THE WHEEL TURNS

When a prolonged, stubborn and heated struggle is in progress, there usually begin to emerge after a time the central and fundamental points at issue, upon the decision of which the ultimate outcome of the campaign depends, and in comparison with which all the minor and petty episodes of the struggle recede more and more into the background.

That too, is how matters stand in the struggle within our Party, which for six months now has been riveting the attention of all members of the Party. And precisely because in the present outline of the whole struggle I have had to refer to many details which are of infinitesimal interest, and to many squabbles which at bottom are of no interest whatsoever, I should like from the very outset to draw the readers attention to two really central and fundamental points, points which are of tremendous interest, of undoubted historical significance, and which are the most urgent political questions confronting our Party today.

The first question is that of the political significance of the division of our party into "majority" and "minority" which took shape at the Second Party Congress....

The second question is that of the significance in principle of the new Iskra's position on organizational questions....

The first question concerns the starting point of the struggle in our Party, its source, its causes, and its fundamental political character. The second question concerns the ultimate outcome of the struggle, its finale, the sum total of principles that results from adding up all that pertains to the realm of principle and subtracting all that pertains to the realm of squabbling....Both...lead to the conclusion that the "majority" is the revolutionary and the "minority" the opportunist wing of our party; THE DISAGREEMENTS THAT DIVIDE THE TWO WINGS AT THE PRESENT TIME FOR THE MOST PART CONCERN NOT QUESTIONS OF PROGRAMME OR TACTICS, BUT ONLY ORGANIZATIONAL QUESTIONS.... (emphasis added)

-- V. I. Lenin, One Step Forward, Two Steps Back, Preface, pp. 259-260 of Volume One, Selected Works.

INTRODUCTION

Whatever particular difficulties the next four years and beyond may bring, a vast change in the distribution of power and the purposes for which it is used remains necessary and inevitable in Detroit and throughout the United States. The condition of most people -- black and white, women and men --

remains one of powerlessness and exploitation. The capacity of imperialism to expand here and abroad will continue to shrink. The ruling class has neither the ability nor the interest to solve the day to day problems which affect ordinary people.

In short, class, racial and sexual struggles which emerged, from which the Motor City Labor League was born, continue. And, as in any period of social ferment and change, differences will inevitably emerge as to the best methods of providing leadership, program, organization and direction. Conflicts about how best and who best to lead over the long, intricate, zig-zag and dangerous path to revolution are to be expected.

Perhaps more than any preceeding revolution in history, the U.S. revolution will require great change in the human beings making the revolution in the very process of struggling for power. We have no illusions about how much such change is possible before the seizure of control of the material and state resources of the society. We do know, however, that the divisions created by imperialism along exceedingly complex lines, involving individualism, racism, sexism, occupation, ethnic origin, and so on, must be overcome. The fear of winning and the responsibility inherent therein on the one hand, and the temptation on the other to seek at best reformist, individual or small group gains as a substitute for class power, will require constant vigilance. Indeed, the failure to retain the unity of the Motor City Labor League is a tribute to the capacity of the ruling class to inculcate division among us. More than ever, the test of our capacity to change the society will be our capacity to change ourselves in the process of organizing and struggling for power. We affirm our view that such change is possible.

Splits therefore within political organizations will occur as they always have. By no means are all such splits and conflicts within revolutionary groups progressive, useful or helpful.

The history of the U.S. left and of recent organizations -- black and white -- has been all too often that of division and sectarianism. We who remain in the Motor City Labor League did not seek a split. We sought to struggle around some political and power issues which we believed were impeding the potential of the organization. When a division did take place, our strategy was one of reunification. It was the group which now calls itself "Changeover" * which wrote:

> We believe the nearly two year experiment in building a Motor City Labor League which could cohere the talents and energies of serious white revolutionaries is now at an end....Whatever view of these differences held by MCLL members each and all should understand that we who have left see no current basis for reunification....A split is now actual. A reunification of the two groups would not, in our view, be in the best interests of the socialist movement in Detroit. ("To the Members of the Motor City Labor League Regarding the September 1972 Split,"page 1)

Our reunification efforts, discussed at some length in our Reunification Paper, failed. A split has occured. This paper is an attempt to define, as concisely and straightforwardly as possible, what we believe to be the political basis of the split and its implications for the future. To be honest, we think it too early to arrive at a proper and thorough analysis of the political issues. Just as many things are clearer now than they

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* The name Changeover was of course that of the Motor City Labor League newspaper and was associated with other MCLL propaganda activities. It originally was the name of a newspaper published by People Against Racism (PAR). Those in PAR who started it agreed, when asked, to allow MCLL the use of the name. While acknowledging the substantive work done by Brian Flanigan, Linda Chabot and others in the group around the development of the newspaper and other productions, MCLL does not acknowledge the right of the group which left the organization to expropriate the name for their own use. In this paper, when using the name "Changeover" as a convenient means of referring to the group, we will use quotation marks. We are aware that the State of Michigan has incorporated the name for them. We do not consider ourselves to be legally, politically or morally constrained from using the name ourselves should we choose to do so.

were two weeks ago, they will be clearer still in three months. Because, however, we are compelled to respond to a description of events, individual leaders and members of MCLL and their motives put forward by "Changeover" with which we utterly disagree, we do offer the following.

