

SUMMARY OF DECEMBER 1979 SC MEETING

I) Secretary's Report

A) Standardized forms: see appendix for #1 and #2, have people applying write for #3

Various standardized forms have been developed to systematize OC membership and outreach. These are:

- 1) A form letter for people who have requested information about the OC requesting information from them so that follow-up can be done.
- 2) A form letter explaining the requirements for joining the OC.
- 3) An application form.

B) Closed OC membership

1) It is very important that the desire of some OC members (either collective or individual) to be closed members should be respected. Unless someone is certain that an OC member has made it clear that they desire to be an open member, their membership in the OC should be kept within the OC itself.

2) On the other hand, the SC should make sure that a member's desire to remain closed is principled. OC members must be responsible for their politics. Closed OC membership should not be used as a way of avoiding defending the politics of the OC.

C) Investigation of the left

The section of the investigation dealing with the ultra-left forces is nearing completion. Comrades who have not yet sent in their response to the questionnaire are urged to do so as soon as possible.

II) Communications

A) Southern California Local Center (SCALC)

See the appendix.

B) Tuscon Marxist-Leninist Collective (TMLC) and Red Boston Study Group (RBSG)

See the appendix.

C) North Star Socialist Organization (NSSO)

The NSSO wrote raising many criticisms along the lines of those raised by TMLC and RBSG as well as others. The SC deferred responding until the question of whether or not NSSO actually unites with Principle 18 is resolved.

The SC requested that the Mid-West Regional Coordinating Committee undertake investigating NSSO's unity with Principle 18. (See also the statement "Conciliation of Ultra-Leftism and OC Membership" in the appendix.)

D) Detroit Socialist Collective

The DSC letter and the SC response will be sent out shortly.

III) Organizational Relations

A) Guardian

The SC decided to undertake a systematic effort to utilize the "Opinion and Analysis" section of the Guardian. In the long run, the OC can utilize the Guardian in a number of ways to get out its line and deepen the ideological struggle in the tendency. As a preliminary step, the SC will write a series of three articles:

- 1) a summary of the essentials of the Draft Plan;

2) a summation of the Principle 18 struggle (which more sharply confronts the role of Mao Zedong Thought in the ideological formation of our movement than "The Struggle Over Principle 18 Summed Up"); and

3) a summary of the essentials of "Forging the Party Spirit."

DF will coordinate the project with responsibility for organizing the writing of the articles, taking initiative in suggesting further efforts, keeping the SC informed of the progress of the project, and communicating with the Guardian.

#### B) El Comite-MINP

An effort has been made to establish a liason with El Comite but it has proved difficult since El Comite has cancelled two successive meetings. The effort will continue.

#### IV) Principle 18 and OC membership

The statement contained in the appendix was approved.

#### V. Fractions:

The SC discussed national fractions (auto, health, etc.) with the aim of beginning to elaborate a perspective on their development and relation to the OC process. The following are aspects of our perspective:

1. The SC sees that these fractions have an important role to play in party-building. In essence, their main role and central task should be to press forward fusion of Communism and the workers' movement in a particular area of work, taking on a full range of communist tasks. (In reality, we can't see what other *central goal* they could have since we're dealing with our role as Communists in an area of mass practice.) They are the embryo of fractions of a vanguard party.

2. We think the requirement for participation in these fractions should be unity with the 18 principles. However, since the central task of these fractions is fusion, fraction members need to have unity with the understanding that their task is developing fusion and building a communist current in the w.c. movement.

3. But, fractions do not need to agree that fusion is primary in party building or the essence of party building, or anything of the sort; only that it must be the focus of the work of the fraction. The fractions therefore do not need unity on all-sided party-building line at this time. But this is not to say that party-building is not a concern of the fractions. In developing their work, as communist work, the fractions will confront many concrete issues of party-building line. These concrete questions clearly will need to be struggled over and resolved to the extent that they bear on the work of developing fusion.

