

Jan 19, 1980

Dear SCALC,

The NSC at our December SC meeting took up discussion of your letter of Nov. 19th around the National Minority M-List conference.* This is our response.

First of all, we definitely unite with your criticism that the SC has not demonstrated movement in correcting our error of failing to keep OCIC members informed about the National Minority M-List Conference. We are well aware that it has been 6 months since the conference took place and we have not provided a fuller overview than put forth at the national OC conference. It is totally unacceptable that our July SC minutes, which contain some overview, has not yet gotten out to people. (Clearly, we have to rectify the problem recently of SC minutes not getting out to OCIC members promptly. We have just begun to address that problem.)

However, our main failure as a SC has been in not struggling more with the Planning Committee to complete the process of summing-up the conference and getting out the conference documents. This has been due to both liberalism and underestimation on our part of the importance of getting out these documents and summation-- both errors of racism on our part. Though the Planning Committee(PC) is independent of the OC and SC so that we cannot decide for it or dictate to it, it was our responsibility to criticize and struggle with them around this, i. e. get the speeches, resolutions, and summation of the conference done and out to all so that the SC and all OC members could review them. As a SC, we have been waiting for these documents to give a fuller overview of the conference.

In particular, it was our responsibility to struggle with PC members who were also a part of the SC, especially TS. At the last SC meeting we finally did have a pretty in-depth c-s-s session with TS around his failure to make it a priority to get this summation process of the PC completed and materials out.

We understand how this has contributed to a difficult situation in S. Calif.,. Hopefully, this will be rectified soon. The PC met a couple weeks ago to complete their summation of the conference. We hope to get the final draft of the summation soon. We have just got and printed up copies of the resolutions and all the speeches but one.

However, we also want to raise some criticisms of your role in this process of defending the National Minority M-List Conf. and struggling with the NNMLC. Despite the above definite failings on our part that have not helped your situation, we think that you have underestimated the extent to which you understand the essence of the National Minority M-List Conf. and can defend it in a basic

* We have all erred by slipping into calling the National Minority M-List Conf the "National Minority Conference." Calling it the NMC is incorrect, because whether intended or not, it could play into racist thinking of downplaying the importance of national minority M-Lists uniting on the basis of politics, not race. Or it could play into the racist underestimation of national minorities theoretically.

way against the attacks of the NNMLC. The NSC's basic initial overview of the conference and our criticisms of the NNMLC's attack of it, were put out at the OC conference in TS's speech and following discussion. We think you know very well what the NNMLC is trying to do in their attacks on the conference, e. g. trying to turn the tables on us, accuse us of sectarianism as a cover for their own sectarianism. You know in essence that their line boils down to uniting national minority M-Lists on the basis of race not politics. And you have the PC's written response to some of their attacks-- which the NSC unites with.

In essence, we think you have to learn to stand up to these national minority comrades in the NNMLC, and in the tendency in S. Calif, and not be diverted by their arguments, often petty, that are not the issue at hand. For example, you raised the question about the formulation in the resolution, "we reject the charge that it was sectarian to demand genuine (my emphasis) to a single center." The SC agrees that to say "genuine" commitment was a sloppy formulation-- just "commitment to a single center or lack of consolidation against a single center" would have been more correct. But poor wording is not the issue. You know, and the NNMLC know, what the basis of unity for the conference was. You know that a number of national minority M-List and advanced workers were invited who did not fully understand the concept of a single center but who weren't opposed to it. So if the NNMLC wants to be picky and take you up on wording like this, you know they are only using one of their "multitude of diversionary tactics" to sidetrack you from the real issue at hand-- was it correct to organize the conference on the basis it was. If the NNMLC bring up diversionary issues, you have to straight out tell them that it's not the issue at hand, and you're not going to deal with it.

Similarly, you asked whether the last sentence of resolution #2 meant the SC supported the political conclusions reached at the National Minority M-List conference. It was made very clear at the national conference over Labor Day that this sentence did not mean agreement with the conclusions. The sentence does not seem problematic in that the SC agreed that it was very positive for a lot of political unity to be reached at the conference. Maybe you're right that it could have been worded better, but once again, is that the real issue at hand?

So, although we agree with many of your criticisms of us in relation to the National Minority M-List conference and are glad you raised them and pushed us forward on them, we pick up from your letter overall a hesitancy to put out to national minority forces in S. Calif what you do know and really struggle over it. -- despite all the difficulties caused by your now having conference documents and sum-up. We would venture to say there is probably some liberalism towards national minority M-Lists operating on your parts. This is a very common form of racism among us white M-Lists in the tendency, as evidenced at the OC conference. We may be wrong about this, but we hope you seriously look at the possibility of underlying racism around this, and if you come to agree, take up the struggle against it.

Finally, I would like to respond to 2 other questions you raised. First, was your question why the NSC thought the resolution around the National Minority M-List conference was essential and why it would have been incorrect to table the resolution given the long wait for materials. We think it was

important to struggle over and unify the OC around a rudimentary perspective on the National Minority M-List Conf, especially given all the attacks and confusion created by the NNMLC. We wanted to at least have some initial collective discussion around the conference and prepare people, even if in a limited way, to be able to defend the importance and correctness of the conference. Having TS's presentation and then discussion and consolidation around the resolution seemed the best way to do this.

Clearly, as we've already acknowledged, our failure to give OC comrades any preparation for this discussion around the conference prior to Labor Day created real problems and prevented a deeper consolidation around the National Minority M-List conf. Our failure to get out the SC minutes, help get out any of the documents from the conference, put the Nat'l Minority M-List conf on the agenda before Labor Day, or even write the resolution well in advance of the OC conference-- were all real errors, serious ones on our part-- reflective of our racism.

Nevertheless, despite all these failings on our part, we stand strongly that it was correct for us to put forward the resolution and try to unify comrades around it at the conference. TS's speech gave the basic overview. And there was time allowed to ask any questions about the conference if folks had them. (Though we could have encouraged more participants of the National Minority M-List conference to share their understanding of it, its importance and success.) If comrades had serious questions about the conference, they should have asked them, and were liberal if they didn't. But if we had failed to put forward the speech and resolution, we would only have been continuing and worsening our error of not giving at least a beginning overview of the National Minority M-List conference and consolidating folks around that beginning perspective.

Lastly, in response to your seeking advice as to how to follow-up on the NM M-List conf., I'm enclosing the proposal for how to follow-up locally on the conference. You might do as we did in the Southern regional center, except with you, it's be in the context of local center. We invited someone from the PC to our center's meeting to give a presentation on the National Minority M-List conference, followed by questions and discussion on it. Then we had a discussion in the center around errors of racism around the National Minority M-List conference and the OC conference. I'm suggesting this because I think your 1st step is to consolidate OC forces locally around the National Minority M-List conf. so they can defend it. The next step would be to have a broader tendency forum, probably including a debate between a PC person and a NNMLC person, around the NM M-List conf. If you 1st had a local center discussion around the conference, OC forces would be in a stronger position at this forum to play a stronger role. You could carry out both these steps in 1 weekend, or over a longer stretch. They are just some suggestions to think about.

Thanks for the letter and criticisms. We hope our response is helpful.

Comradely,
Tom Vlasits
Toni Vlasits
for the SC.