The title of "Changeover's" paper, "Perspective of Changeover on the events of August 31 through October 2. (A setback in the building of a white Movement)" is itself revealing of a major difference between the two groups.

We do not claim to be the most highly developed, sophisticated Marxist-Leninists. Many of us came to Marxism-Leninism late in our activist political life. We find it, as a tool to guide our analysis and our action, to be of enormous value, even though we are only beginning to learn how to use it. We do not, however, believe the method of Marxism-Leninism to be one which merely describes individuals, their supposed motives and "events" which took place out of the context or continuum of change born of the conflict inherent throughout society and certainly within revolutionary political organizations. This difference in approach, personal vilification as opposed to political analysis, has characterized all of the exchanges in this period. And while we believe some of our efforts, particularly "Struggle Within," have been overly abstract, and disembodied from concrete organizational practice, we continue to strive for a political analysis of the split. That does of course involve the real human beings within MCLL and many events and incidents which have transpired. (We assume that even though the "Changeover" paper is copyrighted, we may quote relevant passages where necessary and hope no legal action will result,)

We find the characterization "one step forward, two steps back"to be a useful one in this period in two senses. First, there have been two steps back. Much harm has been done by this split and the methods by which both sides, particularly the

"Changeover" group have conducted themselves. There has been totally unnecessary physical and legal confrontation involving the use of the State, character assasination, and unnecessary imposition of internal matters on third parties. The mere fact of disunity is itself a set-back for the Left, insofar as it certainly reinforces distrust, anti-communism and anti-leadership tendencies which are widespread among people, including some with whom we work. This will be costly to us all for a long time to come. External programs have suffered in ways, many of which are not yet apparent. The show of division immediately prior to a period of what we believe to be increased repression is further incentive for the class enemy to move against us. Racial understanding in the city among political people has indeed been at best strained by the characterizations and actions of the "Changeover" group and those associated with them.

And yet some progress has been made. We are confident that, despite the efforts of "Changeover" to obscure the issues, some very real political alternatives will become clearer to many people. We are confident that free of the stifling, self-defeating methods of leadership employed by that group, the members of MCLL will grow, develop and become leaders at a far more rapid rate than would otherwise have been the case. With an increasingly clear political strategy, our external political work will expand.

We take the characterization "one step forward, two steps back" in a second, more literal sense, that of application of the title and substance of Lenin's essay. For a group as admittedly small and under-developed as MCLL, we find the issues of this split to be of more considerable complexity than can be explored here. They involve primarily, but by no means exclusively, internal, that is organizational, as opposed to external or programatic matters. At this stage of our development, this is not surprising. The internal questions revolve primarily around the meaning and

practice of democratic centralism, methods of leadership and the use of criticism and self-criticism. The primary external question revolves around MCLL's program of work in relationship to the white and black communities in Detroit and beyond.

We certainly do not presume that the MCLL split is of the magnitude or development as that of the Bolshevik-Menshevik split Lenin analyzes in One Step Forward, Two Steps Back. We have, however, because of many analogies, found it extremely useful in understanding the development of MCLL in this period.

Two Views

Particularly for those not directly familiar with the parties involved, some description of the configuration of the split might be useful. MCLL had between 40 and 50 cadre. Three-quarters remain in the organization and one-quarter split. Of those remaining in MCLL, eight are full-time political workers or students and the rest are employed in auto, social services, education, health or the law. Of the eleven who split, eight are full-time political workers or students, two are employed in the law and one as an industrial consultant. Of those who split, two are parents. Those remaining in MCLL include eleven parents. Of those who split, one is not a long time resident of the Detroit area. Nearly half of those remaining in MCLL are relatively recent (within the last four years) of the Detroit area.

There are two views of the split in the Motor City Labor League. The "Changeover" group holds that no political issues of substance separated the two sides. Rather it is their position that Frank Joyce engaged in a personal, egotistical, self-aggrandizing, vengeful, male chauvinist grab for personal "hegemony" in the organization by manipulating the sheep-like members--who remain tricked to this very day--at an illegitimate meeting which took place on Sept. 2 following the resignation of Jack and Sheila from the Central Committee.

MCLL holds that, although there certainly were and are personality conflicts between members of the two groups (and within them), that fundamental disagreements around a variety of political issues and practice were at the root of the division. We repudiate the allegation that the MCLL membership is a stupid bunch of sheep, insufficiently aware of the tricks of manipulation

to have fallen for it "one more time." Such an allegation is typical of the contempt in which the membership was always held by Sheila and some others in "Changeover", which is precisely one of the reasons for the split itself.

In fact, there were two very clear alternative styles and practice of leadership within the organization. Members have, after all, had the opportunity to observe them at close range for some time--in some cases for two years and in others preceeding MCLL. Three-quarters of the membership both in the central committee elections of August 1972 and in the split in September 1972 opted for the assumptions and methods of leadership represented by Buck Davis, Lynda Ann Ewen, Frank Joyce, Valerie Snook and others. In making the choice we chose not only between personalities, but also between two emerging lines on crucial questions of internal and external organizing, all of which have been discussed at enormous length since Sept. 3, 1972.

