

SUMMARY OF SC MEETING #4, MARCH 1979

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THE SECOND NATIONAL MEETING OF THE OC WILL BE SEPTEMBER 1-2.

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1) Chairperson's Report

Interrelated criticisms of the SC's work, and suggestions for improvement, that were made by MSU (Milwaukee Socialist Union), LAWG (Los Angeles Work Group), and COG (Chicago Organizing Group), were reported on and discussed.

Enclosed (Appendix #1) is a very useful summary of the criticisms raised by MSU, the Chairperson's response, and the MSU's reevaluation of their criticisms. The SC generally unites with the conclusions of this document. While many of the MSU's original criticisms had positive content, overall the perspective was one-sided because of a localist view of the tendency's development. Because the MSU had broken with the MA in Milwaukee, they should not have leapt to the conclusion that a break with that line was overdue nationally. Because there is no Guardian Club in Milwaukee and that line has little influence there, they should not have downplayed the significance of that line nationally and the struggle against it. The SC commended the MSU on their initiative in taking up the work of the OC.

In addition to the criticisms raised by MSU in this document, they also raised a criticism of the SC for not giving sufficient leadership to developments in the mid-West.

COG raised concerns about not getting enough leadership from the SC in general, and not getting enough leadership in mid-West regional consolidation in particular.

LAWG raised criticisms of the SC's failure to intervene sufficiently in the development of the Southern California Local Center (SCALC). Specifically, that the SC had failed to aggressively take up the struggle against federationist conceptions of the development of the OC process. The LAWG thinks there have been two situations related to the SCALC which demonstrate federationist tendencies. First, some have argued that the SCALC should be subordinate to the SOC. Second, the SOC did not unite with the SC's statement on the struggle against racism (included with the summary of the second SC meeting). This struggle developed into a two-line struggle within SOC but this struggle was kept within the organizational confines of the SOC although it was clearly an OC-wide question. The dispute, and the SOC's failure to unite with the SC's statement, was not communicated to the SC.

Additionally, LAWG raised general concerns about the lack of leadership from the SC.

The SC summed up and deepened the central criticisms of its work as follows:

- a) The SC has failed to develop a sufficiently clear and explicit overall perspective on the development of the OC. To the extent that it has developed this perspective, it has failed to communicate it to the OC as a whole. This has led to a general disorientation of the OC forces and has left them vulnerable to opportunist criticism of the OC.
- b) Although it has not bowed to localism and federationism, the SC has not pursued the struggle against these influences vigorously enough.
- c) There has not been enough systematic leadership of the SC.
- d) The SC has not given enough guidance to building the OC regionally.

In addition to these self-criticisms, the SC also criticized the lack of initiative from the base. This is related to the struggle against localism and federationism. To the extent that these tendencies dominate local OC forces, these forces will fail to take up the OC's problems as their own problems and expect all the initiative to come from the national SC.

The MSU is a positive example. After discussing the criticisms with the Chairperson and reevaluating them, the MSU has taken initiative in aiding the regional consolidation of the OC in the mid-West.

The SC summed up the necessary steps in rectification as follows:

- a) The SC must clarify its perspective on the development of the OC process and systematically communicate it to the OC. The SC's draft plan for an ideological center will make a big contribution, but other steps must be taken. In particular, a tactical approach to the NCN (National Clubs Network - the former Guardian Clubs), El Comite, and the Guardian, should be made clear. The significance of the contradiction within the tendency which each of their failures to join the OC represents should be clarified.
- b) A concerted struggle for the party spirit and against localism and federationism must be waged.
- c) Regional work must be put on a systematic footing.
- d) In general, the SC must step up the pace of its work and show more leadership initiative. The SC must develop into a more active and systematic body. SC work must be qualitatively transformed and put on the basis of conscious work plans and systematic sum-ups. This will make severe demands on the SC members. Their local organizations must free them up to make SC work their primary responsibility.

