

- Paper written by DMLO on the split.

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"On the Split in DMLO": A Reaction and Critique by
The Committee for Economic Equality

The Detroit Marxist Leninist Organization's (DMLO) attempt at scientific analysis of the recently experienced organizational split (September 1977) fails. In fact, it is more akin to the swiss cheese method of analysis (full of holes) than it is science, or demonstrative of DMLO's ability to use the methodology of Marxism-Leninism in a creative and accurate way.

This is not to imply we in the Committee for Economic Equality (CEE) do not take the paper seriously. In fact, we take it very seriously for three basic reasons:

- 1) DMLO as an organization has just gone through a very difficult period. It is also a period out of which we can learn many lessons. More particularly, we can now develop a keener understanding of some of the errors made that allowed petit-bourgeois ideology to dominate the organization. DMLO's analysis of the split allows us the opportunity to isolate some of the concrete forms of DMLO's ideological base. Even more importantly, some of our newly acquired understandings may assist the Trend as a whole, as we struggle towards consolidation on a national basis.
- 2) The efforts DMLO has made to 'clarify' the issues surrounding the split will assist comrades in other parts of the country to understand some of the particular dynamics of Detroit and some of the real twists and turns involved in the whole process of party building.
- 3) It gives those of us who left DMLO the opportunity to begin areas of struggle with DMLO that couldn't openly surface (because of the dominance of subjectivism) while we were a united whole.

The holes in DMLO's analysis come as a result of their consolidating even more firmly the petit-bourgeois world view that forced us to leave the organization in the first place. We have full confidence that DMLO struggled very hard to develop an accurate, scientific view of what's happened. The difficulty is that such an analysis demands an objective, materialist examination of our collective history and unfortunately, the petit-bourgeois pattern of subjectivism, scapegoating, distortion and guilt by implication that has characterized much of DMLO's history surfaced once again as a substitute for that objective political analysis.

For the purposes of this response we are going to concentrate on three basic issues raised by DMLO's paper:

- 1) Identification of the Central Contradiction
- 2) The Charge of Empiricism
- 3) The Charge of Factionalism

There are issues raised in DMLO's paper (the relationship of theory and practice, process of line development and cadre development, democratic-centralism) with which we have sharp differences as outlined earlier. These differences can't be fully and objectively understood, however, until some purely factual distortions put out by DMLO are straightened out and until both organizations have developed their positions in these areas so they can be clearly understood - theoretically and practically.

In addition, we are going to have to go into more detail about specific

incidents than might be ideal for a political critique for two basic reasons:

- 1) DMLO refuses, or cannot, look at our history in an objective and scientific manner. The result is clear - facts are distorted and changed with DMLO resorting to near slanderous charges as a substitute for sharing the essence of what really happened with Trend comrades. We have no choice, then, but to straighten out some of the mis-information. To take on everything would take too many pages; therefore, we've picked representative samples of distorted facts to demonstrate the subjective pattern of analysis that dominates DMLO.
- 2) DMLO still refuses to share with the Trend, the original paper over which the split occurred, and given the fact that they've now changed their line of argument, we're going to have to sum-up some of their original points in order to make our arguments clearer.

Identification of the Central Contradiction

Evaluation through the focus of hindsight can be good when, in going from the 'shallower to the deeper' it helps clarify confusion. But, evaluation through hindsight can also be frightening, when its focus is used to change or ignore the facts of the situation. Such is the case in DMLO's identification of the central contradiction.

What the majority position in DMLO argued in September, and what the organization is now putting forward as the central contradiction are as different as night and day.

In September the 'failure' of the minority (the cadre who finally separated to form CEE) was to refuse to understand the the centrality of line and program development. Instead, the majority argued, we placed 'secondary' questions of organization, and subjective accusations of personal irresponsibility above the need for line and program. "Not True!", we said. Of course program and line are key - we've always held that to be true. The real questions and arguments were: 1) What is the correct process of developing program and line so that it accurately reflects material reality? 2) Why hasn't there been systematic testing and evaluation in those areas where we do have developed program and line? 3) Why haven't we, after a three year history together, consolidated an even higher level of political unity? The answer we gave centered on a look at the organizational resistance to becoming a proletarianized communist organization. More specifically, we focussed on the importance of the unity of will within a democratic-centralist organization, the centrality of the how's, why's and difficulties of developing a strong base within the industrial working class and the undeveloped base among the oppressed national minorities and the underlying base of petit-bourgeois ideology, manifesting itself in the idealism of the intellegensia. The majority position, as we have said earlier, didn't even attempt to answer these questions.

