

Resolution on the working class

Thu, 10/12/2009 - 09:01

A resolution adopted by the League that explains the criteria for defining the working class

1. For revolutionary Marxists the concept of class is a central starting point for understanding the character of social processes and political action. It is equally important for both the scientific grasp of the dynamic of society and ?as the axis of the revolutionary programme itself?, which focuses around the development of the proletariat into a class, a subject acting according to its historic role. Therefore the class character of revolutionary politics and science must be defended against any blurring of the class relations which are produced by the dominant bourgeois relations.
2. The basis of the Marxist concept of class is dialectical materialism which differs in principle from the ?methodological individualism? of bourgeois sociology and its supposed opposite, ?structuralism?. Its starting point is that capitalism is one of those historic social formations where the conditions in which human beings produce their social life are alienated from their producers and become alien forces which determine their lives. As a result the social relations become a concrete totality in which the contradiction between the relations of production and the forces of production, which develop themselves within these relations, is the determining characteristic element of this social formation of social classes. This basis is a historical process, in which the class antagonism, the tendency to transcend or maintain existing class conditions, is the driving factor.
3. Therefore, classes are social groups, which develop out of a given concrete-historic division of labour and which have a common objective interest in maintaining the existing property relations and state or, alternatively, in transcending them, i.e. they are classes in so far as they have to carry out a common battle with another class. Every class based social formation is determined by the central contradiction between a ruling class and the class on whose exploitation the economic and political rule of the ruling class rests.
4. The dialectical development of the conditions under which human beings produce their social lives does not only bring forth the class antagonism. Other manifestations like different forms of oppression are also necessary results, flowing from the contradictory nature of the progress of mankind. Whilst some, like women's oppression, appear in class society throughout its process of development, others only find their necessity at a certain level of development (lesbian and gay oppression, national oppression, etc.) or only gain social importance at a later stage (environmental problems). At every step of development they are enmeshed in a specific way with the class contradictions. Even though the class antagonism is central for the development of the overall process towards self-rule over the conditions of production, it nonetheless forms a unity with these other factors which only moves forward through their mutual interaction.
5. Capitalism presupposes a social division of labour that is regulated as generalised commodity production. This generalisation of commodity production has as its historic condition the creation of a class, whose conditions allow capital to incorporate in itself masses of ?free? labour, transforming thereby money capital into productive capital that creates a surplus value that can be realised as an expansion of the

original money capital. The class position of the proletariat in the process of capitalist development is therefore determined by its economic function as that part of capital, which allows its self-expansion by the appropriation of surplus value. Therefore the working class is, from the point of view of 'capital in general', the collective productive labourer. It flows from that - via the process of reproduction of capital - that the working class steadily reproduces the conditions, which make it a working class (in the concrete form of machinery, fixed capital money capital), i.e. that it appears as a class of 'wage dependents'.

6. The nature of capital, the accumulation of the surplus, leads to fundamental laws (e.g. tendency of the rate of profit to fall and countervailing factors) which constantly endanger the basis of the existence of the wage labourer as well as of capital itself. Therefore, there is a tendency for the class position of the proletariat to be determined by pressures on wages, the threat of worsening working conditions, unemployment, relative impoverishment. As the exchange relation between the workers and capital does not determine the amount of surplus labour to be done in exchange for the wages, the class contradiction has to appear on the level of determining this amount of exploitation in its different forms; i.e. where the conditions of exchange are the ground for the same claim of 'justice' on both sides, the necessary emerging conflict has to be decided by 'force', as Marx put it. Therefore, the proletariat is forced to the class struggle against the bourgeoisie, which finally allows it to break the antagonistic relationship to the capitalist. Workers have to act collectively in their battle over the nature and extent of exploitation.

7. While class antagonism in capitalism appears as the 'unjust' distribution of income between the owners of the means of production and those dependent on wages, its essence is - as in all class societies - exploitation of the immediate producers: i.e. it emerges out of a social organisation of the work process whereby the working class is forced to produce the means of subsistence and luxury for its oppressors. Therefore class antagonism does not only appear in the sphere of circulation (e.g. in wage disputes). It appears centrally in the production process itself, where the exploitation of the working class has to be forced through. The social division of labour within capitalism determines functional roles within the work process, the 'character masks' of the agent of capital and those who are commanded by capital. As soon as an individual has acquired a position where they have to act as a 'representative of capital', however personally 'benevolent' they want to be, they nevertheless have to act as a fully-functioning instrument for the self-expansion of capital, or they will eventually lose their social role.

