

Amendments Offered to CP Draft Resolution

A recently concluded three-day meeting of the National Committee of the Communist Party adopted a series of Amendments to the Draft Resolution for its 16th National Convention, to be held in New York, Feb. 9-12, 1957, and a series of other policy statements.

Announcement of the meeting was made yesterday by Fred M. Fine, for the National Committee.

Text of the Amendments to the Draft Resolution and a special appeal to the Party conventions of the Party section, county and state organizations follows:

A Message to the State Conventions and Clubs of the Party:

Dear Comrades:

We are now a few weeks from the National Convention which will mark an historic step in the life of our Party. The National Committee is deeply aware of the responsibility that rests upon all of us to bring this period to a successful conclusion.

This awareness rests upon a realization that we must move forward to play our part in big and important mass struggles in the coming months. The basic achievements of our discussion and Convention will be measured and tested by our ability to enhance the role of our Party in this respect.

The pre-convention discussion has been extensive and has shown deep probing into a wide area of problems out of which have also emerged common views and unity on many important questions. It has demonstrated the will of the Party to break with the sectarianism which the Resolution characterizes as the main factor that has inhibited the unfolding of a more effective mass line of work. It has also begun to express a more democratic content of Party life and organization.

It has been a vigorous and frank discussion and debate. That is all to the good. It should by all means continue through the section, county and State conventions and in the National Convention.

We are deeply concerned over certain aspects that mar the discussion and may do harm to the unity and effectiveness of the Party. This is certainly true of some tendencies to substitute invective for serious argument. It is also true that some of the sharp, even extreme, controversy including among leading figures in the Party, has tended to obscure the main aspects of the Resolution and Draft Constitution and is endangering the unity of the Party.

Whatever differences still exist among us and still need to be resolved by further experience and discussion, our National Committee is agreed upon some basic questions which should unite our Party at the coming convention.

The National Committee reaffirms the main political direction of the Draft Resolution. It does not consider valid any effort to represent it as a departure from our basic scientific theory. No invectives of liquidationism, revisionism, or stand-patism, nor abusive charges with respect to international working-class relations should be permitted to distort the discussion of this document or smother our first efforts to break with the roots of our errors.

As further demonstrated by the National Committee's amendments to the Draft Resolution and the Draft Resolution itself, its members have stated clearly their opposition to any and all proposals to liquidate the Party, or resist necessary changes, to discard our basic theory, or to assume a position of hostility towards the Socialist world.

We are deeply concerned that the cardinal principle of Negro-white unity within our Party and our uncompromising struggle for Negro rights that is founded upon our Marxist-Leninist understanding of the national question should in no way be weakened, but rather strengthened. Even in these next weeks as our discussion draws to a close we need also to plunge into the developing fight for Negro rights, especially around the opening of Congress.

The major contribution made by our Draft Resolution was that it placed before our Party the need—and pointed the way—to develop

our theory and policies in a creative, independent manner. This necessarily led to the plowing up of new ground in the searching examinations which our discussion has initiated. But this is a process that is far from completed. It should not be halted, but, rather, it should be encouraged. Consequently, no proposals addressed to making the achievement of our agreed-upon goals more effective should be subjected to hostile labeling or their authors and their motives otherwise made suspect. Failure to curb any such tendencies or practices can only deprive the Party of the full benefit of free discussion or lead to destructive factionalism. All proposals shall be voted upon on their merits.

Our discussion began with the recognition of the necessity to overcome our long-standing left sectarianism. The Resolution found the main roots of this sectarianism in: 1. The dogmatic and straitlaced manner in which we had been attempting to apply Marxism to the American scene. 2. Our oft-times uncritical acceptance of the views of Marxists of other countries. 3. Our bureaucratic system of organization and lack of internal Party democracy. Since then the National Committee has presented a new Draft Constitution which declares in its preamble:

"The Communist Party bases its theory generally on the cultural heritage of mankind and particularly on the teachings of the giants of scientific socialism, Karl Marx, Frederick Engels and V. I. Lenin, as interpreted by the Party and creatively applied and developed in accordance with the conditions of the American class struggle, traditions and customs."

