

September 16, 1981

Dear comrade,

TMLC

Recently a number of us have come together and conducted a series of discussions on the importance of summarizing the political decline of the Organizing Committee for an Ideological Center. Out of these discussions, we have committed ourselves to organizing a series of regional conferences next January and February where various positions within the anti-revisionist, anti-"left" opportunist trend analyzing why the OCIC failed can be aired and where a deeper understanding of and unity concerning this crucial turn in the party building movement can be achieved. Off of the unity we have achieved so far, we have formed the initial core of a national planning committee to set policy for these conferences.

Briefly, we can summarize the unity we have achieved so far as follows:

- 1) The purpose of the conferences is to conduct a serious discussion and struggle over the roots of the OCIC's demise. This is taken up from the standpoint of the need to re-confirm the basic political integrity of the anti-revisionist, anti-"left" opportunist trend, and the goal of reactivating the many comrades who have lost their bearings to take up party building work within the parameters of that trend. All of us share this standpoint toward the conferences, though we do not agree on the underlying reasons for the OCIC's demise.
- 2) The core of the conferences should be debate and discussion over the major positions analyzing the OCIC's failure. To avoid an ultra-democratic and unproductive use of precious time, the conferences would be organized to give the bulk of time to the major, well-developed positions that have some influence in the trend. At present, we have identified at least two such major positions - that the OCIC failed because of the fusion party building line; and that it failed because of a continuation of the ultra-leftism characteristic of the new communist movement. We have also noted the likelihood of other positions being developed to a similar level of comprehensiveness, specifically the view of the Tucson Marxist-Leninist Collective that the OCIC failed because of a continuation of the "Stalinian deviation" and the views of MINP-El Comite that the formation of a national center was premature. As the planning for the conferences proceeds, we would expect the planning committee would have to weigh politically which of these views receive major attention at the conferences. Also, though not all views in the trend would receive equal time for presentation, all views would have the opportunity to be aired at some point on the agenda.
- 3) We tentatively foresee agendas which include presentations on the major and minor positions as well as workshops and plenary debates on these views. Also, we anticipate panel discussions on two closely related questions: What road forward for the trend? and The state of our trend relative to other trends on the left. We foresee conferences running from Saturday morning to Sunday dinner.
- 4) The conferences would be organized by a national planning committee which would set overall policy for their implementation. This committee would be made up of leading comrades who share a commitment to the conference goals and to carry out the work needed for their successful implementation. It should be representative of the trend politically and geographically, but not in a mechanical sense. It should be small enough to function effectively to set policy. So far, the comrades who have tentatively agreed to function on this committee are Dave Forrest and Max Elbaum (Bay Area), Sharon Rose (Detroit), Melinda Paras (New York) and

John Frampton (Boston). Invitations have also been extended to leading comrades in the Tucson Marxist-Leninist Collective, MINP-El Comite, and the collective which recently split from MINP to join this committee, and it possible that other comrades would be asked to join it in the future. There has been some complexity concerning the invitation to TMLC, and the particular letters concerning this matter are enclosed.

- 5) Three regional committees would be established to make decisions regarding regional particularities and conduct the bulk of the actual organizing work for the conferences. These committees would again be representative of the trend politically and geographically. Each committee would have a co-ordinator or two co-ordinators who would work closely with the national committee to guide the work.
- 6) The planning committees would be responsible to circulate major papers on the positions to be presented at the conference, and to organize preliminary meetings in the various cities where the trend is active to prepare for the regional conferences. We anticipate major papers on the major positions to be completed by early December. In some cases, documents outlining the main views in contention have already been developed. These, and other documents that may be drafted by various forces, would be circulated as well.
- 7) Tentatively, the conferences would take place in the Bay Area January 23-24, 1982; Chicago, January 30-31; Boston, February 6-7; and Washington DC, February 13-14.
- 8) The work would proceed in four stages. The first, from now until early December, would involve firming up the membership of the national and regional committees, issuing a broad call for the conference, making sure main papers to be discussed at the conferences were drafted, and securing sites for the conferences. The second stage, from early December until the conferences, would involve the main work of circulating papers and organizing preliminary meetings as well as tabbing down who would be attending. The third stage is the conferences themselves, and the fourth the summation.
- 9) For the present, Dave and Max will act as an executive of the national planning committee. Our immediate tasks are to circulate this letter and the enclosures here to comrades who we think should play a role on the national or regional committees, to get initial feedback, firm up an initial list of national and regional committee members, and issue the conference call. We would also have to be sure meetings of the regional committees are held before the second stage starts to firm up plans for work. A national meeting may be required as well.
- 10) The conferences would be open to all activists in the trend. At present, we agree the CWP should have observer status. Further discussion on the relationship of the CWP to these conferences must be taken up by the planning committee as the overall relationship between CWP and the trend becomes clearer, particularly since some differences in our assessments of the CWP emerged in our initial discussions.

Based on these initial discussions, we have taken the initiative of drafting this letter and the enclosed first draft of the conference call. You should consider this letter an invitation to serve on a regional committee for these conferences. The conditions for participation are agreement with the basic political goals of the conference and the standpoint toward it that the committee-in-formation has adopted, as well as rough agreement with the more practical plans for its implementation. We would like to hear from you

by October 10 concerning whether or not you desire to serve on a regional committee, as well as with any feedback you have on the general concept of these conferences, the draft call or particular policies, or other related matters. Please contact Max Elbaum, 298 Fairmount St., #2, Oakland, CA 94611; 415-465-2104.

If you agree to function on this committee, we would like to add your name to the conference call when it is issued (hopefully by November). This is not a "final deadline" however, as we expect we may well add comrades to the regional or national committees even after the public call is first issued. But we want to have the call have maximum effect, and do not want to hold it up until all the membership of the planning committee is finalized.

Comrades, we believe these conferences can mark an important turning point in our trend's development. With an organized, trend-wide summation of the OCIC s demise, we can put the period of sectarianism in th e trend behind us, and clarify in a principled matter the key differences on party building line that still exist i n the trend. As well, we can reach a higher level of unity on the tasks before us. For these reasons, we urge you to participate in the work around these conferences and lend every effort to make them a success.

For the Planning Committee
in Formation,

Dave Forrest/Max Elbaum