

OCIC
NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT
on the
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA LOCAL CENTER
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NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT

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Introduction

The National Steering Committee of the OCIC (NSC) was invited to come to the Los Angeles area to investigate a struggle over the building of a Local Center in Southern California. From the time that a concrete plan for building a Local Center was advanced by the NSC in September of 1978 for the Southern California Local Center there has been a growing controversy and struggle over the national perspective. Because the NSC failed to intervene at an earlier stage, the first time that the struggle was brought to the full attention of the OCIC was at its second national conference. As a result, two members of the NSC were sent to investigate the controversy. This report is a summation of this investigation.

Our goals for the visit to Southern California were three fold: First, we hoped that the National Steering Committee could further its understanding of the strategic importance of building local centers and the contradictions involved from the local experience in Southern California. We wanted to deeply investigate the issues and raise various lessons for a national summation on building local centers. Second, we wanted to intervene in the local situation and try to carefully clarify the national perspective, identify the differences and offer our own view of how to move the process forward. Third, during our trip we wanted to help local forces more fully understand the national OCIC's perspective on various local center related issues.

Based on our investigation we have concluded that the Southern California Local Center leadership has generally upheld the OCIC's developing national conception of the local center. Arising in opposition to this perspective has been a minority of OCIC comrades in the Los Angeles area who hold, we believe, incorrect views on a number of issues which are federationist. The bulk of our report will try to address these concerns. It is important to point out that errors made by the National Steering Committee and the Southern California Local Center Steering Committee have in some ways contributed to the federationist errors. By examining these errors, as well as highlighting our differences with the minority's perspective, we hope to draw out lessons for all OCIC members, especially for those presently engaged in building local centers around the country.

Let us first turn our attention to a brief review of the party building perspective of the OCIC on Local Centers.

OCIC Party Building Perspective and Local Centers

Below are listed three key aspects of our party building approach at this time and their relationship to Local Centers:

1. The key party building task in this period is theoretical. The Local Center is to become the main arena for the bulk of the tendency's forces in taking up our theoretical tasks at the local level.
2. The theoretical center of the movement must be distinct from the centers that direct practice in the movement. Directing centers for practice must operate from a higher level of political unity than can exist in the local center. The basis of unity of the local center is only the 18 Principles of Unity and the need for a single, national center for the movement's theoretical work. To violate this basis of unity by imposing on OCIC adherents a higher level of political unity would be sectarian.
3. The ideological struggle must be movement-wide. Our key task in this regard is to strive to unite the tendency on a principled, non-sectarian basis (the Principles of Unity and a single center). We must ensure the full participation of all OCIC adherents in the ideological struggle. This is particularly important at the local center level.

In sum, the tasks of the local center are the same as that of the OCIC as a whole: to elaborate a program, strategy and tactics for the US revolution and to unite the tendency on a principled basis. The OCIC's ability to carry out these two tasks will depend in large part on the success of the local centers. This is why we understand the building of local centers to be of strategic importance.

But what about practice and the role of cadre organizations in all of this? What does the OCIC say about this?

The OCIC encourages the formation of directing centers for practice. The summation of advanced practice will greatly benefit our theoretical tasks. Local Centers will be key arenas for providing a context for summing up advanced practice in order to advance our theoretical work on a particular question. For example, advanced experience in the anti-racist movement or the anti-imperialist movements or the trade unions - should all be brought to bear as an integral part of our developing theoretical conceptions.

The OCIC encourages various forms of communist practice. These include: cadre organizations, national fractions within trade unions and areas of mass movements, and other forms for directing practice in the country. OCIC Centers will encourage people in their various formations to coordinate practice where possible, although the OCIC Center cannot provide the direction for them.

Cadre organizations will play an important role in the process of party building. Cadre organizations are able to carry out work which the OCIC and later the IC cannot do and can make particular contributions to the OCIC process in three important ways:

1. Through correct practice, cadre organizations can help build the multi-nationality and working class character of the OCIC;
2. Through correct practice, cadre organizations can contribute to the development of all sided communist cadre. The OCIC contributes to certain aspects of cadre formation. A local democratic centralist organization can help form people as agitators in the class, instill an understanding of communist organizational principles, etc.;
3. A cadre organization can be an important form for testing many of the theoretical views developed in the OCIC, although this, of course, is voluntary.

In sum, it is important to understand fully that the theoretical center for the tendency cannot direct practice. While these two arenas, the theoretical and practical, will undoubtedly benefit each other in the party building movement, they must be kept distinct. Failure to insure this will lead to federationist errors.

Federationism

While recognizing the positive contributions of cadre organizations and centers for guiding practice it is important to not allow these forms to fetter the ideological struggle. Our draft plan calls for centralized ideological struggle. It does so to avoid the legacy of the ultra-left party building efforts where competition between organizations predominated over a process conducive to principled unification. Ideological struggle, historically, has taken the form of struggle between organizations, rather than between political lines held by individuals, even where those lines cut across organizational divisions. Within a single center, ideological struggle is taken out of the straight jacket of competing circles. Every cadre in the tendency participates in the ideological struggle as an individual, not bound by organizational discipline. In this way ideological unity is forged between individual Marxist-Leninists around leading line.