8. During the development of capitalism, as capital increased in size and centralisation, a series of roles as functionaries of capital emerged. These became more and more separated from the formal ownership of the means of production. At the same time a sizeable hierarchy of functions developed that mediated between the command and control of the top functionaries of capital and the individual work process. This is the source of a whole range of professions and strata that are neither direct agents of capital nor part of the working class, since their profession is mainly to organise the exploitation of the workers and secure capital's control over the working class.

9. With the development of capital and the capitalisation of more or less all the areas of the economy, the functional roles of capital, middle strata and workers have been transferred from capitalist industry to other areas. When, for example capital starts to be accumulated in commercial branches and commercial capital tries to secure as much as possible of its share of the profit as whole by exploiting the surplus labour of commercial labourers, it introduces similar methods of control and work organisation as the industrial capitalists. With the commercial capital facing the same structural problems as industrial capital, the same pattern of class conflicts will emerge, therefore forcing the commercial wage labourers into the same class position which in general will arise between the functionaries of the capital and representatives of the exploited workforce, while the position of the middle strata remains uncertain. According to their whole social role, they may either act as the immediate task force of capital or they may be forced into joining the

side of the working class in disputes, where their income position and jobs are under threat as well.

10. The underlying economic contradictions appear in concrete class reality in a contradictory way. The functions of capital and the function of wage labour can be united in one and the same person (e.g. in the top managerial positions). On the other hand people who are in formal terms 'their own' employers (e.g. contract-workers in the construction industry), are nevertheless exploited, expropriated of their surplus labour. They constitute part of the working class, despite the fact that they do not receive a 'wage', in contrast to the senior manager who hires them. Or, to give another example, the concrete division of labour can force unproductive workers, i.e. those who do not produce surplus value for a capitalist, into the class position of the proletariat.

11. Furthermore, in order to secure its rule, the bourgeoisie accepts to different degrees and under different historic circumstances, that it can sustain a series of unproductive strata out of its revenue (e.g. landed property, officer caste, top bureaucrats of the state). Therefore the transformation of the objective class position of the proletariat into a concrete social appearance cannot be derived simply from formal economic categories (e.g. the wage form, productive labour in private industry etc.). Besides this, a concrete economic analysis of the function of social groups within the social division of labour, is necessary. 'Moments' such as the level of income, the historic development of working conditions, social status and milieu and, particularly, the appearance of class antagonism in crises, are vital to a scientific assessment of the class position of certain layers.

12. Therefore, as well as the classes which play a directly functional role in the capitalist production process, wage labour and capital, in any actual capitalist social formation other classes and strata reproduce themselves, which are historically more or less essential for the political and social existence of the bourgeois order. Apart from the classes of land owners and small property owners, this also applies to a series of the middle strata which occupy a position between the owning classes and the working class. On the one hand, they are made up of a series of privileged castes and professions, which are safeguarded from the fundamental sharpening of the conflict between capital and wage-labour, or even fulfil the functions of capital in these conflicts. On the other hand, they are themselves dependent on the bourgeoisie, and for the most part, are also more or less condemned to wage labour. Furthermore their privileges are historically relative. They are constantly threatened with being declassed (i.e. being thrown into the proletariat or the subproletariat). The analysis of the middle strata therefore necessitates a concrete, historic analysis which is not only essential for the political-ideological understanding of various petit-bourgeois political phenomena, but also for the form in which the bourgeoisie organises its rule.

13. There is no one clearly definable 'middle stratum' or 'new middle class' with common interests. Top layers of managers who act directly as agents of capital are clearly part of the bourgeoisie. Other managers and supervisors who are not part of the 'collective productive labourer' are also extensions of the capitalist class. Amongst professionals there are those such as consultants, leading barristers, partners in architects firms etc. who are part of the petty bourgeoisie or sometimes the bourgeoisie proper. On the other hand there are many white collar and even professional workers with relatively privileged working conditions who are losing these privileges and increasingly should be seen as part of the labour aristocracy.

