

Looking Forward / looking back

Why not PD?

A recent meeting of the organisation decided that we we should wind up the organisation Peoples Democracy. At the time it appeared something of a formality to clear out of the way concerns about the need for us to meet immediate tasks of the class struggle and to move on quickly with the proposed programmatic discussion.

It is of course much more than that. It is a belated recognition of the failure of our organisation, our programme and our political understanding to date. The list is pretty long: The national question, the republicans, an accomodationism and lack of political clarity that time and again made our members ambassadors for campaigns within the party rather than ambassadors for the party within campaigns, a political economy that was wildly out of date, a failure to identify and get to grips with the problems of the working class movement. An internationalism that left us content on the margins of Europe. This sort of history means that we can not simply go forward in the old way looking for the lucky break that will change our fortunes.

Why a programme?

We have some basic questions to answer now. Have we sufficient unity and political agreement to justify the struggle to maintain a collective existence? If so what have we to offer working class militants? For an organisation our size that answer can only be a political programme - anything else can best be provided elsewhere. That's why every member of the collective needs to take part - even if the only result is the space and time to think through political problems rather than a finished document. People worry about isolation and an academic bent. In fact any serious campaign would finish us. Decades of refusing to follow through on political debates mean that we will have to bend the stick pretty far before we face any danger of academic abstraction.

Why not campaign?

If we write a programme there will be nothing timeless or academic about it. It will clearly relate to this place and this time. It will clearly contain elements of perspective and some view of where we go to build a revolutionary party. That means that we can say even now that there are a number of areas where we have interests and that we would want to

attend events and join in discussion. We have however no duty or responsibility at all to build the old "PD campaign" and to do so would in the present circumstances be irresponsible because we would be misinforming and miseducating militants about our strengths and abilities and even about the immediate tasks that marxists face.

What are these areas? Defence and repression is one. There are a large number of civil liberties and relatives groups - its true largely innocent of either an orientation to the Working class or mass action, however the issue will remain an explosive one for some time to come. Solidarity is another. Bosnia ia an example of an area where we would like to see both discussion and action that would help to build internationalism and clarify ideas about the processes at work and build resistance. Trade union 'social partnership' provides a platform for propaganda for workers democracy and education.

We should observe and participate in major events to ground our programme in present reality. We hope that reasonably soon we will have a programme to bring to these areas as aour major contribution to struggle and a basis for recruitment. We should not jump in to test the water or have one last splash.

The need for a project for workers power

One glaring perspective project does face us. What is the road now to workers power? We used to see it in the growth of republicanism, a shift to the left and fusion of at least some sectors with the left. Is it now in Social democracy? the defeat of social democracy? Some other method? We need to clarify this quickly. If we as a group don't know where we are going we can't expect others to follow us

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