The OCIC's approach is explicitly geared to avoid a federationist approach to party building. Federationism reflects an incorrect party building line on organizational questions. A federated party is one in which independent organizations federate with one another, maintaining their independent political perspectives, leadership, and circle existence. The political basis of unity of a federated party cannot be higher than the lowest common denominator, or the common basis between the various circles. Therefore, the line can be no higher than the lowest level of unity. A Leninist party should not be a coalition of local groups, but a single organization of cadre united on a common line and a leading center.

In sharp contrast, a non-federationist approach to party building stresses the need to forge a leading center, and political line which stands above the local organizations, and shapes the process of the tendency's development. The only way a leading center can be forged is for local circles to approach the ideological struggle without binding instructions constraining individual participation. In the present context of our tendency, very few are explicitly arguing for building a federated party, but many of our attitudes about maintaining our circles reflect a federationist outlook.

History of the Local Center in Southern California

In September of 1978 the National Steering Committee advanced a concrete plan for building a local center in Southern California. The plan called for the formation of a Steering Committee which would reflect the composition of the OCIC forces in the area. Outreach to the organized tendency's forces was the primary task of the center. Other tasks were taking up national OCIC issues, sponsoring forums, consolidating OCIC forces around the 18 Principles of Unity.

Based on this plan, a Steering Committee was established in October of 1978. Six members served, two comrades from each of the three OCIC organizations in the area. All members were selected by their respective groups - the Socialist Organizing Committee (SOC), the Los Angeles Work Group (LAWG), and the Los Angeles Organizing Committee (LAOC).

The plan made clear from the beginning that members of organizations who serve on the Local Center Steering Committee were primarily responsible to the national process and the Local Center, not their circles. The plan stressed that Steering Committee members could not in any way be bound to organizational instructions, though guidance by local circles was encouraged. The plan made clear that the local center was to take a shape and process of its own unimpeded by any narrow circle pursuit.

The OCIC party building perspective was not yet fully defined at this time. It was still in its developmental stage because it lacked the benefit of testing in practice. Due to this, the plan had certain weaknesses:

1. It could not yet fully define its tasks in relationship to the OCIC forces in the area. The original plan lacked an understanding of the strategic importance of all members of circles fully participating in the Local Center and as individuals in the ideological struggle. Because of this, the plan never made clear how the local center was to move to a membership structure after the establishment of the steering committee.

This weakness was responsible, in part, for the Local Center Steering Committee's failure to open up the struggle to the membership at large for discussion and debate. From October of 1978 when the Steering Committee was formed until June of 1979, the struggle remained within the confines of leadership only.

Local Center members who were in circles and two individuals did not have the opportunity to participate in the struggle until well after lines had been consolidated and the resignation of one member of the Steering Committee. Because the local center membership did not function as a membership body of the OCIC, lines of communication were non-existent between the Steering Committee of the LC and the base. During this time, two of the three organizations dissolved; consequently, members of these circles had no formal relationship or communication with the Local Center.

2. The plan did not fully define Local Center tasks in relationship to the tendency at large. The plan lacked a full understanding of the strategic importance of local centers in providing a principled, non-sectarian arena for the unification of the anti-"left" tendency. The emphasis in the plan was on outreach to the organized party building forces in the area, and little understanding of the importance of uniting with individuals in our movement given the fragmentation and racism of the tendency.

This unclarity was partly responsible for some initial confusion as to the role of cadre organizations and the role of individuals in the Local Center. It helped to strengthen a circle approach to the building of the Local Center.

In addition to the specific weakness of the original concrete proposal for the building of a Local Center in Southern California, there were other errors made by the National Steering Committee:

1. The NSC failed to consolidate itself around the developing OCIC party building approach as soon as it could have. This impeded the ability of the NSC to offer more timely concrete guidance locally;
2. The NSC failed to probe deeper into the struggle locally, so that it could more effectively sum up the practice. Because of this error, the NSC did not intervene in the struggle at an earlier, less consolidated stage.

The Local Center Steering Committee in Southern California also bears a good deal of responsibility for contributing to federationist errors. Because the struggle remained internal to the SC for a long period of time, the Local Center membership was not able to participate in the struggle, and the NSC was not fully informed of the depth of the differences. Position papers were not released to the national until months after their dissemination locally. These errors had the effect of impeding movement-wide ideological struggle and of nurturing a circle existence on the Steering Committee itself.

In the main, the above describes the chief errors made by the National Steering Committee and the Southern California Local Center Steering Committee which contributed to the federationist line on Local Centers.

Let us return to the question of the original plan of 9/78 advanced by the National Steering Committee for the Los Angeles area. It is important to understand that the NSC's perspective on Local Centers was a developing one throughout the past year and a half. While the weaknesses in the plan gave certain strength to federationist errors, we believe that the plan was generally correct. It was based on the concrete local conditions of Southern California in its particulars, and was based on the OCIC's party building approach in general. Based on the practice of the Southern California Local Center, the NSC further developed the non-sectarian party building perspective and the strategic conception of Local Centers.

The "minority" view of the plan of 9/78, however, suggests that the plan was not based on the concrete conditions of Southern California. The "minority" view is critical of the NSC for advancing a plan which did not speak to the "unique" conditions of the area. During our discussions with comrades of the "minority" view, the following reasons were given for Southern California, and in particular Los Angeles, being "unique":

1. there was an absence of a cadre organization in the LA area;
2. the leadership of the Local Center were individuals only who lacked a base in the working class; and
3. the local center was obstructing the process of building an area cadre organization because it diverted energies away from practical work in the mass and class movements.

