

The Tasks of the Communist Sections Regarding Municipal Policy

Due to the great number of municipal elections taking place this year and also to the coming presidential election we are reprinting below the resolution on municipal policy adopted by the Enlarged Presidium of the E.C.C.I., February, 1930.—EDITORS.

1. Municipal work is a field in which the Communist Parties must strengthen their contacts with wide masses of workers. In view of the growing capitalist contradictions, the maturing general economic crisis, the enormous growth of unemployment, the rapid fascization of the bourgeois State apparatus, the capitalist offensive against wide sections of the working class and sections of the non-proletarian population in the field of municipal politics as well as in other fields, and the growing activity of the masses—a correct Communist municipal policy can and must be made to serve as a lever for the mobilization of the population from the influence of bourgeois parties, of fascism and social fascism.

While in all other fields of activity (especially in the trade union field) the Communist Sections have already begun to alter their tactics to correspond with the new stage in the class struggle, as far as municipal activity is concerned, however, *hardly any of the Sections of the C.I. have brought about the change, nor, in the majority of cases, have they even begun to introduce it. More than that, the municipal activity of the C.I. Sections bears the imprint of opportunism in practice such as voting for municipal and police budgets, blocs with bourgeois parties (Czecho-Slovakia, France, etc.), unprincipled subordination to bourgeois law and order, opportunist practice frequently degenerating into actual corruption (Gaebel—Degner case in Berlin), and in all Sections of the C.I. provides a refuge for opportunist elements. To bring about a decisive change in municipal activity is one of the most important general political tasks of the Sections of the C. I.*

2. This decisive change in municipal activity presupposes a *breach with social democratic traditions regarding the role of municipalities in the bourgeois State.*

“The task of the proletariat is to *break up* the State apparatus of the bourgeoisie, to destroy it, and with it also all parliamentary

institutions, whether republican or constitutional-monarchist.

The same applies to bourgeois municipal institutions, and it would be wrong theoretically to draw a distinction between them and other organs of the State. They are, in fact, part and parcel of the bourgeois State which must be destroyed by the revolutionary proletariat and replaced by local workers' councils." (Resolution of the Second Congress of the Communist International: *The Communist Parties and Parliamentarism.*"

Consequently, it is wrong to demand that the bourgeois State power should concede "*complete* administrative and financial autonomy to the municipalities." (France.) To demand the extension of the right of self-government in accordance with the interests of the workers and peasants, or "election of municipal officials" (Finland) can only foster the democratic illusions of the masses. Municipalities as such cannot serve as an "instrument of proletarian class struggle" (Denmark).

3. Communists repudiate the attempts of the opportunists to draw a distinction in principle between private and State capitalist enterprises and municipal enterprises. The same methods of capitalist exploitation are employed in municipal enterprises as are employed in private enterprises. With the fascization of the capitalist State and municipal apparatus, municipal enterprises more and more become strongholds of fascism and social-fascism. Communists cannot demand "workers' control over municipal enterprises"; they can neither advance nor support the slogan of "municipalization of public utilities" (which, however, does not preclude Communists from voting against the transferring of municipal enterprises to private capital, provided they make it clear that a genuine struggle against the monopolist aspirations of the bourgeoisie can be carried on only in the form of a revolutionary struggle).

4. The change of tactics in the municipal field calls for ruthless struggle against opportunism in municipal practice of the Parties, first and foremost, the complete cessation of all cooperation whatsoever with the Social Democratic Party. Communists must not enter into election alliances either with the social-democrats, or with other bourgeois parties. They must not vote for social-democratic mayors, town councillors, chairman of town councils, etc. Working class majorities in municipal councils can be said to exist only where Communists alone, or workers and peasants pledged to work on the Communist platform and under Communist leadership have a majority.

5. The general line of the Communist Party in municipal work is to mobilize the toilers, primarily the working men and women

employed in industry for a revolutionary struggle against the prevailing capitalist system.

“Where the Communists secure a majority in municipal councils, they must (a) form a revolutionary opposition to the bourgeois central authority; (b) do everything in their power to be of service to the poorest sections of the population (economic measures, organization or attempt at organization of an armed workers’ militia, etc.); (c) to take advantage of every opportunity to show how the bourgeois State authority puts obstacles in the way of every really important reform; (d) to utilize this for strenuous revolutionary propaganda, not shrinking from conflicts with the State authority; (e) under certain circumstances (in an acutely revolutionary situation) to replace the local self-government organs by local workers’ councils. Thus, the work of the Communists on municipal bodies must form part of their work for the disintegration of the capitalist State.” (Resolution of the Second Congress of the Communist International. *The Communist Parties and Parliamentarism*.)

The Communists must use the municipal, as they do the parliamentary bodies as a platform for mobilizing the masses for the revolutionary struggle.

The Presidium of the E. C. C. I. places on record that the Communist Parties have made very little use of the municipal platform for the organization of the mass struggle against the capitalist offensive and fascist reaction. In the overwhelming majority of cases, the Communist fractions on town councils have shown inadmissible passivity during the political campaigns of the Party and during mass movements in general.