We are living through a period of great change in which the world socialist movement must review its policies, program and tactics, re-study long-held theoretical positions and bring itself fully into line with current realities. Our Party must seek to reorient itself not on the basis of adopting one or another set of ideas from abroad but must work out its own course based upon the discussions of our own party, our particular conditions, and our own use of Marxist science. In so doing, we should examine the discussions and proposals, the points of view of Marxists in all countries in a friendly, critical and open-minded fashion.

The National Committee feels that in rounding out and concluding our discussions we should be guided, all of us, by certain considerations. We are convinced that the membership and leadership of our Party is capable of and will resolve many basic issues.

1) We recognize that this convention must strike out on a new course to initiate significant changes in our Party to correspond to changes in the world and our nation as well as to overcome long-standing and deep-seated weaknesses.

This Convention will not be the end but rather the beginning of a process of reinvigoration and strengthening of our organization. Of necessity we are mainly determining the main direction and route to travel. Only as we test our policies, tactics and new theoretical concepts in practice will we be able to fully judge their validity

and develop them further.

2) Of necessity also we must limit our decisions to those matters that we have had time to discuss, to thoroughly review and to thrash out conclusively. Obviously the Convention must answer the main questions of line and organizational policy as they are projected and being amended in the Draft Resolution and Draft Constitution.

Clearly many fundamental matters of theory and program will remain, even matters on which we have and many for some time continue to have widely divergent views. It is therefore important that we see the establishment of full inner-party democracy including the right to dissent as essential also to our ability after this Convention to continue discussing many questions while moving forward unitedly to implement the decisions of the Convention.

Yet we wish to achieve this in the frame-work of basic unity within the Party. Party unity is one of our big assets and should surely be sought with energy. It is timely to restate that we do not wish to proscribe the expression of opinion in this discussion. We want to read no one out of the Party for their views. We know by now that none of us has a monopoly on wisdom and none of us is immune to error. We should consider the motives of all comrades as honest and that we all share in an equal regard for our Party.

This National Committee meeting, attempting to assess the views and conclusions of the membership, feels that a fundamental basis for unity of the Party and the work of the Convention lies in the general agreement with the main propositions in the first three sections of the Resolution. These sections project a policy on such vital questions as an estimate of the present situation in which we now live and work, the path of struggle toward a labor and people's anti-monopoly coalition, and our views regarding an American Road to Socialism. We feel these will undoubtedly be further strengthened by amendments, bringing the Resolution up to date.

We note that the largest amount of discussion and controversy has revolved around Section Four dealing most directly with our Party. In order to bring the debate more into focus and to fix attention on a number of issues that have proved most controversial, this National Committee meeting has adopted and now presents for discussion three further additions to the Resolution. We feel these help to make clear also the views of the National Committee upon these important matters. (Party Name and Form, Democratic Centralism, and the Vanguard Role of the Party).

The National Committee is also making public the Agenda of the Convention.

We urge that these closing weeks of debate be conducted with a view to bringing the discussion to a successful conclusion, in a spirit of free debate, free also of acrimony, based upon the basic unity of purpose that binds us together in the fraternity of our Party.

Comradely yours,
NATIONAL COMMITTEE,
Communist Party, USA.

Democratic Centralism and Monolithic Unity

Amendment II to Draft Resolution. As adopted by the National Committee Dec. 18, 1956. 'On Democratic Centralism and Monolithic Unity' (Add to paragraph 3 on page 60): Democracy is vital to a Communist Party. It is the method by which the rich experiences of the members of the Party and the masses of people become available to the Party as a whole. It is this experience and democratic participation together with the power of Marxist analysis which enables

the Party to keep Marxism from being a dogma, and instead makes it a living, growing, developing science with which we can serve our class and nation even more effectively.

At the same time unity of action, cohesiveness of organization is indispensable.

Any organization seeking to accomplish anything besides affording their membership opportunities for idle discussion must have some centralization. The problem is not to abandon all forms of centralization but to find the correct limits.

"Democratic Centralism" and "Monolithic Unity" have in the past been two basic principles of organization for the inner life of our Party. Experience has shown that under these concepts and their application rigid conformity and an almost total absence of the right to dissent has resulted in stifling independent and creative thinking, destroyed initiative and helped bureaucracy to flourish. Lack of democracy never helps Party unity very much either. The seeds of disunity flower in the soil of bureaucracy and inevitably leads into internal explosions, harmful division and finally to splits and expulsions.

