

SUMMARY OF OCTOBER 1979 SC MEETING

I) Secretary's Report

A) OC membership

1) New membership

The procedure for new membership will be simpler and more systematic. The requirements are, first, agreement with the principles of unity and with the conception of forging a single center (generally as set forth in the Founding Statement) and, second, testimony by a present OC member as to the applicant's seriousness and reliability.

In order to satisfy these requirements, two written statements are needed.

a) One from the applicant stating their level of consolidation around the 18 principles of unity and the Founding Statement, stating the applicant's unclarities and disagreements. It should also include a short historical essay on the applicant's experience.

b) One from a present OC member testifying to the applicant's seriousness and reliability and containing any other information considered pertinent to OC membership.

Both statements should be sent to the OC Secretary. The application will be reviewed collectively by the SC or an appointed subcommittee.

2) New members

a) Individuals from St. Louis, Hartford, and Boston.

b) The Willamette Workers' Organizing Committee from Portland, Oregon.

3) Expectations of OC members

In connection with determining the status of several comrades who have not been active in the OC, it was decided that if OC members do not participate in the OC process they will be removed from OC membership and so notified.

B) Friends of the OC

In order to promote the broadening of the OC process, a "friends of the OC" mailing list will be established. Upon request and the payment of a small fee, all public OC documents will be mailed as they appear.

C) Tendency investigation

Comrades who have not yet completed the in-depth questionnaire are reminded once again that it should be completed as soon as possible. The SC is critical, in particular, of those forces who supported the idea of a tendency investigation at the OC's founding conference but have not followed through on that commitment.

D) Communications with the SC

Comrades who wish to write (or to send some material) to the SC as a whole are requested to send a copy to each of the SC members. The SC is not centralized geographically and it is an unnecessary burden on the SC Secretary to be expected to reproduce and circulate documents when it could just as easily be done by the originator of the document. It is also important, when material is sent to all SC members, to clearly indicate this so that it is clear to the SC Secretary who has received the material. (See cover letter for addresses of SC members.)

E) Publications

Two major publications are planned on:

- 1) the struggle over Principle 18, collecting the key documents and speeches; and
- 2) the Second National Conference.

II) Communications

A) TMLC and RBSG (Red Boston Study Group)

A letter was received concerning "unprincipled struggle" at the national conference. A draft response will be prepared and considered at the next SC meeting.

III) Organizational Relations

A) Guardian

An ongoing liason with the Guardian has been initiated by the SC. The first meeting revealed primarily that the Guardian is feeling burned and disoriented by the recent struggle with Silber and is in a period of reassessment. At this point, they are much more open to the OC but their continued vacillation on the question of the relative dangers of revisionism and ultra-leftism to the party-building movement today remains a major contradiction. The Guardian's main hesitation about seeking unity with the OC appears to be the criticism that the OC underestimates the revisionist danger.

The Guardian is, however, very interested in contributions to the Opinion and Analysis section of their paper from the SC, in particular, and the OC generally. They are also very interested in suggestions from the OC as to how the paper can be made more useful to the tendency.

A proposal on how the SC can make use of the Guardian will be prepared for the next SC meeting.

The SC discussed the possibility of the Guardian joining the OC and decided that because of the Guardian's history of "dabbling" in various efforts, their present sharp contradiction with Silber, and their present isolation, there was a danger that the Guardian could be propelled toward unity with the OC on an unprincipled basis. In order to guard against this, some general guidelines were established:

- 1) The Guardian should thoroughly repudiate, in writing, their document "The State of the Party-Building Movement."

2) The Guardian must accept political responsibility for that document. It cannot simply be excused by attempting to shift the responsibility for it to Silber.

B) El Comite-MINP

The SC is self-critical that it has failed to establish an ongoing liason with El Comite. Although El Comite has never carried through on its commitment to put forward its views on the OC, given the concrete context, the SC accepts primary responsibility for not ensuring that relations with El Comite were established. More fundamentally, the SC is self-critical that it has not yet taken up El Comite's line. It was correct to place secondary priority on this in view of the contradiction over Principle 18 and with the NNMLC, but some progress in this direction could have been made in the past year.