In every campaign the Party carries on—against the war danger, against fascist and social-fascist terror, against mass dismissals, for carrying on economic or political strikes, etc., the municipal platform must be utilized for the purpose of explaining to the masses the Party slogans, to mobilize them for supporting the Party campaigns. Municipal councillors must at the same time be the principal Party agitators, the initiators in calling mass meetings, where they, as representatives of the workers, must show the connection between the class struggle in the country and the struggle around municipal questions in the given locality.

Especially in periods of illegality municipal posts must be used for continuing Party work.

In municipal election campaigns, Communists must put forward before the masses an extensive programme of partial demands, but they must not put forward such partial demands as are likely to foster democratic illusions among the masses.

Every Communist Party must draw up a programme of action

of its own around which it must mobilize the workers. In this municipal programme, attention must be drawn first of all to the following partial demands:

(a) To lead the struggle of the workers against fascism of all shades, to organize proletarian self-defense corps in opposition to the fascist and social-fascist shock troops, etc.

(b) Systematic campaign against imperialist war and all war measures against the U.S.S.R., against billeting (of soldiers) and against the municipalities rendering assistance in recruiting: to establish connections with working class and peasant soldiers and sailors outside as well as within the given municipal area (by the system of "patronage") and to support their struggles against the drill sergeant regime.

(c) To render assistance to the workers in their political and economic struggles by making grants to strike funds, giving financial support to strikers and locked out workers, organization of free meals for strikers and their families, playgrounds, kindergartens and creches for all workers' children, etc.

(d) Wide support for unemployed, by exempting them from payment for municipal services, special grants for their support, the money for this purpose to be raised by increasing the taxes of the bourgeoisie, exemption of unemployed from paying rent to big house owners; organization of public works for the purpose of providing employment such as hospitals, workmen's dwellings, etc., wages to be paid at not less than the customary rates in the given industry.

(e) It is particularly important to exert every effort on municipal councils to enforce the class principle in municipal taxation, *i.e.*, to raise the taxes of the propertied classes, especially of the wealthiest stratum, to reduce the share of taxes to be paid by the workers and other toilers, to completely exempt low paid workers and the disabled from taxation, etc. In this connection, revolutionary workers' representatives should not shrink from disregarding bourgeois laws and regulations.

(f) Introduction of the 7-hour day and one-month annual leave for all workers (manual and non-manual) employed in municipal enterprises, four months' leave in connection with pregnancy, payment of all social insurance contributions from municipal funds.

(g) Support for workers' mass organizations, cultural and educational organizations, sport leagues, freethinkers, etc.; support for

proletarian organizations like the I. R. A., and W. I. R., by the municipality affiliating to the organizations.

(h) In countries where there are national minorities, an energetic struggle must be carried on against any oppression of these national minorities, for the right of these national minorities to employ their own language in the conduct of the business of municipal institutions, for officially recognized schools where all subjects are taught in the language of the national minorities without control by priests and other reactionaries, and for the establishment of educational institutions capable of satisfying the political and cultural requirements of the national minorities.

(i) To fight for the provision of facilities and equipment to serve the cultural requirements of young men and women workers, to fight against all institutions which corrupt the minds of the working class youth.

(j) To establish fraternal relations with municipal councils in the Soviet Union; to send delegates to the Soviet Union to study the working of the Five Year Plan and Socialist construction; to expose the slanders spread about the Soviet Union by the bourgeoisie and the social-fascists.

(k) These general principles of Communist municipal policy must be supplemented by suitable demands for women workers, workingmen's wives, agricultural laborers and poor peasants (prohibition of distraint, free use of meadows and forests, remission of taxes for all persons in poor circumstances, poor lower middle class) etc. These demands must be adapted to the concrete conditions prevailing in the particular country and municipality.

6. The *municipal programme* of the Sections of the C. I. must be so constructed that, firstly, it will contain concrete immediate demands, which can be understood by the broad masses and will mobilize them for the struggle under the leadership of the Communist Party; secondly, that the programme should continue to be sharply directed against unprincipled adaptations to bourgeois legality, and thirdly, these partial demands must be linked up with those basic demands which the Communist Party, as the Party of the working class, will carry out after it has seized power. It must be systematically explained to the workers and other oppressed strata of the population that the achievement of one or two partial demands cannot greatly improve their position.

In the midst of the rapidly rising revolutionary tide, when growing masses of workers are realizing that there is no other way out of the threatening catastrophe than the proletarian revolution, one

of the most important tasks of the Communist Parties is to popularize the municipal policy of the U.S.S.R. and its results (expropriation of the landlords and capitalists), deprivation of the propertied class of the right to participate in municipal activity; transference of the houses of the bourgeoisie to the workers, the class principle in taxation policy, preference to working class districts in connection with all municipal improvements and works, extensive assistance for the unemployed, free education, utilization by the workers of cultural institutions, which were formerly the privilege of the bourgeoisie.