In addition, the "minority" view is critical of how the National Steering Committee developed its party building perspective in relation to Local Centers. That is, the "minority" holds the view that the national leadership of the OCIC changed their perspective on party building "mid-stream" without a vote of the entire OCIC. The "minority" view comrades rejected the notion that the NSC perspective was a developing understanding over the past year and half and that the weaknesses of the original plan were due to an underestimation of federationism.

The NSC believes that these views of the "minority" are a reflection of a failure to grasp the OCIC party building perspective and the struggle against federationism and racism.

Federationist Errors of the "Minority" Perspective

The NSC believes, based on its investigation, that the federationist approach or circle approach to party building has held back the full implementation of the national Steering Committee's perspective on OCIC Centers. The "minority" view has not correctly grasped the relationship between cadre organizations and the local center, the role of individuals and the role of practice in the OCIC process. The NSC believes that the "minority" perspective made errors by:

1. seeing the development of cadre organizations as primary over the development of the local center;
2. failing to grasp the role that individuals play in the OCIC process. These incorrect views on individuals are also responsible for the

inability to understand how to build the multi-nationality of the OCIC.

3. failing to correctly understand the relationship of practice in the class and mass movements to the OCIC process.

Below are listed a number of examples of federationist errors on the part of the "minority" perspective which illuminate the points made above. Quotations are taken from various position papers of the "minority" view over the past few months. In each case the NSC has tried to reflect discussions with comrades during the investigation in Southern California.

1. On the Role of Cadre Organizations in Local Centers

The situation in the Southern California Local Center was complicated by the fact that the Local Center developed simultaneous to SOC's plan to recruit many of the Los Angeles comrades into its organization. While the two processes were kept organizationally distinct, the NSC felt in their discussions that comrades from the "minority" perspective put the building of a regional cadre organization primary over build the Local Center. This was manifested in a number of ways:

- a. viewing the Local Center as less important than the "real" plan for a cadre organization;
- b. viewing the Local Center as an unhealthy "half-way station" for individuals who didn't want to join SOC or who didn't want to do work in the class or mass movements;
- c. the final conclusion that local centers should not be built without a cadre organization.

The following quotes from position papers of the "minority" perspective draw these lessons more clearly:

"Up to this point in time the LA Center has as yet to recruit anyone to the center. What are the primary reasons for this? It cannot be attributed to the dedication of the comrades involved. What are the reasons for this situation?...There is no OC Cadre organization in LA that functions in the class and mass." (A's Paper of 3/12/79, p. 14)

"We have concluded from our LA experience that the formation of a LC in an area devoid of any cadre organization should not be encouraged. If a local center is formed in such an area, then steps should be taken to immediately develop an organization that can engage in systematic practice, summing up that practice, and testing of theory." ("Minority Analysis" paper of 10/26/79, p. 10)

Concerning the first statement above, it is the opinion of these NSC members that the reason there was little success in winning over tendency forces to the OCIC was due to the lack of consolidation around a developed OCIC party building perspective by the Steering Committee locally. Without this, the outreach work could not be effectively carried out. It was not the result of an absence of a local cadre organization. In addition, and more importantly, this statement implies that people cannot be won over to the ideological work of the OCIC, but rather on an hidden agenda of a cadre

organization.

This view is a federationist error. It puts the task of building a local cadre organization (a circle) primary over the task of building a local center (a formation for the purpose of breaking down circles in the ideological struggle).

There are important areas of the country where local centers should be built but where there is no cadre organization. St. Louis is an example. There are individuals in this city who can play an important role in winning tendency forces to the OCIC. This task has nothing to do with building a cadre organization. To put forward the primacy of cadre organization view negates the primacy of the national process and holds back the party building movement.

It may be that as a result of comrades coming together in a local center formation, a circle which directs practice may emerge. In this case, it must be very clear to all that the process of building the circle must be separate and distinct from the building of the Local Center.

2. Recruitment Into the Circle and the Local Center

A second error of the "minority" perspective comrades was their failure to keep the task of the Local Center's and the cadre organization's recruitment distinct. At one point, a serious proposal was presented to the Local Center Steering Committee suggesting that it was the responsibility of the Local Center to help build OC cadre organizations and to encourage people to join cadre organizations as part of the Local Center work. Through discussions during the investigation, the NSC learned that presently the position of the "minority" is that the Southern California Local Center should have played a more active role in encouraging Local Center members to join SOC and to help build a regional cadre organization. The following quotes point to this:

"In January the SOC representatives proposed to the Local Center that ONE (emphasis in the original) of the tasks or functions of the LA Center would be to help recruit individuals into SOC. It is not the position of SOC that the fundamental or basic political tasks of the center is to recruit to SOC. Nevertheless, SOC does feel that it is a political responsibility of the center to help build local OC cadre organizations where possible. Bazaar as it might seem, members of the center are opposed to having one of the functions of local centers to help build local cadre organizations. They are opposed to help recruit to SOC." (A's paper of 3/12/79, p. 10)

"The Center should actively encourage Local Center participants who share political unity with a local cadre organization to explore the possibility of organizational unity with that organization. We think that the value and necessity for cadre organizations in this period of our development should be pointed out as part of the Local Center's work." ("A Beginning Analysis from the Minority Perspective", 8/31/79, p. 3)

These are further examples of the federationist error of putting the local circle's development ahead of the national process. To put forward the view that one of the responsibilities of the Local Center is to recruit to SOC seriously violates the principled basis of unity of the Local Center and the OCIC. In other words, if one of the responsibilities of the Local Center is to recruit to SOC, the Local Center would only become a sectarian front for the local cadre organization. SOC's political basis of unity, which is at a higher level, would then become the basis of unity of the Local Center.

