

# Excerpts From Political Resolution Drafted for Communist Convention

Following are excerpts from the "Draft of Political Resolution" to be submitted by the national committee of the Communist party of the U. S. A. for its national convention. The convention is scheduled for New York next Feb. 11 through 14.

At the present, the task of the progressives is not to prejudice the form of the eventual political realignment. The expansion of labor's independent political role and all serious efforts to transform the Democratic party by ousting the Dixiecrats and undermining the influence of big business, help create the pre-conditions for a new political alignment under labor's leadership, whatever its form. At the same time, the widest and most extensive education for the formation of a new party led by labor facilitates labor's current struggle to influence the situation within the Democratic party. For it demonstrates that labor is not forever committed to the Democratic party and will eventually, in one way or another, build a new political home for itself and its allies. The Communist party and its supporters have reason to be proud of the staunchness with which they met the wave of persecution against them. Nonetheless this persecution was not without effect. It took the form of an expanding pattern of repression including: Taft-Hartley Act affidavits and perjury prosecutions; Smith Act arrests, trials, convictions and jail sentences; Congressional committee inquiries and contempt citations; the screening of whole industries and the entire Civil Service, firings from jobs, hounding from professions, establishment of industry-wide blacklists; McCarran Act persecutions; wide-spread deportations of foreign-born; deprivation of legal rights to halls, radio time, advertising space, etc. All this put the Communist party in a position of de facto illegality.

This attack was designed to destroy the Communist party. In this it did not succeed. It did succeed in weakening and isolating it. It is necessary for all members of the Communist party to face up soberly to the fact that in this period the party suffered heavy organizational losses, declined in political influence in many areas of work and fields of activity, became dangerously isolated from important sectors of the labor and people's movement; that the Marxist press is in jeopardy, and that generally the party is confronted with a critical situation.

Was it inevitable that, in view of these attacks and adverse objective conditions, that the party should suffer such heavy organizational losses and become so severely isolated as it did? The answer must be "no."

The attacks on the party occurred at a time when the over-all economic situation, with the exception of the chronic postwar agricultural crisis was characterized by high levels of general employment and increased total earnings by workers' families. Against the background of this economic situation and its consequences, the errors and long standing weaknesses of our Party had a particularly damaging effect.

The most important of these errors include:

## (A) In the Fight for Peace:

While we repeatedly asserted that World War III was not inevitable, we tended to weaken this correct estimate by declaring that each new defeat for American imperialism increased its desperation and, hence, increased the danger of war. This was coupled with an analysis that the only major difference in the ranks of monopoly capital was between those who want war now and those who want war later.

This overlooked the fact that Wall Street's ability to achieve its predatory aims was diminishing and that the setbacks to the imperialist drive sharpened all differences within the ranks of monopoly capital as well as between the imperialists of various countries. It overlooked the fact that the overall situation of American imperialism still gave it room to maneuver short of world war rather than reducing it to desperate alternatives.

In effect, such estimates excluded the possibility of the peaceful settlement of differences except through a major change in the relation of class forces in the United States. They made it difficult to convince the party membership and the masses of the possibility of achieving under existing conditions a protracted period of peaceful coexistence.

## (B) In the fight against the Fascist danger:

This took the form of over-estimating the scope, level and tempo of the process of fascism under way generally. Our evaluation also tended to equate the attempted outlawing of the party with fascism. This led to wrong organizational decisions in 1950 including conscious efforts to reduce the size of the party membership. While this particular error was quickly recognized by the districts and the national committee and corrective steps were taken, it nevertheless resulted in serious damage to the party organization.

Subsequently, in 1951, the national committee statement on the Vinson decision upholding the first Smith Act conviction of Communist leaders estimated that we had entered a wholly "new situation"—in other words, that a qualitative change had taken place in the

process of the fascization of our country. This led to the introduction of a system of leadership which virtually gave up the fight for legality, tended to accept a status of illegality and abandoned many possibilities for the public functioning of the party.

While it was essential to safeguard the party and enable it to function under the difficult conditions it faced, and while numerous Communists displayed great steadfastness in this task, nevertheless, as a result of a sectarian approach to this effort, the party needlessly lost thousands of members.

Contributing to these left-sectarian errors were:

(a) The failure to recognize that the ruling class was not so hard pressed as to be unable to continue its established method of governmental rule even as it sharply curtailed the Bill of Rights by launching unprecedented attacks against the labor and people's movements and in the first place, against the Communist party;

(b) Underestimation of the strength of American democratic traditions among the people, their readiness to defend the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, the latent power of the trade unions as a bulwark against fascism, the peculiarities of American governmental structure, as well as the struggles between and within the two major parties which act as impediments to the repressive drive of the most reactionary circles.