7. The activities of Communist municipal functionaries must conform to the above-mentioned tasks. Hitherto however, the keynote of their activity has been, as a rule, unprincipled subordination to bourgeois laws and regulations, and frequently, concern for the preservation of their, in most cases, well-paid posts.

In all municipal councils where the Communists have a majority, they must fight for the application of the Party's municipal programme, not hesitating to come into conflict with the government. Such conflicts, the inevitability of which must be clearly recognized by the Communist Parties, must be used by our Parties to expose before the masses the reactionary character of the capitalist government system, and for mobilizing the broad masses (demonstrations, protest strikes, etc.) in defense of the activity of Communist town councils.

8. One of the principal defects in the municipal work of the Communist Parties has been their inadequate connection with the current actions and slogans of the Party, their isolation from mass work, especially from work in the factories. Municipal demands are generally drawn up "from above" without discussion at workers' meetings. Communists must link up the proposals of their municipal fractions with their factory agitation, must bring them up for discussion at factory meetings, unemployed meetings, as well as at the meetings of the mass organizations. The municipal functionaries must report on their activity at similar meetings. Only such a radical change in our municipal work on these lines can bring Communists into close contact with the masses. The masses must undertake control over the activities of Communist municipal fractions and municipal representatives. For this purpose factory, trade union, and unemployed, etc., meetings must be organized before every important action that is to be taken up in the municipal councils. All the chief municipal demands must be included in the election platform of the trade union opposition. The factory newspapers must give systematic publicity to the activity of the Communist fractions in the town council and also its struggle with the

bourgeois—social-democratic bloc. Various Communist councillors must be attached to large factories, unemployed committees and mass organizations. On the other hand, the workers in large enterprises, unemployed committees and mass organizations must elect delegates and attach them as advisers to the municipal fractions. Mass work organized in this manner, continuous self-criticism, and a firm, systematic strengthening of contacts with the masses will create a firm base for the revolutionary activity of the Communist municipal workers.

9. No change can take place in the municipal activity of the Communist Parties unless a change is made in the composition of the fractions and in the methods of leadership of **municipal activity** by the Party.

In order to purge the Communist fractions from opportunist and petty-bourgeois elements, their mistakes must be openly pointed out, their opportunist conduct must be exposed to the workers. The backbone of the fractions must consist of factory workers, especially workers from large enterprises, and not of the so-called "municipal specialists" among whom there are to be found so many opportunist and directly hostile elements. When drawing up lists of candidates, only absolutely (politically) reliable and politically conscious men and women workers and young workers should be put up. Municipal election campaigns and the municipal activity as a whole must be utilized for the purpose of drawing broad masses of women into the revolutionary movement.

Courses of municipal politics should be held systematically for the education of municipal functionaries.

10. In most cases municipal fractions work without systematic control on the part of Party organs. Certain C. I. Sections have still failed to set up municipal departments at headquarters or district municipal departments to control the work of Party fractions on municipal councils. The fractions and municipal functionaries must be under the regular guidance of the Party organs. The establishment of authoritative municipal departments in central and district committees, the appointment of truly Bolshevik workers as functionaries of these departments and publicity in the Party press dealing with local affairs in order to support and control municipal activity are necessary prerequisites for a successful fight against opportunism in practice.

The attempts being made by the opportunists to unite Communist municipal functionaries separately (Leagues of Communist Municipal Representatives) for independent elaboration and carrying

through of the municipal policy without the guiding control of the Party must be energetically opposed.

11. The turn in municipal policy will encounter strong opposition from all opportunist elements in the Party; but the Communist Party must not only concede no ground in carrying out the new municipal tactics, but, on the contrary, it must use every act of sabotage and opposition by the opportunist elements to mobilize the Party and working masses against them, so that the Party must be able in case of necessity to remove such elements from its ranks without damage. The struggle against municipal legalism which is one of the most dangerous forms of opportunism, must be carried on absolutely relentlessly.

12. The turn towards a revolutionary municipal policy implies also energetic struggle against "left" deviations (boycott of municipal elections, boycott of municipal work, *refusal* to occupy municipal posts, etc., underestimation of municipal work for the mobilization of the masses, the *substitution* of the mobilization of the masses on a concrete programme by a partial programme of "left" phrases about the revolution in municipal affairs after the proletariat has seized power, etc.). Communists in all countries, "democratic," and fascist alike, must participate in municipal elections wherever there is an opportunity, in order to mobilize the masses and to enable the revolutionary masses to express their will in some form or other against the imperialist bourgeoisie and its agents in the working class—the social-democrats.

For a Bolshevik municipal policy. Under this slogan the Communist Parties must effect the turn towards and must mobilize the rank and file of the Party for the application of the new line. Municipal work must be the work of the whole Party. Like trade union work and work in the other mass organizations, municipal work is part of the general work of the Party to bring to the knowledge of the masses the principles and aims of the Communist Parties, and to mobilize them for the achievement of their principles and aims. A correctly applied revolutionary municipal policy will become a powerful lever for winning the masses for the proletarian revolution.