Even if there were no other differences whatsoever, which there are, the division of MCLL would be a split and would be political along the self-proclaimed lines of the protagonists for the simple reason that the position that the split is purely personal is itself a political position. We think that socialists and revolutionaries generally err on the side of seeing human conflicts as political where it is not, rather than on the side of seeing personality where there is in fact politics. Even where the motives are the most individualistic--as perhaps in the case of an agreed upon renegade such as Eldridge Cleaver--there are political distinctions to be made. An agent of the state is political. A person driven "insane", such as James Johnson, is political.

The personalization of conflict was a consistent pattern of the Murphy group extending to how the organization itself and many of its programs were founded. This was true in two senses. First never has analysis of the dynamic political and social forces and class and race struggle in Detroit been advanced as the reason for the emergence of MCLL. Second, NO individuals other than Sheila have been given credit for starting MCLL. Moreover, the emphasis on the great person is characteristic of the bourgeois method of analysis employed by this tendency throughout. It is obsessed with three things--individuals, their motives and incidents. Never does "Changeover" put forward any analysis about what forces create such individuals, with their nasty motives, nor the incidents themselves. We were never told either what is wrong with struggling for power within the organization--whatever the motive, although we hold it to be the duty of revolutionaries to put forward and organize around their political position.

Some Relevant Facts

On Saturday and Sunday, August 19 and 20, the Motor City Labor League held a convention at which we made some decisions on both external and internal matters and held the first elections in the history of the organization, selecting both a six member Central Committee and representatives to the General Staff from each of the organizational work sections. With the value of hindsight, we believe that the dynamics of the split were present in embryonic form within the convention and the dynamics which surrounded it.

The convention was the first formalization of methods of contending for power within the organization, the structures up to that point having been necessarily and essentially self-generated. Even prior to the convention it produced three "incidents" or developments. Frank Joyce and Brian Flanigan held two discussions about attempting to prevent Jack Russell's election to the Central Committee. Frank Joyce holds that it was Brian Flanigan who took the greater initiative in instigating the discussion. It is apparently accepted that it was Frank Joyce who initiated the process of abandoning the attempt on the grounds that it would be impossible to achieve and that there were not sufficient political grounds to oppose Jack's election.

Secondly, a number of Central Committee candidates "campaigned" in various ways, including more aggressive participation in meetings, private discussions with individuals, etc. At a subsequent membership meeting the majority of members indicated that none of the candidates had attempted to campaign with them.

Thirdly, on the Friday night prior to the convention, members of what came to be known as the Murphy Bloc, at that time consisting of Sheila Murphy, Lynda Chabot, Bill King, Margaret Borys and Brian Flanigan met. We have never been told the substance of their discussions except that they did not determine a "slate" on which they would all vote. Whether individual voting intantions were discussed and reviewed, we do not know. Whether attempts to seek positions on the General Staff were discussed, we do not know. Whether a position on a proposed amendment precluding Central Committee members from being elected as section representatives to the General Staff was discussed we do not know. Whether the presumption of the existence of a "Joyce bloc" was discussed then or later, we do not know.

Whether the campaign speeches of the four members of the group who were candidates for the Central Committee were discussed, we do not know. We presume some of these matters were discussed. We do know that no comparable meeting was held by any other members of the organization.

We also know that the election process was generally agreed to be quite underdeveloped and that it did indeed revolve, on the surface, around "personality" matters rather than stated political differences. Among other things, we were caught in the vicious circle of having been told frequently that we weren't developed enough to have real political differences and that real political differences could only exist around "external matters." This tended to deflect and delegitimize discussion around matters of internal power, styles and assumptions of leadership, etc. This assertion by persons who are now member of the "Changeover" has continuously been put forward in their papers. By the Saturday, September 2, Central Committee meeting it was clear that there were major differences around matters of internal work, and we sought to establish (and thought we had succeeded) that such differences were a legitimate basis for political struggle.

The Central Committee elections were held. There were ten candidates for six positions, four of them members of the "Murphy bloc," although they did not campaign as members of any "bloc." Justin Ravitz announced the results as "a clear mandate." Sheila Murphy was first, Frank Joyce second, Jack Russell third, Lynda Ann Ewen and Valerie Snook tied and Buck Davis sixth. The difference between sixth and seventh (Brian Flanigan) was nine votes. The difference between first and six was 10 votes. We do not intend here a complete analysis of the election results or dynamics. We do, however, believe two things. First, in so far as there is any one incident or event which produced the split, it is the issues of the C.C. election and the reaction to it which is responsible for all that has followed. Secondly, the secret ballot election did establish the internal politics, practice, and methods of the Murphy Group (or "circle") as a minority within the organization and other styles of leadership were affirmed in the election. The criteria of leadership was certainly ill-defined. External practice doubtless is of greater importance for the central committee. Some unanalyzed class conflicts within MCLL did play, we think, a role in

the election results.

> But it is one thing to call oneself something, and another to be it. It is one thing to sacrifice the circle system in principle for the sake of the Party, and another to renounce one's own circle. The fresh breeze proved too fresh as yet for people used to musty philistinism. 'The Party was unable to stand the strain of its first congress,' as Comrad Martov rightly put it (inadvertently) in his Once More in the Minority. The old hidebound circle spirit overpowered the still young party spirit."
> (Lenin, ibid.)

