

We'd appreciate any comments you
might have re: the level of unity regarding
content etc. Please pass this around the TMLC.
Our first collective struggle over this is on
8/1/79. please contact agave then with any
ideas.

DRAFT POINTS OF UNITY FOR THE BUILDING OF A COMMUNIST
COLLECTIVE IN BOSTON AROUND THE PRIMACY OF THEORY

7/17/79

(THIS IS AN INTERNAL DOCUMENT FOR MEMBERS OF THE STUDY GROUPS)
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INTRODUCTION

The building of a communist collective requires the strong political unity of collective members. In the initial formation of the collective this requires that all comrades struggle to unite around points of unity that demarcate the essential political line and practice of the collective. These points of unity are not simply abstract "universal" principles of Marxism-Leninism but rather points that speak to the specific conjuncture of party building in which we find ourselves. While the points certainly do not cover all the theoretical and political positions which the collective must soon confront, they should constitute the essential principles to which we all adhere as the basis of initial unity.

The following points were drafted by the leadership of the study groups (the TRB: Rich, Irene, Lucia, & Ricky). They are meant for struggle and debate by all comrades in the study groups who are considering joining the collective. They by no means represent the final draft with which we must all agree. Rather, we will set up discussions, both collective and individual, so that we can deepen, clarify, and modify the points in order to reach sound collective unity. One thing that should be kept in mind is that these points are our basis of unity; any other positions expressed by the TRB in the past are more in the nature of individual views. All positions beyond these points will be developed collectively.

The founding of a communist organization will represent a qualitative leap in the practice of all collective members. Schematically, the difference between our present study group form and a communist collective is this: In the study group, we are attempting to train ourselves as individual Marxist-Leninists to become theoretically adept and politically aware of the direction and tasks of the party building movement. A collective however is founded in order to intervene in the party building movement and to carry out party building tasks. It requires greater discipline and willingness to struggle so that we are a politically united organization of communist cadre. All four practices (political, theoretical, ideological, and economic) are carried out in their proper relationship as determined in the collective process. This necessitates a serious commitment to the organization, and the party building movement as a whole.

With this task in mind, it is important to ask why we are building another communist organization in Boston at this time. While the answer to this question will be elaborated and deepened after the founding of the collective, we offer the following as some basic premises from which we start:

Boston has no organization representing the 'primacy of theory' line of party building. Besides having our share of the left opportunist groups such as the CP(ML), the RCP, COUSML, etc., the only OC force is the Boston Organizing Committee (BOC) which holds to an economist-fusion line. As well, we have the Boston club of the National Network of Marxist-Leninist Clubs (NNMLC) which holds to the rectification line on party building.

As the clubs are a new force on the party building scene, any analysis of their line is necessarily limited at this time.

However, we can say that there are a number of areas of disunity or ambiguity in their line which counsel us to build a 'primacy of theory' organization separate and apart from the Boston club, with the hope that through struggle we can build toward unity in the future:

1) By focusing on the allegedly proletarian character of the line of the CPUSA prior to 1956, the Club Network starts from a fundamentally incorrect premise which can only serve to obscure the economist character of our past and the qualitatively different lines we must develop to guide our present practice.

2) The Club Network strategy for building an ideological center is contradictory and spontaneist. There is little analysis of what constitutes the rectification "movement", its practice, or what leadership roles the clubs can or will play in the development of a "multiplicity of organizations". Every theoretical and political issue seems to be on their agenda without any sort of prioritization of our theoretical tasks. While on the one hand they have refused to join the OC for its lack of a party building line, on the other hand they assert the need to build various study commissions of forces within and without the rectification "movement".

3) Key to the ambiguities in #2 is the clubs' lack of a concept of political practice internal to the organization; that is, there seems to be little emphasis on the importance of building disciplined communist cadre with advanced theoretical abilities who are able to lead others in political and theoretical work.

4) The leadership of the Club Network has evidenced little understanding of the nature of advanced theoretical analysis. In addition, their concept of "rectification" seems to only touch on the "general line", a term which still stands undefined. There is no recognition of the need to rectify both our understanding of international communist history, and the theoretical framework, concepts, and methodology of Marxism-Leninism.

5) Finally, the national club leadership has made it clear that they have political differences with our line, while failing to specify the exact nature of those differences. In their process of building the clubs, they have consistently refused to recognize any contribution the Ann Arbor Collective (M-L), the TMLC, or the Theoretical Review has made to our movement.