## (C) On imminence of economic crisis:

Repeatedly since 1945, the party has erred in assessing economic developments in the United States. In 1945, in 1949 and in 1954, it predicted that the current declines would develop into crises of major proportions.

At certain moments the party's analysis wrongly appraised effects of the continuing arms program. Even more important, it overlooked the extent of continuing investments in fixed capital to replace, expand and modernize equipment which had worn out or become obsolete since the last major cycle of fixed capital renewal in the Thirties-Together with this it failed to size up adequately the level of commercial and residential construction as well as the scope of unsatisfied consumer demand and the possibilities of credit expansion. Also, it overlooked the temporary stimulating effect of the Government's tax program which provided for rebates, attractive amortization terms, lower excess profits taxes.

The party's judgment in each case was faulty, because it never made an adequate analysis of the specific features of American capitalism. Instead, it based itself on a one-sided and incomplete study of economic data, applying the Marxian theory of economic crisis in a routine, formal and doctrinaire manner.

These repeated estimates of impending economic crisis had many harmful effects: projection of unrealistic economic programs, overestimation of the tempo of radicalization of the masses with resultant mistakes in tactical approaches to united front relations especially in the trade unions; and finally, encouragement of all tendencies to overestimate the imminence of war and fascism.

Our policies and tactics in regard to the most important aspect of our work, our relations with the labor movement, did not escape the influence of sectarianism. We did not view the labor movement realistically in the light of its actual level of development. Rather, our point of departure was our own concept of what the labor movement should be. We therefore projected standards of achievement for Communists and progressives in the labor movement, as well as for the labor movement as a whole, based on our estimate of what was urgently needed rather than on what was possible under existing conditions.

This led to cumulative strains in the relations between the party and the most friendly sections of the labor movement. It was in great part responsible for isolating us from the membership and the leadership of the unions, toward whom we often adopted not only a sectarian but even a factional attitude. This was demonstrated not only in the failure to wage a skillful and consistent fight to prevent an irreconcilable rupture with the progressive and center forces in several C.I.O. unions, but also in the development of a policy of waging the sharpest struggle against those we characterized as the "center forces" in the C.I.O., and as "Social Democrats."

Within the conservative-led unions this sectarian approach also proved to be very costly. Communists and progressives were often faced with the alternative of either pursuing policies which led to their isolation, to loss of positions of leadership and often to loss of job in the shop as well; or taking a more flexible position and being branded as opportunists by the party. The history of the past period is replete with examples of both consequences. In the vast majority of cases it led to the isolation of the most militant trade unionists from the masses of the workers. In many cases it caused militant and progressive workers and union leaders to break relations of long standing with our party. These mistakes are in large part responsible for our failure to build the strength of the left in the A.F.L. and the conservative-led unions of the C.I.O.

The Communist party recognizes and respects the complete political and organiza-

tional independence of the trade unions and other organizations of the working class and people. It rejects any policy of interference in their internal affairs. It repudiates any allegation that it seeks to capture or control these organizations or to "bore from within." Its attitude to them is the same as to the working class and the people generally whom it tries to influence publicly by political discussion, persuasion and example.

## Estimate on Segregation Issue

The party's work in relation to the Negro people's struggle for equality and freedom was also hobbled by sectarianism in policies and organizational measures. For many years our program and practices in the struggle for Negro rights was conditioned by a narrow and sectarian conception of the character and class base of the Negro people's movement. In minimizing the fact that all the class strata of the Negro people suffered discrimination to one degree or another and therefore had a stake in the struggle for equality and freedom, we clung to negative attitudes toward non-left led organizations of the Negro people and their leaders. Ofttimes, we supported organizational initiatives which had the effect of drawing off the militants from the major Negro organizations and isolating them into left-wing bodies.

In their turn, these left-led Negro organizations were often (under the weight of our insistence) heavily burdened with "special pleadings" in behalf of the general program of the left; as a result they departed from the specific program and method of struggle which masses of Negro people were prepared to support.

Consequently, these organizations soon placed themselves outside the mainstream of the organized mass movement of the Negro people for democratic advancement and equal rights. Incorrectly identifying the militancy of the Negro masses in their battle for equal rights with anti-capitalist or anti-imperialist consciousness, we frequently put forward programs and slogans which corresponded poorly to the prevailing level and temper of the Negro people's movement.

The validity of the slogan of "self-determination for the Negro nation of the Southern Black Belt" as a theoretical premise for our political estimate of the direction in which the Negro people's struggle in the South is developing, needs to be re-appraised.