By their own statements, the members of the "Changeover" group consider themselves to have been the founders and movers and shakers and leaders of MCLL. They were indeed the single concentrated unit of power within the organization. Certainly their prestige and their power was set back by the election. And they did act to preserve it. Lenin is also helpful here:

> "There is a saying that everyone is entitled to curse his judges for twenty-four hours. Our party congress, like any congress of any party, was also the judge of certain persons who laid claim to the position of leaders and who met with discomfiture. Today these representatives of the "minority" are with a naivete verging on the pathetic, "cursing their judges" and doing their best to discredit the Congress to belittle its importance and authority....Charming, is it not? To be sure, gentlemen, the Congress was not devine; but what must we think of people who begin to "blackguard" the Congress after they have met with defeat at it?"

The process of "blackguarding the Congress" vis a vis the MCLL convention in fact began before it ever happened insofar as Sheila in particular, on numerous occasions, characterized it as an "experiment". Indeed, we agree that it was not "divine". The low vote for B.P. - resulting more, perhaps, from his identification with the Murphy "bloc" than a real analysis of his qualities as a proletarian leader, in addition to being an innovative and brilliant propagandist - did reflect considerable underdevelopment of the organization, as well as underdevelopment of B.P. Other questions could be raised. Even Sheila's statement that, "We must discuss these election results and the complete abdication of leadership by the membership they reflect.", could be dismissed as "cursing ones judges for 24 hours" since it took place the day after the results. BUT, matters continued.

One week after the election the general membership was informed that the Friday night pre-convention meeting had taken place, that indeed there was a "Murphy bloc", the existence of which would produce "no apologies", and by subtle process of innuendo it was suggested that there was a "Joyce bloc". Jack Russell told Babs Belvitch that B.P. and Bill King would be proposed for addition to the C.C. in three months and that Camilla Davis might have voted an "ultra-feminist" ticket in the election - which she did not do, but

which suggests that the membership was held to have had illegitimate or no political criteria for the judgements they made.

In a host of subtle ways, organizational tensions rose appreciably after the election. Scenes were created around a number of issues including a letter to the Draft Cockrel Committee concerning MCLL's electoral resources, the unchallenged decision by Sheila to leave the second C.C. meeting early, the allegation that people were "bullshitting" when they said they had not been "organizing" before the election, etc.

Matters were such that Jack Russell had no difficulty on August 3, following Sheila's departure and the completion of the C.C. regular agenda, in initiating a discussion of organizational tensions, in which he said he would give his views if everyone else would give theirs. They did, and moved inexorably and unwittingly to a paralyzing organizational crisis as a result.

We do not have the time or space to recreate all those events here. We note the following facts:

--At the point of the first semi-formal instance in the C.C. in which they were a minority (around a crucial question raised by the demand for Valerie's expulsion), they resigned. Although they have since tried to characterize this action as incorrect by virtue of its spontaneity and impulsiveness, at the September 3, General Staff meeting, Sheila admitted that she and Jack had met prior to the C.C. meeting and discussed resignation as one possible course of action.

--At the point in the General Staff meeting of voting on Sheila's resignation from the C.C., the question of Valerie's expulsion having produced a 9-9 tie and Jack's resignation having been accepted 14-2, the agenda shifted and it was decided to begin that evening's general membership meeting with a discussion on leadership and democratic centralism.

--At the point in the general membership meeting at which we were moving into a discussion of the issues around Valerie's expulsion , in which presumably the case for expulsion would be presented for the first time by Sheila, Jack, and others (and even though the membership had approved by a vote of 22-14 that discussion as the first item on the agenda), the "Changeover" group, claiming that the membership "already had its minds made up", walked

out.

--At the point at which reunification proposals were to be exchanged, they declared a split.

--At the point at which sponsorship of CCC became an issue, the "Changeover" group proposed bypassing the General Staff of CCC (as they essentially did in their "coalition proposal") as the decision makers and proposed to the non-aligned members of the Planning Committee that the matter should be decided exclusively by the co-sponsoring group, The Alliance.

--When the matter did come before the General Staff of CCC they proposed an "electoral College" method of bloc voting and the disenfranchisement of MCLL's 23 votes and their own 10. When their proposal lost under a voting proceedure of one-person, one-vote agreed to by the body, they charged that the vote had been a railroad and a mockery of democracy and walked out before the meeting had been formally adjourned. Following this walkout the "Changeover" group resigned from [redacted] the General Staff of CCC, the Steering Committee of the Women's Book Club, and ceased all participation in both CCC and the Women's Book Club.

CONTROL, CONFLICT AND CHANGE

The events surrounding CCC require further elaboration. Despite the efforts of "Changeover" to circumvent the General Staff of CCC (their original "coalition" proposal suggested merely that "some explanation will be necessary in the Planning Committee and the General Staff." That proposal incidentally did not contain any provision for the addition of "independents" to the reconstituted Planning Committee) the initiative of Alliance and MCLL members of the Planning Committee did succeed in bringing the issue of sponsorship to the General Staff.

In a meeting one week prior to the General Staff meeting, with non-aligned Alliance and other members of the Planning Committee, "Changeover" had taken the position that as a matter of principle, they could not enter into any coalition with MCLL in CCC, thus altering their initial proposal for a "coalition." MCLL subsequently took the same position regarding "Changeover." Thus the meeting was defined from the two group's point of view as an either/or situation, in terms of representation on the Planning Committee.

