

On the Proposed Name Change

While PF's proposal to change the name of our organization is not one of the central aspects of our current struggles, it does have some significance. For this reason I am writing this brief response in the context of our ongoing preparation for the DMLO Conference.

I am opposed to PF's proposal; both for what the proposal says and for what it does not say.

PF has based her proposal on two interrelated rationales: 1) that "the proposed name change reflects more accurately the current state of our organization in terms of the party building movement" and 2) that "a change to the suggested one (DWOC...my note PC) would be more conducive to our United Front efforts in building a left-center alliance."

On the first point, that the proposed name change would give a more "accurate portrayal of our organization"; the question emerges: to whom? Our organization has been identified for more than five years within both the party building AND mass movement as "DMLO". Examples of public uses of "DMLO" abound. (See past and present political reports) The fact that we are not an organization carrying out a fully elaborated line is, of course, true; but not really to the point. When we ARE part of an organization with a fully elaborated line we will be part of the PARTY. Until then, we are an organization of Marxist-Leninists, one of the myriad forms of pre-party organization our movement has produced. As such, "DMLO" is as "good" or as "bad" as any other name.

The real significance of changing the name of our organization at this time is within the party building movement; and more precisely, within our Tendency. This aspect is missed in PF's proposal.

The reason that I see the real import of a name change as being within the Tendency is that a change to the DWOC cannot be other than an "announcement" that our organization has not only adopted the party building line of the PWOC, but that leadership intends to pursue significantly higher unity through the process of developing "fraction" work. Because I have dealt with my opposition to the "fusion" line in other places, there is no need for that in this paper. Realistically, however, comrades must see the birth of a "DWOC" as not coincidental to the birth of the TCWOC, the BAWOC, and the other "WOC's" which will undoubtedly emerge on the road to a pre-party organization under the line of the PWOC. This is the real political meaning of the proposed name change at this time. This is only part of my reason for opposing it however.

On another level, that of the relationship of our name to united front work, PF's proposal has some disturbing implications. I think that the comrades suggestion is a historical throwback to an earlier time in our movement. What I'm speaking of is the period when the "new communist" movement was only just emerging, and when many in our movement believed that the way to combat the lingering effects of McCarthyism was to remove any forms of identification ~~that~~ included "communism", Marxism-Leninism", etc. It was felt that in this way, organizations could "get people's attention before they hit the worker's with the real news about "who we are" I believe that this was a period which was a reflection of the immaturity of our movement in understanding different levels and forms of work. This has historically reflected itself in an economist view of what our tasks are in the trade union and mass movements.

PF writes that "cadre would be in a better position to explain the nature of the organization on the basis of political line". Comrades, we must understand that our political line only becomes concretized in application to the particular struggles we are engaged in... and the leadership we are able to give to those struggles. Our propaganda will be judged by advanced workers on its analysis, its style; and in the long run, by its relationship to our practice. It will not be judged by the advanced in any important sense by the name attached to it .It is only the center-right and right elements within a particular situation who will raise the question of "communists!"; and by now we should all realize that red-baiting will occur in response to a revolutionary line ~~WHATEVER~~ the name of the group putting that line forward.

I would suggest that if comrades have trouble identifying themselves as members of DMLO that they have also had problems identifying themselves as communists. There are many factors which contribute to this: our primitive organizational level, our meager development of agit/prop, our general low level of cadre development, the relative short period of time some comrades have been in their situations, etc. However, PF's proposal would respond to this situation in both a superficial and mechanical way: "If we have trouble identifying ourselves as communists----we'll change our name." What is needed instead is a dialectical approach which emphasizes growth of political and organizational skills within the context of knowing that each situation will develop differently and that a multitude of different tactics must be developed from a single cohesive line.

We do need development on how to develop and use agit/prop, but "hiding our lamp under a bushelbasket" is not the correct starting place. What is required instead is a strengthening of the unity and clarity our cadre possess in relation to our politics(strategy,etc); and the development of a much more sophisticated organizational arrangement to move that forward. This is essentially a question of internal development, and not a function of so obviously a secondary factor as our name.

The EC has unity on the absolute necessity to move DMLO beyond our slipshod and amateurish methods of organization. It is in the development of unity on a party building strategy and the efforts to organize ourselves in better ways internally that we will advance most significantly our work at all levels:mass and party building work.

In summary, I am opposed to PF's proposal both because it would not deal in a substantive way with our relation to the mass movement, and because it would enter us into a developing phenomenon which I have significant disagreement with.

PC