

BASOC GENERAL MEETING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 1979
Precita Center, 534 Precita (at Bryant), San Francisco
1:00 - 4:30 p.m.

Proposed Agenda:

- a. Introduction and agenda adoption.
 - b. Iranian Student Association speaker.
 - c. Evaluation of last Cultural Forum.
 - d. CC report and discussion—including CC subcommittee reports but not items to be specifically discussed later in the meeting.
 - e. Study sum-up ideas and BASOC conference proposal: report and proposal, discussion and decision.
- BREAK**
- f. West Coast Pt. 18 conference: report, proposal, discussion, decisions.
 - g. Dues proposal.
 - h. Endorsement policy proposal.
 - i. Iran proposal.
 - j. Announcements.
 - k. Criticism/self-criticism.

The CC will propose emphasis on Items 4, 5, & 6. The study sum-up ideas refer to our process of building unity. Summation of the first section of the study plan will take place at the next General Meeting, tentatively being planned for March 4.

RESOLUTION ON IRAN

(This proposal was presented at the 1/9 CC meeting. Some of the specifics may be changed due to more recent developments.)

Iran is on the threshold of a new-democratic revolution and given the rising role of the Iranian working class, the radicalization of the intelligentsia, and the strategic position of Iran vis-a-vis Western Imperialism, this may have a profound effect on the world revolutionary situation. The U.S. progressive movement must unflinchingly support our Iranian brothers and sisters as they deal powerful blows against our common enemies. Only by offering our concrete aid can we demonstrate the true solidarity of the Iranian and North America peoples.

In this light, the proposal is made that BASOC set up an Iran Committee, composed of members of our organization and led by a member of the CC, which will contact the local branch of the ISA, offer our firm support to their struggle, and ask the Iranian comrades how we can best help them.

Furthermore, we should specifically offer to help organize a demonstration in the near future at the federal building protesting the threatened deportation of the Iranian students. Such a demonstration, if it were to develop, would not only offer important support to the Iranian revolutionary movement, but would also help us to further the development of BASOC. Specifically, it would allow us to: 1) develop deeper working relationships with each other; 2) foster concrete ties with other ML and mass organizations; 3) learn about each others' ideas as they come out in practice; and 4) help vitalize our communist study.

While the organization of this demonstration would offer us new challenges, they are none the less entirely within our modest capabilities. As we would envision and propose that the demonstration take place.

- A. The tasks of organizing the demonstration for BASOC would fall to the Iran Committee. The committee would contact various groups, which would include but not be limited to the ISA, the Coordinating Body, Inkworks, KDP, NCA, Guardian Club, RCP, ABDC, Non-Intervention in Chile, and Non-Intervention in Nicaragua.

- B. The coalition of forces would meet, plan, and call for the demonstration.
- C. The demonstration would take place in the beginning of February at the Federal Building with the slogans of "Hands Off the Iranian Freedom Fighters!" and "U.S. Out of Iran!"
- D. The coalition would make the final decisions as to line, speakers, security, etc. Within it we would work to make the demonstration a resounding success.
- E. All BASOC members would be urged to attend.
- F. Following the demonstration, we would sum up our experience and plan for future actions and educational activities in support of the Iranian struggle.
- G. We would at every point solicit guidance from the ISA in regards to organization, groups to contact, and line of demonstration, as well as other matters.

PROPOSAL FROM MASS WORK COMMITTEE

Endorsement Policy

If a member of the liaison committee wishes BASOC to support a demonstration or action—in other words, something that is a one time commitment—the procedure would be for the proposal to be brought to the CC. The CC would vote on it and if accepted would then mandate the small groups to support the action. If a general meeting is coming up very shortly (like a week), it would be voted on there. If the CC rejects the issue, the member could still bring it up at a general meeting.

UNITED LEAGUE ENDORSEMENT

Comrades,

The United League is a broad-based Black freedom organization based in Tupelo, Mississippi. The League, which has over 70,000 members throughout Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee, has led militant boycotts and demonstrations against discrimination in employment, police harassment, KKK terror, and the theft of Black land.

