

FUNCTIONING OF THE STATE AND LOWER LEVEL PARTY BODIES

FUNCTIONING OF THE party bodies at state level is better though it also suffers from many shortcomings. In many states there are three bodies, the state councils, the state executive and the secretariat. The state councils generally meet once in three to four months, and in some bad cases once in six months. The executives meet 6 to 10 or even 12 times a year in the case of major states. In some states the secretariat functions more than the executive and meets more often and regularly.

The state organisations discuss state political issues, mass problems and campaigns and only once in a while party organisation. National politics are discussed very seldom though reporting on National Council and CEC meetings is regularly done, at least in the case of major states. Orga-

nisation is discussed only once a while when some organisational campaigns are to be launched e.g. enrolling subscribers for journals, fund collection, etc., or there is some serious organisational problem.

In many states a leadership at state level has developed, capable of tackling political and organisational problems, giving leadership to the mass movement with initiative and drive and also organising many-sided activities. That is one big gain of the last few years.

But the position is not even, conditions vary greatly from state to state and every state has its own specific features. While leading personnel are there in many states, there is lack of proper team work and check-up in most cases; tendencies of individual functioning, frontism and localism are very strong; liberalism in the matter of discipline and check-up has grown. Where the party is weak, the state centre is only a nominal centre with hardly any effective cadres, barring the secretary who has also to be on the move. In the worst cases there is no office secretary even and the office resides in the secretary's portfolio.

Of the three tiers in most cases only two function. In some cases where the three tiers are functioning, it is felt that one is redundant and involves considerable waste of time and duplication. The state council has played a positive role in different ways and must be continued. Provision for candidate members, which should not exceed ten per cent of the number of full members, should also be made in order to help promotion of younger comrades. The second necessary body is the executive. The executive generally consists of some comrades working at the state centre, some mass-front leaders and a number of DC secretaries. In most cases, the executive consists of 25 members. The smaller states have only secretariats.

It was said in the Organisational Report of the Bombay Congress that in the states where the party is strong, the three-tier system and in the states where it is weak, the two-tier system should be followed at the state level.

With regard to states where the party is weak, the two-tier system (councils and secretariats) should be continued.

But experience of the three-tier functioning is not the same in all the states where the party is strong. Some leading comrades feel that the secretariats are unnecessary and some other comrades feel exactly the opposite way. Whether the three-tier system is needed at the state level where the party is strong, depends upon several factors like extent of party influence, general political situation, the size, etc. Hence no hard and fast rule can be laid down regarding this matter. The different state councils should take all aspects into consideration in deciding on a three-tier or a two-tier system.

In the recent period, with the increasing political role and responsibilities of the party, while political activities and mass work have been developed, the party organisation has suffered except in very rare cases as, for example, Kerala, where a strong organisational department was set up with special cadres allotted for organisational work. No arrangements for relieving the secretary of routine work are there. In some cases, there is lack of proper differentiation of functions between state leaders and in most cases, too many jobs thrust on the same functionary. This aggravates individual functioning and hampers giving proper leadership to various fields of activity.

The departments at state level have functioned very unevenly. Generally two or three departments have functioned well, while most of the departments have not functioned. Besides the dearth of suitable cadres to man these, one important reason for the failure of the departments is the way they have generally been constituted with many of their members working in the districts and not at the state centre.

To remedy this situation, some organisational measures are urgently needed. For party organisation, there should be a strong organisational department with leading cadres allotted for this special work. Regarding other departments also, they should generally be composed of cadres working

at the state centre and be able to function in such departments.

In smaller states which are not yet able to organise departments suitable leading comrades should be allotted for these jobs.

The secretaries of all state councils should be relieved of all routine functions of the state centres if they have to fulfil their more important duties effectively. Assistant secretaries or office-in-charges can be appointed to relieve them of this routine work and assist them.

In most states, the women's front and student front are neglected to such an extent that there is not even a single wholtime functioning on these fronts. This also should be remedied.

A strict differentiation of functions and division of work with regular check-up is necessary within the state executive. Suitable cadres, besides members of the executive, should be made available for the work of the departments by following a bold policy of promotion and check-up and training.