Several concrete steps in this rectification appear later in this summary.

In the course of the discussion summarized above, several important subsidiary points were developed:

- a) A rudimentary perspective on the OC's development: The key task facing the OC over the past year has been to consolidate its position within the broader movement and to establish its leading role in consolidating an anti-"left" trend. In part, this leading role is being won in the struggle against "left" internationalism, and in part in the struggle against those who oppose the conception of a common party-building effort. This is the underlying significance of the struggles with PUL's supporters and with the Guardian, and now with the NCN.

The struggle for leadership of the anti-"left" tendency should not be seen as a struggle of the OC, as an organizational form, for hegemony but rather as the struggle for hegemony of two political views which have guided the OC--the crucial need for the tendency to demarcate with "left" internationalism, and the crucial need of the tendency to join in a common party-building effort.

The first view has been widely discussed. The second derives both from the enormous magnitude of our tasks and from the need to thoroughly root out the "left" party-building conceptions which have dominated our movement and which continue to appear within the tendency.

The strength of the OC has been that it has been able to assume a leading role on the basis of principled struggle for these two key views.

b) A tactical approach to El Comite, the Guardian, and the NCN: The role of El Comite should be sharply distinguished from the role of the Guardian and the NCN. El Comite is not playing an active role in holding back the process of forging a common approach to consolidating the tendency. The Guardian and key elements within the NCN have played such a role. The Guardian's approach to party-building is, at this point, politically isolated. The focal point for defeating opposition to building a common center for the entire anti-"left" tendency therefore centers on the NCN.

Although the NCN has broken with the most sectarian aspects of the Guardian's party-building line, there is no clear evidence that they have made a real break with sectarianism. Joining the OC, or joining with the OC in discussion of building a common center for the entire anti-"left" tendency would represent such a break.

OC members who are in a position to do so should actively take the Organizing Committee Bulletin #2 to the NCN and take up struggle with them around those ideas.

In order to clarify the contradictions with the NCN, and Silber in particular, the SC decided that the internal Guardian Clubs Newsletters from Sept.-Oct. and Nov. should be made public within the OC. (Appendix #2) They are useful in gaining a clearer perspective on the significance of Silber's break with the Guardian's line and gaging the extent of Silber's break with sectarianism. They are being made public, despite their internal nature, for the following reasons:

- The ideological struggle has a significance to the tendency as a whole.
- They have already been widely, but unevenly, circulated outside of the Clubs. Hence there is no substantive violation of Guardian internal security.
- The split between the Guardian and the NCN is an accomplished fact. If this were not so, the publication of these documents within the OC could have exacerbated internal contradictions within the Guardian and interfered with its internal process.

2) Secretary's Report

a) OC Membership: The following organizations were admitted to OC membership.

New Unity (Springfield, Mass.), Red Boston Study Group (Boston, Mass.), and North Star Socialist Organization (Minneapolis, Minn.)

b) Publishing: 1. 700 copies of OCB #1 have been sold, 2. OCB #2, a reply to the Guardian's "State of the Party-Building Movement," is in print, and 3. the SC decided that a modest profit should be earned from the sale of OC Bulletins in order to provide a fund for future publishing.

c) Investigation

The investigation questionnaires go into considerable detail about the practical work of OC organizations. Since it has become clearer over the past year that the focus of the OC's activity must center on the tendency-wide ideological struggle and that organizational questions cannot be allowed to interfere with this perspective, questions have been raised about the appropriateness of the questionnaires.

