
The Workers Government

The entire logic of the slogans, the demands and the methods of struggle we advocate is to go beyond any stable form of capitalist rule, to disrupt and destructure the capitalist state. At the peak of working class mobilisation, the demands of an Action Programme can link and escalate in a chain reaction, building up to a direct revolutionary struggle in which the question of state power is objectively posed.

What form of government would correspond to such a situation of limbo in society, of dual power, of struggle to decide definitely who rules, proletariat or bourgeoisie? What slogan summarises, in relation to the government of society, these demands?

The International-Communist League fights for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Yes, but that is a formula that defines the political regime of the victorious proletariat in more or less secure possession of state power. Such a regime is virtually inconceivable, unless a revolutionary communist party already leads a majority of the working class — certainly inconceivable as a stable consolidated regime, rather than a Paris Commune type experience.

Such a party does not exist: it must be created. Yet deep social and political crises of the bourgeois order, and revolutionary working class mobilisations, can well erupt before there is a revolutionary party in a

position to lead the majority of the working class to the seizure of power.

In Britain, with its resilient and deep-rooted established labour movement, it is doubly probable that the working class will enter the struggle for power, not neatly united behind a Marxist party, but, on the contrary, dragging along with it all manner of reformist and bureaucratic elements.

Do we refrain from putting forward a government slogan until we can form the government? But the logic of the whole chain of demands leads inexorably to the question of the form of government that will tolerate, carry out or endorse the various demands. We need an 'algebraic' government formula

In the event of a deep crisis, shaking both the bourgeois state and the established labour movement, revolutionaries will not retreat into sectarian pedantry, advising workers to hold back until they recognise revolutionary leadership. Nor will they simply propose the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' — thus evading the problem of the immediate next steps in struggle.

Revolutionaries will fight for a **"Workers' Government"**.

The various slogans of the programme are either vapid propaganda or else tools in the hands of revolutionaries struggling for the leadership of

the working class. That is true whether the revolutionaries be a tiny minority or a **big** minority in the working class. The government formula corresponding to the **mobilising** transitional slogans of our programme is: "For a workers' government".

The Bolshevik Party in 1917 first used such a formula. To the parties that claimed to represent the workers and peasants — the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries — it said: Take the power. Act against the capitalists and landlords. We will support you against reaction, accept your legality, refrain from resorting to violence against you. We simply insist on, and will **defend** as necessary, our complete freedom of political propaganda and agitation.

In 1938 Trotsky summarised it thus:

"Of all the parties and organisations which base themselves on the workers and peasants and speak in their name we demand that they break politically from the bourgeoisie and enter upon the road of struggle for the workers' and farmers' government. On this road we promise them full support against capitalist reaction. At the same time, we indefatigably develop agitation around those transitional demands which should in our opinion form the programme of the 'workers' and farmers' government'."

All the battles for transitional demands are linked with a struggle for united action, including united action with reformist-led workers. While constantly warning the workers about the ties which bind the reformist leaders to the bourgeoisie, we cannot assert **a priori** that it will be at this or that particular stage of struggle that each section of the reformist leaders will come out in open opposition to the workers' struggle.

The workers' government is the keystone demand of the united front — the expression on a governmental level of the approach which proposes **unity in action** to less than revolutionary working class organisations, and imperiously demands of all organisations based on the working class — break with the bourgeoisie and **act** in the interests of the working class.

In Britain, a "workers' government" could have meaning as a government based on a congress of workers' councils — probably with a Labourist majority. Or with the

Labour Party or the TUC in a state of convulsion, having shed right-wing segments, revolutionaries might call on either of those organs of the labour movement to take power, act against the capitalist state, arm the workers, ensure workers' control in the factories, and take immediate economic measures in the workers' interest.

The call for a workers' government is a bold tactical compromise which revolutionaries may **use in struggle**. We do not write that compromise into our programme, as a necessary aim.

Already at the 4th Congress of the Communist International, Zinoviev warned: "Woe to us if we ever allow the suggestion to creep up in our propaganda that the workers' government is a necessary step, to be achieved peacefully as a period of semi-organic construction which may take the place of civil war etc. If such views exist among us, we must combat them resolutely".

A non-communist workers' government would be an unstable, temporary regime. Retaining complete political independence, communists would ruthlessly expose every faltering by the government in the struggle against reaction. They would fight to make sure that when the government fell — as surely it would within a short time — it was replaced by a revolutionary government, rather than by counter-revolution.

Since World War 2, especially, there has been a considerable experience of parties based on the working class forming stable, bourgeois governments. That experience makes it doubly necessary to underline the point: the call for a workers' government has meaning only as a weapon in the hands of a party equipped with a full transitional programme, and as a concrete step in that programme.

As an immediate **slogan** it can avoid lapsing into reformist meaning only when the bourgeois state has reached a high level of destabilisation, as a result of and accompanied by mass working class action. The slogan can serve the working class only if it is an element in an advanced stage of the struggle to build and gain hegemony within the labour movement for a revolutionary communist party. The use of the slogan is linked inseparably through the struggle to build the revolutionary party in the working class to a programme that sets its goal as the creation and consolidation of a working class, soviet state. To prop-

ose such a 'transitional' workers' government as a **substitute** for a communist workers' government, or for the dictatorship of the proletariat, is merely giving comfort to reformism.

Those who use the "workers' government" as a substitute for the fight for independent revolutionary working class mobilisation "take their place beside the Social Democrats as a new type of trickster" (Radek). Such are the Lambert sect in France, who speak of a CP-SP government in France, or a 'pure' social democratic government in Germany, as a workers' government — irrespective of its relation to the bourgeois state, and ignoring entirely the question of programme, even as an abstract blueprint, let alone as a weapon of working class mobilisation.

And in Britain today? We have a Labour government that is a **capitalist** government, and an effective **capitalist** government because it is based on and has a lot of confidence from the labour movement. Most of the demands we make on it say implicitly: break with the bourgeoisie!

We say it explicitly: break with the bourgeoisie, carry out actions in the interests of the working class.

We ourselves agitate to mobilise workers to fight to **impose** pro-working class actions on the government or to force concessions. In the course of that fight we build our own party. To the degree that we mobilise, the bourgeois state can be shaken up and destabilised, and the labour move-

ment too is shaken, transformed, regenerated, the balance of political forces within it is changed.

For the International-Communist League, the call for a workers' government is the culmination of the various demands we direct at the established labour movement, fighting for a break with the bourgeoisie. Its appropriateness or otherwise as an **immediate demand**, in its **summary** form, depends on working class mobilisation, stability or otherwise of the state, political condition of the labour movement etc.

To call on the Labour Government now to declare itself a "Workers' Government", as opposed to making concrete demands on it (including 'break with the bourgeoisie on this or that concrete question') would be pernicious. It would be abstract, propagandist, apt to sow illusions rather than dispel them in action for concrete demands which are a logical next step in struggle.

The call for a workers' government is a weapon for revolutionary mobilisation — but only where there is already a tremendous degree of mobilisation demanding an immediate political focus. It is the final part of the 'Action Programme' section of our Manifesto because the Action Programme must cover the whole range of important possibilities and contingencies that will face our class over the period between now and the proletarian revolution.