4. The fractions have an important role to play in developing and clarifying communist theory. They will provide an extremely important body of knowledge and experience with a really national character. Various discussions in the fractions will have a generalizable impact on the theoretical development of the tendency as a whole, raising important questions in a concrete way. It will be important for the OC process to consciously use this theoretical work and experience to deepen the development of the entire tendency. A good example is the Chrysler crisis. It raised the whole question of nationalization in a concrete and immediate way for the auto fraction. The discussion of nationalization in the auto fraction could be used consciously by an ideological center as a concrete point of departure for developing a general line on nationalization.

5. The fractions are autonomous from the OC. In other words, the OC— from the SC to local centers— should not be involved in guiding or directing the work of fractions, since the OC is not a center for guiding practical activity.

6. Similarly, the fractions should be autonomous from local organizations. In other words, fractions cannot be built on a federationist basis. This would inhibit and distort their development in much the same way that it would inhibit and distort the development of the OC itself. Comrades must enter the fractions without binding instructions from their organizations and, insofar as their practical work related to the fraction, they must be bound by the decisions of the fraction. In other words, comrades in the fraction need to agree to test out in the class, to the best of their ability, whatever program, strategy, and tactics the fraction decides upon-- even if they disagree with it. Any other course will render the fractions ineffectual and unable to develop into real directing centers for practical activity.

7. Of course, conflicts between the political line of a fraction and the political line of organizations with members in that fraction will inevitably arise. While local organizations should not be allowed to voice disagreements with the line of the fraction in their mass practice, they can put before the tendency and OC their disagreements. For example, a minority within a fraction can write to forces in the OC why they think a particular majority perspective is racist, and thus open up ideological struggle around it. This would exert pressure on the fraction through ideological struggle to reopen the question. After a certain point, level of disagreement on fundamental questions would mean the only principled course would be for an organization to ask its members to leave a fraction. While recognizing a principled basis for this in extreme cases, the SC would urge all comrades to always place the development of the tendency nationally in the forefront of their perspective and to recognize the important role which national fractions can play in the development of the tendency.

8. There are definite limitations on the ability of fractions to serve as directing centers for practice. Fractions cannot dispense or allocate the tendency's forces, since there is no one center to balance out claims of different fractions. This authority must remain with circles and individuals. The fractions can, however, encourage certain activity, make suggestions, and struggle for their point of view with forces which do have the authority to allocate forces.

VI) Steering Committee Plan of Work

- A) Consolidation around the Draft Plan, federationist errors, the principles of unity and the centrality of the struggle against racism.
- B) Deepening the OC's leading role by emphasizing its positive program--local centers, the 18 point consolidation, the struggle against racism, etc.
- C) Isolate and expose the leadership of the rectification circle.
- D) Carry through the summation of ultra-leftism.
- E) Strengthen the leadership of the SC through:
  - 1) more thorough advance preparation;
  - 2) more attention given to SC consolidation in the course of discussion so that all SC members can articulate the SC's point of view;
  - 3) maximizing the potential for drawing SC members into broader tasks and assignments, striking a better balance between cadre development and utilizing members' strengths;
  - 4) improving the division of labor; and
  - 5) giving individual attention to SC members and their development, avoiding the approach of "abstract equality," but ensuring that the historical impact of racism and sexism are spoken to. *So, special attention will be given to the development, especially theoretical, of women + national minority SC members. For example, independent study plans are being developed.*

VII) 18 Point Consolidation

See the proposal in the appendix.

VIII) Local Centers

A) SCALC

The discussion is contained in "National Steering Committee's Report on the Southern California Local Center" in the "Post Conference Packet on OCIC Centers" which has been distributed.

B) Local Center Task Force Proposal

See the appendix.

IX) Anti-racism Consolidation

A) The struggle against racism at the Second National Conference

TV was assigned to write a sum-up.

B) National Minority Marxist-Leninist Conference follow-up proposal

See the appendix.

C) Anti-racism Task Force Proposal

See the appendix.

X) OC Discussion Bulletin

See the proposal in the appendix.

XI) Deepening the Demarcation with Ultra-Leftism

See the proposal for the Ultra-Leftism Task Force in the appendix.

XII) SC Self-criticism

A) CN criticized himself for failing to give sufficient attention to the OC in the recent period. This revolved around poor meeting preparation and poor follow-up on several tasks.

