

Ch.: We have reached the scheduled time for the address of the Chairman of our Party, Comrade Bill Foster, who is seated here on my left, and I recognize at this time Comrade Ben Davis, who has been asked to read to the convention the remarks of Comrade Foster. (Applause.)

William Z. Foster: Comrades:
The crisis afflicting our Party is

both organizational and ideological. Among its main origins are: the corruptive effects of imperialism upon the working class and the Party during the many years of "capitalist prosperity"; the protracted attack of the Government upon the Party; the many serious left-sectarian mistakes made by us during the cold war years; the negative results of the Stalin revelations; the serious Right mistakes of recent months—and all these factors operating in a rapidly changing national and world situation.

My remarks are not an opposition report to Comrade Dennis' keynote speech; they also do not constitute a separate program, nor are they so presented. They do, however, embrace fundamental steps necessary for the Party, and they have all been matters of serious dispute in the top leadership of the Party, of which the Convention is entitled to a clear picture. My remarks are not directed against the main resolution as such, but to amend, strengthen, and adopt it, as has been done in the various state conventions. The political demarcation in the Party has not been between supporters and opponents of the main resolution, but between those who want to maintain the Communist Party and those who would give it up for a political action association. Now to my specific remarks and proposals:

1. *Re-affirm the continued existence of the Communist Party:* By eliminating the central question of dispute in the Party—the political action association—this action is the main single thing the convention must accomplish. For months there has been an intense agitation in the Party by the Right tendency to the effect that we should transform the Communist Party into a political action association—as proposed concretely by Comrade Gates in the November 1956 number of *Political Affairs*. But such a step would mark the end of the Party as a fighting organization and would reduce it to a body of socialist propaganda. It would also largely liquidate our forces, because it could not have a mass character. It would likewise worsen our position among the broad masses, as it would be highly vulnerable to charges of being a sinister "boring-from-within" body. And it would provoke fresh governmental attacks upon us by appearing as a legal maneuver upon our part. The whole thing is only a resurrection of the discarded Browder Communist Political Association of 1944-45. Its formation would constitute a disastrous step backward for us in the face of militant American imperialism, and it would be so understood by our friends and foes.

The advocates of the association, which is the heart of the Right pro-

gram, have pressed it upon the Party with such vigor that the very life of the Party became threatened with a factional split. However, the rank and file, as soon as they grasped the import of the political action association, let it be known, in the conventions and in the press, that they did not want this liquidatory organization but were determined to maintain the Communist Party. This membership response caused the sponsors of the association to make a sudden move to save their project by by-passing the national convention. That is, the convention should not vote on the association, but should delegate the question to a continuing Party discussion, with its solution delayed indefinitely.

This is a dangerous proposal; if successful, it would sentence the Party to a protracted factional struggle over the issue, thereby imperiling the life of the Party. It would also be a grave violation of Party democracy, by preventing the delegates from voting on a vital matter which they had been discussing for months. Unfortunately, the National Committee, in its "Name and Form" Amendment III, supported the proposition. But again the rank and file had a different idea. In the state conventions they have been voting overwhelmingly for the Party and against an association.

In this respect, the New York

State convention spoke out very clearly and emphatically. Comrade Ben Davis introduced a resolution providing for an endorsement of the Party, a rejection of the association, and the reference of any further discussion on the matter to the National Committee. This proposition was well received by the delegates, and Comrade George Charney of the State Committee joined with Comrade Davis in re-introducing the resolution jointly as a unity proposal. With enthusiasm, the convention almost unanimously adopted it. This New York action points the main way to Party unity. If similar action is taken by this convention it will avert the danger of a split by removing the contentious association question from factional struggle.

In disposing of the political action association, however, let us not fall victims to a drive from the Right for a so-called new mass party of socialism. For such a body there is no prospect in the political situation, neither now nor in the foreseeable future. It must be held as a future perspective. Untimely action by us in this direction would be just about as harmful as turning the Party into a political action association. This convention should let it be known that it is resolved to build the Communist Party and not some futile, opportunistic substitute for it.

