

TMC

PROPOSAL FOR A NEW ENGLAND REGIONAL CENTER

The Organizing Committee for an Ideological Center (OC) is attempting to draw all anti-Revisionist, anti-ultra-left forces into a common party-building process. To really organize a common process will take more than good intentions: it requires a common organizational form -- that is, a single, national center for our tendency. The center's main task is theoretical: the independent elaboration of Marxism-Leninism to the revolutionary struggle in the U.S. To undertake this theoretical work, all the tendency forces must be drawn together in an organized process of ideological struggle.

OC centers, on a local and regional basis, are the main form for the broad forces to directly participate in the struggle over the key theoretical, political and organizational issues facing the OC. They are the concrete structure for participation in the national process. They are the local and regional branches of the OC.

The New England Regional Center (NERC) will attempt to draw together all tendency forces within the region. It will develop the struggle in New England over the crucial questions facing our movement. It will also do systematic outreach to win over as many tendency forces as possible to the OC's perspective and draw them into the OC process. Finally, the NERC, in conjunction with the national OC, will undertake various other activities to develop the ideological consolidation of its members (such as study of the OC's 18 points of unity) and move forward our theoretical work.

The NERC is a dynamic form that will develop and consolidate over time. As such, this proposal is subject to change and elaboration as the center consolidates its unity and faces new and different tasks necessary to advance our tendency.

Membership

Since the NERC is a regional branch of the OC, to join the NERC means joining the OC. The basis of unity for both is the same: that is, the 18 principles of unity of the OC and agreement with the need for a single center for our trend.

In the NERC all members participate as individuals, whether they are independent Marxist-Leninists or cadre of democratic-centralist organizations. Organizations cannot bind their members to uphold a certain position, but must allow them to participate in a tendency-wide process of struggle without any constraints. In addition, all cadre of organizations should be active members of the NERC.

In this way all comrades will have to stand up for their own ideas in the ideological struggle. We will build a truly common process of struggle, instead of having separate struggles compartmentalized in the different organizations. And the ideological struggle can go forward as a struggle between contending lines to be judged on their merits, instead of as circle warfare between the different organizations.

Internal Consolidation

The NERC, like other local centers, will have 2 main tasks: internal consolidation and outreach. Internal consolidation means a process of developing principled struggle and unity among forces in New England as part of a national process. Through the struggle the political unity and character of the NERC will develop over time. The NERC will take up the main issues facing the tendency, study and discuss them, develop systematic struggle over key differences, resolve them and contribute the results to the national OC. These issues include, for example, the Draft Plan for a Leading Ideological Center, the struggle against racism and its relationship to party-building, critique of ultra-leftism, etc.

Regular discussion and struggle around these issues will be the main activity of the NERC. The form for these discussions will be flexible to allow us to accomplish 3 goals:

1. all cadre participate
2. develop the broadest and deepest possible struggle
3. overcome isolation (between circles, localities and individuals)

All NERC members will be grouped into Discussion Groups (DG) of 15 members each. The DGs will be organized to maximize interaction between different forces (geographically, organizationally, politically). Some of the DGs will be composed of comrades from different localities (especially Boston and Fall River-New Bedford) and will alternate meeting location. The DGs will meet on a monthly basis. Struggle around various issues will usually begin in the DGs. This will allow for maximum participation by the rank and file, insuring that they strive to take an independent stand.

To deepen the struggle regional conferences will be held periodically -- approximately every 3 months. Here all the forces in New England will be brought together to sharpen and resolve differences and consolidate the center. The conferences will include presentations elaborating the different lines in the struggle and voting on alternative resolutions.

The Regional Steering Committee (RSC) will be responsible for organizing the ideological struggle and initiating any necessary steps to advance it. In addition, each DG will have a leader. The DG leaders will meet together monthly with the chairperson of the RSC to sum-up the discussion in the DGs, prepare for future ones and analyse the contradictions within the NERC and how to resolve them. These meetings will aid the RSC in deciding how to proceed.

Within the NERC, there will be many differences around various questions. The purpose of the NERC is to struggle out these differences and reach unity where possible. The process just described will be the main way unity will be developed. Exactly what is done will depend on the nature of the difference, the importance and current relevance of the question, etc.

In general, however, the RSC will solicit the views of a minority and distribute them in written form for discussion, the DGs or in preparation for a conference. Comrades with a particular point of view can go to other DGs to facilitate debate and struggle. Regional conferences will be held. Any NERC member has the right to contact the RSC and propose topics for discussion. All members are required to carry out principled struggle in the NERC.