These areas of difference should not obscure the fact that the founding of the Club Network as a party building organization dedicated to an emphasis on line and theory (as opposed to fusion) represents an advance for our movement. The areas of potential unity are in many ways much greater with the Club Network than with the fusion forces and we should work on clarifying the differences and building unity if at all possible.

In conjunction with this view of the Boston M-L left, we must recognize that the 'primacy of theory' forces in our movement are very weak. The major proponent of the line has been the TMLC which has made great

strides in developing the line theoretically in their pamphlet and in the TR, and in political practice. The founding of another 'primacy of theory' collective can serve to greatly advance the line in a number of ways:

1) While the TMLC can play an effective leading role in putting forth its position on the West Coast, the existence of a 'primacy of theory' collective in Boston can allow us to more effectively carry the struggle east. The fact that PWOC, the leading proponent of the fusion line, dominates much of the eastern party building movement makes this task that much more difficult.

2) Unlike Tucson, Boston has numerous party building and other Marxist-Leninist forces; as well, the level of mass struggle is somewhat higher in Boston than in Tucson. Taken together, these two factors allow great potential for developing both primary and secondary aspects of our line in full view of, and struggle with all the tendencies of the party building movement.

3) By developing strong political and communication links with the TMLC, we can begin to give the line greater depth through struggle as well as a more national character and practice.

Finally, the building of a communist organization dedicated to elaborating the 'primacy of theory' line in theory and practice is crucial not only for the party building movement, but for our own development as communists as well. By developing a democratic-centralist organization we will be able to train ourselves in the science and history of Marxism-Leninism, produce theoretical analyses and political strategies for party building, to be tested in the party building movement, and begin to apply Marxism-Leninism to the conjuncture in Boston. It is only in these ways that the 'primacy of theory' line can be realized in all its complexity and command the greatest possible influence in our movement.

In the early phase of the collective, the TRB will constitute the collective leadership. Of central importance however is breaking down the existing lines of division by raising other cadre to leadership capacities in the various functions of the collective. Eventually, leadership would be elected by the collective membership on the basis of political leadership and responsibility. A key aspect of how fast this can occur will depend on individual collective member's willingness to take on political responsibility and to develop ~~help~~ self through individual and collective study.

Tasks in the early period would include deepening our unity around the practice of our line; consolidating the collective structure; intensive study in the basics of Marxism-Leninism; and study and analysis of the party building movement in order to produce a public position.

There should be no illusions as to the ease with which we can accomplish our goals. In many areas we are embarking on new terrain and many mistakes will be made. However, with a self-critical stance and a real commitment on each comrade's part to struggle to rectify and unite, there is great potential.

We in the TRB have been working for over a year to build contacts with comrades who would be willing to struggle to build such an organization. We have great respect for the varied backgrounds, abilities, and commitment shown by comrades in the study groups. In fact, it is our belief that only by fusing these varied abilities into one communist organization that we can realize the potential influence of our line. Thus we are very excited and optimistic of our collective future and we present these draft points of unity in the hopes that we may all soon find ourselves united in the effort to build a communist collective in Boston.

POINT ONE

THEORETICAL WORK IS THE PRIMARY ASPECT OF OUR WORK AS COMMUNISTS IN THE PRESENT PERIOD IN THE STRUGGLE TO BUILD A GENUINE COMMUNIST PARTY.

The US communist movement is characterized by an extremely low theoretical level. Since a revolutionary party and movement must be guided by advanced Marxist-Leninist theory, we recognize that the key obstacle to building the party is the lack of that revolutionary theory.

We see this position as distinguished from those in the anti-dogmatist/anti-revisionist movement who, while basically breaking with the left-opportunism of the new communist movement, have placed primary emphasis on fusion as the strategy for building a new communist party, and as the main guarantor against sectarianism. We hold that such a position is economist and provides a basis for strengthening revisionist(right-opportunist)tendencies in our movement.

Marxist-Leninists struggle and unite around political lines on the issues raised by the class struggle of the particular conjuncture. However, any political line is only as advanced as the theoretical analysis on which it is based. Thus, while we do not abstain from developing political lines on key issues because we lack a thorough and scientific analysis, we recognize the essential link between the political line and practice of our movement and the movement's level of theoretical development. In order to deepen the political unity of the collective and the movement, we must advance theoretically. Therefore, the "primacy of theory" is not just a general theoretical statement but the guiding political line in the present period.

The evolution of this political line within our movement is expressed in the following documents. We adhere to the basic analyses and rectifications put forth in these documents and commit ourselves to further elaborating the party building line.