The SC's view is that the questionnaires are appropriate. Although the OC (or the ideological center) is not going to lead practice, or to intervene organizationally in OC groups, it nevertheless has a responsibility to aid the

development of local organizations. In addition to ideological consolidation, the OC can foster the development of links between organizations engaged in similar practical activities, it can foster exchanges between groups with particular organizational problems and those who have solved these problems, etc.

d) Committee of Five Sum-Up

The SC decided that, although a systematic sum-up is clearly desirable, it does not have the importance of other matters which are pressing upon the SC's meager resources. The key error of the Committee of Five was the underestimation of the depth of the ideological contradiction around Principle 18. This error and its consequences, will be summed up as part of a sum-up of the entire Principle 18 process which the SC will do after the conferences are concluded.

e) Mailing List for OC Materials

All SC material will be divided into two categories--documents and internal material. The SC will develop two corresponding mailing lists for forces ^{inside} outside the OC.

3) Communications

a) Milwaukee Alliance and Milwaukee Socialist Union: The SC letter to the MA and MSU which was mentioned in the summary of the last SC meeting, but not included at that time, is enclosed as Appendix #3. The MSU has accepted the criticism.

b) Boston Party-Building Organization

All OC forces have received a long letter from the BPO concerning various details of the process around the Principle 18 conferences. The SC decided that only the matters BPO raised concerning the organization of the exchange which appeared in OCB#1 required a response. The response is enclosed as Appendix #4.

c) Southern California Local Center

The main points were:

1. The Principle 18 process "has been too drawn out with too little return. We think it was a mistake to let BPO determine the pace."
2. The SC should have continued doing propaganda around the question during the process of preparation of the papers in the exchange. In particular, "Dogmatism, the Main Enemy, and "Left" Opportunism" should have been distributed and its use advocated.
3. The SC needs to take more leadership in developing the West Coast region.
4. The LC is self-critical in not taking initiative around doing propaganda work around Principle 18 and in not raising the question about the delay in the Principle 18 process earlier.

The SC unites with 2-4 above. It will specifically address the question of West Coast leadership in the context of the next SC election. The SC disagrees, however, with the first point.

The SC did not "let BPO determine the pace." In the SC's opinion, the BPO did delay the process somewhat by the length of time they took to prepare their paper. But this was only a matter of a month or perhaps two. As we see it, the real problem is that the exchange wasn't initiated much earlier. The SC also disagrees that there has been "too little return." There has been a lot of very productive consolidation going on around Principle 18 nationally.

d) Boston Party-Building Organization: The BPO requested that the Revolutionary Worker's Headquarters, The Way Forward, and the Commentator Collective should be invited to the Principle 18 conferences. Each of these organizations holds that the main danger to party building is from the "left" but opposes Principle 18.

The SC recommended to the conference planning committee that the RWH, because of its importance in the movement, be invited to send an observer. The SC left the others up to the planning committee.

4) Local Centers

a) Washington DC

The PSO responded to the call for developing local centers by saying, in essence, that there was no need for a local center in Washington because the PSO is the OC in Washington.

The SC made the following points:

1. Our task is to consolidate the anti-"left" tendency, not merely the forces currently organized and relating to the OC.
2. It is of the utmost importance that OC forces recognize that the anti-"left" tendency is much broader than the OC. It includes many other organized and semi-organized forces and hundreds of individuals.
3. Generally, but particularly in the context of Washington DC, a narrow view of the tendency is objectively racist.
4. PSO's narrow view of the tendency is related to a federationist approach to the OC's efforts. This approach sees the OC primarily as a coming together of local organizations.

The SC has had preliminary discussion with PSO about these problems and will continue discussion. PSO has agreed that their conception of the OC process was objectively racist and are now open to helping to develop an LC in Washington. They will also take up the party-building question more seriously.

b) Southern California

The SC addressed three issues that have arisen with respect to the work of the SCALC:

1. The SC decided at its last meeting that local centers should have regular delegate status in OC meetings. SCALC questioned this, pointing out that it would lead to double counting since some LC members are members of OC organizations.

Admittedly, representation of local centers at this time raises problems. On the other hand, the interests in generating as broad a process as possible override these problems. These interests dictate that we give as full a role to local centers in the OC process as possible. We must break with the conception of the OC as merely a federation of organizations, with local centers as local federations. Most importantly, we must break with the idea that the OC needs to serve only itself, rather than the broad anti-"left" tendency. Local centers should become the focal points for drawing broad forces into a common party-building effort.

