

# being a party member

**CPGB-ML MEMBER KIT #1**



# #1

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Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist)  
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# Introduction

## **Welcome to the CPGB-ML!**

The Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist) is a *revolutionary* party, which has set itself the goal of building an organisation capable of leading the masses in overthrowing imperialism and building socialism in Britain. It's a party with a big job to do, but we're not daunted by the task that's in front of us. Instead, we're serious about setting to work on it.

Our branches and local organisations are at different stages of development and maturity. That means there is no easy solution to how we set about building our forces and conducting our political work. But while each situation is unique, there

are lessons that we can learn collectively that will help us grow as quickly and effectively as possible.

The aim of these booklets is to provide a basic understanding of communist organisational principles. We hope that they will help every party member, including those who are at present relatively isolated, to set to work on building or expanding a local party group.

If we want to succeed as a party and play an effective role in building a revolutionary movement, each CPGB-ML and Red Youth member must grow into a focused and dedicated party cadre. We need to be ready to leave behind old, unhelpful habits, and we need to train ourselves instead to think and work like communists.

As Comrade Stalin told the All-Union Congress of Soviets following the death of the great Lenin:

Comrades, we communists are people of a special mould. We are made of a special stuff. We are those who form the army of the great proletarian strategist, the army of Comrade Lenin. There is nothing higher than the honour of belonging to this army. There is nothing higher than the title of member of the party whose founder and leader was Comrade Lenin.

It is not given to everyone to be a member of such a party. It is not given to everyone to withstand the stresses and storms that accompany membership in such a party. It is the sons of the working class, the sons of want and struggle, the sons of incredible privation and heroic effort who before all should be members of such a party. That is why the party of the Leninists, the party of the communists, is also called the party of the working class.\*

Of course, it's a lot easier if you are based in a city where we have a good presence already, but all these larger groups had to start somewhere. They have grown and strengthened themselves from small beginnings over the last few years. Some began with only one member not so long ago – proving that consistent, patient and well-organised activity, combined with a clear Marxist analysis, breeds success.

Our task is big, but we are not the first communists to have faced it. Whenever we feel overwhelmed by what needs to be done, we can take strength from these words of Chairman Mao, who was speaking

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\* 'On the death of Lenin', speech delivered by JV Stalin to the Second All-Union Congress of Soviets, 26 January 1924.

about the challenges that faced China's communists back in 1945:

There is an ancient Chinese fable called The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains. It tells of an old man who lived in northern China long, long ago and was known as the Foolish Old Man of North Mountain. His house faced south and beyond his doorway stood the two great peaks, Taihang and Wangwu, obstructing the way. He called his sons, and hoe in hand they began to dig up these mountains with great determination.

Another greybeard, known as the Wise Old Man, saw them and said derisively, 'How silly of you to do this! It is quite impossible for you few to dig up those two huge mountains.' The Foolish Old Man replied, 'When I die, my sons will carry on; when they die, there will be my grandsons, and then their sons and grandsons, and so on to infinity. High as they are, the mountains cannot grow any higher and with every bit we dig, they will be that much lower. Why can't we clear them away?'

Having refuted the Wise Old Man's wrong view, he went on digging every day, unshaken in his conviction. God was moved by this, and he sent down two angels, who carried the mountains away on their

backs.

Today, two big mountains lie like a dead weight on the Chinese people. One is imperialism, the other is feudalism. The Chinese communist party has long made up its mind to dig them up. We must persevere and work unceasingly, and we, too, will touch God's heart. Our God is none other than the masses of the Chinese people. If they stand up and dig together with us, why can't these two mountains be cleared away?\*

Just like the communists in China, Russia and elsewhere, the CPGB-ML has made up its mind to dig up and uproot capitalist imperialism and its servant in the British working-class movement, social democracy, which together are strangling our garden like a weed. If we do our work well, we too can inspire the masses to join us in demolishing this outdated and barbaric system.

In its place the British people will be free to cultivate a society free from exploitation and inequality. Technologically and morally advanced, we'll play our part in freeing the world from the poverty,

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\* From Concluding speech at the Seventh National Congress of the Communist Party of China by Mao Zedong, 11 June 1945.

ignorance, disease, war, racism, sexism and colonial subjugation that have for so long been imposed on the oppressed by the parasitic and bloodthirsty capitalist ruling class.