14. From the standpoint of the individual capital, valorisation of capital takes place in the commercial and financial sector via the exploitation of wage labour, while from the point of view of capital in general the profit in this sector is just a deduction of the industrial profit. But for the individual capital, its share of this profit-deduction will be bigger the more surplus labour can be extended in relation to the wages paid to commercial and financial wage labourers. Therefore commercial or financial wage labourers are, in principle, subject to the same exploitation of surplus labour as productive workers. This is even more so if

capital accumulation in that sphere increases. Just as in the sphere of production, employees with a predominantly managerial occupation or employees whose occupation is bound up with special privileges, belong to the middle strata or even part of the bourgeoisie. As the organic composition in these areas is lower than in industry, it is quite clear that the workforces in these areas have increased both as a proportion of the working class and of the middle strata of the whole of society. For the same reason (the low organic composition of capital), these areas are a special target for a new wave of rationalisation (e.g. via technical revolutions in telecommunications and information processing) and new forms of work organisation (e.g. the creation of self-employed poor).

15. State firms as such do not employ productive labour, since they do not produce a surplus for a concrete individual capital, but they appear as extra costs of production. In those state industries where wage labour serves capital formation, the employed are usually productive workers. Outside of this small sector with productive workers, state administration, education, etc, exist where unproductive workers are employed. But even in the unproductive state enterprises the principle is forced through to reduce these extra costs (and thereby the deduction of the surplus) by maximising the surplus labour of the wage-labourers as much as possible. Therefore, wage-labourers in the state sector (e.g. post, rail, health) can be subject to a relation of exploitation analogous to that of productive workers in the real meaning of the word.

16. Nevertheless privileges for certain professions are particularly extensive in the state sector (e.g. consultants in hospitals, pilots in state airlines, university professors, professional engineers). Among so called 'public employees', there are therefore a whole range of different classes and strata. The top state administration and the central managerial organs of the state enterprises are incontestably part of the ruling class, although as individual persons they do not appear as a bourgeois; in their totality however they are the political and general economic arm (administration, justice, executive) of the bourgeoisie. Inevitably the management of state enterprises also stand for the interests of the bourgeoisie by maintaining and directing a capital that, were it outside revenue, would yield profits far below the average rate and thus have no chance of survival, but which is for economic or political reasons, necessary for the bourgeoisie in its totality.

17. Therefore, the wage labourers in such sectors are confronted with functionaries of capital who strive to reduce the share of deduction or redistribution from profit or (via the formation of the average rate of profit) that are caused by these necessary state activities, by enlarging the amount of surplus labour exploited from these wage dependants. While the scale of employment in the state sector, increased dramatically after World War Two, thereby playing an important role in the shift of employment from industry to the so called 'service sector', the amount of deductions from the industrial profits which funded this increase, nowadays are not in the interest of capital accumulation anymore. Therefore the public sector today is a battle ground where important layers of the workforce come into repeated clashes with the agents of capital.

18. However it is often not exactly clear whether these are struggles by privileged middle layers to defend their position 'above the proletariat' or whether they serve to bind the middle strata in the public sector to the bourgeois state. Also, in the 'unions' which organise these workers the interconnection of union bureaucrats, party representatives and state officials is quite high. In fact, only a thorough analysis, and the results of class struggle, can help us to understand which parts of the civil servants and their organisations can be incorporated into the activities of the workers' movement, or which of them can at least be brought into short-term common fronts against the immediate functionaries of capital.

19. The methods of imperialist super-exploitation and the establishment of finance and monopoly capital as the core of the contemporary capital relation have led, on the one hand, to an expansion of the middle

strata in the imperialist countries and, on the other, to the creation of a privileged layer within the working class, the labour aristocracy. While the 'labour aristocracy' shares with the middle strata many common appearances, with regard to forms of income privilege and even 'life style', the root of these privileges are not 'tradition' and the benevolence of the bourgeoisie but the class struggle of the proletariat and the strength of working class organisations. The extent of the 'privileges' of the labour aristocracy is therefore dependant not only on the objective conditions of accumulation, but also on the relation of forces between the main classes.

20. To attenuate the class struggle and stabilise class relations in the imperialist heartlands, the bourgeoisie was obliged to concede a form of 'regulation' of the class struggle, which temporarily allocates a degree of security and wealth to a part of the working class. On the basis of these insurance and regulation mechanisms a 'labour bureaucracy' (distinct from though interlinked with the labour aristocracy) was formed. This is not only bourgeoisified in its milieu, but its entire economic function makes it an instrument of capital rule, receiving privileges for performing this function. Because of its particular role and relation to the working class this labour bureaucracy forms a particular caste within the middle strata.