2. *Re-endorse the Party's theoret-*

ical base of Marxism-Leninism: To take this action decisively is of fundamental importance for the life and growth of the Communist Party. During the past year there has been an incessant campaign by the Right in the Party press and elsewhere against Marxism-Leninism. This has gone on virtually unchallenged by the National Board. They try to separate Marxism from Leninism. The central idea in this campaign is that, whereas Marxism is of universal validity, Leninism, as basically a product of the Russian Revolution, has only limited validity. Especially it is said to be left-sectarian so far as the United States is concerned. This is Right revisionism, which goes in the general direction of Social Democracy. If it should prevail in our ranks it would cut the heart out of American Communism.

Unfortunately, much of this incorrect line has been injected into our draft resolutions for the convention, including the main resolution, the constitution, and others. Thus, the term "Marxism-Leninism" was stricken from the Party preamble; the concept of the Party's vanguard role has been weakened, and democratic centralism has been rejected in principle. But worse yet, in the main resolution the Party's acceptance of Marxism-Leninism has been made conditional. This document

endorsed Marxism-Leninism only to the extent that it is "interpreted" by the C.P.U.S.A. Such a concept would at once strip Marxism-Leninism of its scientific and its international character and reduce it to a matter of innumerable national interpretations. This is an impossible position for a Communist Party. It was in an effort to get this concept changed that I voted against the resolution.

In its letter of greetings, signed by Secretary Jacques Duclos, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of France is correct in warning us of revisionist tendencies in our Party. Many in our Party have been saying this for months past. And its truth is manifested by the many basic amendments made in our main resolution by the various state conventions. This convention should welcome the sage and friendly advice of our French comrades as well as others. Of course, the convention will work out its policies and estimates upon the basis of American and international conditions.

Obviously, we should support Marxism-Leninism, not as a dogma but as a guide to action. We should flexibly develop and apply it to specific American conditions, with a constant alert against every form of doctrinairism. At the same time, we must recognize the universal truth of the vast body of Marxism-Lenin-

ism as the science of the world proletariat. These elementary facts were again made clear to us in the recent splendid document of the Chinese Communist Party. Our national convention should re-affirm clearly the Party's endorsement of Marxism-Leninism, and also take the necessary steps to cleanse its convention documents of the various revisionist conceptions that have been injected into them. Along with the re-affirmation of the Communist Party itself, this re-dedication to Marxism-Leninism is the most vital business before this convention.

During the long Party discussion the rank and file of the Party have also let their voice be heard upon this matter. They have declared unequivocally for a Marxist-Leninist Party. So clear has been their voice that some Party leaders who only a few months ago were speaking out against Marxism-Leninism, are now proclaiming themselves and the Party to be Marxist-Leninist. The national convention should declare its adherence to the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism. Without such an unequivocal statement, our Party would be in danger of political bankruptcy.

3. *Changes in the Party's structure, policies, and methods:* In order to cope with the political urgency of the rapidly changing national and international situations, to lift the

Party out of its critical position, to apply the deep-going lessons of the Stalin cult of the individual, and generally to re-establish its mass strength and prestige, the CPUSA must improve itself in many directions: in its organization, in its ideology, in its leadership, in its policies, and in its methods of work. The whole Party is conscious of this need for change and progress.

Under the general head of "change," the Right tendency, however, advocates proposals which, if adopted, would be disastrous for the Party. Among them are: to abandon the Party for a political action association, to consider a "new mass Party of socialism" as an early possibility, to devitalize Marxism-Leninism, to develop a pro-Tito international course, and to destroy the progressive and heroic history of the Communist Party by a reckless, distorted and damaging criticism, as exemplified in the Schrank New York report, in the "Vanguard Role" Amendment, in the published trade union "material," and in various other documents.