Our party's central committee established a Cadre Development Committee (CDC) in 2010. The CDC's job is to help to develop our members into active cadres so we can become the type of revolutionary party that Britain so badly needs. We have been given the task of helping members to get active, of encouraging the formation and growth of branches, and of ensuring that political training takes place.

These pamphlets are a part of our efforts to fulfill that role and we hope that you will find them both useful and inspiring. Please do read them regularly – alone and collectively – and use each one as a practical guide to action.

## CDC

May 2014



### **EDUCATE** yourself and others

*Each one teach one*



### **AGITATE** among the workers

*Raise the understanding of the people*



### **ORGANISE** the party and the class

*Harness the power of the masses*



### **OVERTHROW** the capitalist system

*Break our chains and build socialism*



### **FIGHT** for communism

*The future that works*

*“Man’s dearest possession is life, and since it is given to him to live but once, he must so live as to feel no torturing regrets for years without purpose; so live as not to be seared with the shame of a cowardly and trivial past; so live, that dying he can say: ‘All my life and all my strength were given to the finest cause in all the world – the liberation of mankind.’”\**

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\* Nikolai Ostrovsky, *How the Steel Was Tempered*, 1936

## Being a party member

All those who apply to join the CPGB-ML start out as candidate members. This period of candidacy lasts for *at least* six months, and it is not unusual for it to take two years or slightly more. There’s a good reason for candidate membership. We don’t want to build, and the British working class certainly doesn’t need, yet another party of *armchair* revolutionaries, keyboard warriors, lecturers and loafers.

Candidate membership is there to ensure that we build a party of *active* members – people who are willing to work hard in building the party, fighting for the working class and opposing imperialism.

Candidate membership is your chance to work within the party organisation and learn about how

we do things. It's your chance to find out if communist party membership is for you. It's also a chance for the party to assist you in your political work, to provide you with the help and support you need to conduct *practical work*, and, crucially, to guide your *political education* as you study the teachings of Marxism Leninism and come to grips with scientific socialism.

## Leninist organisation: democratic centralism

Our party is organised on the model of democratic centralism. Properly applied this means that everybody should be an active member, an active participant in both the work and the decision-making of the party.

In order for the collective to be able to act in unison, each of us needs to cultivate *personal discipline*. We need to listen to and understand the views of others and to respect our comrades, even where debate is passionate. And we need to keep in mind that the majority views of an *informed* collective will usually have a sounder basis than the opinions of any single individual.

Through practising this form of democracy, we're challenging all the basics which we've been taught by bourgeois culture. We're challenging the sanctity of the individualist approach to life – the selfish, narrow-minded and opinionated culture prevalent in society. We're learning how to work, live and act as a unit – arm-in-arm, shoulder-to-shoulder, as equal comrades in the struggle against capitalism and imperialism.

### ORGANISATIONAL TIPS

- Democratic centralism allows us to make the maximum use of our organisation. Learn to make your voice heard and be sure to listen to others when we have *free and open discussion* between party members to decide on a policy or action, and remember that *unity in action* is vital if we are to *implement* the policy once a decision has been made.
- Train yourself to operate as part of a working-class army and to carry out party decisions in a disciplined way. The communist party's struc-

ture of lower bodies and higher ones is key to *welding a mass of people into a single body*; an arrowhead that can be directed precisely and effectively, turning the party into a powerful force that is far greater than the sum of its parts.

- Do not follow orders mindlessly, but instead carry out decisions consciously and collectively, making sure that you understand why the decision was taken and bearing in mind that only unity in action can ultimately prove whether a policy is the right or wrong one. The more unified we are in carrying out the party's programme, the more quickly we will be able to spot any mistakes and work out how to correct them, based on evidence and experience.
- Between meetings and between congresses, you will often have to rely on leaders to make quick decisions when there is no time to initiate a party-wide debate or to consult a committee. It is important that you elect leaders who you trust to carry out this work.
- Remember to keep thinking for yourself and independently verifying the job your leaders are

doing. Discuss the party's performance with your comrades and compare your thoughts on its progress and performance. All officials should expect to have their work scrutinised and to be corrected by their comrades when they make mistakes.

