

*Opposition paper by Dan Farrell
-not distributed to OC members*

The OCIC formed itself, and once formed, correctly recognized that something was seriously wrong. The membership of the OCIC was (is) predominantly white and petty-bourgeois, while the tendency as a whole is overwhelmingly national minority and working class. For party-building to proceed, multi-national unity must be achieved; the existing situation must be corrected. For this correction to be made (or at least begun) we must identify the main obstacle holding back the development of multi-national unity, and the main tasks involved in overcoming it.

The regional and local leadership of the OCIC have made such an assessment. "Racism within the communist movement is the key obstacle holding back our tendency." (Boston Local Center Steering Committee, "Now the Struggle...."). The White chauvinism of the white OC members was targeted as the main block to building multi national unity. Therefore, the main task for the OCIC is determined to be an ideological campaign, aimed primarily at white chauvinism and secondarily against anti-working class bias of the membership of the OCIC. This campaign aims at "getting at the white chauvinist attitudes that have held comrades back from taking up outreach to national minority comrades, or have caused them to approach this task in an incorrect manner." Also, "Comrades, then must struggle to look seriously at their white supremacist ideas (emphasis mine), get to the root of them and struggle with them." "The communist method for waging this struggle against bourgeois ideology is criticism and self-criticism. Only by peeling peeling away the layers of defenses, rationalizations and justifications can we get to the essence of the backward ideas. Only by laying them bare can we begin to correct them." (all quotes from BLCSC, "Approach to the Discussion.").

My position is that the BLCSC has correctly analysed the root of the problem - racism in the communist movement. Their approach to overcoming this problem, however, is seriously flawed; it reduces the struggle against racism to a question of individual ideas and attitudes; it approaches the struggle in a stageist and undialectical way; and it liquidates the political content of the struggle against racism.

How did the regional steering committee decide upon this approach? The membership of the local centers can only guess. The NERSC has criticized itself for its white chauvinism in its approach to setting up local centers. But they have not conveyed to members the essential features of their analysis of the situation. Nor have they approached criticisms of their approach in an honest way. Anyone who disagrees with the prevailing estimate of 'white chauvinism as the main obstacle' or who proposes an alternate way of taking up the struggle against racism is not to be taken seriously because they are "defending their own white chauvinism and the white chauvinism of the OCIC". This is a circular argument by which the SC attempts to avoid sharp struggle by ignoring the political content of objections to their approach.

Comrades, the understanding of the centrality of the struggle against racism for the party-building movement is indeed weak in our region. The leadership of our region has been guilty of the grossest white chauvinist errors ("Racism and Federationism in the New England Region."). The membership sits in a 'conspiracy of white chauvinist silence' uniting in words with the approach but holding back in practice.

Meanwhile, sharp struggle has broken out on this question in the other regions of the OCIC. Many honest forces outside the OCIC are in disagreement with the approach being taken. Discussion of the approach to the struggle against racism must not be taken up in a closed and defensive way.

In hopes of moving this process forward, I will present in some detail the criticisms mentioned above of the present approach and present a limited alternative. I do not see this alternative as "liquidating the struggle against white chauvinism", nor do I see it as an attempt to disguise or cover my own white chauvinism. I see ideological struggle over white chauvinism as an essential process, but not the entirety of the struggle against racism. (I have taken this approach seriously - I have written elsewhere an extensive self-criticism of my own white chauvinism, and am engaged in deepening my understanding of the hold of white chauvinism, as a means of changing my practice. I say this not in a self-congratulatory way, but as a recognition of the inadequacy of my past efforts. But, the question of the best way to move forward, individually and organizationally, is still not settled.)

Racism is a system of oppression that has a material and an ideological base. The material base is centered in national oppression, economic exploitation and denial of democratic rights for national minority and oppressed nationality peoples. The ideological component of racism is that form of bourgeois ideology known as white chauvinism, or white supremacy. The struggle against racism will be successful only in so far as it analyses and understands the connection between these two component forms of racism. The leadership's approach does not understand this connection. Documents continually use the terms 'racism' and 'white chauvinism' interchangeably, giving the impression that racism is only an ideology; that if we can just change ourselves the problem will be solved.

The main problem of the leadership's approach is that in its focus on individual ideological struggle it ignores the existence of racism at the organizational level. This involves primarily questions of political line and outreach. Political line involves the question of how the struggle against racism is taken up objectively; the program, strategy and tactics for dealing with the reality of national oppression. Political line also involves the plan for uniting the tendency through the building of an ideological center. The leadership approach is that to put forward questions of political line at this time is a diversion from the struggle against white chauvinism; the OCIC has all the political line it needs at this time to unite the tendency. "... the OC has a definite political line and practice. The OC has a political line on how to unite the tendency around a common plan to build a party. Its practice is to attempt to unite the tendency and to conduct ideological struggle in that context. Building multi-national unity is clearly an important component of that practice." ("Carry Through...")

