

MINUTES OF THE LAST GENERAL MEETING

There was a proposal from the Organization Committee about the organizational structure of the group. This proposal suggested that since the original "Continuations Committee" meetings had evolved into general membership meetings that we being to define them as such and hold what would now be called "General Membership" meetings once a month. In place of the present 5-person Organization Committee, a 12-member Continuations Committee would be elected from the group to carry on the organization functions mandated by the general membership.

A member of one of the Party Building study groups made the following amendments to this proposal:

1. Everyone on the coordinating committee should be a member of a study group.
2. Every study group should have at least one person on the committee.
3. This 12-person committee should discuss the process which is going on in the study groups.
4. The study group leaders committee should be dissolved and this function joined with the Continuations Committee.
5. This leadership committee should recognize that there are two processes going on simultaneously--the process in the study groups and the process in the general membership meetings--and should attempt to structure and assist the development of both processes.

This person also indicated that their study group had discussed the method of selecting the coordinating committee and had been divided over whether to have it elected at large or as representatives of the various study groups.

There followed a discussion of this committee and some general discussion about the perspective of the group as a whole. Some of the points touched on were:

1. The relationship between theory and practice and how quickly we move to some common focus of struggle.
2. Reorganization of the group after the present round of study groups into other types of collectives, perhaps around common areas of practice and work.
3. Other functions of the coordinating committee: generalizing the developments in the study groups; drawing out debates and providing forums for bringing out differences and clarifying where people want to go.

A proposal was made to officially change the name of the organization committee to the "Coordinating Committee". This was passed.

A proposal was made for the composition of the coordinating committee, that one member be elected from each study group and that 4 be elected at-large by the general membership meeting.

We then voted on the main proposal as amended by the Party Building study group and including the above proposal for composition. There would be representatives from nine study groups: 2 party building; 2 trade union; 1 culture; 1 fundamentals; 1 anti-racism; 1 Capital, Vol. III, and 1 schools. This proposal was passed.

We then passed a separate proposal that each person running for the committee at large make a brief statement about their political perspective.

REPORT FROM FORUM I COMMITTEE: This committee recommended that the forum be held the first week in April, and that the speakers be Jim on experiences of those who left PL;

Steve on experiences of those who left R.U.; someone from the NCA; and possibly Lyn on experiences in BACU. The report was accepted.

REPORT FROM FORUM II COMMITTEE: This committee reported on the thinking behind this forum as follows: The committee expected two positive results from the forum:

1. Internally to deepen our understanding about Party Building.
2. Externally to make a public statement in an anti-dogmatic, anti-sectarian fashion.

The committee proposed to work with the speakers regularly before the forum so that they would be addressing the most critical questions about the tasks facing the left at this moment. The proposed speakers were Jim Schock from the NCA, Max Elbaum from the NCA and the Guardian Club; David F. from the East Bay Network; and a member of our group to raise questions not addressed by other groups while making clear that this was not the position of our organization.

The forum was proposed for Friday, April 28, with a May Day picnic to follow on April 30. This was proposed as a public forum with announcements in various movement media and it was proposed that security be arranged.

A brief discussion followed this report in which some people raised objections to having a speaker from the group and to having the forum so quickly. The forum was postponed for sometime in mid-May and referred back to the committee to report again at the next general meeting.

The next General Membership meeting is set for Sunday, March 26, 1:00 p.m., at the Peoples Cultural Center, 721 Valencia Street, San Francisco. The agenda for the next meeting is: 1. Proposal for a questionnaire. 2. Report from the forum committees. 3. Report on who has been elected to the Coordinating Committee from the study groups, and the election of the at-large members of the CC.

#### A NOTE FROM THE ORGANIZATION COMMITTEE

At our last general meeting, Feb. 26, we were not able to come to enough agreement on the report of the second forum committee to proceed with work on the forum. While mapping out the agenda for the next meeting, the Organizational Committee discussed why this happened, and how we might facilitate a more fruitful discussion next time. The following points came up and we agreed to share them with the group via newsletter.

It was felt that many of us showed an unfortunate tendency to concentrate on purely organizational questions (such as elections, how best to put on the forum, etc.), therefore leaving us insufficient time to discuss political questions, which would be a better use of our time. Such political questions tend to surface during the meeting around organizational questions, where they tend not to be resolved and only impede the work at hand.