Also, in unfolding the struggle against racist ideologies, practices and acts of white supremacy and chauvinism—a vitally necessary permanent and principled obligation of all Communists, progressives and humanists—there were widespread tendencies by some bodies on all levels to make unwarranted charges of white chauvinism. Likewise, in upholding the correct principle that white chauvinism is incompatible with membership in the party, arbitrary administrative excesses occurred which distorted and diverted the effectiveness of this struggle.

The party's previous electoral tactics contributed heavily to its isolation from the trade union movement and the broad masses of peace-loving and democratic-minded Americans.

The support which the party gave to the formation of the Progressive party, for which no serious base existed in the trade union movement, was one of the most harmful sectarian mistakes of the past period. It flowed from and was conditioned by the sectarian estimates and policies which characterized the work of the party in all other fields. The tenacious hold of sectarianism in our electoral policy was further demonstrated in the party's continued support to the Progressive party even after the 1948 elections had clearly shown that its formation had been a mistake and that it had no substantial mass following.

Our isolation from the labor and people's movements was increased during this period by a policy of indiscriminately supporting the establishment of left-led organizations. This overlooked changes which had taken place from a previous situation in which the absence of initiatives in many fields by organized groups necessitated the formation of a wide array of left-led organizations. With the new role played by important questions, left-led organizations in many instances isolated their members and supporters from the main currents of political life in the country.

In other cases, where initiatives by left committees were justified, mistaken efforts were made to expand such committees into membership groups. Only in a few cases were such left-led organizations justified in terms of political and organizational need.

Following the results of the 1952 elections, the national committee began a serious struggle against left-sectarianism as the main danger in our mass work. This found expression in the resolution on the results of the 1952 elections, which sharply criticized the sectarian direction of the party's electoral tactics; in leading articles in 1953, which outlined the path for making a sharp break with sectarianism in our mass work and for redirecting the party toward the mainstream of the labor movement; in overcoming hesitation on projecting our position on peaceful transition and



The New York Times

**WOULD REVISE PARTY:** Eugene Dennis, general secretary of Communist party. He outlined a scheme for reforming the organization.

an American path to socialism as initiated by Comrade [William Z.] Foster; in the opening of a concerted political struggle against sectarianism in many phases of our Negro work, including the issuance of "The Common Program for the South," as well as publication of various articles; in the initiation of new approaches to the Smith Act trials; in serious efforts to influence the left-led unions to re-enter the mainstream of the labor movement; in the party program adopted in 1954 which, despite certain errors in estimate, gave new and broad perspectives to the party both in its immediate work and long range outlook; in the gradual abandonment and finally complete liquidation of unnecessary and extreme security measures.

The Marxist movement in our country has suffered historically from dogmatic application of Marxist theory to the American scene. The Communist party inherited these weaknesses. Insufficient development of independent theoretical work of our party over the past decades has contributed towards our doctrinaire acceptance and mechanical application of many theoretical propositions.

## Marxism Oversimplified

Our party has also suffered from an oversimplified approach to and an uncritical acceptance of many views and ideas of Marxists and Marxist parties in other countries.

Doctrinaire forms of party organization, bureaucratic methods of leadership, failure to develop inner party democracy and a frequent intolerant attitude to the people we worked with have been in large measure responsible for our inability to correct mistakes in time as well as for much of our sectarianism. All these factors are interrelated; each helped to reinforce the other.

The party must distinguish better between the additions

to Marxist theory made by Lenin which are valid for all countries and those specific aspects of Lenin's writing which reflect exclusively certain unique features of the Russian revolution or of Soviet society.

Likewise, the Communist party will have to be bolder in re-examining certain Marxist-Leninist theories which, while valid in a past period, may have become outdated and rendered obsolete by new historical developments.

Already, in response to these new developments, profoundly important and qualitatively new elements have been introduced into the body of Marxist theory by Marxists of many countries. For example, we as well as other Marxist parties have already discarded as obsolete Lenin's thesis that war is inevitable under imperialism. We have long since discarded as incorrect Stalin's thesis about the alleged law of inevitable violent proletarian revolution. Likewise, we are making important modifications in the theory of the state, as evidenced in our advocacy of the peaceful, constitutional path to socialism.

The Communist party formulates its policies independently. It is not subject to any external allegiance or discipline either of an organizational or political character.

The Communist party works for friendship between all peoples so that our country may prosper in a world at peace. In this spirit it advocates friendship and cooperation between our country and the socialist countries. This has been one of its major contributions to the national welfare.