By December DMLO had discarded their analysis of the lack of program and line as the central contradiction for a view that says what we were really struggling over was the majority view that sees the primacy of learning Marxist-Leninist methodology and cadre development vs. the bureaucratic empiricism of those who left. Interesting shift - particularly when:

- 1) Identification of this difference as primary was never focused on within the context of an organization wide discussion; nor was it identified as an area of contention by the Central Committee.

The only clear struggle took place among a small group of cadre charged with evaluating the Baltimore Conference. All of us involved in this particular discussion agreed that we needed such a discussion but (as was so often the case in DMLO) it never happened. Where then= does DMLO get off putting this forward as the central contradiction, while conveniently forgetting it was never focused on for discussion within the organization until after the split?

- 2) What DMLO cadre say now and what they said in September are very different focuses. To be fair to DMLO, some reading between the holes lead us to assume that the newly stated 'fundamental contradiction' may represent an attempt on their part to answer the question raised by us - why isn't there more program and line development. Great! We applaud the attempt at deeping our collective understanding of the crisis in DMLO. The problem is - DMLO makes no attempt to explain what process was involved in moving from 'the shallower to the deeper'. In fact, the original analysis (the one around which we seperated and is now apparently rejected by DMLO too) has been swept under the rug. This is obviously something less than a dialectical-materialist approach to evaluation, but not the least bit unusual when one recognizes that the dominant political tendency in DMLO is marked by subjectivism and constant flip-flopping.
- 3) The shift in the analysis by DMLO is really incredible when one realizes that those who left DMLO in September because they 'didn't understand the centrality of program and line' are now (with DMLO's new view) being criticized for upholding the primacy of program and line as central to moving the organization forward:

"Basically the differences are over the two aspects of theoretical development: that aspect which deals mostly with giving the cadre the tools to understand their work and the situation in the world...the basic methodology of Marxism-Leninism which would include dialectical and historical materialism and political economy as basics. The other aspect is the concrete conditions - the work which must be done to answer questions coming out of our mass work that we must answer to formulate our strategy, our program. Some of us say that basic M-L methodology must be incorporated into the developing of line and therefore both aspects must develop simultaneously. Those on the other side say that at any given time in an organization, one aspect must be key; that for DMLO methodology is key at this point."

(Quoted from "On the Split in DMLO"
by DMLO, pg. 4)

DMLO's paper then goes onto argue that it has always been (except right in the begining) the majority view that methodology is key for now and it was the empiricist view of the minority that saw line development as key.

From DMLO's distorted and changed view of what it was we were arguing about, the "former CTC cadre" (identified through impecation at first, and direct accusation later) as the factionalists) could be recollected to have consistantly and methodically pushed an empiricist approach to everything. According to the new and revised analysis, the empiricists opposed the 'political' leadership that holds that of the majority

and continually struggled for its bureaucratic, mechanical views.

DMLO's Charge of Empiricism and
Opposition to Leadership

From DMLO's distorted recollection of history and their newly developed analysis, a pattern of 'empiricism' on the part of the minority begins to emerge. The facts of the situation, however, do not substantiate this charge. Some concrete examples:

- 1) DMLO Statement: "there was no clear ideological foundations for DMLO..."
(All quotes from DMLO come from their paper "On the Split in DMLO". This one is page 3.)

Fact : The original principles of unity and later the Principles of Unity developed by the Committee of Five and adopted by DMLO represented a clear ideological foundation. Our basic error was that we allowed reliance on paper unity to substitute for real unity. We didn't constantly link the development of positions or the resolution of disagreements back to our ideological foundations, thereby deeping our collective understanding.

- 2) DMLO Statement: "The Central Committee was to serve (a) largely bureaucratic function - rather than provide Political direction."
(pg. 3)

Fact : We never held this view! Our position was and is that: "The task of the CC is to strive to reach to greatest political clarity, the highest political unity and the greatest political development of all members in the organization and reflect it in our line.... The CC should concentrate on political concerns of the organization and the workgroups and not with the day to day functioning of the work groups. This is unless the day to day work runs asunter to the overall political priorities of the organization."
("DMLO and Democratic Centralism" 4/76
Put out by the CC and written when the 'empiricist' leadership was dominant on the CC)

- 3) DMLO Statement: "The highest leading body in DMLO was seen as the general body rather than the Central Committee"
(DMLO Paper pg. 3)

Fact: If what DMLO means is that we saw the general body to be the highest decision making body - that's true. But the people now accused of being 'empiricists' also held that" the CC is responsible to the total membership and directs the organization based on specific priorities adopted by the general body. When the general body is not in session, the CC is the overall decision making unit for the organization.