B) In connection with ongoing failures around adequate preparation and attention to detail, a criticism of TS discussed at the National Conference, TS deepened the criticism. He made the following points:

1) In essence, the weakness stems from individualism--failing to shape his own activities to the needs of the collective.

2) A long history of never having to be truly accountable to a collective makes it very difficult to really internalize that his individualism can be altered. For a long period in the service he never had to be really responsible. In mass and communist organizations since then he has never really had to submit himself to discipline because he has always been leadership and the view was always his view. As a result, he has never been forced to make changes in the way he operates.

3) There are a number of aspects of individualism at work:

a) Fear about the possibility of change. Essentially a fear of losing personal freedom.

b) Lack of respect for the collective process.

c) Lack of respect for other individuals which is manifested in a tendency to evaluate others in a one-sided way, seeing the whole of the individual only as their weaknesses. The effect is to excuse failure to work collectively.

4) In the present context, narrow nationalism contributes to the problem of overcoming individualism and adopting a collective approach. Individualism can be excused by thinking: "I don't have to listen to white folks."

It was agreed that the key to overcoming this individualism was to fully grasp its impact on all the things which TS values most highly. He must recognize the impact that his failure to establish correct priorities and his failure to follow through on tasks has had in undermining the party-building movement and the working class. Concretely:

- 1) Weak follow-through on the National Minority Marxist-Leninist Conference has had a racist influence. It has allowed the NNMLC to belittle the accomplishments of the conference.
- 2) Incorrect priorities and weak follow-through have undermined the SC process and therefore weakened the SC and the entire OC process. TS should no longer allow the considerable leadership he does bring to the SC process on the basis of weak preparation and follow-up to serve as an excuse for failing to make the full contribution he is capable of.
- 3) These weaknesses undermined TS's own development since the result is that he is not assigned major work.

4. Objectively, TS's individualism capitulates to racism, feeds into racist ideology in the following ways: it holds back the assertion and development of strong national minority leadership that our movement very much needs; it plays into white comrades not seeing the strong leadership national minority comrades have to offer our struggle, especially this party-building and OC process, and thus thinking that national minority comrades are not capable of that strong leadership; and finally it plays into racist stereotypes that national minority comrades or people are not very disciplined or organized, or unable to combat and overcome particular weaknesses they may have.

5. Similarly, objectively, TS's individualism weakens the process of fusing Communism and the workers' movement. It feeds a lack of trust in the working class.

The SC discussed the following course of action for TS's transformation:

1. TS write up this self-criticism to help him internalize the serious impact his individualism has on party-building and the class.
2. The process of his transformation has to be a collective process. TS and others have made the individualistic error of assuming that substantial change could be accomplished by oneself. Therefore, SC and Seattle comrades have to play a strong collective role in the process of transformation:
  - a. The SC will have a short discussion at every SC meeting to review TS's progress in following-through on tasks, his overall transformation.
  - b. Seattle comrades need to help work out a plan with TS for developing a weekly plan of work and a system of checking up on his carrying out his national OC priorities, and secondarily his local priorities.

C) In connection with the above and other SC weaknesses, the entire SC agreed that each member had to more fully grasp the national impact of everything they do, take up their work more diligently and combat any tendencies to fail to assign SC work clear priority over their other activities.

### XIII) NNMLC

#### A) Oakland forum

DF reprinted on a recent forum in Oakland put on by the MLEP (Marxist-Leninist Education Project, one of the "multiplicity of forms" of the rectification circle). The forum topic was the Draft Plan. DF represented the SC. The discussion of

the forum broadened to a general discussion of the NNMC's recent line of attack on the OC. The key points that were brought out were:

- 1) The Draft Plan proved to be a good document to focus debate. It clearly brings out the two key differences--around a common center and around the centrality of the critique of ultra-leftism.
- 2) The Network is attempting to portray the OC's insistence on the centrality of the critique of ultra-leftism as an attempt to "get" the Network. That is, rather than a principled formulation corresponding to the reality of the current period, they portray it as a sectarian formulation designed to direct criticism at the Network.

