

A PROPOSAL FOR MERGER OF PROGRESSIVE SOUTH ASIAN ORGANISATIONS
IN CALIFORNIA

*[Note: This proposal is strictly preliminary and all provisions are subject to full discussion and modification, if desired, by all those concerned. *]*

PURPOSE

Independent progressive South Asian political organisations and units in California have multiplied to the present number of at least 9, with branches stretching from San Diego to Berkeley to Fresno. In particular, the number of organisations in the Bay Area alone has been a source of confusion for those outside as well as within. Coordination of efforts on concrete projects has, at times, been muddled with some confusion arising principally from divergent organisational loyalties. The functioning of individuals within a coalition has also been a source of controversy. In view of the apparent relative lack of ideological differences among most of these groups and their traditions of mutual cooperation in the recent past, this proposal for organisational merger is being put forward with a view toward opening up substantive discussions on the subject.

POLITICAL BASIS OF UNITY

It is proposed that the political basis of unity in this new merged organisation should be the New India Coalition (NIC) Political Resolution of June 1976, as modified by the constituency of the new organisation. Appended to this document should be an action program which follows from recognition of the fundamental problems. It is important to note that, unlike various proposed alliances, this basis of unity goes far beyond mere defense of civil liberties in its discussion of economic and social democracy, nature of the ruling classes, role of imperialism, etc.

Given the fact that differences of viewpoint will inevitably continue to arise within the context of this political basis, as they have in the past, it is further proposed that these differences be faced neither with tolerance nor sectarianism, but rather with *open political struggle within the organisation*. Such political struggle should be viewed as a healthy sign that we are continuing to advance our collective political understanding and avoid the ideological stagnation that leads to revisionism and opportunism.

SCOPE OF CONCERN

In view of the many common problems and concerns of the people of the South Asian region, the scope of the new organisation should cover all of South Asia, or perhaps more loosely the "South Asian region". Thus, the ideological thrust (as distinguished from the strategy of a movement) can be disengaged from the petty nationalisms and ethnicisms that have only served the feudal elites, imperialists, and current ruling classes in dividing the working class. The organisation shall not, in name or in substance, either imply a student organisation nor one which is limited to persons of South Asian origin.

Membership should be based solely on the merits of one's political commitment, sincerity, and adherence to the political basis of unity. On the other hand, the non-discriminatory presence of persons not of South Asian origin should not be allowed to detract from the organisation as a fundamentally South Asian political organisation supporting fundamental revolutionary change.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

- (1) Priority to organisational programs: With regard to programs of the full organisation, all local units would be expected to give their full support to the implementation of these programs once a plan of action is resolved -- thus functioning as one organisation with many branches.
- (2) Local autonomy: If any local unit or group within the organisation wishes to put on a program in addition to organisational activities, it is most welcome to do so under the organisation name -- consistent with the political basis of unity. It may also put forth programs beyond the context of the political basis of unity provided there is an *open* understanding with the rest of the organisation. Thus, a reasonable amount of local autonomy, and hence spontaneity, should be preserved.
- (3) Decision policy: It is proposed that all efforts should be made to resolve organisational decisions by consensus whenever possible. Only if all reasonable attempts at consensus fail should last resort be made to majority vote. This may be difficult to achieve, but we should strive for it as a tactical objective. The purpose is to preserve unity, ensure open struggle over differences of viewpoint, and avoid personality conflicts.
- (4) Coordination and administration: Because of the large geographical spread of the new organisation, a central coordinating body will be necessary -- elected periodically by a general meeting of the full organisation. The convener of this coordinating committee (tentatively designated the "policy coordinator") and the members of the coordinating committee may be chosen from any local units. Meetings of the coordinating committee may circulate to the different units (with an eye to practicality and economy).

Administration should be the responsibility of the secretariat headed by the "administrative coordinator" (tentative designation). This would relieve the coordinating committee of day-to-day correspondence, accounting control, etc. to permit its greater concentration on initiating new positions, programs, and external relations. Unlike policy coordination, the secretariat requires a stable permanent address, and it is proposed that this be located presently in the East Bay (San Francisco Bay Area) where the bulk of our collective administrative infrastructure is already in place.

- (5) Publications and production of permanent audio-visual resources: All units should make contributions, however small, to the production of publications or audio-visual materials -- either individually or in cooperation with other units. Each unit would undertake responsibility for consis-

tency of the produced material with the political basis of unity. Materials would, in turn, be distributed by all units and their branches, if any, anywhere in the world. Those units which prior to merger were the primary publishing units could reorganise themselves as the principal publishing arm of the merged organisation to which all units could make contributions for publication. Finally, those units which lack the labour power should feel free to call upon the services of the secretariat, if necessary, for assistance in printing, editing, translation, typing, etc. -- though each unit should strive to contribute as much as possible locally.

- (6) Other possible activities: The organisation and its units should consider the possibility of opening up study groups, information centers, and increasing our communications with South Asia. Collectively, possibilities include a press relations/political lobby section (perhaps working closely with other organisations in a coalition), a news pool, documentation of government harassment, united front demonstrations and pickets, the issuance of organisation-wide statements in response to major events in South Asia, assistance in community organising, and general pooling of resources, finances, labour power, and morale. Most importantly, ideas should be evolved for concrete ways of assisting the movement in India.

Submitted by:

Committee of Concerned Indian Students (B)

- * This merger proposal is being sent to (alphabetical listing):

Friends of India [Santa Cruz]

India Forum (O) [Oakland]

Indian People's Association in North America (B) [Berkeley]

Indians for New Democracy in India Association [Oakland, Fresno]

South Asia Students Association [Berkeley]

San Diego unit

Santa Barbara unit

Committee of Concerned Indian Students (B) [Berkeley]

and several individuals who have established a close and trusted working relationship with one or more of the above-mentioned groups.

NIC would continue to exist as long as conditions require its services as a coalition.