- There is no complete safeguard against making mistakes; indeed, we have to assume that sometimes we will get things wrong. No organisation is perfect. Collective decision-making is our best weapon against making *lots* of mistakes. Disciplined unity of action is our best weapon against *persisting* with wrong policies.
- Do your part in making this process work by constantly raising your own level of understanding – don't rely on others to do all the thinking!

### **Inner-party debate**

- Always try to keep an open mind in discussion and debate. New information may come that proves you wrong or requires you to reassess your ideas in any field of knowledge – put the truth before your ego!

- Don't take political disagreements personally – this is not about you, but about the search for knowledge and the need to serve the working class.
- When a debate becomes circular or repetitive, this is usually a sign that all the arguments have been heard. This is when the time for debate ends and the time for decision-making has arrived.
- Study is vitally important if you want to be able to contribute usefully to debates. Do not expect comrades to value your ideas if you haven't really thought about or studied the issue in any depth. The level of debate – and the strength of our party's decision-making – will only be as high or as strong as the knowledge of the participants!
- Liberal-lefty 'ultra'-democratic tendencies tell us that 'all opinions are equally valid' and should be given equal weight. But, while you should be prepared to listen carefully to what everyone has to say during a discussion, you also need to bear in mind that the party's goal is to arrive

at the right conclusions based on the collective knowledge of our members and the objective interests of our class. This means you must learn to differentiate between those arguments that are scientific and reasoned and those that are based on hunches or prejudice, so that together we can steer a true course.

### **Being in a minority**

- Learn how to carry out decisions you may not agree with, and to restrain yourself from telling non-party members about your disagreements.
- If you find it hard to promote the party's policy with enthusiasm, simply stick to stating what the policy is and why the party has made its decision. Learn to do this without showing your dissatisfaction or feeling the need to distance yourself from the party's standpoint. Remind yourself that the revolution is more important than your own ego!
- If you are right, practice will prove you right and another opportunity will come for you to debate the issue and persuade your comrades to

change the party's policy. Try to keep your mind open to argument so that if you are wrong you can realise it and correct your position.

- If your minority position turns out to be right, and the party later corrects itself, take part in the process of evaluation so that your comrades are able to see where and how they went wrong in reaching their previous decision. The reasons for any change in policy should be well communicated, both to members and to the working class. This process is all a part of raising our collective understanding and helping us avoid making similar mistakes in the future.

### **Collective working**

- It's important to know when is the right time to question and when you should simply get on with the task in hand. Each of us, as communists, must be capable of being a good foot soldier, as well as striving to become an outstanding general. Only in this way can we earn the respect of our class and have something useful to offer them.

- Being a party member in no way precludes having a meaningful social, work or family life – quite the reverse. But if we are to have any chance of success in our political work, each of us must take our responsibility towards our class, our comrades and the party seriously. We must learn to fulfill our commitments; to aim high and hit the target! It will be self evident that, in our struggle to build a new society, the highest levels of cooperation and self-discipline are required. Many hands make light work – together we can achieve great feats!
- We are still a very small party. Part of your development as a cadre will involve learning how to direct yourself and work alone when necessary, as well as how to be part of a team when possible. Look for ways to motivate yourself, even when no-one is around to work with you, taking strength from the collective resources and knowledge you are able to draw on via party leaflets, papers and educational materials.
- Our party has excellent literature, and political material, reflecting its coherent, materialist un-

derstanding of our country and the world. Each member must learn to master this knowledge and be confident and proud to bring that liberating class-consciousness to the British working class. Read the party's blogs, papers and leaflets, and watch its videos, so that you thoroughly understand our position on important questions. Discuss these materials with your comrades so that you are able to represent the party's position in public and explain it to workers.

- Read the party bulletin so that you are aware of what your comrades are doing around the country. Try to use any good ideas you read about there and feed back your experiences of doing so in order that others may learn from you.
- Share your experiences with comrades whenever possible and exchange ideas both locally and with the centre. If you find something that works, make sure everyone else knows about it. Try to contribute regular reports and articles to the party's paper, websites or bulletin. This is the best way to ensure that the party becomes really efficient and effective.