United League President Skip Robinson and Legal Counsel Lewis Meyers are coming on a west coast tour this month, and they'll be speaking in Oakland on Friday, January 26. The tour was initiated by the Anti-Bakke Decision Coalition (ABDC) and has been endorsed by over 75 organizations including many church groups, trade unions, and student groups.

We propose that BASOC support the United League by mobilizing our membership to attend the Oakland event, distributing speaking-tour literature, donating \$50 to the League, and offering to help with other tasks as needed (such as child-care or leafletting). In this light, we recommend that BASOC send two representatives to the ABDC speaking-tour planning meeting on Wednesday night, January 10, with the following message:

To the United League, ABDC, and participating organizations:

We fully support the United League of Mississippi, and warmly welcome freedom fighters Skip Robinson and Lewis Meyers. We will be mobilizing our membership to attend the January 26th event and inviting our friends and co-workers.

Please accept our contribution to the United League, and let us know if there is any other way we can be of assistance.

Co-ordinating Committee
Bay Area Socialist Organizaing Committee

BULLETIN**Local 250**

HOSPITAL AND INSTITUTIONAL WORKERS' UNION

240 Golden Gate Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94102 • (415) 441-2500

In June 1978, a Trade Union Conference on South Africa was held in San Francisco. 64 unions were represented and over 200 people attended the conference. John Gaetsewe, General Secretary of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), spoke at the conference appealing for support from all the unions to help overthrow the racist regime now in power in South Africa. The second "program of action" was to set up local committees to educate the members about the conditions in South Africa. Local 250 has set up such a committee. Our first effort was the showing of the film "Last Grave at Dimbaza" at the San Francisco and Oakland general membership meetings.

Our next event is more ambitious. We are planning an **AFRICA NIGHT** which will be held on Saturday, February 17, 1979, at 8:00 p.m. The evening will include a speech by Belvie Rooks who has recently visited Mozambique and South Africa and will contrast working conditions in both countries. She will also speak on the conditions of health care workers in South Africa along with a slide show. This will be followed by an interpretive reading by Gee-Jay Franks-Hatton. Then an African Dance Group will perform. After this program our **DISCO DANCE** will begin and continue until 2 a.m. A no-host bar will be open.

Tickets are \$3.00 per person and may be obtained by calling Hilary at 821-7656.

EVENTS AND FORUMS REPORT**ON THE CRITICAL ATTITUDE**

The critical attitude
 Strikes many people as unfruitful.
 That is because they find the state
 Impervious to their criticism.
 But what in this case is an unfruitful attitude
 Is merely a feeble attitude. Give criticism arms
 And states can be demolished by it.

Canalising a river
 Grafting a fruit tree.
 Educating a person
 Transforming a state
 These are instances of fruitful criticism
 And at the same time
 Instances of art.

—B. Brecht

The Events and Forums Committee of the CC has just been formed and is in the process of getting established and defining what its area of activity will be. What this looks like so far is that members of the committee will be involved in planning cultural forums, in setting up educational events, and in helping to shape BASOC's social life. The cultural forums will deal with learning the subtler manifestations of bourgeois rule at our point in history, and with creating a vehicle for critical analysis of artistic productions by BASOC members and friends. Educational events will deal with the issues that emerge from our debates as those most needing of greater clarification, as well as with those hurled at us from the mass movements and demanding of our attention (international perspective, S.F. school struggles, the New Right, developments within the trend, etc.). Our social life, while

developing organically along with our political perspective and our commitment to each other, can also have a planned aspect to it, and the committee will play a strong role in doing this planning.

Our work is at an initial stage, and we are very much in need of input from interested comrades. This can range from ideas for forums to suggestions for films to see, to becoming a regular Events and Forums member. All of these are necessary if we are to make use of the Bay Area's rich pool of educational, cultural, and artistic resources in the developing life of our movement and the mass struggles with which we are involved. BASOC has already stamped itself as somewhat unique in the trend by the strength of the cultural presence within its ranks. Participation in the work of the Events and Forums Committee will be one of the surest ways to keep this creative flame alive and growing as one important part of our overall development.