(DMLO and Demo-Centralism)

- 4) DMLO Statement: (During the 1976 CC Elections)"the member who was

formerly part of the CTC (and has since left with CFE) argued for.....decentralization of authority with the CC as an administrative body."

(DMLO paper pg. 5)

Fact: We never saw the CC as anything other than the highest political organ and the fact that such a charge is seen as truth by DMLO during the '76 elections and today is demonstrative of the persistence of scapegoating and subjectivism within the organization. The argument not around the question should the CC provide leadership, but what are the specifics of leadership at our particular point in time. The specific views of this 'empiricist' candidate was that political line and program would be scientifically developed through mobilizing the entire organization to contribute at different levels (through study commissions, ongoing evaluations of work, continuing discussion of Trend progress and political questions, criticism self criticism) to developing an objective base of political unity, as opposed to the idealist notion that there were some of us (none of who had yet been fully tested in organizational or mass practice) who had the answers, and should therefore be on the CC to develop the in's and out's of political line and program out of their isolated heads. Within the framework the CC would have the real leadership responsibility of moving the entire organization forward - with clearly understood program and line.

O.K. Once having shown the thread of empiricism (which DMLO 'acknowledges' was held by the entire organization in its initial stages, but consciously struggled around and held onto only by former 'CTC' people after 1976) and then redefining the issues that solidified the need to separate in September of 1977 it becomes necessary for DMLO to explain why principled political struggle didn't lead to unity and ultimately why the split occurred. The answer is simple - A Faction and we now come to the most irresponsible aspect of DMLO's analysis.

The Charge of Factionalism

This part of DMLO's paper is particularly insidious. DMLO argues that a faction emerged during the week of preparation for the September meeting, while at the same time implying throughout the paper that 'former CTC people' functioned as a cohesive unit and with separate concerns throughout the life of the organization. In either case a faction is never proven by DMLO. No where is there any charge of secret meetings or documentation of 'former CTC people' functioning as a separate organization within DMLO. As a matter of fact, as people in DMLO are well aware, even the term 'Proletarian Caucus' came from one of the majority members coining the term to describe our political position in a workgroup discussion preparing for the general body meeting. What does exist in DMLO's paper are innuendos, impecations, references to 'political leanings of certain cadre' and assumptions about what must have happened during the week before September's general body meeting. For DMLO, it is clear, proof of a faction is not necessary, statements are sufficient. For example:

1) DMLO Statement: "For the collectives the coalition meant....
...testing out their line...."

(DMLO paper pg. 2)

Fact: This statement is true for the Detroit Collective who, after opposing the consolidation of DMLO as a Democratic Centralist Organization, went on to join the October League. This statement is not true for the Cass-Trumbull Collective. CTC had no consolidated line to test and DMLO represented a higher level of organizational commitment for CTC members as for everyone else. The effect of this erroneous statement is to create a spectre of an organized collective putting out its own line throughout the life of DMLO

- 2) DMLO Statement: (During the 1976 Elections)"With the exception of six members, all of whom were formerly in the CTC....the entire membership voted for the candidate...beginning...a stage of political struggle within DMLO wherein the former members of the CTC voted as a bloc and took a position which was shared by no one else in the organization."
(DMLO paper pg. 6)

Fact: In the vote mentioned one former voted CTC member voted with the majority, another abstained, four former CTC members voted together as did three (possibly four) people who were never members of the CTC. Further when the split finally occurred four (not six) former CTC people left, as did four people who had never been members of the CTC.

The thread of factionalism is also implied in a couple of the political struggles DMLO refers to. We'll focus on one - Analyzing the Special Oppression of Women (DMLO paper pg. 10):

DMLO Statement: "...women cadre formerly in CTC..(were) anxious to begin the work of bringing (a women's group) into being...In the period that followed, there was much struggle between the members who made the proposal and those who served on the study commission on the Question of Women....those members who had raised the proposal were anxious to begin.....and reacted to the questions raised as secondary."