The entire history of the anti-revisionist movement in this country has been precisely this. Recruitment to a particular circle's political line substituted for movement-wide ideological struggle. The only way in which one could contribute to the party building movement was by joining a circle which operated under an already defined political line developed outside of a movement wide struggle.

Secondly, what would happen if there was more than one cadre organization in the Local Center? The LC would have to direct people to one or the other competing circles.

Lastly, it must be noted that the NSC has no disagreement with members of a center "who share political unity with a local cadre organization to explore the possibility or organizational unity with that organization." It is well known that the OC looks favorably upon communists joining practical centers. But this is different than saying that it is a task of the Local Center to build or recruit for local organizations. This would only compromise the tendency-wide character of the centers.

3. Movement-Wide Ideological Struggle and the Local Center

Early in the process of building the Local Center in Southern California the federationist view that cadre of democratic-centralist organizations should not "prepare" for OCIC political line struggles under the leadership of the Local Center was advanced. The first time this question came to the fore in Southern California was during the preparation process for the Point 18 conference. SOC believed that since their organizational form was a higher level of organization, their cadre's preparation should be done primarily under the organization's leadership.

"It is the opinion of SOC that the local cadre organization of the OC should not place their internal ideological and political development under the jurisdiction of the local center." (A's paper of 3/12/79, p. 8)

"Point 4 of I's paper says 'preparation of local forces for the Point 18 conference'. This, to SOC means that the local center is to 'prepare' SOC comrades for the March conference. Prepare how and through what method? Perhaps I means that somehow the local center will make sure that the SOC delegation to the conference is acquainted with all the documents, has studied them and has clarity on all of the basic questions. SOC believes that such a conception of the role and

function of the local center is incorrect and doesn't take into account the internal political and ideological life of SOC." (A's paper of 3/12/79, p. 9)

The above quotes were taken from position papers written in early March. They are views which are no longer held by the "minority" view comrades. In fact, later in the process of preparation for Point 18, SOC comrades did participate in Local Center preparations. The NSC felt it important to raise the issue in order to learn the lessons for the national process.

In our effort at breaking down the circle existence in the ideological struggle, it will be necessary that all OCIC forces participate in a common arena under common leadership for all OCIC discussions and debates.

Though organizations/circles are free to conduct whatever internal discussions they wish, all circles must be willing to see the Local Center as the primary arena for ideological struggle. Circle discipline must not guide the participation of comrades in the Local Center. If OCIC members who are also in circles do not participate in the movement-wide struggle freely, the whole purpose of creating the Local Center will be defeated.

Let's pose another situation. If all members of the Local Center had joined SOC before the Point 18 conference, would there still have been a role for the Local Center in preparation? The NSC's perspective is that this would have changed nothing. The primary arena for the ideological struggle must be the OCIC centers. OCIC centers provide the context for a movement-wide process where political line struggles are in full view of the tendency and not kept subject to the democratic-centralist discipline of a cadre organization. All individuals in a circle must stand as an individual in the ideological struggle. All opposing positions and struggles must be before the movement as a whole and not kept behind circle walls. A movement-wide process of political line development cannot succeed otherwise.

4. The Local Center as a Process Separate from a Local Circle and the Need for a Distinct Leadership Body

In discussions with the "minority" perspective comrades, it became clear that they did not view the Local Center SC as a legitimate leadership body. Partly this was due to errors of the Local Center SC in keeping much of its discussions bottled up in the SC for so long. But much more importantly, seemed to be their implied view that "real" leadership should be exercised by local cadre organizations. In the following quotes the view of putting the cadre organization's leadership over the Local Center's leadership comes out sharply:

"Until we enter the next stage of development, the leadership of local centers must of necessity come from local cadre organizations. If we reject this view, then where will local center leadership come from? SOC says, based on our analysis of the LA center and its work, there are

no 'individuals' that can provide 'leadership' for the center outside OC organization. Real authoritative leadership here in LA can only come from local cadre organization that have practice in the class and mass." (A's paper of 3/12/79, p. 13-14)

"SOC believes that the source of the problem rests on the 'plan' (of 9/78) and its conception of local centers as independent political entities responsible in the first place to the NSC, then to itself, and lastly, if at all, to the local cadre organizations. SOC believes that this conception of local centers is not valid at this time and is premature. We are saying that at some time in the future, such a conception of a local center could be correct, could be possible - however, SOC says that there could also be other organizational methods to create an area wide leadership." (A's paper of 3/12/79, p. 10)

There are at least two important lessons to draw from the above quotes:

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- a. The confusion expressed on the question of the local center as a separate political unit is the result of not understanding the importance of maintaining the distinctness of the two parallel processes in the party building movement. The centers for guiding practice must be separate from the movement's theoretical center. The Local Center must be a separate entity - over and above the discipline of any circle within it and primarily responsible to the national process.
 - b. OCIC leadership bodies must be selected primarily on the basis of the ability of individuals to place the interests of the tendency over the interests of any circle within it. OCIC leadership is not necessarily going to be party leadership. Party leadership will come from a number of different formations. By promoting one's own circle leadership as the only qualified leadership of the OCIC is to put one's circle existence above the interest of the tendency as a whole. Given that most circles and their leadership are white, this is racist as well.
- Bullshit!!