Our Party does not need nor want such destructive projects of "change" as the Right tendency has been proposing. It does want, however, the numerous constructive changes that have been proposed in the Party discussion, many of which have been incorporated in conven-

tion documents. These include: Marxism-Leninism, freed from all forms of dogmatism and doctrinairism and closely developed and applied to the American situation; more Party democracy, less bureaucracy, and a Party discipline based upon democratic agreement and not upon "commands"; greater participation of the membership in policy-making; more genuine self-criticism by the leadership; a refreshment and reorganization of leading bodies upon a local, district, and national scale; broader united front practices and less sectarian conceptions of the Party's vanguard role; more cooperative relations with other American Left groupings; comradely criticism of brother Communist Parties and the countries of socialism; the cultivation of more political initiative by the Party, etc. In this spirit the convention should handle the general question of Party change and progress.

4. *Solve the Party leadership crisis:* For the past year especially, the Party has been experiencing a grave crisis of leadership, which is one of the major causes of its crisis in general. It has done far more to disorient the Party than the government attack upon us. This leadership crisis has been marked by many of the leaders going far to the Right themselves, or by their definitely conciliating the Right. Consequently, the top Party committees

have failed to give firm leadership to the Party during these critical months. This failure has much to do with the present low prestige of the leaders in the Party. In New York State the leadership crisis is particularly acute. It is a basic task of the convention to strengthen the Party leadership, especially in the National Committee and the National Board.

To this end there must be more worker members, and fresh leading forces brought in, especially mass-workers — proletarians, Negroes, youth, and women. We must become really the Party of the working class. The leadership must be required to practice more self-criticism and to operate within the framework of a democratic centralism closely keyed to American conditions and traditions. The Party especially needs staunch leaders—who believe in the Party and will fight for its program. We must have leaders with prestige, but we must not spoil them with adulation, and especially we must not allow them to develop bureaucratic habits. While reducing our excessive numbers of full-timers, we must also maintain a strong core of "professional revolutionaries."

One of the keys to the Party's present difficulties, and particularly to its leadership crisis, is the fact that during recent difficult months the Party has been led, especially in the National Board, by a working combination of the Right and

some comrades who, while not themselves Rights, nevertheless run a sort of political interference for the Right. The Right has its main strength in the New York State Committee and in the staff of the *Daily Worker*. It also acquires much help from the above described conciliationism. This is the main reason why, in the Board, the Right, although a minority in the Party, has been able to write so much of its line into the policy and convention documents of the Party. To eliminate such conciliation practices is one of the important changes needed by the Party.

5. *The ideological fight on two fronts:* A major cause of the confusion in our Party during the past year has been the abandonment by the Party leadership of the Leninist policy of the fight on two fronts. When the National Committee began its sharp attack against left-sectarianism at its April meeting, it was necessary also to issue a warning against the outcropping Right danger. This was an ABC matter of practical need to prevent a pendulum swing to the Right, for this wrong trend also had roots in the Party. But this was not done, and those who proposed that attention be paid to the rapidly sprouting Right were accused of trying to cover up left-sectarian mistakes. Not until September was a warning issued against the Right

danger, and this was so toothless that even the comrades on the Right voted for it. Not until this day has the national leadership made any serious criticism of Right tendencies in the Party. The general result has been that the Right has grown like a bay tree.

The national convention should change this impossible situation by putting the Party's ideological struggle on a two-front basis, with the main weight directed against left-sectarianism. This is the traditional weakness of the Party, especially with regard to doctrinairism and wrong methods of work, as was especially manifest during the difficult cold war years of struggle against fascism and the war danger. I myself made my share of these errors of the characteristic sectarian type of the period. It is a misjudgment of my position, however, to allege that I now underestimate them. If I have not seemed to dwell upon them so much as some other comrades, it was because my attention has been directed so largely towards defending our basic theory of Marxism-Leninism and also the very existence of our Party itself from the sweeping attacks that were being made by the Right against them.