In developing the ideological struggle in the NERC, the RSC will pay particular attention to the education of the members. In conjunction with the National Steering Committee, educational materials will be developed in preparation for furthering the struggle around various issues. Taking educational work seriously is important in developing the full participation of all comrades. It will deepen the tendency's political and ideological consolidation.

Outreach

Along with internal consolidation, outreach is the other principle task of the NERC. It takes 2 main, interrelated forms: drawing new forces into the NERC and OC; and struggling for the OC's line in the movement.

The preliminary outreach done at the time of the formation of the NERC will draw in the bulk of those forces ready to join the OC at this point. In addition, the NERC will need to do systematic investigation of the tendency in N.E. to determine who the forces are and what's needed to draw them into the OC. This investigation and analysis should be centralized regionally, but with local components. On the basis of this analysis, the NERC should set up study groups (like on point 18) and other outreach programs.

National Minority Marxist-Leninists are a particular area of focus for our outreach activity. The foundation of our attempt to win them to the OC is taking up the struggle against racism within the NERC and in the members' practice. Weaknesses of OC forces on this score are the main obstacle to the full participation of oppressed nationality comrades. Building multinationality will also involve a conscious, systematic approach to developing the participation and leadership of national minority Marxist-Leninists within the OC and to building political unity with national minority comrades outside of the OC.

In addition, attention needs to be paid to developing the participation and leadership of women comrades. The foundation for this work is taking up a conscious and systematic struggle against sexism in the NERC.

The second main outreach task of struggling for the OC's line in the movement is a very important one. It's related to the first task in that we want to recruit comrades not just to the OC's organization, but to the OC's political perspective.

The NERC has the responsibility to act on the basis of the national OC's line and struggle for it in our region. This could take the form of forums and debates with the National Network of Marxist-Leninist Clubs or other forces in the tendency. It will also involve distribution of OC literature and the literature of OC members.

Other Tasks

In general, the NERC should be the regional arm of the OC and carry out its work in this region. As the OC develops, it will increasingly be expanding its theoretical work. The theoretical work will be on questions facing the movement and the NERC will be organizing struggle around them. But the NERC will also organize local branches of national study teams that the OC sets up. These branches can bring together advanced cadre from the region to contribute to the national process.

The NERC will also sponsor conferences to sum-up practical work to advance our theory. For example, summing-up the work of the OC forces in the struggle against racism is a real priority. Our theory and practice on this question is weak presently.

The NERC can also initiate study of the 18 points of unity in the region, open to members and non-members of the OC. This is important to the ideological consolidation of the OC. The NERC can also initiate study groups on other important questions, such as point 18: why it's correct and why it should be a line of demarcation for our tendency.

Leadership

The Regional Steering Committee (RSC) will lead the NERC in its tasks of internal consolidation, outreach, etc. The RSC's ability to lead will develop over time as both the NER and the RSC consolidate themselves. The RSC has been appointed by the national Steering Committee of the OC. After an initial period of approximately 6 months, where center participants can see the role of comrades in the center and have some basis for choosing, there will be elections for a new RSC.

Initially, the DG leaders will also be appointed. The RSC will select leaders on the basis of ability to develop a good process of struggle and consolidation in their group. After the initial 6 month period, the DG leaders will be elected by the membership of their DGs. In order to avoid federationism in the structure of the NERC, election of DG leaders is subject to the final approval of the RSC.

The RSC will be responsible for leading the process of struggle and consolidation in the NERC and integrating it with the national process. The RSC will attempt to lead the NERC in a political direction: that is, it will struggle for its positions on different important questions. At the same time, it will take care to draw out opposing views and organize a good process of struggle.

The RSC will operate on the basis of majority decisions. However, members of the RSC can express whatever view they want in the ideological struggle as individuals.

Finances

Each member of the NERC shall pay regional dues according to the following schedule: income under \$7,000--\$1/month; income \$7,000-\$15,000 --\$2/month; income over \$15,000--\$3/month. This is in addition to the dues charged by the OC nationally. RC members who have special financial burdens should contact the RSC to work out a reduction in their dues. Dues are payable on a quarterly basis.

Agenda

The first few meetings of the NERC should be discussions of the OCIC's general orientation to the tasks of organizing the communist movement. Accordingly, our first five or six meetings will examine the developing party-building line of the OCIC. This line is expressed in the Founding Statement, resolutions of the OC's national and regional conferences, and the OC's organizational rules and practice as a collective body.

