

Political Summation of Forum on Draft Plan with Rectification  
Forces 11/25/79 DF

The Marxist Leninist Education Project (MLEP) invited me to participate in their monthly forum, whose topic was the OC's Draft Plan. This was the same forum which a month previously I did not participate in on the OC's First Year. I had told them that I would participate in a November forum, and so kept my word.

Preparation:

Participating in the forum was Bob Wing from rectification perspective (leader of the NCOBD, now the NARO). In addition, Hilar from the Bay Area Socialist Organizing Committee (BASOC) spoke although not as a representative of that organization. BASOC has not formal position on the draft plan, but most of their members are sympathetic to, but critical of the OCIC.

We met twice, the speakers and MLEP board representatives, to discuss the forum. We agree to speak on 3 main areas: a) the conditions and history of the tendency 2) strategic conception underlying the draft plan 3) tactics necessary in building an ideological center. It was clear from these preparatory meetings that rectification forces wanted to focus on number 2, especially drawing out what they believed was an implicit fusion view etc. They wanted to stay away from making the speech topics specific, like the need for a common center. We argued some, but it was clear that they were going to have it their own way, so basically we all wrote speeches from our own point of view.

They demanded that we begin the forum with a summation of the previous one, which was a summation of the rectification critique of the OC first year document. I protested arguing that this would start the forum with 10 minutes of criticisms of OC. But they wouldn't budge so they gave me 10 extra minutes in my speech to deal with their arguments. So I took it.

The basic format was three speeches, and then open it up to questions and comments from the floor. The most unprincipled aspect of the preparation was that at the first meeting there was no mention of their 10 page critique of the Draft Plan, yet a week before the forum the paper appeared given to me by another BAWOC member who received accidentally. I confronted them on springing the 'critique' and they responded that they 'forgot' to tell me. This I doubt, and generally they use the tactic of 'surprise', and a well orchestrated blitz before such public events.

Speeches:

I opened the forum with the first speech. I have enclosed a copy so there is no need to restate content. Bob Wing was

MLEP report continued:

second, and his speech is captured in the Critique of the Draft Plan document. He didn't really make any new points. Hilary's speech was basically good. She emphasized her agreement with basic aspects of the Draft Plan especially: the need to do a thorough summation of ultra-leftism, and the need for a common center. She also raised her criticisms of rectification and said that she agree with fusion. She raised criticisms of the Draft plan as: 1. not a clear enough view of the relationship of theory and practice 2. She also raised criticisms of the OC's approach to the NNMLC as being sectarian. She pointed to weaknesses in adopting the national minority conference resolution at recent labor day conference. And ended generally talking about the need for both OCIC and NNMLC forces to overcome sectarianism. She obviously doesn't agree with our approach to struggle with NNMLC. I will try to get copy of the speech she gave for people:

Questions and Answers :

The questions and answers were dominated by the struggle between the rectification forces and OC forces. Main points of contention occurred over the following areas: 1) the characterization and history of the tendency, 2) the possibility of a center without a line 3) the need to critique ultra-leftism 4) the relationship of pre-parties to the ideological center. I will try to take each area and give a sense of the exchange emphasizing the strong and weak points of the various arguments as they unfolded.

1) Characterization and history of the tendency:

The main thrust of rectification criticisms were that we had 'shifted positions', once characterizing our tendency as a trend and now arguing that we were part of a single anti-revisionist movement. In addition, they argued that the line of demarcation had occurred over international line, and that now the OC was trying to 'tamper' with the demarcation ~~xxxxx~~ by asserting that it never really happened, or that it was over a left partybuilding line. They summed up that this shift reflected the sloppy theoretical work of the OC, and that the OC was trying to change the line of demarcation from left internationalism to a left partybuilding line so that they would be read out of the movement.

I pointed out that there had been no qualitative shift in our positions. The initial draft resolution described ~~xxx~~ us as a wing in a single movement, and as a trend in embryo. I said that the shift had been semantical in the sense from trend in embryo to tendency, but that there had been no real shift in seeing that we were a single anti-revisionist movement and not yet defined as a Marxist Leninist trend fully developed. Secondly, I pointed out that it was incorrect to characterize ourselves as a fully developed trend, or as a separate movement because we hadn't articulated a set of alternative politics.

I drew on Lenin's definition of a trend as a fully developed political trend with definitive positions on questions of both counter-revolution and revolution. Thirdly, I argued that we had not completed the break with ultra-leftism, which we began on international line.