Two political viewpoints that seemed to surface during the forum discussion:

1. We should stress anti-dogmatic and anti-sectarian practice as our contribution to a correction of these errors on the left as a whole, and should therefore engage in active theoretical study and debate both within and without our group and not assume any organizational form that would stifle these.
2. We cannot engage in any worthwhile practice without first coming to agreement on comprehensive group "line" and a "tight" organizational structure, and this should be done before attempting to work with other groups.

Holders of the first viewpoint seem to feel that taking the second course of action will inevitably lead to a dogmatic and sectarian approach, since without practice, evaluation and criticism/self criticism by large numbers of people, no Marxist analysis is possible. Holders of the second viewpoint seem to feel that taking the first course of action would make us an un-serious, un-Leninist group that would lack the discipline and purpose necessary for revolutionary work.

It seems likely that both these viewpoints will be with us for some time. We should begin to frame our political discussion so as to give each serious consideration and come to some resolution or synthesis. If we are to move on, however, we cannot let this political debate hole up our theoretical and practical work. Talk alone will not settle these questions dialectically. When discussing questions such as the forum, let us frame the discussion in terms of getting on with doing it (after all, we have agreed to do it at two previous meetings) and evolve a way of doing it that will make clearer our understanding of our own politics. Let us get clear on what we hope to gain from this forum, so that we may properly evaluate it in future discussions.

We have all agreed that we are non-sectarian. The essence of being non-sectarian is to be able to engage in practice with people with whom we do not totally agree, internally as well as externally. We have agreed we are non-dogmatic. The essence of being non-dogmatic is the willingness to subject even our most cherished political opinions to the test of evaluation in practice.

#### REPORT ON THE PROPOSED PARTY-BUILDING FORUM

I. Goals of the Forum: The party building forum would help us achieve both internal and external goals. Internally, it would help us to deepen and to centralize our discussion of party-building questions. Our discussion would be deepened by focusing on key party-building questions. Our discussion would be deepened by focusing on key, specific questions in preparing for the forum; by the presentations of different viewpoints at the forum itself; and by further discussion and thought stimulated by the forum. Our discussion would be more centralized by providing a framework for the exchange of views among different study groups and individuals in our process, and between ourselves and groups and individuals in the Bay Area who have similar views. This framework would include not only the forum itself, but also a plan to carry through the discussion within our group after the forum is over. This discussion process should help point the way forward when the present series of study groups comes to an end.

Externally, the forum will be our first public statement: a successful forum on party-building would be a concrete anti-dogmatic, anti-sectarian statement, because it would combine the goal of helping us develop our organizational unity with the goal of helping develop the unity of the movement as a whole. This unity would be developed by promoting a multi-tendency discussion of party-building within our movement, and not by promoting a particular line at the forum.

II. Questions to be addressed at the forum: Speakers would be asked to address themselves to specific questions on party-building, so that a thorough exchange of views on important questions could take place. This would make it easier to compare the positions presented. We would work with the speakers regularly before the forum to insure this.

We propose that the speakers address themselves to the following questions relating to their analysis of class forces in the present situation:

1. What should be the political basis of unity of the independent party-building trend?
2. What concrete steps can be taken towards unity on this political basis?

3. What are the central political tasks of our movement? (Fusion? The development of theory?)

III. Speakers: The following speakers were suggested: 1) Jim Shock, NCA; 2) Max Elbaum, NCA and Guardian Club; and 3) Dave Forrest. Shock and Elbaum have expressed interest in speaking, after a tentative discussion. At this time it is unsure whether Forrest would be able to speak.

The committee discussed these proposed speakers and felt that a wider range of views should be presented. Since our group contains some views within the independent party-building trend that are not represented by the three proposed speakers, we further propose that there be two speakers from our group. The two speakers would speak as individuals, and it would be made clear that they did not represent our group, and that our group had not yet taken a position on these questions.

We propose this selection process: Members of our group who wish to speak would be invited to volunteer. These volunteers would write a brief outline of what they wish to say. The outlines would be made available to the membership, who would then choose the speakers on the basis of choosing the presentations they feel it would be most useful to hear.

Moderator: Our group would provide a moderator, who would also give a brief account of our group, and an explanation of our purpose in holding the forum.