The danger from the Right has been discussed very little during these past months, although it is now threatening the life of the Party. It

has its main roots in the "prosperity illusions" generated among the workers and in our Party, and by the many-years-long boom period. Thus, this Right tendency is a direct political descendant of the Lovestone opportunism of the boom 1920's and the Browder revisionism of the boom 1940's. The Right trend manifests itself by a softening of the Party's theory and fighting policies, and it points in the direction of class collaboration. It has worsened all the problems that the Party has had to contend with during the past period. Its main outlook is for a minimum of class struggle; it seeks to emasculate Marxism-Leninism; it plays down the Negro question, and it makes the parliamentary road to socialism appear as a mild evolutionary advance, instead of the sharp class struggle that it will be. The danger of the Right tendency has been fully demonstrated by the bitter factional struggle it has been carrying on during recent months for its proposal to transform the Communist Party into a political action association.

6. *For a class struggle program of work:* It is fundamental that this convention should produce an effective program of immediate tasks and should organize the Party to put this into effect. It should also lay the basis for a general Party program, embracing such questions as an anal-

ysis of the industrial outlook, a restatement of the Negro question, the perspective for a Labor-Farmer party, a rehandling of basic trade union questions, a clear statement of the American road to socialism, and many other problems—all this, of course, to be tied in with the Party's fight for an anti-monopoly coalition.

The Right tendency in the Party, like that of Lovestone and Browder before it, tends to overestimate the strength of American imperialism. It plays down the effects of the general crisis of world capitalism, so far as the United States is concerned. For the Right, too, the possibility of a serious American economic crisis is virtually excluded. The inevitable conclusion from such ideas is a perspective of little class struggle, as illustrated in Comrade Gates' article in the November 1956 *Political Affairs*, and of sharp tendencies to minimize the vanguard role of the Communist Party. Such trends have been injected into the published material for a trade-union resolution, in which class collaboration, the policy of the AFL-CIO top leadership, is glossed over as of no particular importance, instead of being characterized as a deadly danger.

Contrary to such revisionist ideas, our Party must base itself squarely upon an outlook of sharpening class struggle. It must realize that world

capitalism is sinking into general crisis in the face of the rising socialist world, and that the United States, although still very powerful, is no basic exception to the general capitalist crisis. The present high industrial activity in the United States is essentially temporary in character. The workers, the Negro people, and other democratic strata, face a perspective of increasing class struggle, in which they will be compelled to defend their living standards, their organizations, and their civil liberties. It is upon such a perspective that we should base our tasks and general program, and not one of a placid evolutionary advance. Only with such a fighting perspective can we build, on the domestic field, the anti-monopoly coalition, or be a factor in fighting, on the international scale, for the peaceful coexistence of all nations. Only thus, too, can we think realistically of the American road to socialism.

7. *Strengthen the Party's internationalism*: The CPUSA must, of course, base its policies upon specific American conditions and upon the class and national interests of the working class, the Negro people, and other democratic strata who form the great majority of the American people. This, however, in no way conflicts with the Party's need to carry on a vigorous international

struggle for such overriding interests as peaceful coexistence of all nations, world socialism, and other issues. The true national and international interests of the people are harmonious, not contradictory. Our Party—an American party—independent, and Leninist—must cooperate freely with all other Communist parties.

A marked phase of our Party's present crisis is a serious weakening of its proletarian internationalism. This is partly an "over-correction" of errors made in this sphere during the Stalin regime, but mostly because of the pressure of the very sharp imperialist influences upon the Party. This weakness manifests itself, among other tendencies, by an underestimation of the war danger and of the aggressive role of American imperialism, by virtually ignoring the general crisis of world capitalism, by a certain acceptance of the bourgeois theory of American exceptionalism, by sniping at the Soviet Union, by cultivating a pro-Tito orientation, by scorn for the opinions of foreign comrades regarding our Party's policies, etc. Such incorrect ideas, freely expressed, have done grave damage to our press and also the Party, by isolating us from the American workers and from the world Communist forces.