December Forum Sum-up: "The Role of Art in the Anti-Imperialist Movement"

The December 1st session explored this question via a discussion of the film "Controlling Interest" and African Marxist Ousmane Sembene's novel God's Bits of Wood. The format included a few introductory remarks on the nature of culture under advanced capitalism, background information of Sembene's career as novelist and filmmaker in newcolonial West Africa, statistics on the large number of unions and church groups who own prints of the film, and a few excerpts from the novel for those who hadn't read it (about a third of those present).

The 40-50 who attended were mostly BASOC members, plus a few outside friends. Since a majority of people had done the reading and had looked at the study questions, a solid discussion should have happened. It didn't, though, and no real conclusions or even deeper questions were developed. This was disappointing, and besides a criticism that the intro remarks were too long for a Friday, end-of-the-work-week event, most of the feedback so far has mainly centered on environmental factors. Basically, we froze our asses off at the Precita Center, couldn't hear the sound track of the film, were made uncomfortable by the seating arrangement (in rows facing one way), and lost each other's comments in the gym's acoustics. One major error was that donations weren't asked for, and BASOC had to cover the rental fee for the film. Newsreel undercharged us, though, so we only had to pay \$40.

The few criticisms that did emerge from our discussion were communicated to the people at Newsreel, specifically that racist "beehive" stereotypes of Asian workers were noted but not really contradicted by the film, and also that our movement needs to spend more time thinking about the best way to utilize cultural products in our work.

All of these details will be corrected for the next forum to better accommodate what will hopefully be just as large, well prepared and enthusiastic a turnout as the one in December. Any other critiques of this forum would be well appreciated, and should be given at the February 11 General Meeting, or to Bill Shields, 391-3445.

Holiday Party

We made collages critiquing Christmas advertising, improvised short theater sketches on the theme of Christmas ideology in the workplace, and danced, drank, ate, and rapped till 1 a.m. The action was at St. Augustine's Episcopal Church hall in Oakland, a good space which should be remembered for future East Bay events. With the help of a large donation of materials from Project Scrap in S.F., we transformed the huge hall into an abstract-materialist holiday decoration (huge billows of red and green cloth surrounding streams of crepe paper and our collages). The refreshments were both healthy and intoxicating, depending on your preference. Everyone threw themselves into the improvs, and some great images emerged of both workers' and management's visions of the holiday scene. Two factions emerged after the planned activities, the rappers and the dancers. After running out of exhibitionist steam, the dancers criticized the rappers enough to get the masses on the floor, but only for a while. This important division in our group still exists, and will have to be resolved at a higher level of struggle. At a May Day party, perhaps?

The Next Culture Forum: "My Life With Commodity Fetishism—A Startling Expose of the Political Economics of Styles, Fashion and Daily Life"

We need help in planning this, as it is still in its formative stages. Potential readings will be Marx on fetishism, Monthly Review on consumer credit spending and a piece on the advertising industry. We're still looking for poetry, prose, graphics and songs about consumerism and fetishized consciousness.

The film we'd like for the night is Rossellini's "The Rise to Power of Louis XIV," an excellent political economic analysis of how France's lavish "Sun King" used fashions and art to protect the power of the French royal state from the threat of bourgeois-democratic rebellion. It's a powerful metaphor for our media warped situation today, and would be a good springboard for our discussion. It costs \$125.00 to rent, however, and we can only think about using it if BASOC members will commit themselves to turning out at \$2.00 a head, and to bringing along a few friends as well. We'll be asking for people's responses and, hopefully, approval for the rental, at the general meeting.

STATEMENT BY THE PARTY BUILDING COMMITTEE ON DISSOLUTION OF COMMITTEE - 1/23/79

This committee has decided to discontinue meeting as a separate committee and we would like to explain the reasons and review what we consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of the role the committee played.

The committee was formed several months ago because those of us involved felt that BASOC needed to move in the direction of defining a more explicit level of political unity if it was to function in any sense as a M-L organization. We were fairly confident even then that this was the sense of the majority of people in and around BASOC and that there was little really consolidated opposition to such a perspective.

Nevertheless, we felt there was some resistance, in fact, if not in theory. We didn't see this as necessarily an antagonistic difference. We respected the sense of the importance of mass struggle that motivated much of this opposition. (See our paper on relation of theory to practice available at the next general meeting for a much fuller development of our position on these points.) We also knew that we might agree with these same people on many other questions and that once we got through this initial cynicism about organization, our problems might be of an entirely different sort. We felt the hesitation about moving toward more unity had to be overcome, however, and sooner or later we would lose people who had no patience with an organization that seemed to have no theoretical clarity or direction.