The OCIC also has a basic political line for taking up the struggle against racism as laid out in principles 11 and 12. These principles (like the other 16) are relatively undeveloped. Does this underdevelopment and the OCIC's plan for uniting the tendency hold back the process of achieving multi-national unity, or does it move the process forward. My position is that this lack of development of political line on the struggle against racism works to hold back the development of multi-national unity, works to offset the positive features of the OCIC's approach. That the failure to see the need for the development of political line at this time is a racist error on the part of the OCIC. The existing approach to the struggle against racism and the existing political line were developed by a predominantly white organization; it fails to take leadership from national minority comrades and multi-national organizations who have done significant work in developing lines in these areas, particularly on the relationship between nationalism and revolution. Until this racist error is recognized and rectified, the OCIC will be seen as a racist organization. The OCIC could spend much time on the Point 18 controversy, making it the major political priority. But it cannot see the necessity of even considering that its political line on racism may be inadequate for achieving multi-national unity.

The position of the OCIC is that the question of political line on the struggle against racism is an open question, one that will be taken up at a later stage of development (in the IC, for instance). And yet, a 'leading line' on the struggle against racism does exist and dominates the OCIC. This is the line put forward and developed by the PWOC. While I do not disagree with the responsibility of the most advanced forces to take leadership, there is a problem of the relation between cadre organizations and the ideological center. The process of line development and consolidation goes on (I assume) in cadre organizations. The recent movement towards the establishment of a pre-party formation will further this process of line development and consolidation. Meanwhile no line development goes on in the OCIC. This process insures that the cadre organizations will control the process of line struggle when and if it takes place. This is a problem of racism and federationism, a problem that seems to have been knocked off the agenda of the OCIC by the current 'white chauvinism campaign'.

How does the existence of officially underdeveloped political line and implicit 'leading line' relate to the process of building multi-national unity? The mass practice of many OCIC cadre is in implementation of this line; a line weak on the question of nationalism and on the question of the movements of the national minorities, especially the Black Liberation Movement. National minority cadre are confronted with white OCIC members who are not only white chauvinist in their attitudes and individual relations, but who also carry out a particular political line. Taking up party-building questions with these comrades will require the articulation of the prevailing political line. Many of these national minority comrades are under the influence of (and have developed) alternative lines on the struggle against racism. The OCIC's backwardness on taking up political line struggles is an indication of the racism of the organization. With the continued crisis

of the ultra-'left'(or centrist, or right-opportunist, or social-imperialist) trend, this problem will likely become more acute rather than less.

The ultra-'left' (or right-opportunist) groups achieved some success in uniting with national minority comrades. The reasons for this go unanalysed the SC approach. Did they make significant progress in combatting their own white chauvinism, or did their political line have anything to do with it? Or was it due to tailism in their political practice? The NERSC rejects the notion that political line has anything to do with achieving multi-national unity: "These comrades also claim that the development of political line on the struggle against racism is particularly important to building multi-national unity. This is a ghettoisation of national minority comrades. It's saying that they are only interested in racism and not all the political questions facing the party building movement." (Carry Through...,pg 3). Of course no one ever claimed that national minority comrades were only interested in racism; that's a straw argument that the SC throws in to avoid the issue. But to deny that the stand taken by predominantly white organizations on the struggle against racism is, and has been, a central concern on national minorities reveals a serious ignorance of the history of the communist movement, a failure to objectively analyse current reality and a serious racist error which dismisses the role of nationalism as a revolutionary process.

Two examples from the history of the CPUSA are instructive. The CPUSA made great strides in achieving multi-nationality in the 1930's at a time when it had developed unity on political line that took up the centrality of the struggle against national oppression and made work with the Black Liberation Movement a priority. The party also made strides in combatting the white chauvinism of its white cadre, because it was able to tie the attitudes of the cadre to concrete practice, based on an implementation of political line.

In the 1950's the CPUSA embarked on a 'phony war' against white chauvinism. This came at a time when the party was liquidating its political line on the national question and the centrality of the struggle against racism. The leadership used this campaign to cover the liquidation of political line, putting forward the view that the problem was caused by 'bad cadre' rather than by 'bad political line'. Of course the 'phony war' failed; large numbers of cadre, both white and national minority were driven out of the party. This stands in marked contrast to the party's success in attracting large numbers of national minority people to the party; a success based on taking a firm stand in support of the mass movements of national minorities, a stand based on a developed political line.