It was unclear to the NSC by reading the documents what the root of this view toward leadership of the Southern California Local Center was. Did comrades believe that no individual should be allowed to serve as leadership on a local center regardless of who it is? Or did comrades have criticisms of the specific individuals which were on the Local Center SC in Southern California?

Based on discussions with both the "minority" and "majority" perspective comrades, the NSC would conclude that this incorrect view on the question of individuals emerged in the context of the individuals on the LC Steering Committee deciding not to join SOC. Because comrades did not join the organization, they were viewed as manifesting bourgeois individualism. Comrades' inability to distinguish between the two separate processes is responsible for their incorrect attitude toward the specific individuals on the SC as well as an incorrect view toward individuals in leadership of the OCIC in general. Thus, "majority" comrades outside of SOC were judged primarily by their attitude toward SOC, rather than in relationship to their Local Center work.

The following statements from the most recent paper by the "Minority" perspective (10/26/79) supports the NSC's opinion:

"If individuals come to use the Local Center and the Steering Committee as half-way stations which afford them the opportunity to still be part of the mainstream (and even occupy leadership positions) while ignoring practical base building, then the whole plan of the local centers will begin to work against the future of the OCIC." (p. 9)

"A Local Center composed of individuals none of whom belong to an organizational form that guides or summarizes practice, will more than likely transform the Local Center into a separate political unit or circle." (p. 9)

Such a one-sided view of the role of individuals in the party building movement will not move forward our theoretical tasks, will not move forward the multi-nationality of our movement, and will only enhance our circle existence. In addition, this view reflects a sectarian attitude in that it would narrow our leadership to only those who work directly in the mass movements of the class denying the contributions of revolutionary intellectuals who are not directly involved in mass work.

5. The Federationist Line and the Racism of the Communist Movement

Threaded throughout all of the NSC discussions with the "minority" view comrades was the racist aspect of their federationist positions. The NSC understands that this is perhaps the most difficult for white comrades to understand because it has been a blind spot in our movement. The racist errors of the communist movement have yet to be thoroughly summed up and internalized. Because of this failure, the NSC believes it important to raise our concerns regarding racism within the context of understanding what the racist errors of the communist movement have been historically.

Racism in the Communist Movement: In the party building movement as well as in the class at large, unity must be achieved on the basis of our politics, on the basis of our class stand and how that is expressed concretely. There is no unity more basic or fundamental than our politics. For today, in the party building movement, that political line is expressed concretely on our attitude toward how to move forward the revolutionary forces in this country and how to develop our program.

When white comrades fail to grasp the primacy of this question, racism often characterizes relationships with national minority comrades. This manifests itself in a number of ways. Below are listed some common examples:

- a. In many instances comrades operate off of the assumption that national minority comrades have a more fundamental basis of unity than political line - skin color or national oppression. A typical example of this is when white comrades will discuss anti-racist work or racism or questions of practice in general, but will not discuss theoretical questions of the party building movement. White comrades will discuss the "national question" but not other party building questions with national

minority comrades. In our mass work and trade union work, white comrades make racist errors by only giving national minority advanced workers propaganda related to racism, but not on other issues facing the working class. Oftentimes, white comrades will not struggle with national minority comrades over party building questions, but will attempt to find unity on questions of practice, instead. The underlying assumption is that national minority comrades and advanced workers are not interested in such questions, or are not able to take up such questions, or are not able to contribute to such discussions - in other words that party building questions are for whites only.

- b. Another way in which this error is manifested is in the failure of the communist movement to insure the theoretical development of national minority cadre and promoting their leadership in the party building movement. We find that oftentimes national minority comrades are promoted to leadership positions, but not developed in the necessary theoretical skills required to advance the party building movement. In other cases, national minority comrades are not promoted to leadership positions but are instead assigned to practice in the mass and trade union movements. Leadership of our party will undoubtedly come from these areas, but it is important to insure that these contributions are brought to the center of the party building movement so that the most advanced can lead.

What does this have to do with federationism? First, we must have a proper overview of the state of the tendency at the present time:

- a. most circles in the OCIC are predominantly, if not in most cases entirely, white
- b. most of the advanced within the tendency outside of circles are national minority comrades involved in areas of mass practice for the most part.

Given that a key task before us in the OCIC is uniting the tendency, we are largely talking about uniting with national minority comrades.

In the context of this situation, the "minority" view comrades advance the following positions:

- a. building cadre organizations are primary over building the LC;
- b. individuals should not play a leading role in Local Centers;
- c. practice of the circles, in effect, is primary over the theoretical tasks of the party building movement.

The NSC believes that only a blind spot on the part of white comrades could prevent us from seeing the racism in the circle approach (or federationist approach). It is racist in regards to the role of cadre organizations because it seeks unity with national minority comrades, not

on the basis of the theoretical tasks of the movement, but rather on the basis of recruitment to a circle for directing practice. By downplaying the role of individuals in the party building movement, we downplay the role of national minority comrades. By downplaying the primacy of the Local Center work we negate the significance of uniting with the most advanced in our movement who are for the most part national minority comrades.

This is by no means a thorough summary of the relationship between federationism and racism. The NSC intends to deepen this analysis in further documents to come.

Besides the areas of racism which directly relate to the federationist approach to party building, there were other manifestations of racist errors on the part of the "minority" perspective as well. The NSC believes it important to address these concerns in order that the national process can learn.