We felt that an organized group pushing for this perspective within BASOC was the best guarantee of making it through this political impasse and through the natural inertia of an organization so amorphous and unstructured. We do believe that this has been the chief positive function of the committee, i.e., that we were able to provide direction better than we could have as individuals in setting a process into motion whereby political questions can be taken up and a basic political line can be clarified. We believe that with the present discussion plan and other organizational plans that have been decided by the general membership and are being implemented by the coordinating committee a basis has been provided for the organization as a whole to move ahead and resolve necessary questions and, hopefully, to achieve a workable level of political unity. We also think that the organization of membership into work groups is proving effective and that these factors together are beginning to transform BASOC into an organization that things of itself as a worthwhile, potentially effective political force.

We think it would be confusing and probably untenable for our committee to continue functioning separately considering the role that committee members play in leadership of BASOC. Principally, however, our reasons for dissolving is that there now seems to be agreement within BASOC to take up the questions that we see as the most urgent to be resolved and a mechanism established to do so.

Briefly, we want to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the committee's role. On the positive side we feel, as already indicated, that we were able to at least speed up the process of defining positions on key questions. We feel that because BASOC has made some progress in this direction, many who were skeptical in regard to making any commitment to BASOC have become more encouraged and involved. The committee also generally helped to maintain communication between membership and leadership and began to seem overburdened with responsibilities and demoralized by a certain degree of dissension in the period before the reorganization. The committee helped to smooth the transition into workgroups and in particular helped to implement the formation of a democratic rights group. Several comrades, especially several women and people relatively newer to the organization, were encouraged to more active participation by the committee.

On the negative side, there were many times when confusion continued to reign and there was little more prepared or thought out direction from the committee than from any other quarter. Particularly, during the discussion around developing the study program it would have been better if the committee had put forward more clearly an alternative program that reflected its sense of priorities. Instead, we helped to sow further confusion and delay the development of an acceptable program by stressing one-sidedly the need to maintain unity within the CC.

We know that the sharper criticisms of the committee have more to do with the correctness of forming the committee at all, and whether such an approach automatically implies factional maneuvering and a sectarian "small group mentality."

Certainly unnecessary divisiveness and factional spirit and should be carefully avoided. We hope, however, that the practice of the committee has helped to demonstrate that open and even organized political struggle can be carried out in a way that is not necessarily sectarian or unprincipled. There were times when we should have struggled harder to solicit the opinions of others and explain the views of the committee. Perhaps that might have satisfied some of this criticism.

We will make available papers representing the tentative unity we achieved in discussing "fusion", the question of the main errors of the Left, a study guide for discussing "Point 18" (U.S. Imperialism as the main danger), and especially a paper our committee developed on the relation of theory to practice.

—Committee for Party Building Perspective

CC MEETING - 11/28/78

The newly elected CC met for the first time. Adjustments were made in the Common Discussion Program, following up on the General Meeting's changes. The CC discussed its tasks and decided that its principal task was to guide the development of political unity growing out of the Discussion Program. To do this, small groups would need to provide summations of their agreements and discussions. The small groups' CC representatives were asked to do this. The CC adopted discussion of small groups' problems and questions as a permanent agenda item.

CC MEETING - 12/5/78

The dues proposal was presented and discussed. Proposed readings for the Racism and Sexism sessions of Discussion Program were passed. The CC discussed its own division of labor, and established these committees: Internal Organization, Mass Work, Liaison, Events and Forums, and Financial. Membership of the committees consists of:

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|-------------------|---|
| ● Internal | Steve Hiatt (Internal secretary), Margaret, Doug, Tom, Rita |
| ● Mass Work | Pat, Hilary, Kitty, Ken |
| ● Liaison | Jesse (External secretary), Steve Hamilton, Joy |
| ● Financial | Margaret (Treasurer), Doug |
| ● Events & Forums | Bill |

In dividing its work in this way, the CC stressed the importance of involving other BASOC members in the work of the committees. The Treasurer was asked to provide an estimate of BASOC expenses for the newsletter, using input from the small groups.