They tried to further confuse the issue by arguing that if we saw ourselves as the same movement with the ultra-lefts, then that meant that we wanted to establish party relations, or see building the party with these forces. Secondly, they brought up the example of the Second international split (1914) to show how demarcation over this line meant a separate movement had been formed.

I responded that we didn't see building the party with the ultra lefts, nor did it follow that by saying we were in the same movement that we were courting the ultra-lefts. I pointed out that RCP, CP ML, and CWP are all in the same movement but it doesn't logically follow that they have any interest in trying to build the party with each other. Regardless, objectively they are in the same wing because of their ultra-leftism, and secondly, in the same movement because they are anti-revisionist. I repeated that we can't say we are a fully developed trend or a separate movement until we have an alternative program, strategy and tactics. No one from rectification would argue that we do. I pointed out that putting the maturity of the tendency ahead of itself was a consistent idealist, volunteerist error that they made.

### Break with Ultra-leftism:

Closely following this discussion was an exchange to what extent had we broken with ultra-leftism. From the discussion the following points became clear: 1) the rectification forces see the break almost purely in terms of international line. 2) they do not want to make a all sided summation the most immediate task, and in fact Bob Wing said that they don't see it as the most pressing task 3) they don't really see that there was an ultra-left partybuilding line.

This last point is worth pursuing because it wasn't directly said but implied in their arguments. During the discussion the rectification forces tried to draw a parallel with the OCIC/Fusion forces with the ultra-lefts partybuilding strategy. They argued that the national pre-party was the central strategy of the PWOC, the OCIC was just an envelope for the pre-party, and the real line behind all of this is fusion. They implied that national pre-parties were a conspicuous feature of the ultra leftist strategy, and that the OC was similar to the Liaison committee, the Unity committee etc.

Given this line of reasoning I pointed out that the rectification forces must have summed up the ultra-lefts partybuilding approach as rightist, and mechanical materialism, since this is how they characterize the OC and the fusion partybuilding view. I pointed out that the OC would have real differences with this analysis if the rectification forces denied that there was a an ultra-left partybuilding line. I forced them to say if they were opposed to national pre-parties, and if they didn't think that there was a left line on partybuilding.

Bruce O. got up a little rattled and said that they didn't have any disagreement with pre-parties on 'principal' but that it was a 'conspicuous' form of the ultra-lefts and should be put before the movement and debated. I explained the OC's view. I challenged around the ultra-left partybuilding line and they didn't respond as to whether there had been one. But Bob Wing gave his weakest response of the evening when he said that fusion didn't necessarily have to be left or right approach, whatever that meant?

This is an area we must pursue much more sharply with them.

#### Single Center:

The next main area of debate was around the single center. They argued that it was incorrect to build a neutral center, that the OCIC really had a line (fusion), and that it was incorrect demand that all forces join the OCIC. Their main thrust was that it went against Leninism to demand that all forces be assembled into a common organizational form, without unity on line. Every line should build its own center and try to win other over to it, this was the Leninist principal they argued.

I went through the main arguments as to why a single center was necessary. Secondly, I tried to draw out that they were talking about unity on a very particular line rectification vs fusion. I explained that we didn't feel that unity on this question was principal at this time, although it would need to be taken up in the future. I made an error in this section by conciliating with their characterization of the OCIC as a 'neutral center', by saying that at first the center would not have the leading political line and that one of its first jobs would be administrative. While this is true, it was incorrect because I should have pointed out more sharply that we have a limited line on building a center, that we have a theoretical agenda, and that the OC steering committee is not a neutral body, nor would a leadership for a national theoretical center.

From the floor a comrade from BAWOC made a very good point: he asked what Leninist principal they were pointing to by arguing that everyone should build their own center. He drew upon the Bolshevik experience where Lenin established ISKRA to wage a struggle against the main deviation in the movement: Bernsteinism. The journal included many social

democrats who disagreed on a number of other questions. The key here was that all forces could be united in a common effort around the main deviation to the movement.

Bob Wing Responded very authoritatively that this was not at all what happened in ISKRA. He said that Lenin went out and build his own journal, against the wishes and lines of many smaller groups. He painted the ISKRA experience as if it was similar to the recently established Rectification Journal (eg. united group on fully developed partybuilding line).

I am enclosing a draft letter with the BAWOC comrade is working on to Bob Wing. I think it makes some good points on how they distort the History of the Russian experience in relation to this question, and it also take some of the best quotes in terms of supporting our position.