It should be pointed out that the OC has consistently maintained the importance of the summation of ultra-leftism ever since its Founding Statement almost two years ago, well before the Network arrived on the scene.

- 3) On the one hand, the Network denies the existence of an ultra-left party-building line. On the other, it attempts to discredit the OC by portraying it as continuing the line of the ultra-lefts by drawing an analogy between the OC and the National Liasons Committee, the Continuations Committee, and the Unity Committee.

Both these claims can be refuted by pointing out the "left" sectarian errors of these efforts and the struggle which the OC has waged against these errors. None of these efforts proceeded from the conception of "forging a leading center." None attempted to establish a center independent of the organizations involved. None attempted to draw the entire Marxist-Leninist tendency (as they saw it) into the effort. All of these efforts had much more in common with the Network's point of view--set up a center, then win people to it. All of these efforts operated on a completely federationist basis--negotiations between the leadership.

- 4) The Network tries to portray the OC as advocating a "neutral administrative center." This attempt can be countered in two ways. In the first place, it should be perfectly clear that the Network does not view the present SC as a neutral administrative center. Most of the activity of the Network, in fact, is concerned with countering the views of the SC. In the second place, it should be pointed out that developing and organizing the ideological struggle and putting forward a strong line are not in contradiction--if the ideological struggle is not approached from the standpoint of organizational hegemonism.

- 5) The Network exploits the abstract logic of: A party-building effort obviously needs to have unity on party-building line. This should be answered by making it quite clear that the OC does have a party-building line. A rudimentary line, but a definite line nevertheless. It must also be pointed out that different levels of development of the communist movement demand different levels of unity on party-building line. The level of unity needed at any given stage of development cannot be determined in the abstract, but must be based on a concrete analysis of the pressing tasks of the period. The Network's abstractness around the need for unity around party-building line corresponds to abstractness in identifying the key tasks of the present period.

- 6) The Network still continues to justify its attempt to split the tendency by maintaining that the Draft Plan "is the fusion line" and using their differences with the fusion line at a general level to justify their abstention from the OC.

The OC should continue the approach it has taken to meeting this line of justification for splitism. In the first place, it should be made clear that the Draft Plan is not a settled question and that the Network could argue their position within the OC. In the second place, the Network should be forced to concretely deal with what it thinks the errors of the Draft Plan

itself are and struggle over them on the basis of the concrete problems which the development of our tendency pose.

7) A major component of the Network's present effort to divert attention away from the concrete proposals of the Draft Plan is to claim that the PWOC's "real party-building strategy" is to form a national "pre-party organization" and that the PWOC must put their "real" strategy before the movement for discussion.

The SC agreed that the Draft Plan does not represent the full party-building views of any of the individuals on the SC. At best, the Network's demand that the "full" party-building views of the PWOC be discussed at this time is simply a continuation of their sectarian line that any common party-building effort needs unity around an all-sided party-building line. At worst, it is simply an attempt to "PWOC bait," to raise the fear of organizational hegemonism by the PWOC.

OC comrades should respond to this in two ways. In the first place, the Network should be asked to point out what concrete things the PWOC has done which merit the charge of organizational hegemonism. In the opinion of the SC, the PWOC is certainly an influential organization but has not made errors of organizational hegemonism. In the second place, it should be pointed out that the struggle against federationism and the circle spirit, and the concrete policies which the OC has adopted, place strong obstacles in the way of any organization pursuing a policy of organizational hegemonism within the OC. The OC would demand of any national organization what it demands of local organizations--subordinating themselves to the national process (no circle discipline within the OC process, etc.)

8) At the forum, the rectification forces criticized the SC for "shifting position" from the Draft Resolution to the Draft Plan without making a self-criticism.

This criticism is not valid. The SC never adopted, or even discussed, the Draft Resolution. It was put forward before the founding of the OC by PWOC, SUB, DML0, and PSO. The SC is, however, self-critical that it never has made clear the relation between the Draft Plan and the Draft Resolution. While the later was never put forward by the SC, it was an influential document in the history of the OC.

9) At the forum, the rectification forces argued that pre-party organizations (democratic centralist, all-sided) are an obstacle to party building because they "freeze the ideological struggle."