The NERSC fails to understand the organizational component of racism in its approach to outreach. While the NERSC is correct in criticizing the white chauvinism and empiricism of its past outreach efforts, it still bows to spontaneity in outreach - individuals spontaneously contacting other individuals. This is a step; a further step would be for organizational discussion to be started with existing groups in the area, not just to unite with them in the OCIC, but also to seek out their analysis of the errors that the OCIC is making, and the methods

of correcting them. The NSC has correctly kept up party-building discussions with El Comitè/ MINP. (This despite the NSC's racist and sectarian assessment that they (El Comitè) are "playing a minimal role in the tendency" due to the fact that El Comitè is following the course of building El Comitè in New York (NSC Bulletin #1)). Has any organizational outreach been done in the New England region?

Another example of organizational racism being ignored is the "BOC...holding back almost all its leading members from participating in the BLCSC and NERSC." This was announced in a SC document, not by the BOC. Members of the local centers have the right to demand a full and extensive self-criticism from the BOC (and other cadre organizations where applicable) for its federationist and racist errors. AS individuals must not be 'let off the hook' for their white chauvinism, neither should the cadre organizations.

In summary to this section, the NERSC fails to take up the struggle against racism as a political question. The correct approach would not be to call for a full discussion and articulation of political line at this time. Rather what is needed is an investigation into the role that political line plays in developing multi-national unity in our tendency, and then beginning discussion on how the question of political line is to be taken up in the OCIC. It is not correct to take the position that any discussion of political line must be postponed until the Ideological Center is completely formed (or even later).

The leadership targets ideological struggle over individual attitudes as primary, but even this limited approach is put forward in a dogmatic way. The leadership sees the ideological essence of white chauvinist ideas as the view that national minority people are seen in stereotypes - "lazy, stupid, emotional, close to nature, etc." Once these attitudes are exposed and corrected, multi-national unity can be achieved. While it is undeniably true that these attitudes must be changed, the SC approach fails to get to the analysis of the material conditions that give rise to these incorrect attitudes. For Marxists, the change in individual attitudes can only be accomplished as part of the struggle to transform material conditions. These material conditions include for many comrades a historic and current isolation from national minority comrades and from the mass movements on national minority peoples. This gives rise not only to a failure to break the hold of bourgeois ideology of white chauvinism, but also a failure to understand the reality of national oppression. Both of these factors result in a serious lack of understanding of the centrality of the struggle against racism and the need for a multinational vanguard party.

For many comrades the fundamental expression of their white chauvinism is that they are isolated from national minority comrades. This is more than a question of immediate attitudes, but a question of why the comrade is in the objective situation she/he is in. The SC's response to the problem of 'segregation' is to deny that it exists. According to the SC, these comrades don't need to analyse their

situation - that's just a white chauvinist diversion. They just need to go out and find those national minority comrades that they haven't noticed due to their white chauvinism. The SC sees no need to waste time with objective analysis of concrete situations, or to accept any comrades assessment of his/her situation as honest. After all, we have 'bad cadre', why take their word for anything. And the final proof? Comrade Rachel Stein, who was one of the people putting forward this analysis, made a serious white chauvinist error at the 7/13 Boston LC meeting. Therefore any comrades who put forward the same analysis are exposed as racists.

The SC puts forward that the main form of white chauvinism is that OCIC members are not engaging in political discussions with those national minority comrades who have (or are very close to) unity with the 18 points. Individual white comrades need only to change their attitudes and the problem will be solved. But the hold of white chauvinism manifests in many ways that prevent OCIC members from taking up their communist tasks. 1) Not talking to developed national-minority comrades about party-building. This is the error made by Comrade Tom DiSilva with "Juan" and by Comrade Mark Williams with "Bob". This error's correction does involve primarily a change of attitudes. 2) Not developing political relations with non-ML "advanced workers" and national minority comrades. Correction of this error involves not only changing attitudes, but also involves a deepening of the understanding of the party-building process - the relation of mass work to communist work, etc. 3) Raising of other political questions over the centrality of the struggle against racism. This is the error made by the NERSC in conciliating GH. Its correction requires a deeper understanding of the party-building process. Change of immediate attitudes is secondary. 4) Relating to the mass movements of national minorities in a racist way. This error is corrected by carrying out a developed political line; by understanding the party-building process, and by change of attitudes. 5) Not challenging the white chauvinism of the white working class. Corrected by changing anti-working class attitudes. 6) Not attempting to win over national minority comrades under the influence of ultra-'left' lines. This is a problem of political line and sectarianism.

