

# CHINA FRIENDSHIP ASSOC. HOLDS FOUNDING MEETING

Los Angeles—As the 25th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China approached, a great step forward was taken in furthering the friendship between the people of this country and the people of China. The national U.S.-China People's Friendship Association was formally founded at a convention held in Los Angeles from August 31 to Sept. 2.

More than 300 representatives and observers from more than 30 local associations were present to initiate the new organization. Following the opening of the convention, more than 1,500 people attended a rally which was addressed by writer Han Suyin. The convention adopted resolutions on organizational structure, elected a national steering committee and decided to publish a national journal, *New China*.

The three-day convention heard much debate and discussion concerning the character of the new organization. One debate focused around a paper, coming out of a minority position of the Atlanta chapter, called "Walking on Two Legs, Leaning to One Side."

The paper placed the main stress on "specifically aiming toward reaching the middle class." However in the workshop on community outreach this proposal found itself in an overwhelming minority and never reached the floor of the convention itself. This reflected the view of most of the convention's participants that the Friendship Association must be broad-based and that special work must be done to bring China-U.S. friendship to the working people and minorities as well as to the middle class.

The main discussions around the question of structure dealt with the problem of on the one hand, having a strong national organization, with spokespeople and a representative voice to the masses; while on the other hand, avoiding bureaucracy or domination of the organization from the top, thereby hindering mass, democratic participation. Although this contradiction could not fully be resolved at this early date some measures were taken in that direction, as national leadership was elected which was fairly representative of the work going on locally to build the association. Resolutions were passed aimed at keeping national leadership responsive to the local organizations and making sure that most of the steering committee at least had support from the majority of local members.

Perhaps the most heated debate arose around the publication of "*New China*." The first issue of this expensive, full-color journal was sold at the convention. While some chapters declared their outright opposition to publishing such a costly national magazine, for fear that it would sap local funds and resources, the majority of the convention voiced approval, with reservations. One worry the delegates had stemmed from the expense involved in financing a full-time paid staff for the magazine. How responsible will this staff be to the membership, whether or not the journal will sell, at a dollar a copy, and to whom it will be directed, were some of the questions discussed by many. The practice of the coming year will serve as the only basis for answering most of these questions. A compromise resolution was passed, proposed by delegate Koji Ariyoshi of Hawaii, which called for keeping subscription money held in escrow for a definite period until the magazine becomes solvent and stable. In this way, if it does not succeed, the people's money can be returned.

While many questions regarding the political content of China-U.S. Friendship were left unsettled, it was generally felt that the association shouldn't involve itself in the political movement, but should limit itself to building friendship between the two peoples. However there are still many points to be debated as to what friendship means. For example, what about raising the struggle to restore Taiwan to China or connecting China-U.S. friendship with the fight against discrimination of Asian-Americans? Such questions were not resolved at the convention.

The organization is just beginning and many problems have been left unsettled after this first national convention. But all the delegates seemed to agree that this was a fine beginning. A message was sent to the convention from the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries in Peking reading: "Deep appreciation for your efforts in promoting friendship and mutual understanding between the Chinese and American peoples."

The convention ended with representatives singing "Long Live U.S.-China Friendship!"