At the same time the Communist party recognizes that over the years it held certain wrong and oversimplified concepts of what its relations should be to other Marxist parties. The party tended to accept uncritically many views of Marxists of other countries. Not all these views were correct; some did not correspond to American conditions.

The party also viewed uncritically developments in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. It mistakenly thought that any public criticism of the views or policies of the Marxist parties of these countries would weaken the bonds of international working class solidarity or bring comfort to the enemies of peace and socialism.

The incorrectness of this view was highlighted by the revelations in [Nikita S.] Khrushchev's special report to the Twentieth Congress of the C. P. S. U. [Soviet Communist Party]. Because it held this view, the Communist party of our country was entirely unprepared for and deeply shocked by the admissions of crimes, violations of socialist justice, mistreatment of certain national minorities, and the basis for the rupture of relations with Yugoslavia—all at variance with the truly liberating character of socialism. The courage shown in making these disclosures and the profound process of self-correction, begun some years ago and sharply accelerated since the twentieth Congress, are irrefutable evidence of the historic role and vitality of the socialist system.

Socialism is strengthened, not weakened, by the fraternal and constructive criticism of Marxists of many lands. Such criticism has nothing in common with those who deprecate the epic achievements of the

U.S.S.R., People's China and socialist countries or those who seek to engender hostility to socialism at home and abroad.

Our previous mistakes on this question played into the hands of the enemies of peace. Our attitude was used to refurbish the slanderous calumny which has been used, historically against all radical movements in our country—the lie that the Communist party is "the agent of a foreign power."

This despicable charge is a lie cut from the whole cloth. We are American Communists, patriots. Our allegiance is to our own country, the United States. In representing and advancing the fundamental welfare of the working class, we aim, always to serve our country's true national interests.

Bureaucratic concepts of party organization, systems of leadership and relations between the party and the masses have been a prime factor in contributing to our errors. They hindered the early and timely correction of these errors. Wrong concepts of leadership discouraged full and free participation of the membership in the discussion of policy and tactics.

## Bureaucratic Methods

These bureaucratic methods of work, system of leadership and organization have been accentuated in part by the mechanical application of certain principles of organization adopted by other Communist parties that functioned under different historical conditions.

The unfolding of a correct mass policy by the party, as well as its ability to attract and hold masses of socialist-minded Americans, requires extensive changes in its structure and methods of work. Among these are the following:

Guarantees of real inner-party democracy through provision of channels for freedom of discussion, dissent and criticism within the framework of carrying out the majority will.

The national committee should issue a special publication on a regular monthly basis which should be devoted exclusively to articles or letters discussing, debating or differing with party policies, whether current or long-range. The decisions of all party bodies shall continue to be made by majority rule. Minorities or individuals opposed to such decisions shall be required to abide by them. But the right of such individuals or minorities to express their views shall be guaranteed in all cases. However, this does not mean that factions—groupings with their own platform, discipline, organization and publications set up in opposition to the regular program, discipline, organization and publications of the party—can be tolerated.

The whole history of the Communist party shows that factionalism actually destroys inner-party democracy and shatters party unity.

Between pre-convention discussion periods the national committee must take special steps to involve the membership in making basic changes in policy. Such methods may involve setting aside limited periods for party-wide discussion on draft policy resolutions; or convening special delegated conferences with power to act on specific questions presented beforehand; or the organization of referendum votes on questions.

Establishment of closest ties between membership and leadership and creation of political and organizational guarantees against bureaucratic separation of leadership from membership by the following:

a) Proceedings of the national committee shall be publicized, including digests of speeches or reports as well as votes of national committee members on important questions. Where possible state committees shall do likewise.

b) Minutes of national board meetings shall be circulated among all members of the national committee. Periodic summaries should be sent to state committees.

c) The national committee should be considerably enlarged.

d) The national committee shall meet a minimum of three times per year, with agendas and draft documents to be discussed sent in advance to all members.

There are no valid grounds for any destructive attitude toward the party's past contribution and the vital role the party has to play in the future. Neither is there any justification for proposals to liquidate our party so as to "clear the way" for a broader party of socialism at some future time.

Another view with which the national committee disagrees is that the Communist party should change its character by transforming itself into an educational league which would simply conduct propaganda for socialism and the eventual formation of a united socialist party. This would be a harmful retrograde step. It flows from an abstract understanding of socialist education that separates it from political struggle and class organization.

The foregoing two proposals are liquidationist in character. However, others of an extremely different character have also been offered. One such proposal is that the Communist party become a political action association. In the opinion of the national committee, circumstances today do not justify such a change.