21. The urban and rural petit bourgeoisie, which continues to be strongly bound up with simple commodity production and circulation based on individual labour, forms a class of owners of means of production between capital and the working class. The material foundation of the class of peasants and the urban petit bourgeoisie traditionally make them a hegemonic force amongst those classes and strata between working class and bourgeoisie. The development of accumulation in production and circulation as well as in the agrarian sector, led to the shrinking of the numbers as well as the economic, political and ideological weight of these strata. Today, they are classes in decomposition, dissolving themselves into other middle layers and having to share their ideological and politically hegemony with them.

22. School students, students and the unemployed appear as particular layers. In order to determine the character of their class position, the relation between past, present and future as unity and contradiction has to be considered (biographical element of class relations). School students and students are trainees who will become wage labourers, entrepreneurs or peasants in the future and will be added to these classes respectively, but are presently stamped by the social position of their parents (and often dependent on their finances). Depending on the strength of the ties to their parents and on the weight of their future activity, their class position has to be determined concretely. Some parts of the school and university students therefore are undetermined in regard to their class position and in a state of transition from one class to another. These layers therefore can be won for the fight of the working class, if they understand the problems of the educational sector as rooted in the class character of society.

23. Beside that, there are several other strata of the population that are not wage earners, but belong to the working class. Non-earning performers of house work (men as well as women) share the class position of their companions, because the production of use values in individual households is not even indirectly capitalized (although the employment of domestic service is expanding again) despite being necessary for the reproduction of capitalism. From the point of production and reproduction of capital and wage labour therefore families, or family-like partnerships, appear as 'units' of reproduction. Therefore children, school and university students - as described above - also belong to the class of income earners of their families. Elderly people after retirement at the moment in general do not depend on the class position of their working children, as they will live on state pensions or the interests of their financial assets. Retired workers especially depend to a high degree on the strength of the organised working class and their solidarity.

24. Every non-retired worker belongs to the reserve army of labour during his/her time when he/she is partially or non-employed. Unemployment does not only form a special social stratum of income, but it constitutes a condition of existence of the working class as a whole. The lowest stratum of the relative surplus population, the 'Lazarus stratum' (as Marx called it), is living in the social sphere of pauperism, whereof the 'lumpenproletariat' constitutes a special additional group. Like the bourgeoisie this stratum consists of people unwilling to work, trying to live on the expense of others. Especially looking at 'criminal classes', Marx detected a high degree of similarities and relationships to the bourgeoisie.

25. Besides the lumpenproletariat, three categories belong to pauperism; unemployed but able to work workers, marginally employed as well as a large proportion of retired workers (especially women), secondly orphans and pauper children as candidates for the reserve army of labour; thirdly, ruined property owners and people unable to work. Within the sphere marked by passivity and instability the lumpenproletariat as an active element stands in the relationship of a 'special class' to the working class. A wage labourer who is no longer waged counts to the working class as long as his/her joblessness is only limited in time; he/ she remains as a member of the reserve army of labour and as a disposable part of the workforce attached to the working class and its struggles. The longer the unemployment lasts and above all if it becomes a permanent status, the danger of declassification or entering the lumpenproletariat increases.

26. Besides the real lumpenproletariat (that often is wrongly equated with pauperism) the most parts of the paupers therefore belong to the working class (as long as they emerged out of the proletariat, and are not ruined property owners). Nevertheless this faction due to its lack of function in the production process can only exert little impact in the class struggle with capital. Therefore the idea that paupers will be the 'new revolutionary subject' - as some autonomous or workerist theories argue, has no Marxist foundation. On the other hand, it is the neglect and ignorance of the trade union leadership, aligned to the labour aristocracy, that they do not organise within the impoverished parts of the working class. This effectively surrenders these sub-proletarian strata to the knives of reactionary, populist and even fascist, political forces.

27. In the imperialist heartlands, the vast majority of the population does not own any means of production and it is employed in the form of wage or salary earners (at least 90 per cent of the working population). On the basis of exemplary studies, it can be estimated, that in general two thirds of these wage earners are part of the working class and the other third is part of the middle strata. However, this must be investigated country by country. In particular, the change of class structure over the last decades has to be taken into account.

