

The Rising Peace Demand At Women's Conventions

By Claudia Jones

A NUMBER OF RECENT conventions of women's organizations indicate that large masses of American women are giving increasing battle to the consequences of the aggressive pro-war, pro-fascist Wall Street policies of the Truman Administration.

Wives and mothers of working men and women, Negro and white, the future young mothers and wives, have, in communities, shops and organizations, raised mass slogans for bringing the boys home, for peace now in Korea, for negotiations of difference between the great states; for ending the senseless slaughter of their husbands and sons, and the infinite suffering of the sons and husbands of millions of Korean and Chinese mothers and fathers.

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt confirmed this sentiment when, on returning from Geneva, she voiced opposition to extension of the war through use of Chiang Kai-shek's troops in Korea.

While assailing the Taft-MacArthur proposal, Mrs. Roosevelt said nothing, of course, as to how the Truman Administration has adopted, lock, stock and barrel, the MacArthur proposals for extending the war not only in Korea and China but in Europe.

But prolongation of the war in Korea, the terrible growth of casualties of American Negro and white GI's and the perspective of World War III, assiduously being pumped for by both Trumans and MacArthurs, has made for deeper anti-war sentiment not only among the masses of women, also in old established women's organizations.

EVIDENCE of this as yet ungrasped depth of antiwar sentiment among the masses of women, as women, is to be observed in the positions taken in the recently concluded annual women's conventions.

A few examples will suffice. Take, for instance, the recent Houston convention of the General Federation of Women's Clubs. Delegates represented a membership of 5,500,000 women. While finally steamrolled through pro-war elements, not a single delegate supported the resolution for universal military training although during debate six spoke sharply against it. Significant was the vigorous opposition voiced by an Indiana woman delegate.

"Why should we change our

way of life to something most of our ancestors fled from?" she demanded. "Let's see if the United Nations will not work out this situation. Why should we teach our children till they are 18 to guide their lives by the teachings of the Bible and then make killers of them? Military training provide very little in the making of good citizens. It would have been put in the Constitution if our forefathers wanted it." (N. Y. Times, May 16, 1951).

During the same month this convention convened, the president of this organization, Mrs. Dorothy Deemer Houghton, leader of a bourgeois-led organization, in a full magazine article in the million-circulated McCall's entitled "Women Want To Get into the Act" pleaded for a garison state. But under pressure of the membership she was forced to express the view that women "are sick and tired of carrying out policies" (such as war legislation) they had nothing to do with in framing; and that there is a general feeling that women have "healthy instincts" as to what is a good law and what is not; for their children, their families and their nation. She also admitted that a growing bulk of letters showed a resurgent interest of women in this organization in international affairs.

STILL ANOTHER index of this trend was the recent Miami convention of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers. While not opposing the Truman war policy, pumped for by certain elements, this convention went much further than any previously held convention. Among the resolutions adopted was a peace resolution which promotes the concept that a "Good parent is one who fights for peace"; a 1951 platform which urges that teaching be classed as an essential profession to halt draft board and defense industry raids on an already critical short supply of instructors; the top priorities be granted for materials for school building construction, legislation to provide adequate finan-

cial support for schools and to help equalize educational opportunities for Negro, Mexican, Puerto Rican and white children.

Reflecting the aroused concern of parents and teachers against "Operation Killer" brutalization of the nation's youth was the position of the 100-member board of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers that universal military training should be "temporary" rather than a permanent fixture, and that the "Blood and Thunder" TV shows which show "gupplay, killing and torture" all too frequently, should be banned.

OR TAKE the regional convention of the National Council of Negro Women in Galveston, Texas. Theme of the convention, **Freedom Is Everybody's Business**, set the grave tone of the convention. Echoing in this convention were the anguished cries of Negro women, the inflammable element in the emerging dynamic Negro liberation and people's movement, whose demands for redress against their court-martialled sons in Korea forced even a MacArthur to give lipservice to protest against the well-known existence of a jimcrow U. S. Army.

