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# Club Educational Study Guide: Reflections on Socialism

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## Importance of Subject

Comrade Sam Webb has written a discussion paper, . It deals with the key considerations in going from where we are to winning socialism and the key questions of the early period of its construction in the U.S. This paper opens a major discussion throughout the Party and with our friends. It is important to update our thinking on this subject both in terms of substance and methodology as they apply to our country. Doing so will help us become much more effective in building the Party and attracting people to socialism. It will also link our daily activity in the struggle for the needs of our class and people to defeat the ultra-right Bush Administration and their cohorts, with the road ahead to socialism. It is, therefore, most important for our entire membership and all our clubs to participate in the discussion.

## Method of Conducting Club Educationals

We, therefore, urge every club to have at least two major club discussions on the paper. This guide is aimed at helping you accomplish that in the most productive way. It is most important that everyone receive Comrade Webb's paper and, if at all possible, read it completely through before the first of the two proposed club discussions. Each discussion should be planned for approximately an hour. Someone should be assigned to lead each discussion, and someone else to take notes. A copy of the notes should be sent in to the National Education Commission c/o the National Office ([cpusa@cpusa.org \(mailto:cpusa@cpusa.org\)](mailto:cpusa@cpusa.org) or 235 West 23rd Street, New York, NY 10011).

There are seven discussion questions below: 4 for the first session and 3 for the second. Approximately 15 minutes should be allotted for each of the 4 questions in the first discussion and 20 minutes for each of the three questions in the second discussion.

There are several methods that could be used to conduct the educationals. Pick that which suits your club circumstances best.

Method 1. Each discussion question (or a substitute you devise) is assigned to a different person to open up for 5-7 minutes and then the discussion leader chairs additional comments from the club. Then the discussion leader sums up where there is agreement, disagreement, and where there is the desire to have further discussion at some future time. The same process is repeated with each discussion question.

Method 2. The discussion leader opens up on each question for 5 minutes and then the same process is followed as in Method 1.

Method 3. No one is asked to prepare an opening on any given discussion question. Rather the discussion leader poses the question to the club members and chairs and guides the discussion on each successive question, etc. Of course, it is likely the discussion will be richer if the discussion leader or participants are asked to help by preparing a little opening on each question.

### Discussion Questions

Session 1:1. We fight for the daily needs of working people both as a matter of social justice and as necessary to be able to advance the struggle for socialism. We also believe it is possible to win some victories in these struggles. Comrade Webb gives reasons for the necessity of socialism in addition to those we have traditionally used. Why is socialism indispensable and necessary?

2. Comrade Webb lists important values that need to guide our struggles for progress and socialism. Why do we need values in the struggle? And where do the values of the Communist Party come from? Why does he list democracy as one of our most important values?

3. Comrade Webb argues that the working class must and will lead the struggle for major social progress and socialism. But he also argues this must be done in close alliance with other core social forces namely the racially and nationally oppressed, women and youth. Then he argues the alliance that can and needs to be built to win socialism will be the broadest of all and can embrace all working people. Why can't some other class or social force or combination of them play the leading role for major social progress and socialism? Considering that each stage of the struggle takes on more advanced demands, why does Comrade Webb say the progressive front of struggle for socialism will be the broadest?

4. Comrade Webb argues the advance from where we are to socialism requires going from one strategic stage of struggle to another. In the present stage we seek to defeat the ultra-right, most reactionary sector of the transnationals. Progress in this stage of struggle will open the next stage of struggle where our main aim will be to radically curb the power of the transnational monopolies as a whole. Progress in this stage of struggle will open the door to the stage of struggle where our aim will be to achieve working people's power headed by the working class to construct socialism. What is the significance of our understanding of these different phases or stages of struggle? Why should we not just skip the intermediary phases and fight for a change in class power and the construction of socialism?

Session 2:5. Marxism has always pointed to the necessity to win a qualitative change in class power from that of big capital to that of the working class in alliance with its allies in order to be able to build a socialist society. Comrade Webb suggests that change in power will likely be more than a single event at a single moment. Rather it is likely to be more complex and could be extended in time. Marx, Engels, and Lenin all preferred such a transition be achieved without civil war or significant violence a peaceful transition. However, they considered the conditions for it could only be achieved rarely. Comrade Webb agrees that if it were only up to big capital such a peaceful transition would be highly unlikely. Under what conditions does Comrade Webb consider avoidance of violence a real possibility?

6. For many years Marxist textbooks defined socialism as 'working class power, social ownership of the means of production, and planned economy.' Why does Comrade Webb favor qualification of such a definition? The record of the socialist countries with respect to democracy is mixed. There are good experiences of going beyond the limits of what was won under bourgeois democracy, and there are experiences that deviated from the struggle to build truly democratic societies and hence are incompatible with socialist values. What approaches to the political structure and functioning of our country, including the role of the Communist Party, does Comrade Webb suggest so that there will be a flowering of democracy for working people and a full implementation of equality for the racially and nationally oppressed and women.

7. One of the conditions for socialist society to fulfill its high values is the rapid progress of its economy. The model of the socialist economy 20 years ago began suffering from a number of problems in comparison with the developed capitalist countries it had been overtaking. These included: an inability to introduce the results of science, research and development rapidly into production; wastage of input factors; production of consumer goods no one would buy; falling behind most advanced capitalist countries in productivity and technology. Among the approaches Comrade Webb suggests to overcome or prevent such problems are: combining the use of market mechanisms with central planning and regulation: using a variety of forms of social ownership of production and distribution, not only nationalization; ending all forms of unearned income, while paying for work performed according to its quantity and quality, until the communist stage is reached. Will these suggestions help avoid such problems? What else should be considered?

Don't forget to send in notes of your club's discussion and opinions to the National Education Commission: ([cpusa@cpusa.org](mailto:cpusa@cpusa.org) (<mailto:cpusa@cpusa.org>) or 235 West 23rd Street, New York, NY 10011).

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