28. While the part of the working population in the industrial sector is declining towards roughly a third of the whole working population, the immense increase of productivity in this sector means that it still concentrates the largest proportion of value production (making thereby invalid any talk about 'de-industrialisation of society' as well as that of an 'end of the labouring civilisation?'). On the other hand, the working class today to a large extent is not anymore composed out of industrial blue-collar workers. Especially in the service and public sectors, new layers of the working class emerged and to some degree were integrated into the workers' movement (e.g. via trade unions of commercial workers or in the public health sector larger parts of women dominated work forces than before World War Two were integrated into the trade unions). At the same time, a higher differentiation within the industrial workforce (e.g. increase of technical and administrative staff) underlines this recentring of the working class - i.e. deconstruction of the former paradigm of the worker as exclusively the skilled, male, blue collar worker employed in a big factory of metal or engineering industry.

29. Over the last few decades, important changes in the class structure have occurred both through the industrialisation and capitalisation of particular spheres (e.g. research and development, mass education) and through the effects of the over-accumulation crisis, for example neoliberal restructuring and new forms of work organisation. On the one hand, significant parts of the middle strata are threatened with being declassed. Some of them, like parts of the teachers and engineers, have turned into a part of the working class and especially the latter now take their place within the labour aristocracy. Others are threatened by a far going social decline (e.g. bureaucrats in state enterprises which are going to be privatised). On the other hand, the number of factory workers has shrunk. Apart from the increasing importance of wage labourers in the commercial and other 'service' sectors, an increasing differentiation within the working class is opening between a 'core' of higher qualified, whose work is partially increasing in complexity, and 'peripheral', unqualified, badly paid workers with worsening working conditions.

30. Additionally, a further process of pauperisation in the form of huge armies of unemployed and those dependent on social benefits has occurred, which widens the gap between the lower layers of the working class and its core. Nevertheless these differences are not permanent: there is considerable fluidity between the skilled and unskilled, the employed and unemployed both within countries and on a global basis. We therefore reject any theories of 'segmentation' that analyse this differences as somehow 'stable' and do not see the relativity as well as necessity of permanent social differentiation and its counterpart homogenisation of the workforce within capitalism. So differentiation within the workforce is nothing new in the history of capitalism. In some aspects it was even higher before World War Two than nowadays (as can be proved by special case studies of the history of the German labour force for example). Finally it has to be said that, whilst the industrial core of the working class has shrunk numerically because of enormously increased productivity in these spheres, their economic weight is still central for successful class conflicts with capital, as is their higher degree of trade union organisation.

31. The changing composition of the working class, including the proletarianisation of parts of the middle strata, has led to changes in the trade union and work place organisations of the proletariat. The trade unions dominated by social democratic and Stalinist reformism have generally remained organisations of the core of the proletariat. The winning of proletarianising middle strata was partially successful among women and some of the immigrant workers. At the same time, the trade unions were hardly able to win newly created layers of the working class, amongst them highly qualified productive workers in particular industries. Likewise, the lower, less organised layers of the proletariat, those forces in precarious working conditions are increasingly dropping out of the trade union organisations. It is an essential task of revolutionary intervention in the trade unions to fight for the unionisation of these layers and the unemployed. e.g. a substantial increase in the number of unionised women occurred in Germany during the seventies when there was a stronger emphasis of the trade union in disputes to increase the income of lower paid ranks of the workforce, mobilising parts of the workforce that formerly were not unionised.

32. In the imperialist countries, this development takes place on the basis of a historically exceptionally high level of trade unionisation, which was achieved in the first decades after 1945. Even though the trade unions were organisationally and politically dominated by political currents which based themselves on the particular interests of the labour aristocracy in this period, much wider layers of wage labourers were brought into the trade union and work place organisations. The decline of trade union organisations is to a large extent the result of a tendential retreat of trade unionisation to the traditional industrial labour aristocracy. Its primary reason, however, is to be seen in the class collaborationist policy of the trade union leaderships, not in some 'historic' inevitability.

33. In any event, the numerical decline of many trade unions must not be equated prematurely with an 'end of the importance of the trade unions?'. Firstly, the process is in no sense irreversible. Even

successful defensive trade union struggles can lead to an at least temporary reversal of this process. Secondly, the purely quantitative decline of the trade unions is not identical with the loss of influence in the working class. Thirdly, workers in precarious working conditions, socially oppressed, etc. are not in principle un-organisable. The success of some new directions trade unions in the USA in the service sector demonstrate this. Fourthly, wage earning middle strata or newly proletarianised, highly qualified and relatively privileged parts of the working class in the private sector can be organised in fighting trade unions. It is precisely the increasing proletarianisation of their living conditions which makes them more open to the need for collective economic defence organisations of the wage earners.

