a fitting memorial – a centre of working-class education – to the greatest thinker and revolutionist of all time in the city where he lived and worked for the greater part of his adult life."

That year, 1933, saw Hitler's appointment as German chancellor on January 30 in a coalition government, then with plenary powers from March 24 when the Reichstag voted for an enabling act to rule without parliamentary consent or constitutional limitation.

The resistible rise of German fascism in the 1930s saw brutal street battles between anti-fascists led by the Communist Party of Germany fighting nazi brownshirts.

The spectacle of book-burnings and nazi attacks on so-called "degenerate" art, design and culture meant not only the ideas of Karl Marx but all progressive ideas were under threat. Britain became the refuge of many of the artists and writers.

The response of the socialist and trade union movement in Britain to this tide of fascist reaction was to reaffirm and deepen their commitment to educate the working-class movement in the ideas of Marx.

The resolution carried unanimously at the founding conference was moved by WE Baldwin of the National

Union of Railwaymen, declaring: "The best memorial to Marx in London would be a Marxist Library, workers' school and educational centre."

The work of the library and workers' school in its early years concentrated not only on amassing books by and about Marx, Engels and Lenin, which were not easy to come by in an English translation, but also to begin an ambitious series of classes and public lectures to provide high-quality education in Marxist ideas on history, philosophy, sociology and art that was accessible to working-class people.

Accessibility meant delivering classes in areas that workers could attend after their working day, and MML tutors were sent out to evening classes all over Britain, following the pattern established by the Plebs League and the National Council of Labour Colleges 20 years before.

The inaugural public lecture entitled "The life of Marx" was given on November 5 1933 by Tom Mann, leader of the 1889 dock strike, a close friend of both Eleanor Marx and Friedrich Engels. The Marx Memorial Library and Workers' School of today stands fully in the tradition established by the founders.

This year the library has hosted classes on classic works of Marxism, political economy for trade unionists, Marxism and science as well as highly successful public lectures by Professor Costas Lapatvitsas on capitalist crisis and financialisation. Dr Christine Lindey spoke on revolutionary art and on James Connolly and the reconquest of Ireland with Irish Congress of Trade Union president John Douglas, Michael Carty of the Connolly Association and Dr John Callow.

On the initiative of Professor John Foster, MML's education committee has piloted an online course in Marxist critique of political economy, which will be developed as a distance learning course in the coming months.

Why are such seemingly difficult questions important today when many people in Britain are facing real and immediate hardships from government cuts and falling real wages?

Our founders in the 1930s understood precisely that only the working class held the possibility of transforming their society, defeating fascism and building a socialist society in Britain and internationally.

In order for the working class to fight for its interests, workers must first of all perceive those interests clearly and understand the origins and circumstances of their exploitation under capitalism.

More pertinently, the current and future prospects for working-class education in Britain are not promising when seen from the perspective of wider access to further, higher and adult continuing education.

The impact of tuition fees is now being felt in earnest on student uptake of courses. The continuing pressure on universities to adapt to “market demands” – in reality the ideological corporate agenda – is intensifying.

External funding for union learning has long been under threat and may not continue after 2015. Trade unions will have to consider whether “learning” in its current form contributes enough value to their organisation to warrant internal funding.

My union, RMT, has developed a wider vision of union education incorporating political education as well as training of shop stewards and branch officers.

The imminent and expected government cuts to workplace learning delivered by trade unions will cause many unions to face an unwelcome choice of curtailing education programmes or cutting back elsewhere.

The work of the Marx Memorial Library and Workers’ School makes a case for continued funding for high-quality education to allow unions to meet their objectives.

The “learning agenda” of late has been set by a right-wing government to meet the needs of business and Tory supporters. It has not addressed the wider needs and aspirations of workers or of their trade unions.

The continued success of MML should offer an opportunity to address this with a generation of young trade unionists seeking to understand the circumstances of their members’ exploitation in order to fight for an alternative and better society.

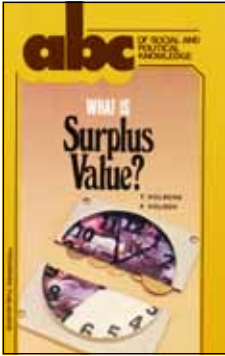
Alex Gordon is chairman of the Marx Memorial Library and Workers’ School.

This article from Britain was originally posted on the Morning Star website [www.morningstar.com](http://www.morningstar.com)



Marx Memorial Library & Workers' School in London – established in 1933, for the advancement of education and learning in all aspects of marxism, labour and working class history.

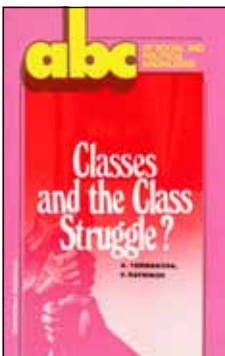
## ABC OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE



### ***What is Surplus Value?***

Paper back – 300 pages by T Volkova & F Volkov

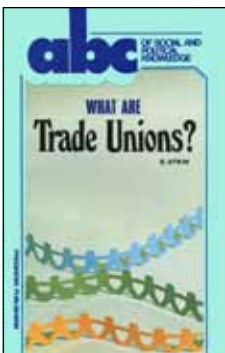
If you would like to understand the driving force of capitalism, how workers are exploited and the methods that corporations use to boost profits, then is a great introductory text. For those who already have some knowledge, it is still worth reading as a refresher and to fill in the gaps.



### ***Classes and the Class Struggle?***

Paper back – 263 pages by A Yermakova & V Ratnikov

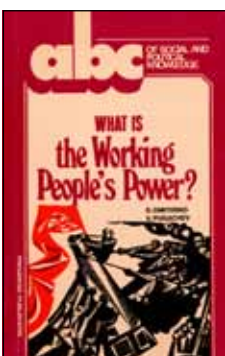
How often have you heard it said that the class struggle is dead, that the way forward is for workers to cooperate with employers? The book defines classes, deals with the origin and evolution of class, peculiarities of class struggle in modern times, the role of the class struggle, its various forms and moves on to the question of socialism and classless society.



### ***What are Trade Unions***

Paper back – 156 pages by E Utkin

This an extremely useful book for trade unionists and anyone else interested in the origin and role of trade unions in society. It ties in with the question of surplus value and class struggle. It looks at the position of trade unions in developing and socialist countries as well as industrialised capitalist states. There is also a chapter on the international trade union movement. Published in 1988, its references to Apartheid are dated, but its contents are still relevant.



### ***What is the Party?***

Paper back – 285 pages by Ye Bugaev

Lenin wrote a great deal about the need for a party of a special type. This book examines the type of party that the working class need – its policies, functions, structures, links to the people and much more that make a revolutionary party. It also gives some insight into the Communist Party in the former Soviet Union.



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