The following is a quote from A's paper of 8/10/79, p. 6-7:

"I have understood and accepted the formulation of the OCIC as applied to minority Marxist-Leninists being part of the OCIC as individuals. I can and do accept this conception as applied to women and gay ML whom might be confronted with a local organization with a very bad line on the Woman and Gay Question.

I have never understood, nor accepted this line when it is applied to white ML, in particular those who say they have unity with the OCIC on the 18 Points, support the international line of the OCIC (pt 18) and say that they want to build a new communist party.

Why would any so called ML who agrees with all OC policies not want to be in a local organization? A local organization which can combine practice and theory to the degree that it has a guiding line?

Is it the position of the SCALC that there could be a principled position for a white ML that should keep that communist from joining a local OC organization?

What such a position does is foster individualism, self interest, elitism and an anti-communist attitude toward the combining of theory and practice."

Besides the obvious federationist error of putting one's circle primary over the Local Center, the above quotation reflect the common racist errors we outlined previously. First, if an organization has a racist, sexist and/or anti-gay line, why would it be correct for a white male comrade to join? Do national minority people, gay people or women have a more fundamental unity among themselves than political line? Our unity as Marxist-Leninists must be built around our political line, not the color of our skin or anything else.

Secondly, if an organization was correctly taking up the struggle against racism and was articulating a generally correct line in the mass and class movements, would we say that we should only struggle with white comrades? If questions of individualism is the only reason which keeps a national minority comrade outside of an organization, and to fail to struggle with

him or her around weaknesses is also racist. It is racist in failing to take seriously the development of national minority cadre. It is an example of racist paternalism in the party building movement.

The following quote from the "Minority Perspective" paper of 8/31/79 presents us with another example of racist errors in the movement:

"The SMG was a local organization of national minority Marxist-Leninists which initially had a strong affinity for the views of the OCIC, eventually split, with some of the key leaders joining the rectification movement and the other forces remaining in a state of dissolution at the present time. Why was it that not one person from this formation was consolidated within the OCIC? We think that this entire experience demands a most thorough investigation by the OCIC. We suggest that one of the important contributing factors was the artificial separation of theory and practice within this entire political process. We will be evaluated by national minority cadre not only on our theoretical principals but also by our practice in the class especially in relation to the anti-racist struggle." (p. 3)

The NSC certainly agrees that anti-racist practice, especially on the part of white comrades, will be important in building the multi-nationality of the OCIC. We are judged by not just what we say but by what we do in the concrete; however, the summation presented above is saying something different. It is a racist assertion that because the Local Center is not a practice center, SMG comrades did not join the OCIC. It downplays the importance of the role of political line on party building as a factor in SMG not joining the OCIC. That is, part of the reason for their decision not to join the OCIC was that the leadership of the SMG had united with a different line on party building. Secondly, the above statement implies that because the OCIC process is not a practice center, we aren't going to be able to win over national minority comrades. It suggests that national minority comrades cannot be united with in the party building movement on the basis of political line, but rather on the basis of practice. This attitude is responsible for the small number of national minority comrades in the OCIC at the present time.

It was this exact point which was stressed at the 2nd National OCIC Conference in our discussions of the racism of the communist movement. Examples of this error were raised: In most cases, OCIC white comrades did not struggle with national minority comrades in the tendency to attend the Point 18 Conferences. Comrades who attended the National Minorities M-L Conference for the most part had never seen the 18 Principles of Unity before hearing of the conference, even when there were OCIC comrades in the same locale. Those comrades who did attend the National Minority M-L Conference did not attend the Labor Day OCIC National Conference even as observers.

All of these examples speak to the non-struggle attitude white comrades adopt toward national minority comrades when it comes to party building questions. The racism is on several fronts. Racism to downplay political line, racism to think that theoretical questions are for white folks only, racism to not insure that national minority comrades intervene in the party building movement and develop in leadership positions.

During discussions with comrades of the "majority" perspective, there was general unity reached as to the errors in attempting to build unity with the SMG comrades. These were twofold:

- a. The Southern California Local Center failed to build unity with the SMG comrades by first struggling around questions of party building. The OCIC perspective was not discussed formally or in depth until invited to do so by the SMG. However, for a period of time before this discussion on the OCIC, there had been ongoing joint work between SMG and the SCALC.
- b. When the discussion did take place around party building, the SC representatives could not put forward fully the OCIC perspective due to a lack of consolidation on the Steering Committee.

The NSC believes that the summation of this experience needs to be deepened by comrades in the SCALC so that the OCIC as a whole can learn from these lessons.

Methods of Struggle

The NSC cannot, at this time, draw final conclusions around the various questions of methods of struggle utilized during the last year in Southern California. Both sides feel this is a very important issue. Unfortunately the NSC was not able to finish a full investigation of the numerous and complex instances in which one or the other side felt that the communist methods of struggle had been violated. We don't expect to ever do a complete investigation of all examples, but we do feel that more work needs to be done in this area. A follow up report will be made regarding these issues.

The "minority" perspective comrades feel that methods used by the "majority" were basically sectarian. These include: a.) distorting people's positions, and prematurely calling them line differences; b.) being overly "coercive" in struggle rather than being educational and persuasive; c.) being undemocratic within the Southern California LC Steering Committee; and d.) using organizational means to remove people from leadership positions.