34. Therefore revolutionary communists actively promote the organisation of as many wage earners as possible in the trade unions (as well as other mass organisation of the working class), including large parts of the middle strata. That means for example that we argue for the trade unionisation of relatively privileged permanently appointed layers of the teachers or of civil servants in the state administration (e.g. the status of Beamter in Germanic countries¹). The recruitment of these middle layers (and particularly of those who are in the process of becoming part of the proletariat) is not only an important step in strengthening the workers' movement numerically, but also in easing the integration of these middle layers into the workers' movement and to aid the breaking of the political-ideological influence of the bourgeoisie over these strata. Furthermore, the winning over of these layers can help to overcome the conservatism of large parts of the core layers of the proletariat, if and when it is based on a class struggle movement against the state or the employers.

35. At the same time, every privilege or special position of these strata within the trade unions (as in the case of the labour aristocracy) must be fought politically and, where necessary, even with special organisations for organising them in trade unions. But we fight for the abolition of all such links to the state from the very beginning and condemn any casteminded defence of special rights. Therefore revolutionaries never defend these privileges as such. In a time of attacks and cuts we will, however, defend any remaining material gains (protections against sackings, insurance, etc.) and call for their extension to all other employed - stressing to the state employed, that only the solidarity of the whole working class can rescue them from the core of the attacks. Even then we have to make clear in our propaganda that we are for the abolition of a special state granted status of civil servants (such as the Beamter).

36. Furthermore, there are some important exceptions where we are actually opposed to the affiliation of the 'trade-unions' of specific middle strata to the national trade union federations or, where they are at present affiliated, we are for their expulsion from them (e.g. the police-officers union in the DGB). This applies to the personnel of the repressive organs of the state (police, judiciary, professional soldiers, secret services) and private security services. Nonetheless, we support democratic and social demands by such professions (e.g. the right to political activity or to organise), where they bring them into a progressive conflict with the bourgeois state or the employers. Affiliation (or maintenance of affiliation) of these professions to the national and regional trade unions or other proletarian mass organisations can only be accepted by us, if they have broken with the command of the bourgeois state or their bosses.

37. Last, but not least, we also oppose the trade unionisation and even participation in workplace meetings of those middle strata, that are about to become a part of the bourgeoisie or are very closely allied to it, e.g. leading managers and employees, but also top civil servants in the state (e.g. heads of departments). These parts of the middle strata, can only find their way into the workers movement by individually breaking from the bourgeois order, similar to the class betrayal of members of the capitalist class itself.

38. On the political level, the changes in the class structure manifest themselves in various crises of the

system of political rule of the imperialist bourgeoisie. On the one hand, middle layers threatened by being declassed react in the form of reactionary or conservative humanitarian movements (petit-bourgeois, reactionary racist and fascist parties, nationalist and separatist movements/petit bourgeois-utopian movement, e.g. the Greens). Declassing does not only take the form of decline from a petit-bourgeois class position into a proletarian or sub-proletarian one. It can also appear in the form of an 'extension of the middle class' i.e. those professions, which previously had a 'middle-class' status, are opened to the working class and become proletarianised in the long term (e.g. certain types of technical or teaching professions). Whilst the first form of declassing promotes right wing reactionary responses, the latter one is a source of utopian petit-bourgeois ideologies.

39. In any case, these developments in the imperialist centres threaten to destabilise the political balance of forces and the class compromises on which the post-war political system rests. In the case of utopian movements of middle strata in the process of being declassed, for example the German Greens, they can appear as a progressive alternative to the conservative opportunist politics of the reformist parties. Therefore it is necessary to develop tactics relating to them. It is possible to engage in limited united action with them e.g. against racist laws and measures or protests against social cuts. There it is essential not only to fight for effective methods of struggle and mobilisation, but also to demonstrate the limitations (e.g. parliamentarism) of the policy and methods of fighting which these groups advocate. To engage in such unity in action is unavoidable where the Greens have already won a leading role in existing campaigns. All the same, where they do not play a role, we should not call on them to join in united fronts as we do with the reformist workers' parties. Long term united fronts, where the class character of the aims of the united front has to be brought even more to the fore, cannot be struck with them. Likewise critical electoral support cannot be given to them (e.g. in the form of a red-green-coalition)