IV. Publicity: We propose that the forum be announced in local left publications and in the Guardian. Even if the forum were not publicly announced, it would be widely known about by people in our group, NCA, Guardian Club, etc.--probably over 200 people. Such a wide knowledge would require security arrangements to prevent possible disruption. It seems to us that such a forum would need to be either secret or public--that it cannot be "half public". since it has not been and will not be secret, the forum should be public, so as to reach the largest number of interested independent Marxist-Leninists.

V. Date: May 17th is suggested.

VI. Follow-up: A systematic plan for follow-up discussions of party-building questions raised at the forum will be necessary. At this writing (March 12) our proposal on follow-up has not been completed.

POSITION PAPERS: We have three position papers and we have decided, given the cost of printing and mailing, not to include them in the newsletter, but to make them available in quantity at the next general meeting.

"THE FIVE RETREATS - A History of the Failure of PLP", a 200 page analysis, is available in xerox form. It can be ordered from Jim Dann, 358 Jersey Street, San Francisco, CA 94114 (648-7825). Please enclose \$3.00 to cover the cost of xeroxing.

#### MINERS STRIKE LABOR/COMMUNITY SUPPORT COALITION

The coalition initiated several weeks ago by several San Francisco trade unions decided Saturday, March 11, to begin a vigorous campaign of activities to educate trade union members and the Bay Area community about the miners' struggle.

More than 250 trade unionists called for task forces to be established in the nine Bay Area/Northern California counties to organize outreach to as many people as possible. A mass march and rally has been tentatively been set for Saturday, April 1, in San

San Francisco.

A motion by the Amalgamated Transit Union local for BART workers urging all Bay Area labor councils and trade unions to "immediately prepare for a 24 hour work stoppage and a day of mass labor rallies" in support of the miners was the subject of intense debate. The motion was defeated by a few votes, with many abstentions.

Meetings are scheduled for 12 noon every Saturday at the Retail Clerks Local #1100 hall at 1345 Mission Street (near 10th), San Francisco, for the duration of the strike.

The San Francisco task force will meet Saturday, March 18, at 10:30 a.m. for planning work sessions prior to the coalition meeting. Concerned trade union members and community members are urged to attend to help with the campaign.

For more information call the coalition staff headquarters at the above address. Tel. 863-3823.

INDIVIDUAL REPORT ON MEETING IN ORANGE COUNTY OF GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS AROUND ANTI-DOGMATIST, ANTI-REVISIONIST TREND: The meeting was hosted by the Orange County Socialist Organizing Committee and included people from L.A. Work Group, Pasadena Work Group, another small L.A. collective, L.A. Guardian Club, and assorted individuals. It was the first such gathering in Southern California and dealt partially with a report from the recent national conference in Philadelphia and dealt partially with a report from the main aspect of the report was a proposal for beginning the formation of an ideological center nationally and what the basis of unity for it should be. An Organizing Committee for such a center was established and 18 points of unity were passed. This conference was attended by 27 voting units, mostly groups (but also some individuals who can be members of the Trend individually) who broke down as 2 from the south, 2-4 from the Midwest, 1 from Seattle, 3 from California, many from the east, and none from the Southwest.

There was also a very positive report by a woman who had recently traveled the country visiting seven Trend groups and her favorable reaction to their openness and seriousness. The other aspect of the meeting was the beginning of a structure in Southern California for communication of people in the area.

All were very interested in our development here and our points of unity, which were shown to them. In some ways things are more advanced there--more established groups; in other ways less developed--fewer people in contact with each other as compared to the potential. They want contact with any of us who visit or wish to correspond. Address of SOC is P.O. Box 4252, Santa Anna, California 92702. A complete list of groups both regionally and nationally will soon be forthcoming from them.

For more details on the meeting or report of the Philadelphia Conference, documents, or copies of SCC pamphlet (Notes From Orange), call Joe at 566-9844.

AFRICAN PEOPLE'S SOCIALIST PARTY: Another individual contact was made about a month ago with Chairman Joseph Waller of the African People's Socialist Party, which is headquartered in St. Petersburg, Florida. Joe came to the West Coast for a fact-finding, speaking, and organizing tour, and there are now groups set up to do ongoing work for the Party. He was very interested in our process and gave a lot of validation for having "revolutionary patience" and not rushing ahead. The APSP publishes a newspaper called the Burning Spear, and copies can be bought at Modern Times.

Further, while Chairman Waller was speaking on February 18, two high-powered rifle rounds