"Changeover"began by proposing that MCLL's 23 members and their own 10 be dis-enfranchised from voting. MCLL opposed the proposal on the following grounds:

--MCLL did not wish to be prevented from exerting its proper and legitimate power in making a decision crucial to MCLL and crucial to CCC.

--MCLL did not wish to support any proposal, be it bloc voting or total disenfranchisement for some,that would make it possible in "electoral college" fashion for the position of less than a majority of the General Staff to prevail, believing that such a situation would be undemocratic.

--MCLL did not believe that it should be "handicapped" or penalized for the fact that in the split the majority of members chose to remain in the organization and hence MCLL did indeed enjoy a numerical superiority over "Changeover" on the General Staff. To "equalize" or to eliminate altogether the resultant voting strength would be worse than Hubert Humphrey's attempt to change the rules of the California primary after he lost.

--To leave the matter entirely in the hands of the Alliance and "independents" seemed an irresponsible attempt to force in the worst way the consequences of the MCLL split entirely onto third parties.

The General Staff, including a majority of the independents and Alliance members, voted to accept the method of one person one vote.

Both groups made presentations to the General Staff. "Changeover's" drew essentially on their paper which was distributed at the meeting (Perspective on Events...) MCLL sought to communicate our perspective on the political issues of the split and presented a nine point outline of our perspective for CCC. Ed Pintzuk made a presentation of an "independent" point of view and proposed a "cease-fire."

Following a question period and a caucus break, two proposals came to the floor. "Changeover" proposed an interim planning committee on which they and MCLL would each have one member. It did not address the matter of staff. MCLL proposed that it continue as co-sponsor of the program with the Alliance and therefore, by implication, that "Changeover" not have co-sponsorship with the commensurate representation on the Planning Committee.

MCLL opposed the "Changeover" proposal for the following reasons:

--The nature of their presentation (confirmed by their presentation at the Alliance meeting three days later) and the nature of their position that politics were not the basis of the split, precluded a clarification of the political issues no matter how much more discussion were to take place. It seemed to us irresponsible

and anti-political to put the General Staff in the position of acting as a jury in a prolonged trial of various incidences and the presense or absence of "criminal intent"on the part of anyone.

--The proposal did not seem likely to bring the best results in doing the work necessary to prepare in one week for the next session of CCC.

--Choosing to continue with MCLL as the co-sponsor precluded neither further discussion of the issues nor the right of the General Staff to change its position at a later time should it wish to do so.

--MCLL did not know for certain that its proposal would pass even with its numerical superiority. We were, of course, prepared to abide by the will of the body had it lost and we did not and do not consider those who voted for the "Changeover" interim proposal to have necessarily voted against MCLL. We saw no reason to refrain from using our legitimate numbers however in support of our proposal for continued co-sponsorship and cannot imagine that had the situation been reversed that "Changeover" would have acted any differently.

We are aware that although the MCLL proposal carried by a simple majority, most of the non-aligned members of the General Staff did not vote for it. We do not for a moment, however, believe the vote to have been undemocratic, a "railroad" or a "mockery of democracy" as it was characterized by "Changeover" before they walked out of the meeting and subsequently quit the General Staff.

The repudiation of <u>any</u> procedure in which they emerge as a minority is precisely illustrative of the anti-democratic practice which was a major factor in producing the MCLL split in the first place.

Democratic-Centralism, Style of Work, Criticism and Self-Criticism

Having put forward a brief factual summary, we should now address the internal political questions which caused the split--the meaning and practice of democratic-centralism, methods of leadership and the use of criticism and self-criticism.

The underlying premise of socialism is that human beings are not inherently dumb, lazy, selfish and vicious. Rather, the socialist views people as embodying intrinsic capabilities for work and development which they will exercise in order to acquire and provide the material basis for the maintenance of a decent life for themselves and those with whom they have voluntarily associated themselves. Consequently, the socialist knows that people are prepared to industriously and unselfishly pursue the well-being of their community and society if that community and society is so organized as to not steal from them their human values--either in terms of their labor or their self-respect.

Democratic-centralism is the method of organization formulated by Marxist-Leninist for the revolutionary party organized to carry out the struggle for power and for society in general after the seizure of power. The primary tenets of democratic-centralism are democracy by majority vote at every level of social organization, freedom of criticism, the right to organize around political tendencies and strict adherence to the will of the majority after it has been arrived at by full and free discussion. The centralist aspect is the vesting of power to make and carry out strategic and tactical decisions in elected leadership bodies.

The reason that democratic-centralism can work and people will voluntarily accept the will of the majority (even when

they have strong disagreements) or in periods of great danger and/or crisis will implement the decisions of the leadership bodies (even without a full understanding of all the considerations which went into those decisions) is because of the different view which socialists have of human beings (and particularly each other) and the availability and use of the methods of criticism and self-criticism.