- 1) "Against Dogmatism and Revisionism: Toward a Genuine Communist Party" Ann Arbor Collective (M-L) Nov. '76
- 2) "On Party Building" Ann Arbor Collective (M-L) April '77
- 3) "Party Building Tasks in the Present Period" Tucson Marxist-Leninist Collective Nov. '77
- 4) "The Primacy of Theory and Political Line" TMLC (TR #7, Sept.-Oct. '78)
- 5) "Theoretical Aspects of Political Practice" Neil Eriksen-Schmidt (TR #8, Jan.-Feb. '79)

POINT TWO

MASS WORK IS AN IMPORTANT, BUT SECONDARY TASK IN THE PRESENT PERIOD.

To say that theory is primary is not to ignore the importance of mass work, but instead is to view mass work in its proper perspective: as a secondary task. To ignore secondary tasks and only work on a primary task is a serious error which should be guarded against.

Our perspective on mass work at this time is that due to the generally low level of the workers' movement and other progressive movements, and due to the absence of a genuine communist party guided by advanced theory, the degree to which we can consider our mass work to be fusion (in the Leninist sense) is quite limited. That is, if communist fusion is the fusion of an advanced communist analysis and program with the working class (and not just the leadership of working-class struggles by communists), then the absence of that analysis and program tends to make our current mass work predominantly economist or reformist in nature.

Yet despite its limitations, communist participation in mass work at this time can offer some positive contributions to the party building movement. The most important is recruiting advanced workers and activists to party building and the 'primacy of theory' line. It also offers the opportunity to develop and train ourselves as to how communist can best participate in mass struggles at this time. For example: improving our ideological practice, learning how to operate as a communist fraction, and learning how a communist organization can give leadership to cadre involved in mass work. Third, we can attempt to build some working class and community ties. Fourth, while keeping in mind the localist nature of our work and thus that what we do cannot be assumed to reflect the level of development in other areas or on a national scale, we can draw lessons as to the level of development of the struggles that we engage in. Finally, mass work allows us to develop one of the bases for a conjunctural analysis of the Boston area.

For a collective, we propose two general guidelines regarding our approach to mass work in the initial period.

1) We recognize that upon joining the collective, some individuals will already be engaged in various mass activities. They will be encouraged to maintain their work, provided they view it as a secondary task, and are willing to make theoretical work and internal political practice their main focus of activity. The collective as a whole, when possible, will attempt to offer support, guidance, and analysis of individuals' mass work to the best of our abilities given our level of understanding of the issues involved.

2) When the collective decides it is correct to take on a particular form of mass activity that would be guided by the collective as a whole, this decision would be based on an analysis of the conjuncture in Boston, would consider where we would be most effective, the limits and possibilities of the work chosen, etc. It would also be crucial to reach unity as to how to engage in mass work as a secondary activity without losing sight of our main task, and how we should allocate our time and energy accordingly.

POINT THREE

THE MAIN FORM OF POLITICAL PRACTICE OF THE 'PRIMACY OF THEORY' FORCES IN THE PRESENT PERIOD IS INTERNAL POLITICAL PRACTICE.

External political practice is the practice of communists in the workers' and mass movements.

Internal political practice is the practice of communists within their own organizations, and the relations between communist organizations in the party building movement.

While both aspects of practice are always part of communist activity, the fusionists hold that external political practice is always primary, whereas the 'primacy of theory' forces hold that internal political practice is primary in the present period.

This latter position flows from an analysis of the present conjuncture which we see as characterized by a relatively stable period in the US working class movement, and a crisis in both the state of Marxist-Leninist theory and the state of the Marxist-Leninist movement. Thus we see that our external political practice will remain at an extremely low level unless we can develop disciplined communists with the theoretical and political abilities needed to intervene as communists in the party building movement and the workers' movement. The process by which this can be accomplished is not by engaging in more and more mass work as our primary form of activity, but instead by developing the following aspects of internal political practice:

1) Consolidating a communist organization through the study and practice of democratic centralism, criticism/self-criticism, and unity-struggle-unity.

The importance of these Marxist-Leninist principles is often underestimated. Even more often, they are incorrectly understood. For example, democratic centralism is frequently viewed as the rigid adherence to a set of political lines, rather than as the practice which governs and facilitates the relations between communists and the process by which lines are developed and struggled over in a democratic and principled fashion. Thus a rectified understanding of communist organizational practice is key in developing communist cadre and building a communist organization. weak?

2) Developing communist cadre through the careful study of history and theory, and through theoretical and ideological practice.

By 'careful' we mean giving political direction and theoretical guidance to the way we approach our study.