The SC's approach to El Comite should concentrate on clarifying El Comite's view of the Draft Plan. In the past, the core of El Comite's disunity with the OC process was the development toward a national pre-party organization which was contained in the Draft Resolution (of PWOC, SUB, DMLC, and PSO) and which El Comite believed was implicit in the formation of the OC. Several things should be raised with El Comite in relation to this:

- 1) The OC was not founded on the basis of the Draft Resolution but, on the contrary, was developed as the means to centralize struggle over precisely the kind of question which El Comite was raising.
- 2) While the conception of the OC as leading to a national pre-party organization may have been influential in the formation of the OC, it was not key. The key was the conception of tendency-wide centralized ideological struggle.
- 3) Those who put forward the Draft Resolution have criticized its conception of the OC process developing toward a national pre-party organization and, at least on this point, are willing to say that El Comite was right and they were wrong.

A plan for taking up the ideological struggle with El Comite will be drafted for consideration at the next SC meeting.

IV) Second National Conference

A) Local center discussion follow-up

In order to carry through on the unfinished discussion at the conference, the following steps were taken:

- 1) It was decided to prepare a packet containing the most advanced documents on local centers as well as some of the key documents from the "minority" within the Southern California Local Center (SCALC). It will also contain discussion questions and a plan for discussion throughout the OC.
- 2) The errors of the SC, the SCALC, and the "minority" relating to the development of the SCALC were summed up. See the appendix to this summary.
- 3) PF and DF were asked to make a visit to the SCALC in order to help resolve the contradictions there.

B) Conference proceedings

The proceedings will be published. The pamphlet will contain:

- 1) The OC's First Year (as amended)
- 2) The Struggle Over Principle 18 Summed Up
- 3) Draft Plan for a Leading Ideological Center (revised)
- 4) the SC evaluation

- 5) all resolutions (as amended)
- 6) the political summation of the conference by the SC
- 7) a self-criticism on racism at the conference
- 8) the SC's presentation on local centers

C) Conference evaluation

The SC had an extensive discussion which will be the basis for a formal SC summation of the conference. It will appear shortly.

V) SC Division of Labor

A) SC Executive Committee

The SC agreed that it smaller SC Executive Committee should be formed to meet (usually once) in-between SC meetings. Its role would be to give interim guidance, review documents, carry out SC tasks, and prepare SC meetings. Its role should be restricted; it could initiate, but could not finalize major departures from the lines and policies of the SC.

Executive Committee: CN (Chair), TV, TS

B) Task forces

In order to carry out the agenda agreed on at the Second National Conference, several subcommittees of the SC will be formed in order to assist it in carrying out its work on several of the main areas of work. These are a Local Center Task Force, an Ultra-Leftism Task Force, and an Anti-Racism Task Force.

Local Center Task Force: PF (Chair), DF, LR

Ultra-Leftism Task Force: JF (Chair), TS, PF, CN

Anti-Racism Task Force: LR (Chair), TV, JF

C) Education Director (see appendix for proposal)

An Education Director (DF) was appointed with primary responsibility for developing the consolidation around the 18 principles of unity, including organization of the conferences around the 18 principles which are planned.

D) Summary of responsibilities

CN: SC Chair, EC Chair, Ultra-Leftism Task Force

DF: Education Director, West Coast Region, *Local Center Task Force*

LR: Anti-Racism Task Force Chair, Local Center Task Force, National Minority Marxist-Leninist Conference follow-up

PF: Local Center Task Force Chair, Ultra-Leftism Task Force, Mid-West Region

JF: Ultra-Leftism Task Force Chair, Anti-Racism Task Force, Discussion Bulletin Editor, Recording Secretary, Mid-Atlantic Region, New England Region

TV: SC Secretary, EC, Anti-Racism Task Force, Southern Region

TS: EC, Ultra-Leftism Task Force

VI) NNMLC

The discussion was concerned with correctly assessing several recent moves of the NNMLC and establishing the correct strategy and tactics in relation to the NNMLC. First, was a proposal to the SC from the Steering Committee of the NNMLC for "joint work," mainly a debate on all aspects of party-building line. Second, are local initiatives undertaken by NNMLC Clubs in Seattle, Boston, and San Francisco more or

less along the lines of the proposal to the SC. What is conspicuous in the proposal and the various local initiatives is that they are all put forward in a conciliatory tone of "seeking unity." Additionally, a recent letter from the rectification forces to the Planning Committee of the National Minority Marxist-Leninist Conference is written in a marked change of tone over earlier communications. Self-importance and arrogance have yielded to a similar conciliatory tone.

In general, the NNMLC's new approach is to characterize the present period as "rectification versus fusion," and to put themselves forward as the "unitarians." In essence, it is splittism with an anti-sectarian cover. The sectarian core of their party-building line remains, the characterization of the present period as rectification versus fusion rather than Marxism-Leninism versus ultra-leftism.