Bourgeois democracy teaches people to view persons in positions of power with suspicion and cynicism because of the widely held view that leaders are corrupt, manipulative and self-seeking (which is precisely what kind of leaders bourgeois societies produce). Persons in positions of power in bourgeois society (because they are corrupt, manipulative and self-seeking) justify their actions by enunciating a view that people in general are dumb, lazy, selfish and vicious (which is precisely the concept that the socialist rejects). Consequently, bourgeois society produces a mean, narrow, circular and reciprocal set of self-fulfilling prophecies about people and their actions which poisons human relationships.

The socialist tool for breaking out of this prison of self and mutual hate and distrust is criticism and self-criticism. MCLL has already put forward a number of pages on the methodology of criticism and self-criticism inside a cadre organization in its initial paper, Struggle Within. We wish to say a little here about the concept itself. Because of the contradictory nature of all material phenomena (a fundamental precept of dialectical materialism), it is only natural that the discussions, etc. which are most productive of higher understanding and growth are those which revolve around ideas and actions about which people disagree. In bourgeios society this is seen as

a conflict, in which there must be a "winner" and a "loser". For socialists, this process is simply "struggle" and is natural, essential and desirable--for without it there can be no development and growth for anyone involved.

The "process" for this struggle is criticism and self-criticism. It has a number of characteristics:

--It must be approached in a spirit of ultimate unity.

--It should not be dominated by personal and non-political (subjective) resentments (although it is the best method for working through such feelings if they are present).

--Both parties involved must approach each other with a willingness to participate.

--The exchange or struggle must be characterized by honesty and openess.

--Both parties must understand and accept that the purpose of the process is to reach a higher understanding, not necessarily to prevail.

This process of criticism and self-criticism with its attendant preconditions of love and respect for human beings, is the socialist method for establishing and maintaining those relationships between people which makes it possible.for them to organize themselves along democratic-centralist, rather than bourgeois, lines. It is therefore the key process in the establishment of socialist relationships and organizations. Consequently, when a person or group of people reject or refuse to engage in this process political unity is impossible and a division is inevitable. That is what happened in MCLL.

The lack of ability for Sheila and others to respect and trust other people led her and her group to a style of work and leadership which was possessive of information, reluctant to

engage in open dialogue and discussion, and contemptous of the ability of other cadre. It was impossible to engage in a process of criticism and self-criticism.

Each criticism was viewed as an attack and met by a counter-attack. When Sheila would miss large parts of organizational meetings and someone would raise that as bad practice and lack of discipline, she would respond by accusing them of being internal-new left-navel gazers. When someone would raise her isolation from most members and other leaders of the organization, she would respond by characterizing such a concern as "touch-feely". When some would criticize her style as intimidating to others, she would respond by saying that if people could be intimidated that that was their problem. When someone would raise a question about her judgment on matters pertaining to LDC work, she would respond that her integrity was being challenged.

"So what?" the reader might ask? Why this "personal" attack on Sheila and her group?

We do not believe it is a personal attack to examine the practice of anyone who claims to be a revolutionary leader.

The criticisms which the Central Committee raised about Sheila and her closest political allies were contentiousness, arrogance, disrespect for people (especially inside the organization), possessiveness of work, use of intimidation and refusal to engage in criticism and self-criticism. Sheila said, when she resigned from the Central Committee (after eliciting approximately three hours of general and specific criticism to which she has never responded), "Your case is weak. You've made some tactical errors. You'll be sorry." Sheila said, as she and her group walked out of MCLL at the Sunday night meeting,

"I haven't responded to all of the criticism of me because nobody asked me to." She never has responded to the criticisms to this day, except to deny them all at the Alliance meeting and say that if they were true, we should not have criticized her, but instead should have thrown her out of the organization and run her out of town. We reject that because that is what is done in bourgeois or gang politics, not socialist politics. Refusal or inability to engage in criticism and self-criticism then became the fundamental issue which split MCLL.

Obviously, if the "Changeover" group has no appreciation of socialist democracy (democratic-centralism), then they can be expected to practice standard aspects of bourgeois "democracy," i.e. ultra-democracy and anti-democracy (read anarchism and opportunism). It was anti-democratic to resign from the Central Committee and walk out of the organization. It was anti-democratic to propose that MCLL and "Changeover" unilaterally declare a coalition in CCC and make "some explanation" to the Planning Committee and General Staff of CCC (as they do in their split paper). It was then both anti- and ultra-democratic to propose in the CCC General Staff meeting that the political process inside MCLL be disrespected and that only those who supposedly had no prior "interest" or "position" make the critical political decision involved (that is the same position which the United States took on whether or not the National Liberation Front should be allowed to participate in the Paris Peace Talks).

Within the above construct, it is easy to see why MCLL was unwilling to enter into a coalition with "Changeover" in CCC. CCC is a socialist education program which has for its purpose the bringing of socialist perspective to a large number of people and the moving of those people to some form

of consistent and developing political work--either in CCC itself or some other progressive organizational form.

No group of people inside Ad Hoc, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, MCLL, BWC or the Alliance (all of which have been sponsors of CCC) has the political(or any other) right to withdraw from the sponsoring organization and unilaterally declare that they must be admitted to the sponsorship of CCC on a coalition basis (albeit "temporary" and "interim").