There are minority viewpoints within the OC on many aspects of its party-building line. We want to organize a process of struggle over those differences within the NERC, and so will circulate readings and solicit presentations representing both minority and majority points of view.

The topics will be as follows:

- 1) History of the OC; overview of its party-building line. Focus on the need for a common process and common organizational form. (This will be a region-wide conference).
- 2) Furthering the critique of ultra-leftism is our most pressing theoretical task (Discussion Group meeting).
- 3) The struggle against federationism-- the need for an open, tendency-wide process (Discussion Group meeting).
- 4) The centrality of the struggle against racism-- in the class struggle generally, and in the communist movement in particular (Discussion Group meeting-- probably two sessions).
- 5) All-day regional conference on topics 2-4. Presentations, voting on alternative resolutions.
- 6) The Draft Plan for a Leading Ideological Center-- this will be the topic of the next few meetings.

We look forward to joining you in the effort to build a common center for ideological struggle.

Appendix: RELATION BETWEEN THE REGIONAL CENTER AND NATIONAL CENTER

One of the main tasks of the OC is to centralize the ideological struggle. This struggle needs to be centralized on a national basis. All the forces in our tendency need to come together, establish a common agenda and commit themselves to a common process of struggle. OC centers (regional and local) will play an important role in that process. They'll be the form through which the bulk of forces can directly participate in the ideological struggle.

They should be seen as part of a national process which is, in general, primary. OC centers should see their discussions and work as part of a national process. The NERC should take up the agenda of the national OC. On the other hand, it should also participate in determining that agenda. It should sum-up the results of its work and communicate it to the national center. As all OC centers and members actively take up this task and as the national center systemizes the struggle, a real national process will emerge.

Within a national context, an emphasis should be placed on the creative role of OC centers (initiating questions to be raised to the national level, etc.). It is the place where the bulk of cadre will directly participate. And it is the place where a regular and frequent interchange and struggle between contending lines can take place.

The NERC will have to develop its own internal process in relation to the national center. For example, the national OC is calling for all forces to take up discussion and struggle around the Draft Plan for a Leading Ideological Center. The NERC should therefore take it up. A time framework should be set nationally for all forces to discuss the Draft Plan. Within that framework, exactly when a particular OC center takes it up should be up to the OC center. Due to the particular process within an OC center, it may make sense to cover certain other questions first.

The way in which the Draft Plan is discussed should also start from national guidelines. But as the struggle unfolds in a center, it will take on a life of its own to a certain extent. At some point the results and contributions should be communicated nationally. The national SC should centralize the struggle, playing a direct role itself. And eventually all the forces in the OC (and the tendency) will come together nationally to resolve the question.

The RSC will be responsible for leading the process of struggle and consolidation in the NERC and integrating it with the national process. If the RSC or the NERC develop positions that are in contradiction with positions of the national OC or national SC, it is their responsibility to initiate a process to struggle out the differences. In the internal process of the NERC, the RSC is

not bound to argue for national SC or national OC positions. We want to develop an internal process regionally that has a certain life of its own. However, the whole point of the OC is to develop a collective process of party-building nationally -- so the RSC has the responsibility to raise its differences nationally.

In its external work -- that of recruitment and struggling for the OC's perspective in the movement -- the situation is different. In this work, the RSC is the regional arm of the national OC. It should take up the tasks of the national OC in this region. In doing so, it should represent the OC's line to the extent that it's developed (those positions adopted at conferences). Let's look specifically at the 2 areas of outreach work: recruitment and struggling for the OC's perspective.

In recruitment, the NERC is recruiting comrades primarily to the OC, not just the NERC. So representatives of the OC should articulate the positions of the OC. However, the representatives should make clear the unity and differences that exist within the OC on various questions. In addition, opportunities should be given to members of the NERC holding differing views to present them in recruitment work. (e.g., speaking at an introductory study group meeting).

In the area of struggling for the OC's perspective within the broader movement, the NERC should carry out policies decided nationally. For ex., it was correct for the RSC to initiate struggle with the Boston Club of the National Network of M-List Clubs around the need for a common party-building process. If a majority of the RSC or NERC disagrees with this approach (or any other), struggle should be initiated with the national SC around it. Until there's a resolution of this struggle, the body is not expected to take any action. But it should not take action that is in contradiction with the line of the OC nationally. Members of the NERC are, of course, free to initiate struggle around any issue as an individual (or group).

Of course, for anyone to actually represent the NERC or RSC in any activity, the body must adopt a position first. At the same time, any member of the NERC or RSC is free to express their own personal views as long as they are not officially representing any body at the time.