In light of this, the SCALC should send one delegate to the Principle 18 conference.

2. The question of the appropriateness of the LC participating in some local anti-imperialist work was raised.

The SC's thinking is that this is certainly appropriate--within some strict limits. These are:

- the level of political unity needed for participation can not be higher than the 18 points. Local centers must avoid projecting a level of unity which cuts them off from the broad scope of the anti-"left" tendency.
- a local center cannot direct practical work for the same reasons. But it could, for example, participate and build for a demonstration around a basic

issue which did not demand more elaborate politics than the 18 points.

- a local center cannot compromise its basic priorities--developing contacts and assessing local forces, consolidating around the 18 points, and organizing discussion around the perspectives of the OC and the SC.

In general, local centers must realize their limitations. They should not attempt to become organizational centers. But local centers can make considerable contributions to the development of practical work. In addition to limited direct practical work, and more significant, a local center can serve to build links between individuals, study groups and local organizations around areas of practical activity. It can call together the tendency's forces for discussion of various areas of practical work - Weber case, trade unions, police repression, etc. It can also serve as the focal point for national communications and link-ups around areas of work.

3. The SCALC asked for guidance in what ideological tasks it could take up. The SC outlined the following possibilities:

- a forum on the history of the OC and its significance
- discussion and struggle around the Principle 18 exchange or the forthcoming reply to the Guardian
- study groups around the 18 points
- discussion and struggle around OC related issues that have arisen in the local center--federationism and the struggle against racism

5) Regions

In order to rectify some of the weaknesses in building the OC, the SC outlined the following approach:

- a) Six regions were established--Northeast (down to Philadelphia), South (up to Baltimore), West Coast, Mid-West (including Buffalo), ^{Central} West, and Southwest.
- b) Building the OC will be carried out on a regional basis with an SC member taking responsibility for each section. The ^{Central} West and Southwest regions are not yet assigned. Developing an approach to that work will be taken up in the future.
- c) The tasks in each region will be:
 1. identifying forces, determining the key centers of movement activity
 2. determining what each force is contributing to party building and to the OC process
 3. outreach, developing the presence of the tendency and the OC (bringing people in contact, breaking down isolation, etc.)
- d) Each SC member with this responsibility will prepare a perspective on developing work in their region for consideration at the next SC meeting. It should include priorities and an estimate of what can be expected in the coming period.

6) Principle 18 Conferences

- a) The OC will finance $\frac{1}{2}$ airfare for the speakers for the West Coast conference by assessing all of the participants in the conferences \$2.
- b) The SC decided that SC members should go to the conferences as SC delegates, not as delegates of local organizations. This is part of the ongoing effort to break down the conception of the OC as a federation of local organizations.
- c) The SC will submit the following resolution to each conference:

Whereas no viable revolutionary current can make a practice of collaborating with its own ruling class; and

Whereas all the advocates of 'left' internationalism have developed a

practice based on collaborationism with U.S. imperialism to one degree or another; and

Whereas 'left' internationalism shares with other major aspects of the ultra-left line an absurdly 'left' approach to the struggle against right opportunism generally and revisionism in particular; and

Whereas the break with 'left' internationalism formed the watershed of the ultra-left line in the party building movement; and

Whereas the formulation--"U.S. imperialism is the main enemy of the peoples of the world"--separates the advocates of 'left' internationalism from the adherents of proletarian internationalism;

Be it resolved that it is correct to uphold the identification of U.S. imperialism as the main enemy of the world's peoples as a correct line of demarcation for building a trend in opposition to ultra-leftism.

d) It was brought to the attention of the SC that some OC comrades have abandoned the effort to bring national minority comrades to the conferences and have, in essence, left the task to the planning committee for the National Minority Conference.