Our worst mistake in this general respect was in connection with Po-

land and Hungary. Here we tended to put the national question of political independence ahead of the higher questions of world peace and socialism. While criticism of the Hungarian and Soviet Communists for previous mistakes was undoubtedly in order, our press greatly overdid the matter. The National Committee also misunderstood the grave danger of war and to socialism that had been provoked by American imperialism in this crucial situation. This wrong line was especially expressed by the National Committee Resolution of November 20, in which, overlooking the "grim necessity" of the situation, it took the impossible position of neither justifying nor condemning the Soviet military occupation of that country. This was an impermissible yielding before aggressive American imperialism.

To re-strengthen the proletarian internationalism of our Party stands as a major task for this convention. Especially we must revamp the National Committee position on Hungary, recognizing that under the existing dangerous circumstances the military and political actions taken by the Soviet Union in helping to defend Hungarian socialism against the acute threat of fascism and war was imperative.

8. *The Convention must establish Party unity:* For almost a year now our Party has been stirred by an intense discussion. On the whole much

good has come from this, but there has also been the danger of a split. Now the Party is demanding that unity be established and the Party get to work among the masses. This convention, therefore, should put the matter of Party unity to the forefront in all its work and strive for this unity around a Marxist-Leninist program.

Party unity can be achieved only upon a sound political basis. It cannot be won by bridging over disputed questions, as has been tried by the National Committee on recent occasions. I refer particularly to the impossible straddle our Party made on the vital question of Hungary, in which we neither condoned nor condemned the Soviet military occupation of that country in November. Of the same type of straddle is the proposal, contained in Amendment III on "Name and Form," which would have us take the disastrous step of not voting in this convention upon the political action association. In the same category are the placing in the main resolution of incorrect "unity" formulations of Marxism-Leninism and the statement that the political action association is not liquidationist. These straddles, however well-intentioned, in no way promote Party unity, but instead conciliate the Right tendency in the Party. Such wrong formulations should be corrected by the convention.

In its work to establish Party unity, the convention should seize upon the key link in the chain. This it can do by promptly taking a decisive vote upon the political action association. It would be a tragic mistake to bypass such a vote. As I have mentioned earlier, the New York State convention hit precisely the right note in this respect. Its unity resolution reads as follows, and I move that it be adopted:

“Resolved, that this convention affirms the continuation of the Communist Party of the United States and opposes its replacement by a political action association; and be it further

“Resolved, that this decision does not foreclose further exploration and discussion as organized by the incoming National Committee.”

By thus fully re-affirming the basis of the Party and by removing the political action association as a matter of factional controversy, a fundamental groundwork would be laid for developing Party unity. This would not settle all questions in dispute, but it would provide a far more favorable basis for their objective consideration. The convention would do well to adopt the New York unity resolution at the outset of its proceedings and thus strike a decisive blow for Party unity, the effects of which would be cumulative all through the convention.

In conclusion, let me re-emphasize that objective conditions are growing more and more favorable for our Party. New possibilities for struggle are opening up. A deep-going stir is taking place in the broad ranks of the trade-union movement and the Negro people, displaying a magnificent spirit of struggle, are the vanguard of the democratic masses. Internationally, the forces of socialism, learning the hard lessons of the Stalin revelations, are girding themselves for a new push forward towards world socialism, while the forces of bankrupt world capitalism are experiencing one defeat after the other.

In this vast field of struggle our Party has a vital role to play. Our convention, by establishing Party unity around a sound Marxist-Leninist program and leadership, can overcome the crisis that has been crippling the Party. We need a will to unity. If we will rise to the importance of our Party tasks in the spirit of the many lessons we have learned during our long and rich Party discussion, we will be surprised at the speed with which our Party can improve its legal position, strengthen its ranks, break its isolation, and again become a real factor in the growing struggles of the working class, the Negro people, and all the democratic forces in this country. (Applause.)

[Convention continues work in committees.]