MCLL believed (and still believes) that the organizational methods employed by the "Changeover" group are incorrect, destructive and retarding. We believe that a coalition is inimical to the development of CCC as an important and unique program. Further, to continue an intense and presently irreconcilable political dispute inside a form such as CCC would paralyze and divert that program--a profound disservice to its structural bodies, co-sponsor and membership. The demoralizing effect that such a process would have on everyone connected with the book club would far outweigh anything to be gained from prolonging the crisis, even for the ostensible purpose of developing further clarity around the political issues involved in the split.

We believed that it was time to make a decision and move on--fully understanding that political debate would continue and that further clarification of the issues (as is represented by this paper) would have to be pursued.

PAROCHIALISM, ISOLATION AND CORRECT RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PROGRESSIVE BLACK AND WHITE POLITICAL FORCES

The preceeding sections of this paper have dealt primarily with events and issues which are fundamentally internal to MCLL. There should not, of course, be any question about the fact that the establishment of correct relationships and styles of work inside a revolutionary organization are a necessary precondition for the maximization of the ability of the members of that organization to carry out consistent, effective and correct mass work. We are beginning to understand some differences with the external political line of the old, pre-split MCLL.

MCLL has been too parochial. The first element of this was Detroit chauvinism. If there was general contempt for the membership of MCLL and even more for anybody not in the organization, the darkest ring of Purgatory was reserved for almost everybody outside the Detroit area who were identified with the progressive movement.

To be sure, we believe that the objective conditions of life (not particularly individual leaders) in this community (distinguishable from other places by virtue of the total domination of the economy by a single heavy production industry and its related lighter industry; the large relative size of the black community in such large Northern industrial city; the relative underdevelopment of the "service" and "financial" industry and the long tradition of Black and Labor struggles) have produced and will produce a left movement in this community which is different, larger, more cohesive and, in many ways, developed and advanced earlier than that in other parts of the country. But that fact in no way justifies the mistrust, dislike, arrogance and contempt which were consistently displayed toward anyone or group in the "movement" who did not accept, imitate or unquestionably acknowledge the superior development of left political organizations and individuals in Detroit. The present MCLL believes strongly in ourselves and our future, but we are also activel and expectantly seeking to establish close relationships with individuals and organizations in many other parts of the country. We know that the time will come when we can for a united national party.

A second element of the parochialism which obtained in the old MCLL had to do with the Detroit metropolitan area itself. There was a critical anomaly in the old organizational posture--because of the intensity of the racial contradiction in present day U.S. society, we feel that it is necessary for at this time in this community to organize an all-white group and seek relationships with black groups developing along similar lines; the policies, programs and projections of the old MCLL were almost entirely confined within the city limits of Detroit--which is not where the majority of the white proletariat in the metropolitan area lives and works. Mass mobilization campaigns (STRESS, Recorder's Court election, etc.) concentrated on oppression which was of central concern to residents of Detroit (and even then, the black community in particular). Without deprecating at all the validity of those issues, that they almost fully embodied the mass mobilization of a white revolutionary organization at the very least reflects some disclarity of political program.

People who were involved in programs in which MCLL worked who lived in the suburbs were scarcely encouraged (and sometimes discouraged) at all to consider what work they might do in their own communities unless it could somehow be tied to a "Detroit" program. There was a minimal and superficial view of the bussing question, but little actual work was done. There was a kind of blind opposition to metropolitanism, although there was never any real work done to oppose it and no political analysis of whether or not metropolitanism is an already accomplished and irreversible social, economic and political fact. This was a serious form of parochialism formerly practiced by MCLL.

What accounts for this second form of parochialism? We believe that it was the emergence of serious and powerful black progressive forces inside the city and the possibility raised thereby that successful cooperative activity by such groupings and MCLL could bring about some highly visible changes in the calculus of power in Detroit, which produced the situation. Sheila Murphy has a long and well-known relationship with certain elements of those emerging black forces. It was this shared perspective with those forces (of which we all were certainly aware and generally suscribed to) about the acquisition of certain forms of power in Detroit which led to the excessive concentration on organizing the white community inside the city limits alone. We now expect to develop programs which reflect this changing perspective on our part.

The above should not be taken to indicate that we do not seek and value relationships and joint work and programs with black left forces. Nor do we think that seeking power (for example, electoral) in Detroit is an incorrect programatic goal for socialists to pursue, if developed and executed along socialist principles.

But MCLL is now accused of having impared those very possibilities because of the "LDC incident."

This pivotal incident in the process of the MCLL split revolved around the attempt to secure the physical assets of CCC as had been done previously by MCLL at the time of the JoAnn Castle/BWC split. In fact, we later discovered the most valuable assets of CCC had already been removed from the office to the home of Jack Russell. In removing some materials and equipment from the CCC office, upon learning that a split was actual, MCLL inadvertently acquired an LDC mimeo and gestefax which we believed belonged to CCC. We did not "steal" the LDC equipment as "Changeover" alleges. In fact, in one instance where someone was taking a typewriter and it was pointed out that it was LDC's, it was left. Moreover, an LDC cadre was in the office at the time the equipment was taken and made no effort to point out that the machines belonged to LDC. Nor is it the case that the taking of the material was intended to preclude discussion around the coalition proposal. Frank Joyce did attempt to call on Sunday afternoon the numbers we had been given to reach "Changeover" for the purpose of establishing a time and a place for a meeting. Two of the numbers did not answer and Frank did speak to Michelle Russell who said that Jack was out.

