

7) Resolution of the contradiction over principle 18

The SC agreed that it is critical that the contradiction over principle 18 be resolved. In the first place, it makes little sense to establish points of unity for organizing an anti-"left" trend and then not uphold them as lines of demarcation. If they are not correct lines of demarcation, then they should not be points of unity; otherwise we would exclude legitimate sections of the anti-"lefts" and the entire struggle against "left" opportunism would be weakened. And if they are correct, then they must be upheld; otherwise we open the OC to forces that have not really broken with ultra-leftism and inevitably the sharpness of the critique of "left-wing" communism would be blunted. Therefore we must reach unity on whether principle 18 is a proper line of demarcation or not.

Secondly, the failure to demand unity on one of two primary dividing lines with ultra-leftism makes the OC inherently unstable. Since the ultra-left line continues to consolidate its hegemony over the communist movement, we must guard against the penetration of our ranks by forces which although they claim to oppose "left-wing" communism actually serve to advance its credibility. By failing to demand that forces demonstrate their break with ultra-leftism by opposing "left internationalism", we reduce our unity to just a verbal opposition to "left" opportunism. We would then be open to infiltration by those who cover their own "leftism" with phrases of opposition to "left-wing" communism.

In order to resolve the contradiction, the SC adopted theses on why principle 18 should be a line of demarcation with "left" opportunism (enclosed) and decided on the following process of resolution:

1. BPO will be asked to write a fifteen page (twenty maximum) paper representing the minority perspective;
2. the SC will choose a writer to draft a response of the same length;
3. the theses and the two opposing positions will be circulated in the first internal OC discussion bulletin;
4. between one and two months after the papers are circulated, three conferences will be organized to discuss them - one on the East Coast (Philadelphia or Baltimore), one in the Midwest (Chicago or Detroit), and one on the West Coast (San Francisco); the conferences would be open to those who could presently participate in the OC on the basis of the decisions of the February conference; and at the end of the conferences, resolutions on the question would be submitted and considered;
5. at the next general meeting of the OC a short final discussion of the question would be organized and then we would move to resolve the contradiction; additionally
6. the SC will choose a writer to draft a substantial background paper on why principle 18 is correct and why a failure to uphold principle 18 is an integral part of modern "left" opportunism but which will not deal (directly) with why it should be a principle of unity for the OC.

The rough (and tentative) plan for the conferences is:

1. One day conferences which would include:
  - two substantial presentations on principle 18 as a line of demarcation with "left" opportunism, pro and con;
  - workshop discussions around particular aspects of the question;
  - sum-up; and finally
  - consideration of resolutions on the question.

2. Participation would be of two kinds:

- delegations from OC organizations and individual OC members; the delegations representative of different levels of development and points of view within the various organizations and with each delegate representing about five members; and
- selected individuals who could presently participate in the OC on the basis of the decisions of the February conference. (Discretion will have to be exercised in this so that the primary character of the conferences remains that of an OC activity.)

3. The SC is committed to ensuring that the conferences and the discussions at them will be as accessible to advanced workers as possible.

This process should not be seen as the final resolution of the internal contradictions within the OC over Principle 18. Much more will have to be done to consolidate a firm proletarian internationalist perspective and fully grasp its relation to party building. But this process will, hopefully, lead to a qualitative and necessary advance.

The SC encourages a full exchange of views on this question. Apart from the process described above, all OC participants are encouraged to circulate their views to the entire OC.