The "majority" on the other hand feels that the "minority" comrades have been fundamentally liberal towards the basic differences. These include: a.) not clearly putting their position on the table and being afraid to take a stand; b.) being afraid of two-line struggle and glossing over real differences; c.) being ultra-democratic in their view of two-line struggle; and d.) using a resignation from the SC of the LC in an unprincipled way during the struggle.

The NSC believe these issues to be of great importance. The NSC has recommended to the Local Center in Southern California that the entire membership discuss the summation of the National OCIC Conference regarding the question of democracy and minority rights and responsibilities. Secondly, the NSC paper, "Forging the Party Spirit" should be thoroughly discussed because it speaks directly to the question of proper methods of struggle in the OCIC.

Without drawing specific conclusions on various aspects of the history, the NSC would like to make some general comments on the importance of ideological struggle and utilizing correct methods.

The heart of the OCIC's work is developing our theory through ideological struggle. Our only hope of forging a national center with a leading line is that each individual does his/her utmost to participate in these discussions. The only way in which we unify our ranks around a common view is for our differences to be aired fully. Without differences being out on the table, we can never achieve unity.

On the one hand, we have to overcome our fear of ideological struggle, our liberalism, and our attitude of letting issues slide. For many of us this is the first time that we have been engaged in this type of process. We have to learn to stand on our own two feet in ideological struggle with our other comrades. We can't just follow this leader or that leader but must learn to develop our own positions and struggle for them.

On the other hand, we need to engage in ideological struggle in a way that insures that we build more unity. This means not deviating from correct methods. We want to struggle against incorrect ideas, not fall into attacking individuals. We want to criticize other's ideas and not distort positions. And we want to do it in a manner which really explains to people what we mean, neither glossing over differences or exaggerating them.

In the process of ideological struggle we have to characterize other people's positions, especially when they haven't been written down. In doing so, there is always a danger of misunderstanding or misinterpreting others positions. This will happen at various times, but we shouldn't become overly concerned as long as the person we are polemicizing against has an opportunity to explain what they really meant.

Concretely, for the Local Center in Southern California, developing correct methods in the present situation is going to be very difficult. As a step in this direction, the NSC encourages comrades to write up their positions whenever possible since this insures the least possible distortion. Secondly, all comrades should agree to carry out struggle around key questions which are agreed upon.

NSC Plan for Moving the Southern California Local Center Forward

After a summation of the week's meetings, the NSC advanced a plan for moving the SCALC forward. The basic thrust was presented at a final meeting of the Local Center membership where both the "minority" and "majority" view comrades were present though not in total. The NSC plan is as follows:

1. Allow the NSC Perspective on Local Centers to be Implemented:

The NSC is asking the "minority" perspective comrades to allow the national perspective on local centers to be implemented in the Southern California area. During the next year we will be able to test the national perspective by looking at the results of our attempts to build local centers both in Southern California and around the country. At the end of the period before the next national OCIC meeting, the whole OCIC can evaluate to what extent the minority perspective's concerns were born out, or are not. The particular concerns that have been raised about the relationship of individuals to the process, the question of practice, and the role of cadre organizations can all be looked at in light of a year's worth of national experience.

2. Deepening the Discussion and Struggle over the Southern California Experience:

Implementing the National SC perspective on Local Centers, which at this time is represented by the present "majority" grouping in the SCALC, should in no way impede the continuing ideological struggle. In fact, it is very important that there continue to be an exchange of views around the issues raised by this experience. Concretely, it would be very important for the present SCALC SC to respond in writing to the recent paper of the "minority" position (10/26/79). These two papers could become the basis for future discussions.

Secondly, we would propose that a special committee under the direction of the SCALC-SC be established which includes a couple of individuals from both "minority" and "majority" positions. This committee would be responsible for planning organized and systematic discussions internal to the SCALC around various issues. In particular, we would suggest that educationals of the whole LC be organized around the "Forging the Party Spirit" paper of the NSC. In addition, it may be helpful to rediscuss the new Draft Plan (presently being re-written) along with the PWOC self-criticism entitled, "PWOC's Leftism", to fully understand the developing nature of the OCIC during the past year. In addition, the committee could plan any other discussions useful to struggling out present differences within the two views.

Allowing the implementation of the national's view in no way should mean that "minority" rights should be suppressed. In every local center discussion it will be important to get clearly formulated, written criticisms of developing national perspectives. In particular, it would be important for the national to know if there are differences around the conceptions and organizational rules laid out in JF's paper, "Forging the Party Spirit."

The NSC feels that it is also important that we avoid developing a factional dynamic on every local center issue. The "minority" perspective is a "minority" only in relationship to particular issues of the Local Center. All OCIC members must be encouraged to participate in the various activities of the Local Center, not only those activities related to clarifying and struggling over differences. This means that on any number of questions which the national OCIC will be taking up around 18 Points, ultra-leftism, the Draft Plan, racism, etc. we should not necessarily see the same "majority" and "minority".

The most difficult task at this time will be getting all OCIC members in the region working together in the Local Center. The general perspective of the OCIC is that to be a member of the OCIC means participating in its ideological discussions and paying dues. We do not want paper members who belong in name only, but don't participate in the main activities of the OCIC.

