

## A Criticism of the OCIC Labor Day Conference

by the 2 Louisville delegates to the conference

We would like to state that we feel some important steps forward were made at the conference. In particular we feel the adoption of the draft plan, as amended, was a positive step. Secondly, the discussions at the conference about racism pushed forward our understanding of this critical question. Finally, a new Steering Committee was elected that we feel has the ability to provide the necessary leadership to accomplish our main tasks as set forth at the conference.

However, we also feel that some important weaknesses were very evident at the conference, weaknesses which will be essential for us to overcome at our future conferences.

1) There was inadequate preparation for the conference by its organizers. The distribution of documents, study guides and questions, proposals and resolutions to be voted on was done at a very late date or not until the first day of the conference. ~~Unfortunately~~ This clearly inhibited a thorough and democratic discussion from taking place on some important issues and proposals. For if only a few people understand the essence and main points of the debates and proposals, an informed discussion and vote on a proposal or resolution will be impossible.

Rectification: Major conference documents, study guides and questions, etc. should be sent out 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ -3 months ahead of time to all organizations, groups and individuals. Major resolutions by the SC should be sent out at least 6 weeks ahead of time. This would allow all members to be thoroughly prepared before hand. This would also enable OC organizations and individuals to write up their ideas and proposals, which the SC could distribute 3-4 weeks before the conference to all OCIC groups and individuals. (The SC or conference body can make decisions as to whether late proposals or resolutions will be put on the agenda for discussion.)

The process and procedure we have suggested above are just some general ideas we feel should be considered and implemented in one form or another. The important point we want to make is that we need well-defined rules and procedure for conference preparation that would allow for full, thorough, and democratic discussion of all the major questions that will be before us at a conference.

2) Some discussion and debate was difficult to follow for<sup>it</sup> would sometimes wander from one important point to another without having the original point fully discussed or resolved.

Rectification: A list of the most important points or areas to be discussed (for example, for a discussion of the OC's First Year and Draft Plan) could be proposed by the SC and possibly approved by the body before taking up discussion. Also some time limits for discussion of the important points could be suggested. These ideas could be implemented only if all major documents and resolutions were distributed to the groups and individuals weeks before the conference, so that the main points of agreement and controversy could be known ahead of time by the SC and the delegates. And the chair of the discussion should keep individuals on a major point in the discussion until it has been adequately discussed or resolved.

3) The chair had a strong tendency to ignore people whose faces they were not familiar with. And people in the back of the room did not get called on as much as the people in the front of the room.

Rectification: Chairs should be fully conscious of this natural tendency and strive to avoid making this mistake, otherwise it will act as a fetter on our having a full airing of all views among conference participants. Overall we feel the chairs did a good job in a very difficult situation, considering the inadequate preparation for the conference which contributed to the discussions being difficult to chair.

One fact that is important to recognize in all the above criticisms of the conference is that they hold back ideological consolidation and development of organizations and individuals within the OCIC. If groups and individuals within the OCIC cannot prepare adequately before a conference, or if they do not participate in a discussion because it is difficult to follow, or they cannot get called on during discussion, then all of these happenings will keep individuals from playing a role in the important ideological debates going on at the conference. And as a result, only a few of the most developed will be participating and making a contribution, a situation which will in the least, hold back the process of the OCIC.

Our final criticism concerns the discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the individuals on the Steering Committee. We in LWC have found from our own process of criticism/self-criticism, that an individual could gain more from an evaluation if strengths and weaknesses were broken down into major and minor categories. It could help an individual in understanding and rectifying the criticism if they knew what strengths were fully or partially developed and what weaknesses were major or minor. It could also help others in their emulation of a particular strength of a comrade.

Secondly, weaknesses that are listed should point out the principal and fundamental contradiction holding back that person from becoming a better communist. In doing so the individual will be more able to understand where his or her energies should go initially and over a long period of time in becoming a more developed revolutionary.

Finally, rectification should be proposed and followed up on for each cadre's weaknesses to help make sure they are sufficiently dealt with.

A Self-Criticism and a Clarification of the Criticism of DF made by  
a Louisville delegate at the OC National Conference in S.C. elections

I decided to write up this self-criticism and clarification because 1) as a communist I need to thoroughly criticize errors that I make, 2) others may be able to learn from my errors, 3) I want to offer some opinions on the process of the steering committee elections, and 4) I want to clarify the content of the criticism I tried to make as it involves the question of the criteria we use to choose leadership.