Shortly after that telephone call, however, the incident acquired a dimension which raises what we believe to be a reflection of very serious differences between the two groups. First, we question the assertion that the political relationship between the "Changeover" forces and the LDC black cadre constitute "the most advanced and harmonious racial relations in the country." In fact, as we noted elsewhere, information about LDC and its direction, resources and program was virtually impossible to get through the normal structures of the organization. In addition to being accused of impugning Sheila's integrity by raising questions, we were told that the fact

that LDC was a "multi-racial form," (though presumably a coalition among organizational comrades) that certain information about its finances and program were unavailable to us. Most important, however, are the issues raised by the reaction to the inadvertant taking of the machines. The questions are crucial:

1. Who, in fact, was responsible for the creation of a situation which ended in a black-white confrontation?

2. Who, in fact, invokdd the processes of the State apparatus in an intra-left struggle?

3. What methods other than threats of physical violence, intimidation, phoney police threats and attempts to initiate criminal prosecution were available to resolve an unfortunate situation?

The first telephone call following the removal of the equipment ended with a black LDC cadre saying to Frank Joyce, "I don't care whose equipment it is, you will have it back in one hour or you are all going to be ice cold dead." This was followed by four essentially similar, but less explicit calls (two by Justin Ravitz) visits to the homes of two MCLL members by a group of black people (among whom were black police officers) and the filing of criminal charges (which to our knowledge have never been withdrawn) <u>after</u> the return of the equipment.

LDC is a multi-racial coalition, of which MCLL was a part and in which MCLL assumed that all participating forces were (or should be) accorded political respect and involved in the making and carrying out of LDC decisions and activities. Does the "Changeover" group condone, support and participate in such activities as described above? Obviously, as they have stated on many public occasions since, they do. The implications of this position on "Changeover's" part is that our original criticisms of the Murphy group - un-socialist, intra-organizational behavior; carrying out work by means of

verbal aggression, intimidation and threats of violence; refusal to engage in discussion and mutual criticism -- were correct.

If LDC is a multi-racial coalition reflecting the "most harmonious and progressive racial relations in the country," why were members of the "Changeover" group (or other whites) not among the people who went to the homes of MCLL members or who went to the Detroit police and the Wayne County Prosecutor? In short, who set up the black/white confrontation which took place? It was clearly not MCLL. The only conclusion is that "Changeover" deliberately took part in a plan of action to set up a racial confrontation as a tactical maneuver (relying on their presumed notion of the existence of cowardice, racism and sycophancy inside MCLL?) or the "white component" of LDC has no actual or significant participation in or control over the political process inside LDC and is prepared to accept and perpetuate that condition (a classic example of sychophancy).

On the question of the use of the state apparatus in intra-left struggles, it is interesting to speculate on whether such a tactic is ever permissible, but not necessary to understand what happened here:

--It was a black LDC cadre who called Ron Glotta and said, "I have some black police officers and a warrant," -- we assume to coerce MCLL into what he desired us to do.

-- It was a black LDC cadre who came to Moss Street with at least one black policeman and said he had a warrant (which he did not and could not produce) and demanded Frank Joyce (not a discussion or the equipment).

-- It was a black LDC cadre who went to the DPD and filed felony complaints against at least four MCLL members.

--It was a black LDC cadre who went to the Prosecutor more than a day after the equipment exchange and continued to request warrants on the previously filed complaints (which to our knowledge have never been withdrawn).

Parenthetically, MCLL never called the police on the people who were threatening us and coming to our homes pursuant to their threats.

But what does it say about LDC and the people and forces in it that they would even consider, much less employ, such tactics? What does it say about their real understanding of bouregois state power and their opposition to it? What does their willingness to give the police and prosecutor the opportunity to absolutely discredit progressive forces in this community by a public, judicial airing of this struggle? What does it say about their ability to define who the real enemy is? Whose side are they on?

Why did tese tactics have to be used and what other alternatives were available? Members of the "Changeover" group have stated publicly a number of times since the incident that they had only two ways to get the equipment back--physical force and/or legal process. Why did they think that? MCLL, at the same time that it was defending itself against the above actions, called for a meeting of the Planning Committee of CCC at which it proposed that a non-MCLL delegation of the Planning Committee negotiate an exchange. That proposal was accepted and the exchange took place within twenty-four hours of the original mistake. Certainly, that was a viable alternative. The analysis which the "Changeover" group had of the situation is reflective of their non-socialist outlook on "contradictions among the people" in which they view struggle as criticisms as attacks, disputes as "war", mistakes as "guilt" and resolution as punishment. MCLL, as we state in greater detail elsewhere, totally rejects these views.

Conclusion

The preceeding, as we said at the outset, is hardly an exhaustive or definitive statement of the comlex differences which produced the split in MCLL. Throughout our history, our bias has been toward practice not writing. That perspective will continue and it is on the basis of our practice of organization and struggle against the class which oppresses us all that we expect to be judged.

Before the split the Motor City Labor League was composed of individuals who had had sharp disagreements in the past. It is entirely possible that the contradictions from which we come will reunite many of us in MCLL or a more advanced form in the future.

None of us joined this struggle because we thought it would be easy. We will however win.

In Struggle,

THE MOTOR CITY LABOR LEAGUE

October 1972