

2/28/80

To the NERCC,

As I discussed with you in our meeting of 1/7/80, I have decided to withdraw from the New England Regional Coordinating Committee. I hope what follows will help clarify and further the discussion of that decision.

When I first joined the RCC as the individual designated by the Red Boston Study Group, I did so out of the conviction that the RCC would be an important arena of struggle; a forum whose initiatives in the effort to develop and consolidate the OCIC regionally would have important effects on the overall direction of the OC nationally. My belief in the political importance of the evolving struggle over the conception and form of OC centers has not diminished. In my view, the question of OC centers (and thus, the question of the OC's prospects of emerging as a genuine ideological center for our movement) can not be resolved apart from a critique of the NSC's generally incorrect approach to organizing the ideological struggle. Indeed, if the continuing struggle in the So. Calif. center, the documents from the Minneapolis center, and my own experience in the New England RCC are any indication, the question of OC centers could be the crucial practical context in which the broader question of the NSC's tendency to place organizational form over political unity will emerge for open discussion (with its specific impact on minority rights, the struggle against federationism and bureaucratic centralism receiving special attention).

What has changed, however, is my belief that the NERCC could be a forum conducive to initiating that struggle. During the slightly more than three months that I participated on the RCC I became increasingly frustrated by the course we pursued. It has been my opinion that if the RCC was to successfully carry out its responsibility for guiding the process of forming a N.E. regional center a preliminary discussion--systematically carried out--as to what a regional center is, what its political goals are, and how it could best achieve those goals was absolutely necessary. Only such a discussion could lay the initial basis of political unity essential to a collective approach to the N.E. center. Considering that the RCC was working under the limitations correctly noted in "The OC's First Year," limitations which arise directly from inexperience with the regional form (reinforced by the low level of national discussion over its various features), the need for a set of preliminary discussions aimed at producing a draft plan whose features could then be struggled over region-wide was apparent.

At the outset this orientation was uniformly supported within the RCC. It essentially reflects the consensus achieved at the "expanded" RCC meeting of 9/22/79 where it was decided to engage in a 4-5 meeting discussion series with approx. 20 participants for the purpose of trying to "lay the basis for a center" in New England (see draft letter



of invitation, 10/7/79). At the mts. of 9/29/79 it was further agreed that the criticism of the Labor Day Conference raised by the representatives of the Theoretical Review would be the first topic of discussion. It was felt that this discussion, raising as it did both questions concerning the overall process of the consolidation of the OC and specific questions involving the relationship between majority and minority views, the correct methods for organizing the ideological struggle, etc., would lay the basis for principled relations among the participants in the N.E. regional center while also serving as an introduction to some of the thornier problems faced by an organizational form open to a diversity of viewpoints.

This initial period of unity was brought to a close, however, through the intervention of the NSC (in the person of JF). This intervention succeeded, despite resistance, in thoroughly disorganizing the process. Rather than a short series of discussions which targetted the key problems relating to OC centers (the So. Calif. struggle, the struggle against federationism, relation of the NSC to local centers, TR criticisms, etc.), and which drew on the relevant materials already generated by the national discussion, the RCC under JF's prodding decided to first draft a plan for the regional center, and then discuss the differences that arose over the draft. Posed as a proposal to expedite the work of the RCC, the "draft now--discuss later" approach only succeeded in saddling the RCC with a spontaneous method of struggle that had no hope of resolving any real differences.

The disastrous impact that this spontaneous approach had on the RCC's work is best illustrated by the actual first draft produced (see draft proposal for the NERC, 11/12/79). This document is characterized by an all unity, no struggle relationship between the NSC and the regional center, the erection of substantial barriers to the dissemination of minority opinions through the splintering of the ideological struggle into small study groups, and a strictly hierarchical structure that allows virtually no room to express the political diversity of the OC forces. The many revisions and additions that this document has already gone through only emphasizes the fact that it was a hopelessly premature effort. Instead of serving as a step toward uniting the RCC around a viable plan for the New England center the initial draft offered a caricature of a regional center that could only (and did in fact) serve to divide the RCC.

The fundamental error in the approach taken by the RCC was that it imposed a higher level of unity on the general orientation to OC centers than actually existed, and that it assumed that debate over the specific language of a document could somehow replace the broader political discussion on which that language should have been based in the first place. In practice, the "draft now--discuss later" line went hand in hand with a refusal to take up the key documents and struggles



that have shaped the national discussion over OC centers. Suddenly, the Labor Day Conference, the So. Calif. struggle, and the NSC's documents on local centers were considered tangential to the 'real' task of building the N.E. center. (Ironically, the very same documents that the RCC couldn't find time to discuss have now been gathered together by the NSC in the packet of basic materials on OC centers.)

Objectively, the NERCC has capitulated to the NSC to the extent that it now takes its task to be the mere implementation of Steering Committee policy on OC centers. From the RCC's perspective anything that might challenge those policies is indeed tangential. Instead of a process that takes the real forces in the NE region as its starting point the RCC has committed itself to an utterly sterile approach to ideological struggle. It is on this basis that I consider my continued presence on the RCC as fruitless. The debate over a regional center for New England must now await the specific proposal of the RCC and the organized discussion around that proposal.

As I indicated in our last discussion, my decision to withdraw cannot be understood as solely the outcome of my criticisms of the RCC's work (although those reasons are the determinant ones). In addition, my decision reflects both a decline in my overall optimism concerning the OC as a whole and personal constraints of time and energy.

Briefly, while I am still committed to the effort to build a single ideological center for the anti-dogmatist/anti-revisionist movement, my confidence that the OC will be able to ultimately fill that role has been considerably lessened. My experience in the RCC, the NSC's sectarian attack on the NNMLC, and JF's cavalier treatment of the criticism's raised by the Theoretical Review forces over the Labor Day conference during the public forum with the Club Network in December, have impressed upon me the consistency with which the errors of the NSC manifest themselves at all levels of the OC's work. It is not clear to me at this time whether struggle within the OC continues to be the correct path. The actions of the various minority forces developing in response to the current tendencies could determine that question.

In the context of my criticisms of the RCC and my general views on the OC, the substantial time and energy needed to maintain the struggle in the RCC can no longer be justified. Under these circumstances I see my withdrawal from the RCC as also a question of seeking the most effective form of intervention in the party building movement.

In concluding this letter I wish to make a self-criticism. It goes without saying that my own participation in the RCC was far from faultless. While there are no criticisms in this letter that the entire RCC hasn't heard before (and in fact many times), this is the first time I have written them down. The result is that I too have contributed to the spontaneous

nature of the RCC's internal debate. In addition, what is now clear to me as I survey the process as a whole, was not always clear at each and every step along the way. Thus, while I have consistently pushed for organized discussion to lay a real basis of political unity for the RCC's work, I too acquiesced to JF's intervention, although with strong reservations. It wasn't until I saw the subsequent draft plan and the nature of the discussions that I realized the magnitude of the error. Finally, I hope the fact that this letter is itself nearly a month overdue will not prevent the RCC from pursuing the issues I have raised here if doing so will move the process of building and consolidating the regional center forward.

In struggle,

Glen