In my criticism of DF I made several serious errors--I did not adhere to some very important guidelines for criticism, self-criticism that have been developed by the communist movement. I have made similar errors in the past when giving criticisms, but thought that I had overcome the problem through a very careful study by the LWC of the purpose and guidelines of criticism, self-criticism which I led. After the study I was able to give constructive and comradely criticisms in a recent process of criticism, self-criticism in the LWC. The errors I made at the conference, however, showed me that I had not overcome the problem, that I had not fully internalized the importance of the guidelines. When the situation was more difficult--I was rushed, tense, frustrated, had conflicting demands on my time, and was angry with the chair of the meeting--I did not follow the guidelines. My experience at the conference has helped me to understand more fully the necessity of following the guidelines, especially in rushed and tense times.

One important error was that I did not state in my criticism of DF that his strengths as a communist were clearly dominant over his weaknesses, which is the reality. I should have started by saying that I feel that DF has made an important contribution to the development of our tendency in the Bay Area and that I respect his work, which I do.

A second error I made was that I did not clearly state the concrete and specific experience on which my criticism was based. My failure here was that I did not stress in the beginning that the criticisms I had of DF were based on experiences 1 1/2-2 years ago and that I did not personally know about his practice since that time. (I had, though, spoken with a trusted comrade in the Bay Area who agreed with the criticism, but this is not the same as personal experience.) If I had been clear that my experiences with DF were some time ago, this would have correctly left open the possibility of change by DF in these areas, as was pointed out at the conference.

A third error was that my criticism was not given in a comradely tone. A fourth error was my lack of adequate preparation for the criticism--due to some errors of localism our group as a whole did not begin early enough to prepare for the conference. More to the point though, the way I spent my time at the conference showed in retrospect that I did not give adequate time to preparing for the criticism.

In thinking after the conference about why the tone of my criticism of DF was so harsh, I realized that my anger was not towards DF, but towards the chair of the meeting--even though I had stated to the meeting that I had a significant criticism to make of DF, she did not call on me until someone else at the meeting asked that the criticism be stated. This in combination with her effort to prevent any nominations from the floor for the steering committee (others rejected this and nominations were called for) made me very angry at her undemocratic approach. (I recognize, however, that the chairs

of the conference had a very difficult job to do and I feel that overall they did a pretty good job.) The anger I felt towards the chair for her lack of democracy and the anger I felt about the rushed character of the elections (which is also undemocratic) came out when I was finally allowed to speak and give my criticism of DF. I accept full responsibility for my errors, for in no situation should I have allowed my tone to DF to be uncomradely, but these undemocratic aspects of the SC election process did make such errors more likely. (Some evidence that the harshness and anger in my tone was towards the chair and not to DF is that the day before I told DF that I would make a criticism of him and told him part of what I would say (the other part I did not think of until later) and my tone then was much more comradely than during the elections.)

The last thing I want to do is to clarify the content of my criticism of DF, which I feel is important in terms of the criteria we use for electing leadership. I stated at the conference that in my experience with DF, he did not show independent ideological initiative, but rather followed the PWOC line. Clay responded that I was questioning DF's political integrity. In thinking about it afterwards, I can see how my comments could have implied that DF was a flunkey of PWOC's line--this is what I want to clarify. Clay also asked how could DF have been effective in combatting the ultra-left line in the Bay Area without independent ideological initiative. My thoughts are that someone can combat an ultraleft line effectively on the basis of a theoretical critique developed in large part by others; many people in our tendency (including myself and the LWC) have benefitted from PWOC's critique of ultraleftism and have been better able to combat the ultraleft line using this critique. This is not the same thing, however, as playing an independent role in developing or significantly changing the basic concepts of our theory, strategy, and tactics. In terms of DF, what I was trying to say was that in my experiences with him I had not seen him seriously question or criticize any of PWOC's line, method, or approach. I am sure that he has thought carefully about it and has concluded that their line and approach validates and is consistent with his experience and study--and this is not flunkeyism. But neither is it evidence of independent initiative in forming or changing some of the basic concepts of our theory, strategy, and tactics.

At the conference and in the report on the steering committee, there was criticism of several steering committee members for not showing enough independent theoretical initiative and for not helping in the development of the overall strategic perspective of the OC and its main tasks--what I was trying to voice at the conference was that in my opinion DF would share in this weakness, and that I thought we needed more people on the SC who had shown some independent theoretical, strategic, and tactical initiative. DF has been elected--I voted for the slate and give him and the whole SC my full support. My criticism of DF based on my limited experience with him may be incorrect and I am open to that possibility as well as the possibility that if it was correct he may well have changed. What is important, however, is that in the election of leadership for the OC, we need to be able to criticize a comrade for the lack of independent theoretical, strategic, and tactical initiative without this being considered an attack on the comrade's political integrity. It is important because our tendency needs leadership which can further develop and improve our theory, strategy, and tactics.