AT DISTRICT LEVELS

THE POSITION IS VERY uneven when we come to the districts. The strength varies from a couple of hundred PMs to three or four thousand. Even in states such as Andhra, Bihar, West Bengal, Kerala, Punjab, Tamilnad and Maharashtra, where all the administrative districts are covered by DCs, the main party strength is concentrated in a few districts, while in others the position is very weak. In some DCs strong, experienced leading teams have developed and they function well. The district bodies mostly discuss practical activities or campaigns when they meet and the members are mostly attached to localities or mass fronts. Due to lack of training and promotion of younger cadres, the leading bodies at this level are generally faced with serious dearth of cadres. With a small number of functionaries active on district level generally a proper division of work

and allocation of jobs are lacking. Too many jobs get concentrated on one or two individuals. Localism is rampant. The development of an effective political-practical leadership at district level is greatly hampered.

The utility of district councils has been proved but these councils should not be too unwieldy and the level of members too uneven. The number of members should generally not exceed 51. The experience of bigger district councils has been that the proportion of absentees is higher. The district executive should consist of not more than one-fourth of the number of district council members. The secretary should have an assistant secretary to carry out the current work properly. Offices must be functioned regularly. In many cases, they hardly exist even in name. Training of effective district leading teams is most urgent task before the party.

INTERMEDIATE COMMITTEES

GENERALLY THE TOWN COMMITTEES function better than the rural area committees whether they are taluq committees or block committees. Though committees at this level are mostly jobdoers, some town committees react more politically and meet more regularly. This can also be said of some of the taluq committees with big membership. In very weak areas, the DCs deal directly with the branches. In relatively stronger areas the intermediate organs have two-tiers, though generally there is only one body at this level. These committees are weak politically and organisationally. Only in cases of strong taluq committees do we have effective leading bodies at this level which can guide the branches and maintain proper contact with them. One reason for the weakness of branch functioning is lack of guidance from these intermediate party bodies. The party has paid very little attention to educating and training the functionaries at this level. Much depends on their secretaries. Where they are effective, the committees function. Otherwise they exist only in name.

To improve branch functioning, these intermediate bodies must be equipped and trained for their work and more attention paid to developing leadership at this level.

THE BRANCHES

BRANCH FUNCTIONING LEAVES much to be desired. Some branches do not even meet on their own. They meet when some organiser from the higher unit calls them. In this respect, town branches are generally better as they hold meetings more regularly and do their jobs more effectively. In the rural areas, hardly one-fourth of the branches function. Most of the branches move when there is an important campaign or when some leading comrade from the higher unit comes.

There is a provision in the Party Constitution for the division of a branch into groups for its effective functioning. Functions of groups is 'to distribute and check up the work of individual' and carry on 'preliminary political discussions' for facilitating such discussion in the branch. But when the branch itself does not function, there is no question of 'group functioning'. The fact of the matter is that branches are not divided into groups at all.

A number of factors are responsible for the serious weaknesses in branch functioning, most important of which are:

- (a) Lack of training and dearth of effective branch secretaries;
- (b) Lack of regular contact and guidance by higher units;
- (c) Low political level of membership and lack of facilities for political education;
- (d) Lack of concrete and regular guidance from above, guidance which translates party politics in terms of jobs to be done at village level.

Branches provide direct leadership to the masses and are the base of the party organisation. Their inactivity or weak functioning affects the entire work of the party for extending party network in factories, rural areas and educational

institutions. For this purpose, it is necessary to take the following urgent measures:

- (a) Regularise training of branch secretaries through a number of short-term schools. One or two schools once in a blue moon cannot solve this problem. This short-term schooling should become a periodical routine.
- (b) Selection of proper secretaries and assistant secretaries, suitable cadres that can provide leadership to the masses and party cadres at this level.
- (c) More regular contact by higher committees and guidance for concretising party line at that level.
- (d) Every branch must subscribe for the party organ and also have a small branch library. It is seen that branches, which get party journals, function better than those that do not get them.
- (e) Occasional meetings of branch secretaries in the area for reporting, check-up and coordination should be held.
- (f) More regular political reporting to branches through periodical general bodies of the area conducted by district or state leaders.

In order to improve functioning at branch and local levels, and help in the selection and promotion of new cadres and for various other reasons, it is necessary to hold annual conferences at both these levels, i.e. branch and local or town committee level.