The SC pointed out that this critique of pre-party organizations has no historical justification and is built only on an extremely superficial summation of the experience of the ultra-left trend. Furthermore, in spite of the Network's claim that democratic centralism "freezes the ideological struggle," the Network itself practices democratic centralism on party-building line, the line which they think has overwhelming importance in the ideological struggle. The Network should be confronted both with their ahistorical critique of democratic centralism in the pre-party period and the contradiction with their own practice with respect to party-building line. The role of the OC as an organized form for preventing democratic centralism from distorting the ideological struggle should also be stressed.

10) The Network should be made to address the question of the accountability of leadership. They clearly feel vulnerable on this point because they make a big point of stressing the accountability of the leadership of the "rectification movement." The contrast between the whole process of accountability of the Draft Plan and the vague proclamations of the rectification forces should be drawn out.

B) Defections from the Network in NYC

An SC member met with five people in NYC who resigned from the NY Club. Their contradictions with the NNMLC centered on the commandist and arbitrary leadership of the NY Club. There will be follow-up and an attempt will be made to tie their experience in with the general line of the NNMLC and, if possible, get them to write up a summation.

C) Response to the criticism of the Draft Plan and "The OC's First Year"

The SC decided to respond to the two recent papers written by the rectification forces criticizing the summation of the OC's first year and the Draft Plan. It should be ready at the beginning of April.

D) Joint work proposal

See the appendix for the SC's response to the NNMLC's proposal for "joint work."

E) The strategy and tactics of the struggle against the NNMLC

The SC agreed on the following principles of strategy and tactics for continuing the struggle with the Network:

1) The OC must set the struggle within the correct context. While the OC must vigorously take up the struggle to defeat (i.e. isolate and expose) the leadership of the rectification circle, the headquarters of opportunism within our tendency, it must be careful to keep from being diverted from pursuing the tasks decided on at the National Conference.

2) The OC must continue to direct its main blow against the organizational opportunism of the NNMLC. The focus for the critique of the NNMLC should be:

- a) exposing the contempt of the NNMLC for the tendency;
- b) exposing the approach of the NNMLC to forging a leading center; and
- c) exposing the unwillingness of the NNMLC to engage in the critique of ultra-leftism.

3) There are several potentially serious errors that must be avoided in developing the struggle. These are:

a) Underestimating the significance of the struggle against organizational opportunism. In this period of party building, it is crucial that a correct organizational line be worked out and consolidated throughout the tendency. It is therefore crucial that vigorous struggle be conducted against all manifestations of organizational opportunism within the tendency.

b) Treating the circle spirit of the NNMLC simply as a question of careerism. The driving force behind the NNMLC's circle spirit is the defense of ultra-leftism.

c) Reducing the NNMLC's opportunism simply to organizational opportunism. While continuing to direct its main blow against the organizational opportunism of the NNMLC, the OC must also begin to draw out the general ultra-leftism which underlies the NNMLC's circle spirit.

4) Tactically, the struggle should proceed on several fronts:

- a) an extensive general document making an all-sided critique;
- b) responses to the criticisms of the Draft Plan and "The OC's First Year";
- c) shorter polemics in the Guardian; and
- d) a series of forums in cities where there are Clubs (LA, SF, Seattle, D.C., NYC, Boston) in April or May.



XIV) Regions\*

A) Reporting

In order to systematically take up building the OC, each SC member who is responsible for a region shall, in the future, file a written report on developments in that region at each SC meeting.

B) Mid-West

The Mid-West region is holding a conference on building local centers on *April 19-20*. Comrades from other regions who are interested in attending as observers for the purpose of deepening their knowledge of the local center process are welcome.

XV) Finances

After a discussion of the expenditures involved in national SC meetings, task force meetings, regional work, etc. (OC members can supply their own estimates of the costs involved), the SC decided that a substantial dues increase is necessary. The details are enclosed on a separate sheet which should be treated particularly securely. *(Sheet on dues may be enclosed or sent out shortly.)*

\* It was decided that a more thorough discussion of the role of regional centers, what's going on in particular regions, etc. will be taken up at next SC meeting.

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