CC MEETING - 12/19/78

The CC discussed an invitation to send observers to a West Coast trend conference. The CC wondered what degree of unity with the Trend's 18 points would be required for doing so, particularly on the 18th point, since BASOC hasn't discussed many of these questions. The CC decided to poll the members on Point 18. In the CC itself, 8 favored the content of Point 18, while 3 opposed it.

The CC discussed the Mass Work Committee's tasks, and decided to: 1) include 15 minutes at each General Meeting for a speaker on a current struggle; 2) include one analysis of mass work in each newsletter; 3) distribute a questionnaire to BASOC members on their mass work. The Mass Work Committee also proposed a procedure for BASOC endorsement of demonstrations and other mass work. The CC will recommend to the General Meeting.

The Internal Committee proposed a meeting of CC and other BASOC members to discuss security problems and proposed solutions. Accepted by the CC.

CC MEETING - 1/13/79

(Since this session dealt more explicitly with BASOC's unity building process, the minutes of this discussion are presented in full.)

The CC unanimously recommended to the General Meeting that BASOC:

1. Hold a conference
2. 2-3 months after the end of the study program
3. With the study groups meeting during the transition to discuss their mass work and the political position papers being written for the conference.
4. The agenda of the conference will be based on BASOC's study and practice up to then.
5. If new issues come up, they should be discussed throughout the whole organization before the conference (i.e., special general meetings).
6. The conference will aim to reach unity on four main areas of our study program: fusion (Point 10 of the Trend's 18 points), ultra-leftism in the movement (Point 15), reform and revolution, and democratic centralism. Possibly unity on some of these areas may have been reached already through discussion at general meetings.
7. The conference will consider questions to take up by BASOC after the conference—what political areas we need to reach unity on next and what the nature of our mass practice should be in the next period.
8. It will also resolve organizational changes needed for the next period. Conference planning will be implemented by the internal committee, subject of course to CC and general approval.

Some of the ideas and debates that came up in discussing this resolution follow:

There was confusion/disagreement over what is meant by "party-building questions." One person put out that party building is an organizational question as opposed to political questions like the nature of the economy, and that a party building position implies other positions not overtly stated on the state of the union movement, whether we are in a period of crises, etc. Others responded that party building questions specifically refer to questions of fusion and ultra-leftism. We need to take up the national question, woman question and others, but these party building questions are questions on which we can take a clear position as a result of our study program on them.

It was objected that a conference is an inner-directed mental exercise; we need to counter the study group mentality of BASOC, not institutionalize it. The response was that this is a period of consolidation in which practice is secondary, that until we have a unified approach to practice that we can test out, we'll be operating individually on the basis of dozens of approaches and not be able to sum up any of them.

There was a sharp discussion on the role of the committee for a party building perspective. Members of this committee reported that it is dissolving and will circulate its position papers, hopefully clearing up concerns people have had.

It was reaffirmed that although theoretical unity is a primary task for BASOC in this period, we need to develop our practice too. Some ways this is happening are the Iran Project (not necessarily developed in a strategic perspective on anti-imperialist work, but a beginning we can learn from), the practice of people in small groups, proposals from the mass work committee, and reports at general meetings. A long-range perspective on developing concentrations was mentioned.

There was considerable discussion of Point 18 and the 18 points. Some felt we should move quickly to affirm our unity with these points and situate ourselves within the trend. Others felt that such an affiliation might not be a good thing, limiting our relationship with other groups. Not only is Point 18 controversial within BASOC, other questions that need further study and discussion include the national question, Trotskyism, industrial proletariat's role.

Although external evens are making Point 18 a priority for BASOC to take up, our internal needs point to the national question and racism as the next major area to take up, for improving our mass work and changing our composition as a group. A distinction was made between a position on Point 18 and an international line, which would be more thorough and include a discussion of the nature of the Soviet Union. BASOC should decide a correct approach to these questions based on what we think makes sense and evaluate the trend in that context.

Generally, this could be summed up that the conference should agree on a plan for studying where we want to line up in the ML movement and how we want to take up the other controversial points in the 18 points.