The SC emphasized that the development of the National Minority Conference should in no way relieve white comrades from their tasks. To allow this to happen is simply objective racism.

7) Federationism

The SC decided that although it has not bowed to federationist tendencies, it has been in error in not taking up a more vigorous struggle against federationism and for the party spirit. The SC was self-critical, for example, that although it had requested that delegations to the Principle 18 conferences should not be bound by organizational discipline, it had failed to properly lay the political basis for this request.

a) A draft letter to the OC on the political basis for requesting that organizations not bind their delegations was discussed and someone assigned to produce a final version for circulation.

b) The question of federationism with respect to the SC itself was discussed.

There are strong forces pushing SC members towards objectively belittling their SC work. Between relatively infrequent SC meetings they return to active local organizations and tend to get drawn into their organization's internal dynamics to the extent that they lose sight of the tendency-wide problems.

In order to help rectify this, the SC as a collective will exert more supervision of the work of its members. SC members will develop work plans and progress will be evaluated regularly. The SC views the coming period as crucial for the development of the OC.

c) The SC will develop a plan for a campaign against federationism within the OC.

1. An SC member was assigned to write a statement on federationism to be considered at the next meeting.

2. The LAWG has been asked to prepare a short program of study materials.

8) National Minorities Conference

Plans are moving forward very well. Written material on the conference will be available around the first of April. There have been many requests for information. The planners expect at least 60 people.

a) El Comite and Bruce (from the KDP) will come to the conference as observers. It is the perspective of the planning committee that only those who are open to struggle for unity to forge a single center for the tendency should come as delegates to the conference.

There has been some controversy about this and some charges of sectarianism have been leveled against the OC and the planning committee around this perspective. A statement on this will be prepared.

b) The planning committee has encountered numerous instances of objective racism in connection with its work. These include:

1. the tendency to rely too much on the national minority conference and its planners to recruit national minority comrades to the OC, thus downplaying the responsibility of white comrades in building the multinationality of the OC and tendency--particularly by taking up the struggle against racism.

2) the attitudes and actions of some OC and tendency organizations in putting forth that a national minority comrade in their organization should participate in the planning committee. First, some organizations were objectively using a national minority member to bolster their position in the OC and tendency. Second, there was objective paternalism on the part of some white comrades in OC organizations towards the national minority comrade in their organization. This came out in these white comrades taking up with the planning committee why "their" minority comrade wasn't being invited to the planning committee--rather than leaving it up to the national minority comrade to take it up with the planning committee. In addition, there was not enough struggle against the subjectivity that resulted from certain OC national minorities not being chosen to be on the planning committee. Some organizations were counting on the conference to bolster their credibility with national minority comrades; and some were counting on the planning committee to struggle with a minority comrade rather than struggling with him/her themselves, i.e. being liberal.

The planning committee is drawing up a letter around these criticisms to be circulated among OC members.

c) A charge of objective paternalism has been leveled against the OC's sponsorship of a national minorities conference.

The SC's perspective is this: If the OC had not taken up the task it would have been objectively racist. The fact is that the organized expression of the anti-"left" tendency is overwhelmingly white. The problem of organizing the national minority section of the tendency is a problem for the already organized section. It was correct for the organized expression to recognize the special problem of the underrepresentation of national minority comrades and take steps to solve this problem.

d) Finances: In order for the OC to meet its financial obligations with respect to the National Minorities Conference, a special assesment approximately equal to the original OC dues will be made. It was pointed out that the minutes of the first SC meeting says: "The SC views this conference as a high priority and is committed to provide whatever financial or logistical support is necessary."

9) Draft Plan for an Ideological Center

A preliminary draft plan was discussed. A final draft will be prepared for the next SC meeting.

10) Sum-up of the OC's First Year

The SC had a preliminary discussion on a sum-up of the first year. It will be completed at the next meeting.

11) National Meeting

The SC set the dates of September 1-2, 1979 for the next national meeting of the OC.