Fact: What's missing in this discription is telling comrades that the CC, as well as the organization as a whole, had approved the programmatic and stratigic thrust of the proposal on women. Equally important, is that the majority paper of September - around which the split took place - held forth developement of the work among women as one of our few positive developements. The questions being raised were secondary - not from the slavishness to practice or small group interests, as implied, but because the questions posed challenged the concept of the organization itself, after the political rationale and specific stratagy had been agreed to by the total organization. Everyone agreed that we required a more fully developed understanding of the special oppression of women, but the people assigned this responsibility were so busy rallying against developement of the concrete decision that nothing but two pages of questions and an analysis of how day care should have been handled at the DMLO sponsored anti-racism conference was developed.

Finally, DMLO's most 'telling evidencé' of a faction emerges in the analysis of the September meeting at which the seperation occurred. The basic argument is that something less than principled struggle happened in preparation for the general body meeting. The fact of the matter is ~~in-preparat~~ that some people (those who finally left) took seriously the importance of the upcoming struggle and assumed personal initiative for following through on the CC directive for all members to prepare for the meeting. More specifically:

DMLO Statement: "...the proposal for understanding the 'lack of proletarianization' as the main error in DMLO was shared only with a select few cadre within DMLO: those who were formerly members of the CTC..."

(DMLO paper pg. 14)

Fact: An outline on 'proletarianization' came out with the CC report, as the minority CC position. Given that the CC did not deem it politically necessary to ask the CC member who had written the outline to elaborate her position, another member who agreed with the outline offered an addendum as further elaboration on the position. This paper was also gotten to everyone in the organization and informal discussions were held with anyone who had questions. As a matter of fact, we offered to discuss the paper with some people who raised specific questions after it came out and those discussions were never followed through on by the people raising the questions.

DMLO Statement: "...a program of "rectification" was also proposed... since this "rectification" program spoke in very specific terms to what should happen in DMLO, including specific demands for individuals to be placed in leadership positions, it must be assumed that this also was agreed upon at an earlier time..."

(DMLO paper pg. 14)

Fact: Why must an assumption be made when all that had to be done was to ask (which was done in a discussion after the paper came out) and be told (as happened) that the rectification program was an attempt to be more concrete should people accept or want to see the implications of the minority position. It was developed by one cadre (who agreed with the proletarianization position) on the Friday before the meeting and shared with the general body on the day of the meeting. We may be wrong in some of our political positions - but we aren't liars. The only reason DMLO had to make an "assumption" is to prop up their weak and slanderous charge of factionalism.

Fact: There has been ample historical precedence for a small number of people within DMLO getting together when they had disagreements about organizational directions and writing an analysis and proposal for organizational consideration. This preparation had never before been labeled factionalism; in fact, those cadre were praised for their initiative. The fact that those who went through this same process and were now being called factionalists reflects the extent to which subjectivism has a hold on the organization.

DMLO's main argument rests on seeing that "if principled differences exist, the principled course of action is to leave. However this applies only after open, full struggles over matters of political principle. What we are identifying as factionalism is a course of action which...necessarily (includes) a hidden method of political struggle...and sooner or later actions (are) seen in the interests of the faction first and foremost, and not in the interests of the organization as a whole."

(DMLO paper pg. 14)

Through twists and turns, and implications and distortions, DMLO then sets out to prove that the people who left had not engaged in principled political struggle and placed the interests of the small group above the organization as a whole.

Fact: A struggle for the highest level political organization possible to DMLO was always a priority to all the people who finally found it necessary to leave the organization. This can be seen in the fact that it is the people now within CEE who were in the forefront of leadership (including assuming concrete tasks -) in developing and continuing our party building work and work with the Trend. In addition, it was present CEE people who provided much of the initiating leadership in developing a program and strategy (with much help from PWOM positions) for Trade Union work, provided initiative and leadership in developing a strategy and program for health, took initiative in giving a theoretical basis to our organization - wide study on the United Front, researched much of the historical data for the first part of the paper DMLO did on the National Question, pinpointed the importance of work on affirmative action, developed work around the special oppression of women, etc., etc.....

Fact: Struggle around political principle was basic to all we did. We consider it of the highest political principle to be organizationally clear on the importance of unity of action within a Democratic-Centralist organization. We consider it of the highest political principle to be absolutely clear on the strategic importance of the industrial working class and work with oppressed national minorities to our revolutionary process - in practice as well as word. We consider it of the highest political principle to be clear on identifying and isolating vestiges of bourgeois ideology when those vestiges, in fact, obstruct our work as communists. The struggle we waged was open and above board and it was only when what we considered to be the correct political position and organizational plan was defeated that we felt it necessary to separate from the organization.