#### Pre-Parties:

A large part of the rectification's argumentation both in the critique of the Draft Plan and the at the forum was around PWOC's alleged plan for a pre-party. I put a section in my speech on this point. They made the following arguments:

- 1) the real plan of the PWOC is to build a national pre-party
- 2) a leading ideological center would inevitably become subordinate to the leadership of a national pre-party
- 3) the OCIC accepts this as represented in their original Draft Resolution for an IC, where the IC is being developed into a pre-party.
- 4) it is the responsibility of the PWOC to put this before the movement to be struggled over.

I first explained why we had changed our view in the OC between the Draft Resolution and the current draft plan. I explained that our original conception was incorrect because the IC process would be needed up until the founding of the Party. Secondly, that making unity around a national pre-party before the outstanding theoretical questions had been solved would be sectarian. Thirdly, it would necessarily postpone any national DC formations until the ideological center was completed.

Secondly, I restated the OC perspective on how DC organizations participate in the OC. Drawing out our anti-federationist approach. Thirdly, I said that while the OC wouldn't initiate pre-parties that we had no opposition to them in principle, since people in the OC had freedom of organizational form, etc. Fourthly, I said that questions concerning PWOC's plans should be addressed to PWOC.

This was a serious question for many of the middle forces. All of them asked me after the forum what PWOC's "real Plans" were.

Participation from the floor: The rectification forces definitely had the initiative, partly because it was their forum, and they have their developed leadership there. But also because they were better prepared and consolidated around their perspectives. BASOC people, and other supporters were weak in their participation, with a few exceptions. I was relied on a lot to defend the position. In retrospect I think our weak participation reflects a number of problems:

- 1) low level of consolidation around the Draft Plan
- 2) fear of ideological struggle, and intimidation in the face of the sectarianism of the rectification forces
- 3) liberalism

Despite poor participation from our perspective from the floor, I think that the forum was fairly successful in winning over BASOC and independentists to our perspective. For many people, the rectification forces sectarianism was exposed, both in ~~xxxx~~ terms of their line and form. Most people want a common process, and understand, ~~xxx~~ at least instinctually the need for critique ultra-leftism. I received a number of positive comments from middle forces after the forum, on my speech and answers. The most ~~xxxx~~ often asked questions by middle forces were:

- 1) How does the Draft Plan view Practice
- 2) Is the PWOC really going to build a pre-party?
- 3) So given that the rectification forces aren't going to be in the OCIC ~~xxxxxxxx~~ how are you going to relate to them.

#### Ideas for Strengthening our Perspective in the Future:

First of all I think that our line in the struggle towards the Network is essentially a strong, and good one. I think the draft plan is a good document from which to carry out the struggle with them. The documents highlights their two weakest points: their organizational opportunism in terms of wanting a hundred centers to bloom, and their failure to want to make the all sided break with ultra-leftism.

I think that we have to depend the struggle with them on the following points:

1. Why we are part of the same movement, until we have created an alternative. Here we have to draw more on the history, and quotes from previous ultra-left groups that made partial breaks but then fell back into ultra-leftism. Secondly, we should quote from our Draft Resolution showing that we have held a consistent position on these questions.

2. We need to go after the fact that they don't see ultra-leftism as the most pressing question to be summed up. In particular we have to force them into the open around ~~xx~~ their view that there is not ultra-left party building line. Differences between ourselves and them on this question is fundamental, since our draft plan represents a break with this legacy.

3. We need to stress the need for a common center and deepen our critique of their line on this question. Deepening our criticisms should be two fold. We should attack their logic pointing out that if we took their line to ~~the~~ its conclusion we would have a hundred centers. Secondly, we should attack it historically, by showing that we adhere to the Correct Leninist principal by uniting the tendency against the main deviation, rather than their line. Here the work that C begun around Iskra should be worked on.

4. We need a sharper explanation on why we changed positions between the Draft Resolution, and the Draft Plan. At this time the only written thing we have is PWOC's self-criticism. The SC should write a brief paper on this, so to undercut their criticisms. In addition, this paper might cover why we don't think the OCIC is guided by fusion solely, and why it is possible for differences on party building lie to exist within a single process.

5. We need to further develop our ideas around the national pre-party, and what the OC's approach will be. In particular we should ask the PWOC comrades to share more of their strategic thinking on the question, so that we can develop the correct tactics towards this accusation.

6. I think that it would be good if eventually we could write a response to their critique of the OC's first year, and the Draft Plan to further consolidated forces around the OC.'

7. It is essential that we deepen the political consolidation of OC forces around the Draft Plan, and in particular struggle against passivity, liberalism, and conciliationism in the struggle with the rectification forces.