It was pointed out that this discussion had not even mentioned the problem of class analysis—who we are, who we work with, on what issues; there is a tendency to an ingrown focus on the communist movement, and detachment from the working class.

We discussed the question of supplementing our principles of unity—a lot of people don't know our original statement (the six anti's) plus we have more unity than that, though not explicitly. It was responded that the point isn't to state our common assumption but to deepen our unity and understanding—do we mean the same thing by the same words? We have several major points to resolve already on the agenda. However, if any individual or group feels there is a point on which we do have unity, they can draft a proposal on it and see what the organizational reaction is.

CC MEETING - 1/23/79

The CC discussed reports from the small groups, including feedback on the Iran Project Proposal, the proposal for a BASOC conference, difficulties of the Fundamentals Group, and criticisms of the Discussion Program.

The Liaison Committee reported that BASOC will be allowed 5 observers at the upcoming trend conference: agreement with Point 18 will not be required to send them. It also reported on discussions with other local groups—Guardian Club, Coordinating Body, etc. The CC agreed that it was necessary to take up the discussion of our external relationship and our internal unity building process.

The Dues Proposal was discussed. Some members objected that it was too formalized and represented a degree of organizational unity beyond that appropriate for BASOC at this time. Others felt that the suggested amounts were needed and that the proposal was flexible, and denied that it tended to build unity by organizational and not political means. The CC voted 10-4 to recommend the Dues Proposal to the 2/11 General Meeting.

The CC then discussed the agenda for the 2/11 General Meeting. The Women's Discussion group asked the CC for 45 minutes to an hour at the General Meeting for a discussion of the CC and its relation to the small groups and the discussion program. The discussion would be led by members of the Women's Group. A formal proposal would be presented at the next CC.

Some CC members felt that such a discussion could be good, but that they were unclear about this proposal, since no specifics, either criticisms or recommendations, had been put forward by the Women's Group. The CC felt that it could not put this on the agenda without more specifics, and asked the Women's Group for a concrete proposal.

The CC tentatively set a General Meeting for 4 March to discuss the summation of the first section of the discussion program. This session's agenda would also include the discussion proposed by the Women's Group.

NEWSLETTER ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Women in films of the 30's and 40's:** SF State Cinematheque, McKenna Theater, Creative Arts Building (Holloway Avenue entrance) Wednesday nights. A series that shows the roles that were assigned to women by male directors, roles that women were supposed to play, respond to, and imitate. Beginning January 31: Applause, Stella Dallas, Design for Living, Rain, Marked Woman, Hands Across the Table & more.
- **Two recent PUL pamphlets:** available at Modern Times, China Books, Yenon. One including Clay Newlin (PWOC) for the Committee of Five (of the Trend) on "Dogmatism, the Main Enemy, and 'Left' Opportunism." The other is PUL's response, criticism, and defense of their own viewpoint.
- **National Lawyer's Guild Convention:** February 15-19, Skills seminars (Gay rights, immigration) Feb. 14. Hotel San Franciscan, 1231 Market at Civic Center. This year's theme: Attacks from the Right on Gays and Women. Workshops in these areas plus others around affirmative action, labor (OSHA, organizing clerical workers), anti-repression. Contact the SF Bay Area NLG for specific lists and schedules: 558 Capp, SF 94110, 285-5066 (sliding fee scal for attendance)
- **Slide Show - Theater Pieces - Talk on Brecht:** Tuesday, February 6, 8:00 p.m., Marina Theatre, Building 310, Fort Mason Center, Laguna and Marina Boulevard in SF. Bus Lines: 30 Stockton, 22 Fillmore, 47 Van Ness. Cost: \$3.00. BASOC and culture group member Olive Crawford will be acting in two scenes from Brecht's play The Mother, as well as reading from his poetry. British and Bay Area Director/Actor Richard Seyd will lead the event, and will examine bourgeois/Naturalistic versus Marxist approaches to theater. There will also be a slide show of Germany in the 20's and 30's, demonstrating the interaction between the times and Brecht's development. Brecht's work moved culture and art into the realm of proletarian science much the same way that Marx and Engels did with philosophy. This is an important event for anyone doing propaganda and political education work, which means all of us. Besides which, it should be entertaining. Hope to see you there!