Fact: The issues involved in the September meeting were not new. They were, in fact, a more developed variation of issues struggled over in the 1976 CC elections. Some of us who left, were also a minority at that time. We stayed with the organization then because 1) it was important that the majority position be tested in practice before completely dismissing it; 2) we felt we might be wrong. It was after a year of practice within the framework of the majority position, where the organization suffered even more stagnation, that we began to really address ourselves to the question why. It was when the CC majority simply repeated the formula that we need program and line, without looking at what we had and what we were learning, without looking at what was retarding our work in program and line development that we began to look at the whole concept of proletarianization.

It was, to repeat once again, after open struggle that a line was adopted that we were convinced would not develop DMLO that we left the organization.

Conclusions

It is clear that the unwillingness or inability to make a scientific, objective, materialist analysis has once again led DMLO to a subjective, scapegoating petit-bourgeois analysis. In the spirit of comradely criticism we would encourage DMLO to look closely at these points:

DMLO and Methodology: The newly revised (never explained) DMLO analysis should be explained so we all know what changes you've gone through to identify the need for methodology as your organizational priority. In

addition, the analysis that identifies methodology as key might imply the idealist (and potentially dogmatic) view that somehow communists can isolate study from practice and line development and emerge with a revolutionary theory. It would be helpful to all of us if DMLO would elaborate on their view of the relationship of study and practice in relationship to theoretical work.

DMLO and Charges of Empericism: In making this charge DMLO misses the essence of leadership as grasping theory to guide practice. The political leadership necessary to DMLO in our early stages (where a majority of the CC was 'empiricists' by DMLO's definition) was to develop a functioning Democratic-Centralist organization, set goals for theoretical and practical development and programmatic positions necessary to move us forward given our level of development and ideological cohesion. While we obviously made seem some mistakes (documented in the first of these series of three papers) for the most part our early history was dynamic and productive. The fact that DMLO pretty much ignores this leads us to the conclusion that the re-writing of history flows more from subjectivism ("what I think is right" means a "political" approach.) than it does from an objectively based political analysis. Lenin addressed a similar problem:

"It is clear I think the cries about this....bureaucracy are just a screen for dissatisfaction with the personal composition of the central bodies....you are bureaucratic because you were appointed by the congress not by my will but against it - you are a formalist because you rely on the formal decisions of the congress and not by my consent; you are acting in a grossly mechanical way because you heed the mechanical majority...and pay no heed to my wish."

Lenin One Step Forward, Two Steps Back

Subjectivism continues to have a hold on the organization. In the interest of DMLO's development and the political development of the Trend we encourage the organization to look at this with honesty - we've all had to do it at one point or another and CEE is prepared to struggle and help as much as is possible.

DMLO and Charges of Factionalism: Had DMLO understood the essence of factionalism - particularly within the context of Lenin's definition of a 'party of a new type' - they would have saved themselves the trouble of developing an untenable, incorrect position. Unfortunately DMLO missed the fact that in criticising factions Lenin was struggling for unity of will in a communist organization - not the absence of open and above board struggle and resolution of political differences. More specifically, DMLO allowed organizational subjectivism blind them to examining the real process of what was happening. Had they looked closely - if they still look closely - they will find that what they put forward as a faction was in fact several people within DMLO who, as a result of shared practice and organizational study and political sum-ups share a similar world view. With this understanding then it would be possible to get to the heart of the political differences instead of having to defend ourselves from incorrect accusations. Had DMLO understood this, it would have been impossible to characterize what was objectively open, above board struggle as symptomatic of a faction. Even a limited understanding of the lessons of the Second International where political differences (not a problem in and of themselves) resulted in absence of unity of will (the problem) and consequently no adherence to carrying out directions of the center, would

have forced DMLO to look for a pattern of obstructionism, secret meetings and refusal to carry out decisions to be able to cry "Faction". None of this documentation is there, and DMLO will have to reconsider exactly what did happen.

We have purposely been very sharp in our criticisms. At moments comrades may question the harshness of our tone. We are of the firm conviction that distortions cannot be treated lightly or gently - above all things communist must be honest about the actual process of a thing. More importantly, we hope that the sharpness of struggle will convince DMLO to root out their petit-bourgeois methods of examining our recent history together. To refuse to do so will call into question their ability to make the even more difficult analysis of objective conditions in the US and what concretely is needed to build revolutionary struggle. We respect the potential of DMLO as a Marxist-Leninist organization, but it is a truism, that only through sharp and open struggle that our respective weaknesses can be isolated and overcome. A first step will be for DMLO to back up and make an objective and scientific analysis of our recent history. To do so will benefit us all.