- At the same time as mastering the intricacies of Marxist economics, the prevailing international political situation and championing the interest of the working class, we need to pay attention to the small details of practical work – setting up stalls, selling papers, leafleting, recruiting, building positive personal relationships with other comrades, and building the prestige and influence of the party among the working masses.
- Do all jobs, no matter how menial or lowly, with dedication and pride and to the very best of your ability. Never consider yourself either too important or too lowly for any task: making the tea and cleaning the floor are as much a part of building the revolution as giving speeches and directing armies. Learn from the self-sacrificing spirit of revolutionaries who have been on the front line of the struggle, and whose motto is: 'Our comrades should be the last to eat and the first to die.'
- Consider yourself a host at every party event or function you attend. Make sure non-party members are being looked after. Don't rely on others

to do everything, but look yourself for ways to make sure the event is as successful and effective as possible.

- Use of drugs and alcohol are endemic in our crisis-ridden capitalist society. We do not take a moralising attitude towards their use by workers, ground down by competition and forced labour for capital, and anaesthetised by false consciousness and an escapist culture. But we recognise that there is nothing revolutionary in the use of these substances; that they can numb the mind and dull the senses, particularly when used in excess; and that little useful study or practical activity can be achieved while intoxicated. Moreover, bringing illegal substances to party activities and onto party premises provides the state with an easy avenue for criminalising workers, members and the party. Comrades struggling with addiction deserve our support, as far as we are able to give it, but those with active substance misuse cannot be members of the party – no excuses for regularly or persistently disrupting the important work of building the party will be accepted.

### CPGB-ML MEMBER KIT

- Pay attention to small details. Always look for ways to improve whatever you are doing. Share your insights with others so that they can improve too. Make 'professionalism in all things' your mantra!
- Learn how to accept criticism gracefully and to give it kindly. Remember that we are all comrades together, working towards the same goal. Your aim should be constantly to improve your own and the party's performance so that we are doing the best job possible.

Wear your party badge with pride. Remember that you have chosen to dedicate your life to the finest cause in all the world – the liberation of humanity!

## Get connected

### Red Youth and CPGB-ML on the web

[redyouth.org](http://redyouth.org)

[cpgb-ml.org](http://cpgb-ml.org)

[twitter.com/cpgbml](https://twitter.com/cpgbml)

[youtube.com/ProletarianCPGBML](https://youtube.com/ProletarianCPGBML)

Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist) [public] and Cadre Dev [private] groups and Red Youth News Service on Facebook

### Get in touch

[info@redyouth.org](mailto:info@redyouth.org)

[info@cpgb-ml.org](mailto:info@cpgb-ml.org)

### Useful contacts

For newspapers, leaflets, party pamphlets and educational materials contact [sales@cpgb-ml.org](mailto:sales@cpgb-ml.org).

To contact the Cadre Development Committee (CDC) write to [paul@cpgb-ml.org](mailto:paul@cpgb-ml.org) or send letters, payments and donations to our Birmingham office:

CPGB-ML or CDC  
274 Moseley Rd  
Birmingham  
B12 9BL

### Editors

To contact *Proletarian* email [editors@cpgb-ml.org](mailto:editors@cpgb-ml.org)

### Central Committee

Contact the General Secretary (Zane):  
[info@cpgb-ml.org](mailto:info@cpgb-ml.org)  
01924 218737

### Membership subs and donations

An essential criterion for membership of the communist party is that members should support the party financially.

Minimum subs for our party are 25p per week for the unwaged and £1 per week for those with jobs. This minimum is kept very low in order to make sure that subs are not a bar to membership for anyone.

However, the party needs money in order to do its work and produce its literature, so we do ask all our members to consider making regular or occasional donations *above* the minimum level, according to what they can afford.

Donations and subs should be paid to:

CPGB-ML  
HSBC Bank, Ealing Broadway Branch  
44 The Broadway  
London W5 5JR

Sort Code: 40-02-26  
Account Number: 01855352

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