

Comments on The OC's First Year - Milwaukee Socialist Union

The MSU has basic unity with the summary of the first year. In specific, we feel that the formulation of a single anti-revisionist movement is correct, that ultra leftism, and a lack of analysis of it, is the main factor retarding the anti-lefts, and that the small circle spirit is a manifestation of ultra leftism, and that the NNMLC is the chief upholder of it. Furthermore, we agree with the analysis of the leading role of the OCIC, and do not feel it is overly glorified. Lastly, we have unity with the course charted for the next year. All in all, the document is an excellent summary of the first year and lays an excellent basis for continued work. Particularly important is the strategic conception put forward by the SC of the importance of ultra leftism and its tenacity in our ranks.

However, as you may have guessed, we did not write out our comments just to state our agreement and praise of this document. We have one area of disagreement which we feel it is necessary to elaborate on. That area is in the "Soft Spots In The OC's Work," section. Here too, we have general agreement with the section, but feel it needs more focus and further concretizing.

The SC correctly targets the primary error in the first year as being a lack of attention paid towards consolidating its political unity, internally. This was manifested in a lack of strategic direction coming from the SC. This resulted in many members feeling like they didn't know where we were at or where we are going. This lack of strategic direction led, in part, to the errors we ourselves made in our December critique of the OCIC (see OC Investigation Sum Up, distributed by the SC). In some cases the strategic sense existed on the SC and wasn't communicated to the base of the OCIC, and in other cases, it was lacking on the SC as a body.

The question is, how will we overcome these errors? The key to overcoming this and all other errors, is the leadership of the SC. If the SC correctly grasps the problem, it will be able to lead the rest of the OCIC in overcoming it. We are concerned because although the weakness is analyzed, there are no concrete proposals for overcoming it. We feel that this shows that the SC hasn't grasped the importance of really concentrating on overcoming this problem.

We are also concerned because we feel that the preparation for the conference has been flawed by this same error, a lack of thorough communication as to the purpose of the conference, and a lack of adequate preparation for it. A few examples will illustrate this problem. Early in the summer the midwest RCC began making plans for preparing the midwest for the national conference. We proceeded by putting primary emphasis on the Draft Plan for an IC. We did this because we understood that the primary focus of the conference would be on the Draft Plan. Only later did we find out that the summary of the first year would be the primary focus of the conference, and it took a few more phone calls to determine exactly what type of discussion there would be around the Draft Plan. This mistake hampered the work of the RCC in preparing the midwest for the conference, and occurred because of a lack of clarity on the SC.

However, the most serious flaw in the conference preparation, is the SC evaluation. The document arrived one week before the conference, and is quite sketchy. The SC recognizes these problems, but what they don't recognize is that the weaknesses in the document aren't caused by members being sick, or having children, but by the lack of attention the SC focussed on summing up its own work. The SC is our leadership body, and is key to our future direction, and to the correction of errors. Surely, its work deserves careful evaluation and discussion. The SC evaluation should have been handled like any other document for the conference.

In addition to the general sketchiness of the document, the SC Evaluation fails to illustrate how the proposed slate for the SC ~~will strengthen~~ is specifically suited to carry out the tasks of the next year, and correct the errors of the last year. Instead we are told that a comrade from SF should be added because he has 'shown a lot of ideological development.' The SC needs to put more emphasis on summing up its own role and in explaining to the membership the rationale of the proposed changes.

We see evidence of this problem in the recent work of the OCIC as well. When the preliminary investigation of the tendency was sent out there was no direction as to how it was supposed to be used. What is the use of it, if there is no plan for discussion? The ~~same~~ same problem existed with OC Bulletin #2. There was no direction given as to how it was supposed to be studied or by when. Finally, in the last set of documents for the conference, we have some criticisms of the documents sent from the Southern California LC. We are sure that there are important concepts in these documents. However, much is lost in the highly internal nature of them. It is difficult to follow the initials and meeting dates. If the SC felt they were important, they should have asked the comrades in S. E. Calif. to edit them, so they would be more understandable to those outside of the immediate situation.

So, while we think that the SC has correctly identified the problem that exists, we do not feel that they have proposed enough concrete solutions to it, and we feel that it hasn't been rectified in the conference preparation. In the spirit of the SC's own self criticism then (as laid out in the evaluation), we would put forward the following concrete proposals for overcoming our primary weakness.

- 1) Improving the overall sense of strategy and communication of it, to all OCIC members, should specifically be listed as one of our tasks in the next year. The main way this should be manifested is:
 - a) through an education director on the SC. This is laid out in FTP's proposal. We agree with FTP, that it would be a step forward to have someone specifically in charge of this work.
 - b) through a change in the SC reports. We feel that it is unnecessary for each OCIC member to get a copy of the minutes of the SC meetings. Instead we feel the SC should distribute periodic reports which sum up recent struggles, point out areas which OCIC members need to improve, elaborate our current strategy, and indicate what tasks are coming up in the near future. In short, we don't need a run down of the SC meetings. We need periodic reports outlining strategically where we are, and where we're going.

2)Members of the SC should put the SC work primary. This has been said before, but we feel it needs further elaboration. We feel that in cases where SC members are part of a local organization, their role in that organization should be clarified. In so far as possible, we feel that SC members shouldn't have day-today tasks in their local circles, such as trade union, or anti-racist mass work, or heavy role in leading internal education unrelated to the OCIC. They should be freed up as ~~much~~ much as possible to give full attention to the OCIC work, and to relating that work to their local organization. We do not see how an SC member can have extensive mass work, or internal education responsibilities and adequately carry out SC work, at the same time.

3)The SC should write a thorough self evaluation. This evaluation should draw on the conference discussion, and their own thinking and should be distributed throughout the OCIC.

4)The OCIC should clarify and discuss the role of regional bodies. These bodies can assist the OCIC and the SC in carrying out its work. However, their role should be clarified. In specific the SC should spell out what kind of tasks they should take up, and what kind of guidance can be offered by the SC.

We feel that these concrete proposals will help correct the problem analyzed by the SC. We would like to say again, that we feel that the SC has generally given excellent direction to the development of the anti-left tendency. We feel that direction they are leading us will eventually result in a successful break with 20 years of ultra leftism. We feel that we can improve the concrete communication of this strategy to the entire OCIC through these proposals.