The Local Center is the arm of the OCIC and, therefore, it is not acceptable for people to be in the OCIC and not participate in its local centers. We recognize that applying this general view to the present situation in Southern California is very difficult. We do not want to be idealistic or mechanical and create a rule which will exclude present forces. We are not as concerned with the amount of people's participation, or how immediately that meetings of the whole local center can be held, as insuring that people do agree that they will have to be part of the same Local Center. Minimally we are asking for all members to be part of discussion around:

- a. the future program of work of the local center (as spelled out later in this conclusion)
- b. the election of a new SCALC leadership, and
- c. the issues organized by the committee in charge of furthering the discussions over differences (as presented earlier).

3. Ideas for a Plan to Move Forward:

The most immediate task of the present SCALC Steering Committee is to write and circulate a year's work plan for the whole local center. This plan must outline main tasks within three main areas:

- a. tasks of internal consolidation
- b. tasks of outreach, and
- c. tasks related to national work.

The plan must be based on some assessment of the local conditions and capabilities (taking in the present situation into account). The draft should be written by the present SCALC-SC with necessary consultation from other members of the SCALC. The draft should be circulated to all SCALC members and a time held for meeting. The draft should also be sent to the NSC to be sure that it is consistent with national perspectives and priorities. A final plan will be adopted by vote of the majority of OCIC members in the Southern California area.

In line with adopting the plan, an election of a new leadership will also be held. The criteria which should be used are electing those people who are best capable of implementing the adopted plan, and who meet the basic ideological criteria elaborated in the previous leadership criteria of the SCALC and the recent national SC elections. This will need to be more precisely formulated.

Members from the minority position should not be de-facto excluded from serving on the Steering Committee of the SCALC. Ideally it would be preferable for someone from the "minority" view of the LC to be participating on the Steering Committee. This person would have to be able to subordinate their differences to the extent that these views would not impede the implementation of the plan which the "majority" of the SCALC adopted. If this is not possible, then it is particularly important that members of the minority perspective participate on the special committee designed to carry out internal education around the differences related to the Local Center.

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At the end of the presentation of the above plan at the SCALC membership meeting, the NSC asked for initial discussion. The responses of the "minority" view comrades varied. One person agreed to participate in the Local Center and test out the NSC plan. One person expressed explicit disunity with the OCIC process, but the dominant view was that the rebuilding of the local cadre organization, together with the high degree of tension among LC members, meant that they would be unable to participate in the Local Center at this time. These comrades did express a willingness to participate in Local Center work after a period of 6 months, or, at least, to re-evaluate the decision at a future point. It should be noted that two comrades from the "minority" view perspective were not present at this meeting and, therefore, we do not know their views regarding the above plan.

The NSC believes that this response is a continuation of the federationist approach for two reasons:

- a. It continues the error of putting the interests of SOC above the interests of the Local Center. It counterposes the two tasks rather than seeing that both can be taken up simultaneously. For this reason, the NSC struggled with these comrades that they should be in the Local Center while rebuilding SOC.
- b. By not participating in the Local Center, the "minority" fails in their responsibility to advance and struggle for their views within the OCIC as a whole. The NSC's view is that this is an incorrect attitude toward the role and responsibilities of the "minority". It is a continuation of the "minority" view errors made in the conduct of the struggle at the 2nd National OCIC conference. That is, the "minority" failed to raise their differences and perspectives on Local Centers so that there could be full debate and struggle within a national context at

the conference. By being unwilling to participate in the Local Center as a minority they deprive the Local Center of a full airing of differences.

The NSC is committed to struggling with the "minority" view comrades in Southern California to participate in the Local Center, to test out the "majority" perspective, and further the struggle over differences internally in the OCIC.

Summary of National Lessons from the Southern California Local Center

From our first OCIC experience in building local centers, the NSC believes there are many lessons to be learned, both negative and positive. Based on the NSC investigation in Southern California, these are the most important:

1. The NSC has to work harder at explaining the conception of the local centers to OCIC members, insuring that there is a solid consolidation.
2. Whenever struggles begin to emerge, the NSC has to deeply investigate the various issues surrounding the controversy.
3. To insure national guidance the Local Center Steering Committee must report regularly and promptly on developments in their locality, so that the national has a good grasp of how local centers are growing and developing. Where two sides are being articulated on the issue of how Local Centers should function, the NSC needs the sharpest expression of each; where the issues aren't yet clear, the Local Center Steering Committees need to try to formulate what the differences are.
4. Once a Steering Committee for a Local Center is established, it must move as quickly as possible to build a membership structure of all OCIC members in a locality. Participation of the whole membership is important to develop at the earliest possible stage.
5. Full minutes and reports from Local Center Steering Committees and the National Steering Committee must be circulated in a way that they are readily accessible to every member of the Local Center. In particular, we should avoid situations where information becomes bottled up in structures not part of the OCIC.
6. All OCIC members who are also in local organizations or other structures should be active participants in local centers as individuals. Where possible minimal guidelines will need to be established for level of participation.
7. Local cadre organizations must subordinate their internal discipline to local centers on OCIC questions of theoretical debate and ideological struggle. no
8. Local cadre organizations are not subordinate to local centers in all other activities such as guiding practice, and are independent to pursue their own work.

shit but we can't think shit.

9. The development of local centers is not dependent upon the establishment of local cadre organizations. Local centers are important with or without such organizations.
10. Much more work needs to be done educating OCIC forces to the importance of individual participation, particularly as part of the centrality of building the multi-nationality of the OCIC.
11. More work needs to be done understanding the link between federationism and racism.

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*Submitted for the National Steering
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by
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