

Making Decisions

By Janet Jagan

One of the most fundamental aspects of any political party, and more particularly a Marxist-Leninist Party, is that of making decisions. How are decisions made in the People's Progressive Party? How far are the rank and file members involved in the decision making? Are the Party bodies all involved in this process? Are the principles of democratic centralism applied?

Congress, our Party Constitution sets out, is the supreme authority of the Party. The Party Group is the basic unit of the Party. The Party Group sends delegates to the Triennial Congress on the basis of the number of members. Congress sets out the policies of the Party to be embodied in between Congress meetings. This is enunciated in the Report of the Central Committee to Congress, in resolutions of Congress and in any other documents. For example, the Party's 20th Congress adopted the Political Programme of the Party entitled "For Socialism in Guyana". The 20th Congress also introduced the new Party Constitution, which was amended slightly at the 21st Congress. Thus, these documents all guide the Party in decision making during the three years in between Congresses.

The Central Committee has the ultimate responsibility of decision making and seeing that the intentions of Congress are fulfilled. In our Party, there are periodic reviews of the decisions of the last Congress, to see that the Party is being guided by the directions of Congress and that decisions are being fulfilled. For example, at the June meeting of the Central Committee, a paper dealing with dozens of Congress decisions was examined to see if the Party was on course. That paper was first presented to the Secretariat; from there it went to the Executive Committee and from there to the Central Committee.

Some matters are raised by groups and go to the District and Regional Committees before being sent to Party Headquarters, where they frequently go either to a Party Committee (Education, Finance, Organisation, International, etc) or to the Secretariat. The Secretariat acts as a filter for matters moving upwards to the Executive Committee or Central Committee.

Let us trace some questions that have faced the Party. At the grass root level, Party Groups have been faced with the rising problem of crime. People are attacked in their homes by criminals; working people lose their small savings and household goods; they are in terror. The groups raise these matters at the District and Regional Committee levels. The Region communicates with the Party, some times direct in writing, or through a Party Organiser or Supervisor of a county or a member of the Central Committee. The matter goes to the General Secretary who brings up the matter at the Secretariat meeting, composed of all Party Secretaries.

The Secretariat examines all possible ways of dealing with the problem. Should we encourage groups to get their respective communities to have Vigilante Groups to patrol the villages at night to protect the people? Should the Party speak to the Commissioner of Police about improving Police patrols in the areas? Should the matter be raised by the PPP Parliamentary Group in the National Assembly and also by the PPP Regional Democratic Councillors? Should publicity be given to the rising crime and studies made as to the reasons, in *Mirror* newspaper? These are some of the questions to be examined. They are examined in consultation with Party Organisers and back to the Regional leaders to see if the Vigilante Groups could be effective, if people would join them and participate. Eventually, the Party, after careful examination, agreed to support the establishment of Vigilante groups, and also to raise the matter with the Commissioner of Police; further to give full publicity to these matters.

This decision was made at Secretariat level, because it was not considered necessary to consult higher bodies on this particular issue. The Secretariat dealt mainly with lower Party bodies on this matter. Later, other matters in relation to the same issue came up: Vigilante Groups should be armed. Experience showed that they could not handle armed criminals with sticks. This has meant further pressure on the Police Department to issue weapons to Vigilante Groups. It has also meant further consultation with the Police Department to have liason with the Vigilante Groups. The latter has been worked out in practice. The question of arming Vigilante groups is a matter not yet resolved, but one which the Party continues to pursue.

Let us examine another issue, one the Party experi-

enced in 1980 when faced with the announcement of General Elections. The elections of 1968 and 1973 were blatantly rigged. So was the Referendum of 1978. Should the Party contest elections? That became a big issue, especially with pressure from other opposition groups to boycott the elections, as was done for the Referendum. This matter was discussed at length at the Executive Committee and the Central Committee. Finally a decision was arrived at that there should be thorough consultation with the membership of the Party through Regional Members' meetings. The Party has demarcated the country into 9 divisions that are called regions, with districts within the regions, according to geography. Thus, the Central Committee asked all nine regions to hold meetings to which all financial members of the Party were invited. The Central Committee prepared a document dealing with the elections, showing the advantages and disadvantages of contesting. Leading members of the Central Committee were given assignments to regions and the nine meetings were held, with full consultation of the memberships. Reports on these meetings were given to the Central Committee and on the basis of this consultation and the final decision of each Regional meeting, the decision was made to contest the 1980 elections.

By and large, the Party tries to develop the responsibility of the District and Regional bodies so that they can arrive at decisions within their competence and to creatively implement the decisions of higher bodies of the Party.

In all of these matters the Group remains the vital and basic unit of the Party, for the Group sends delegates to Congress, which determines Party policy and democratically elects the members of the Central Committee, whose responsibility is to implement these decisions.