The State Department has boasted that this was the only major women's organization whose representatives witnessed signing of the North Atlantic Pact. Some of these used Negro women leaders have been utilized by Acheson and other Wall Street representatives of pro-war, slaveholder mentality against the colored people of Asia, the West Indies and the United States.

But the program of the Negro women's organization, though vague, dealt with the necessity "to join hands and hearts with our neighbors, both in our immediate communities and in our world community as well, in order to build a World society based on freedom and justice. . . ." (Atlanta Daily World, May 26, 1951).

EXTREMELY significant was
(Continued on Page 8)

Rising Peace Demands at Women's Conventions

(Continued from Page 7)

the Boston conclave of 5,000 Catholic women on May 1, in which a Peace Rally of Prayer was staged. This conclave was originally conceived as a counter-demonstration to the international workers' May Day, but Archbishop Cushing, principal speaker urged the women, who came from as far as Springfield, Pittsdown and Provincetown, to "pray for peace and to explore some of the legal means by which peace may yet be organized on the face of the earth."

In his sermon, Archbishop Cushing, speaking of the efforts of Pope Pius XII for peace, declared that the Catholic Daughters of America must make peace the "principal subjects . . . of study and discussions, in round tables, reading circles, study clubs, for the months, perhaps the years ahead." Boston Globe, May 21, 1951).

In the same city, the Minute Women for Peace addressed to this conclave of women, 1,000 leaflets urging "End the War This Spring," which were warmly received by the women. They discussed with these Catholic women, the basis for unity in the Archbishop's address, as well as in the Vatican letter to Frederick Joliot-Curie.

THESE TRENDS index the new depth of anti-war sentiment prevalent among the masses of women. To fail to understand the tremendous potential inherent in one-half of the population for peace and democracy, recognized by all forces in the pro-war camp, is to miss its meaning for the 1951 and 1952

elections as well. It further emphasizes the necessity to fight for heightened assistance by labor progressives to the organization of the masses of women, as women, for peace—a fact dramatized in the Supreme Court 6-2 decision aimed at outlawing the fight for peace, as well at outlawing the Communist Party, most consistent, staunch fighter for peace.

Not to be overlooked is that these developments were reinforced and strengthened as a result of the pioneering distinct role of progressive women's organizations and peace centers. A recent New York Women's Peace Conference, held under the auspices of American Women for Peace and co-sponsored by women's peace councils, showed that unity is developing on a grass-roots community basis.

In Illinois on Mother's Day, over 1,000 women voted "yes" in a poll urging support to the Johnson cease-fire and withdraw from Korea resolution and for an end to the war in Korea now.

Women, everywhere, recognize their support to the forthcoming American Peace Crusade National Peace Congress and Exposition in Chicago, June 29-July 1 can greatly contribute in a special way to the overall struggle for peace. A New York Peace Festival and Salute to the Chicago Peace Congress on June 15, called by American Women for Peace supported by all peace forces, represented a special effort to rally women for this major national peace event. Consequently, emerging as a

distinct movement for peace, the masses of women represent a powerful separate detachment, yet integral part of the peace movement as a whole. Through increasing unity, on direct peace issues, and on the consequences of the war program, particularly high prices, high taxes, the needs of their children in the schools, etc., Negro and white working women and their sisters in the mass organization can help to realize in our country under the leadership of labor progressives and broader peace forces, a majority peace movement in the United States.

What's On?

Tomorrow Manhattan

SATURDAY NITE FILM CLUB presents one of the boldest of American films. Arthur Miller's, "All My Sons," Burt Lancaster, Edward G. Robinson, 111 W. 88th St. 3 showings beginning 8:30. Admission to member \$1. Social all evening.

Sunday Night

UNITED NEGRO PEOPLE'S Comm. for Peace and Freedom presents a Cocktail Party, Sun., June 17. Small's Paradise, 135th St. and 7th Ave., 4-9 p.m. Adm. \$1.20, tables seating 4-8, \$3. Entertainment, Allan Booth and Band. Tickets: Bookshops or call PR 2-4631, eves.

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