We want a maximum of internal democracy combined with the necessary unity in action. The Draft Constitution develops proposals that will bring our organization into harmony with the traditions and experiences of American working class organizations and potentially acceptable to large numbers of American workers and socialist-minded militants as the kind of organization they would want to be identified with.

In the light of this we propose to substantially modify our previous concept of democratic centralism in accord with the provisions of the Draft Constitution, and discard the term. In its place we propose in effect majority rule with specific provision for the right of dissent after decision while guaranteeing our ability to act in a united way, as well as guarding the Party against factionalism, federationism and parallel centers of leadership.

In the final analysis discipline will be voluntary, based on ideological conviction and a mutual desire to advance the purposes of the Party.

As to monolithic unity. Originally, this term meant simply a common ideology or outlook as opposed to a mixture of ideologies. In practice, it came to mean a rigid conformity of views on all matters of theory, policy and tactics. The concept of a common ideology must be retained as essential to a Marxist party. But the term should be dropped because of the harmful practices and connotations that have grown up around it.

Name and Form

Amendment III to Draft Resolution. As adopted by the National Committee, Dec. 18, 1956. "On Form and Name." (Strike out last sentence of paragraph I on page 62 and substitute the following):

Proposals have been made to change the name and also the form of our organization. These proposals have been extremely varied and for the most part have not been examined in detail by our Party as a whole.

Some proposals concern themselves only with a change of name

for our organization to dramatize and highlight the other changes called for in our Draft Resolution and Draft Constitution. Other proposals call for a change from a Party form of organization to a political association or league. Other proposals are made by comrades who feel that any change in name and form should be made in conjunction with some forces not presently active in the Communist Party; while others favor a change in the character of our organization as well as change in form and name.

Advocates of these various proposals have taken note of certain moves towards a revitalization of the "Left" and for greater exchanges of views and common action by various socialist-minded groupings in the country. They believe that these developments can have considerable bearing on our Party's own decisions with respect to name and form.

To label generally, without regard for content, all these proposals for changes in name and form as liquidationist is wrong and violates the spirit of free discussion and all issues called for by the Draft Resolution. All proposals deserve to be studied and discussed on their merits.

It is equally wrong and divisive to insist that a change of form and name must be made at the February convention. It is wrong and harmful to insist that a change in name and form at this convention is a pre-condition for effecting other major changes called for by this resolution.

The basic changes that are urgently needed and which this convention must settle have to do with our approach to theory, the content of our policies, and the correction of bureaucratic methods in the inner life of our Party, and the development of our mass work and ties. What must be settled are the basic Marxist organizational principles, the organizational stability and unity of our organization must be guaranteed.

At this time when the content of our policies and organization are yet to be settled by the convention, the proposals for change in name and form give rise to fears amongst sections of the Party that these proposals may open the way for liquidating essential features of a Marxist organization.

Once the principles of our organization are soundly established on Marxist foundations as outlined in this Draft Resolution, once a Party program dealing more elaborately with fundamental theoretical and programmatic questions is drafted and discussed by the Party, such proposals as deal with form and name will be seen in their proper context, as subordinate to questions of Program and Policy and can therefore more readily be discussed on their merits.

We propose that this convention shall not undertake to change the name and form of our Party. This does not foreclose further consideration of these proposals. The National Committee recommends that the convention should instruct the incoming National Committee to explore all proposals on form and name, to consult with non-Party socialist-minded workers and leaders and to carry through properly organized discussion within the Party with the objective of reviewing this question when we adopt the proposed new Party program, or at some other appropriate time.

Proposal for Agenda

FEB. 9-12, 1956

- I. Organization of Convention and election of Convention Committees
 1. Presiding and Rules
 2. Resolutions
 3. Constitution-Organization
 4. Credentials
 5. Leadership
 6. Appeals
- II. Keynote Address
- III. Report of Resolutions Committee
- IV. Report of Constitution-Organization Committee
- V. Election of National Committee