The source of the NNMLC's shift in approach is to be found in the lack of success of their frontal attack on the OC. In summary:

- 1) the NNMLC has been unable to split the OC, or even to make significant progress in that direction;
- 2) the NNMLC is not growing, they are strong only in San Francisco, and there have been significant splits in the NNMLC ranks in NYC, Boston, and Washington; and
- 3) the various NNMLC initiatives have not achieved their objectives, the study projects are narrow and no OC group has endorsed the plan for a national anti-racist organization.

This has led to isolation and the need for the NNMLC to make inroads into the OC.

The SC's evaluation of the NNMLC's shift, and the correct response to this shift, is that:

- 1) it is only a tactical shift;
- 2) the OC's attack on the NNMLC's organizational opportunism has been successful;
- 3) the criticism of organizational opportunism should be deepened and care taken that this focus is not blurred;
- 4) those who advocate blunting the attack on the NNMLC's organizational opportunism for the sake of "political clarity" are seriously mistaken because, in fact, the concentrated expression of the political differences between the OCIC and the NNMLC is precisely the different approaches to forging a single center; and
- 5) in view of the many initiatives being undertaken by the NNMLC to draw OC forces into struggle with the NNMLC, the OC must be on guard against being forced into seeing the struggle with the NNMLC as the key task of the current period, or of getting bogged down in responding to the NNMLC, and being diverted from its agenda.

Finally, the SC cautioned OC comrades in areas where the NNMLC is strong to be especially on guard against taking a localist view of the contention with the NNMLC and realize that the resolution of the contradiction will be national and that, therefore, the local strategy must flow from the national strategy.

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SUMMATION OF ERRORS AROUND THE SCALC

At its meeting of October 13-14, the Steering Committee discussed at some length errors that were made in relationship to the struggle over Southern California's Local Center development. All of the errors described below were put forward at the OCIC's 2nd National Conference without benefit of a collective discussion by the Steering Committee. This paper is submitted as a follow-up report.

Errors of the National Steering Committee: The Steering Committee erred in regard to the struggle in Southern California in the following ways:

1. The Steering Committee failed to investigate fully the struggle over federationism which had been developing over the past year. When differences were reported to the national level, the SC did not follow up with a full exploration of the situation. Even when there were SC members who had more direct knowledge of the struggle, the SC failed to exert its leadership responsibilities to the extent that the struggle dictated. By not intervening at an earlier stage in the struggle, the SC objectively downplayed the depth and strength of federationism.

The fact that the SC believed that unity on the questions involved in the struggle was to have been arrived at by the time of the Labor Day Conference further speaks to the SC's error of underestimating the strength of the federationist line.

2. The Steering Committee further capitulated to a federationist approach to party building by allowing that delegates to the Labor Day Conference from Southern California be chosen on the basis of the federationist line in the Local Center. That is, delegates to the Labor Day Conference from Southern California were chosen both from the Local Center as a body and from the organization within it.

Errors of the Southern California Local Center SC: The Local Center Steering Committee also capitulated to a federationist line in the following ways (this self-criticism was raised by the co-chair at the Labor Day Conference):

1. To the extent that the struggle remained internal to the Steering Committee, the Local Center leadership capitulated to a federationist line. Movement-wide ideological struggle was not possible when kept within a small arena such as the Local Center Steering Committee. This had the effect of keeping the struggle internal to a circle existence. The Local Center membership could not, therefore, intervene and take up the struggle.
2. The Steering Committee of the Local Center held back informing the national SC of the depth of the struggle. Position papers were not released until several months after their dissemination locally. The Local Center leadership also underestimated the strength of the federationist line by thinking that unity was just around the corner and was going to be achieved by the Labor Day Conference.

Errors of the Minority Viewpoint: As regards the method of struggle during the OCIC national conference, those holding the minority position in Southern California erred by holding back their views on the struggle at the conference. By doing so the minority violated the democratic process. Full ideological struggle was impossible. The minority has the responsibility to state opposing views as clearly as possible in order to move the process of unity/struggle/unity forward.

General Lessons: It is important to point out general lessons for future practice:

1. Stronger leadership nationally needs to be exerted around the country in building Local Centers and Regional Centers.
2. Local Center leadership have the responsibility to consistently report on Local Center developments and struggles, especially in regards to struggles around federationism and racism.
3. Minority viewpoints must be written and communicated to the proper OCIC body.
4. Overall, the errors made in relationship to the Southern California experience were due to our underestimation of the strength of the federationist line within the OCIC. This points to the necessity of deepening our understanding of this question throughout the OCIC.