40. On the other hand, the traditional reformist parties are quite limited in their ability to accommodate themselves to the changing structure of the working class and the middle strata. As the traditional basis, the industrial working class is shrinking or in a process of differentiation, the reformists see their chance to survive above all in a further adaptation to the middle strata, who become more important amongst the party membership anyway. Thereby they lose more and more control over those parts of the working class who are in formation or find it more and more difficult to win them because of their politics and their undemocratic internal structures. Because of a lack of alternatives, these layers either turn to variant new petit-bourgeois movements or to supposedly left reformists, especially post-Stalinists and centrists. Therefore, a further sharpening of the inner contradictions of the traditional reformist parties can be expected, which can lead to decline, splits or their transformation into parties of the middle layers or the bourgeoisie.

41. On the basis of the proletarian class position, we do not foresee the formation of a revolutionary subject in an objectivist form (e.g. Stalinism) nor in a spontaneist (e.g. ouvrierism, Luxemburgism), but in the tradition of Lenin. That is the 'objectively correct' consciousness (derived from the objective class condition of the proletariat) cannot simply be a 'guide' to real Class consciousness and be counterposed abstractly to its development in the class struggle. On the other hand, class consciousness does not develop spontaneously out of the economic class struggles or by simply bringing together individual heroic class fighters.

42. Class struggles must be systematically politicised and united, they need to be transformed from individual, economic or other struggles into a political struggle of the whole class against the rule of capital. That is to say that class consciousness has to be brought into the class struggles, just as the advancement of the class struggle itself promotes the conditions for this being possible. This presupposes both the development of a more advanced, class conscious part of the class in the struggles themselves, the

development of a working class vanguard as well as of a party, which is rooted in the vanguard, and which fights for the conscious leadership of these struggles on the basis of a revolutionary programme which itself will be tested and improved by the struggles. Only the interaction of a self-organised struggling mass proletariat and a party which politicises these struggles and leads them in their strategic aims, will lead to the creation of a consciously acting class for itself, a subject which has not only analysed its conditions objectively, but which has recognised its historic mission and fulfils it.

43. All in all, three concepts of the 'working class' have to be distinguished as well as seen in their unity: the 'class in its objective sense' is determined by the objective contradictions of the capitalist social formation and its presupposition of a class dependent on wages which is continuously reproduced as the object of exploitation. The 'class in itself' receives from the different milieus, from its political and trade-union organisations, from their dominating ideologies etc. as they develop, a concrete historic appearance of the working class. As the 'class for itself' the working class becomes the conscious subject of the historic mission given by the objective contradictions of capitalism. Only insofar as the spontaneous 'consciousness' of the actual class, as it is given, develops into a systematically socialist dominated one, can it be said that 'proletarian class consciousness' actually exists.

44. Nevertheless there are different phases in its realisation, and it is absorbed differently by different parts of the class, depending on the development of the class struggle and the strength of working class organisations. Therefore the differentiations of the class are not only given by the objective changes of the structure of capitalist production and reproduction process. They are equally importantly caused by the different forms in which the class struggle brings about layers of worker activists, leaders, intellectuals, etc, that are the basis for the formation of a proletarian vanguard, a revolutionary party leadership and Marxist science.

45. The economistic reduction of the working class to the productive industrial proletariat alongside the acceptance of the bourgeois ideology of 'the middle class as the majority of society' leads to an underestimation of the class contradiction which is rooted in the economy and the desperate search for 'new revolutionary subjects'. Equally, the denial that there is a material basis for the middle-class appearance (i.e. the actual creation of middle strata) and of this middle-strata's influence on the working class, leads to a systematic underestimation of the changes in the reality of class composition in the second half of this century. It is bound to lead to an underestimation of the task of completely reshaping the working class as a socially active subject and of the struggle which has to be waged against the different forms of appearance of the middle strata on the political, ideological and ultimately military front.

Endnote

1 The German term, 'Beamter' has no direct equivalent in English, it literally means someone 'appointed to office' and is often translated simply as 'official'. In English the latter is usually reserved for fairly senior cadres in the bureaucratic part of the state machine. Even to translate it as 'civil servant' can be misleading since a Beamter is appointed to posts in a wider range of occupations than the British 'civil servant' would be; e.g. teaching, the post office, the state railways etc. Such posts have up to now carried very high job security and traditionally a high social status.