The rooting out of these forms of white chauvinism requires that the ideological struggle not be closed off into a dogmatic model of one form of white chauvinism. The SC sees form #1 as primary, but on what does it base its analysis? The errors of Comrades DiSilva and Williams? other errors? All of these forms of white chauvinism reflect weaknesses in our understanding of the centrality of the struggle against racism as a party building question. This weakness will not be overcome only by ideological struggle over attitudes. It involves the need to study the question of racism, the reality of national oppression in this country. The NSC "Resolution on an Ideological Campaign Against White Chauvinism" (3/16/80) calls for "the need to focus real attention on strengthening our grasp of the reality of national oppression in its various forms and manifestations, and correct methods to combat it", and also, "the OC commits itself to a process of study focusing on the historical development of racism and national oppression, the centrality of the struggle against this oppression historically and its most salient manifestations in the US today."

Does the NERSC unite with this approach? No. In "carry through the Campaign Against White Chauvinism" they state: "...comrades who advocatd the OC study racism also liquidate the primacy of sharp struggle...To advocate study instead (of sharp struggle) is to defend white chauvinism." The NERSC has a serious weakness in its understanding of the struggle against racism. They can only understand it as either study, or sharp struggle; either ideological struggle or political line struggle. Dialectics! Where have you gone?

The NERSC's resolution "Carry Through the Campaign Against White Chauvinism" is a real step backward from the NSC's resolution. Rather than proposing any positive steps towards deepening our understanding of the centrality of the struggle against racism and the nature of national oppression, the NERSC can only propose that we immediately beat down the backward opposition so we get on with the process of getting our heads together.

The SC incorrectly separates the struggle against racism into stages. First comes ideological struggle over attitudes, then at some later stage we can take up the political problems of the struggle against racism. However, the struggle against white chauvinism is a lifelong struggle; at what point do we move on to the next stage? At what point do we make enough progress to take up the objective requirements of the mass movements? Does the rest of the OCIC's work wait until this point is reached? The SC has allowed its analysis of what is primary at this time to liquidate all secondary questions. And its definition of whats primary is seriously limited, if its seen as just individual white chauvinism, and not racism.

In conclusion, the SC should take up the question of the struggle against racism in a brader way: by not limiting the approach to the form that white chauvinism takes; by investigating how to deepen our understanding of the relation between political line and ideological struggle by putting forward a plan of study on the reality of national oppression and the centrality of the struggle against racism fro party-building; and by evaluating itspractice to insure that sharp struggle take place in a principled way, according to the principle of unity-struggle-unity.

A number of objections have been raised to alternatives to the SC's approach: they defend white chauvinism, they seek to avoid sharp struggle, they put forward the backward rectification line. I've responded to the first of these in an earlier sections. I'd like to respond to the last two here.

The Sc alleges that the opponents of the SC approach seek to aviod sharp struggle. But its exactly those comrades wha are in opposition who have engaged the struggles by written responses or by challenging statements in meetnigs. On the o ther hand, those comrades who unite who heartedly with the SC approach (at least in words) are good at 'deepenin the criticisms of others, while remaining conspicuously silent about their own errors (Sc excluded). The Anti-Racist Task Force of the NSC called for comrades to submit written materials which include "summationsof experience, in particular insightful criticisms and self-criticisms of racist errors both within the Communist movement and in mass practice." Comrade Jane Roth of the BLCSC at the end of the

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last Boston LC meeting called for written responses of individual accounts of white chauvinis errors and their correction. The only responses circulated to the membership were self-criticisms of those comrades who had formerly been in opposition and who had changed their position. There were no self-criticisms from other members. Do these comrades have nothing to criticize in themselves? Do they feel that their self-criticisms would help deepen the understanding of those erring comrades who still don't 'understand' the correct approach. Or do these comrades desire to stay 'off the hook'? I think these are questions to be kept in mind before characterizing who are the honest forces and who are the dishonest ones in the OCIC.

Another allegation is that this alternative that calls for the discussion of political line must be an example of the rectification line. I would reject this assisment. The key feature of the rectification line is its liquidation of the role of mass practice in the party building process. the approach that I have put forward calls for the taking up of political line so that communists will engage more thouroughly and correctly in mass practice. The Sc's approach puts off the taking up of political issues in favor of struggle over attitudes. If the mass work examples of the cadre organizations is being paralyzed over the ideological campaign, its hard to understand where the charges of rctification are coming from.

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