Because of the need for analyses of the US and our lack of the tools and understanding with which to make these analyses, most of our study will consist of the philosophy and science of Marxism-Leninism (dialectical and historical materialism), the history of the international and US communist movements, the present party building movement, and eventually, the historical development of the class struggle in the US.

POINT THREE (CONT'D)

Within the collective, theoretical practice includes learning to write internal documents, collectively producing external documents, and writing TR articles. Ideological and political practice includes learning to operate as a communist fraction in the leadership of external study groups.

3) Struggling to overcome uneven development.

While this is a process that is never totally complete, it is crucial for the correct practice of democratic centralism to combat uneven development so that all members can critique political positions and offer contributions. It is a collective responsibility, as less developed comrades will have to take on special study plans, and more developed comrades will have to give direction and leadership. In reality, there is not likely to be two clear-cut groups of more and less advanced; we are all more or less advanced in different areas, and can all benefit from combatting uneven development.

4) participating in, and developing the national party building movement.

This aspect of our practice stands in dialectical relation to the other three aspects. On the one hand, as our cadre, organization, and theory advance, so will our intervention in the party building movement. On the other hand, intervening in the party building movement is vital to the development of our cadre, organization, and theory. Thus the main terrain from which theoretical and political problems are posed, and where a significant part of our theory is tested in this period, is in the party building movement.

Concretely, our party building practice in the present period will include ideological struggle through the TR and exchanging documents and meeting with other organizations. While recognizing that the OC is currently dominated by the fusion line on party building, we still feel it is tactically correct to work within the OC to struggle over party building line and other pressing political questions, as long as the OC facilitates these struggles in a principled fashion and the struggles are productive. As a collective, we will have to continually reevaluate whether our participation in the OC is beneficial to our forces, and to develop criteria for this reevaluation.

We are also strongly committed to struggling with other party building forces such as the NNMLC, independent collectives, study groups, and individuals. In all these areas, we will strive to coordinate our efforts with those of the TMLC.

POINT FOUR

WE SUPPORT THE THEORETICAL REVIEW AS THE LEADING THEORETICAL EXPRESSION OF THE 'PRIMACY OF THEORY' LINE IN OUR MOVEMENT.

The TR puts one aspect of the 'primacy of theory' line into practice in the production of theoretical analyses on key issues confronting the party building movement; in the move to reexamine the classics and introduce modern theory to the movement; and, most importantly, by attempting to develop the particularities of, and rectify deviations in our party building line.

As a theoretical organ the TR serves us in three capacities:

- 1) as a vehicle for the advancement of the theoretical abilities of collective members in order that they may make contributions to the party building movement;
- 2) to spark debate in the party building movement;
- 3) as a communist resource for political and theoretical education.

While we recognize the limited circulation of the TR and the fact that at present it remains largely a house organ of the TMLC and the TRB, we unite with the TMLC in its effort to make the TR a national journal of debate and discussion for the entire movement. Finally, we commit ourselves to discussing with the TMLC the development of the TR into a joint publication of the Boston and Tucson collectives.

POINT FIVE

WHILE THERE IS NO INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF WORLD COMMUNISM AT THE PRESENT TIME, WE AFFIRM OUR COMMITMENT TO PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM, PROLETARIAN INDEPENDENCE, AND TO PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION.

We recognize that an important aspect of the deviations which characterized the demise of the CPUSA and the New Communist Movement was the uncritical acceptance of the leadership of a foreign communist party, i.e. flunkeyism. In addition, the US communist movement has so far failed to break thoroughly with dogmatism and revisionism, and has failed to recognize the theoretical framework which links these two deviations. The resulting inability to concretely rectify and apply M-Lism to the US has been a major cause of our present theoretical poverty and primitive level of organization and practice.

Nevertheless, there is much to learn from the experience of the Chinese and Soviet revolutions, and well as the numerous national liberation struggles which have taken or are taking place around the world. Additionally, there are advances being made in Marxist theory in Western Europe (e.g. Althusser, Bettelheim, and Poulantzas) which can be of great help in advancing our own theoretical knowledge. We must study and appropriate all that is useful in these struggles and texts, yet, ultimately, the construction of a genuine communist party on an advanced theoretical basis is grounded in our own movement and its practices.

However, while primarily relying on our own forces, the class collaborationism of the CP(ML) and others, forces us to reaffirm our commitment to the cause of proletarian internationalism by supporting all those struggles which strike at the hegemony of the US in the world imperialist system; to the cause of proletarian independence by striving to build alliances with various classes, class stata, and oppressed minorities without sacrificing proletarian leadership; and to the cause of proletarian revolution in the USA which at all times must be seen as the goal of the party building movement.