

CP Heads Urge Full, Frank Debate in Spirit of Unity

BECAUSE of the widespread interest it has evoked, we present the full text of a message to the members of the Communist Party adopted at a recent three-day meeting of its National Committee. The story behind this message may be said to have started

last Jan. 20 when 3,000 persons packed Carnegie Hall, New York, to celebrate the 32nd anniversary of the Daily Worker. The meeting was also in the nature of a welcome for Eugene Dennis, general secretary of the Communist Party, and John Gates, editor of the Daily Worker and The Worker, on their return to political activity after completing five-year sentences under the thought-control Smith Act.

In his speech at the meeting Dennis said:

"Our American Communist Party, guided by its socialist principles and scientific outlook, is going to take a new look at all problems confronting our nation and our people. . . . We shall do this with particular concern to search out what is new in the political situation and trends, to see what is positive and negative in our work, and to learn from any wrong judgments, tactical mistakes or theoretical errors we may have made."

This process of self-examination was given new impetus by the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, held in February. In April, at a meeting of the U. S. party's National Committee, Dennis analyzed mistakes of the past decade that had helped isolate the party from the American workers, characterizing these errors as predominantly "left sectarian."

During the ensuing months a spirited, self-critical discussion developed in the party. In September the National Committee adopted a lengthy draft resolution and announced a national convention to be held Feb. 9-12, 1957.

Beginning with November, the party formally opened pre-convention discussion. The present message is designed to deal with certain aspects of that discussion.

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



EUGENE DENNIS

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 conventions.

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 of 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.

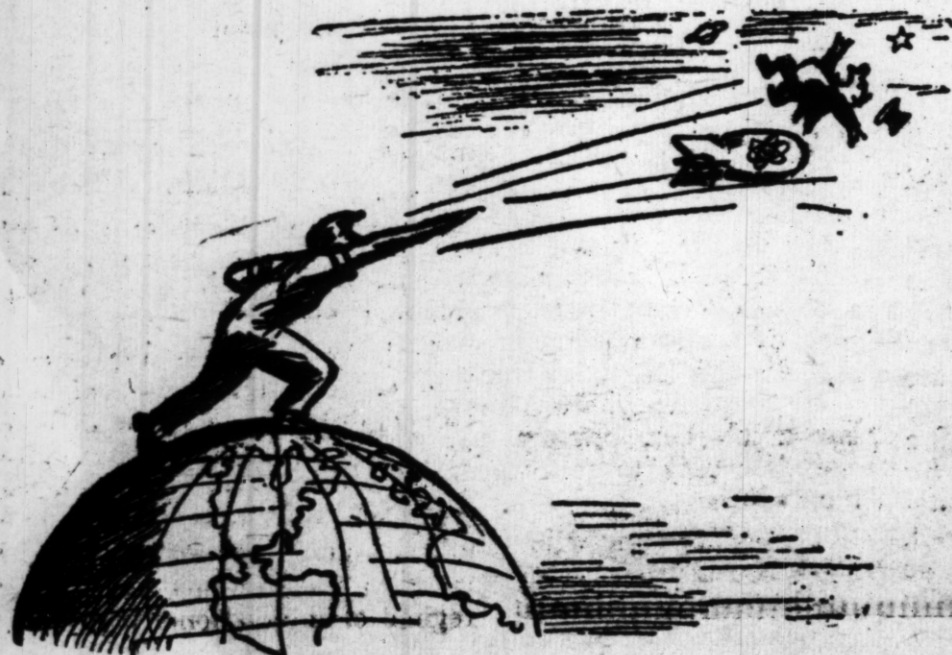
★
OUR DISCUSSION began with the recognition of the necessity to overcome our long-standing left sectarianism. The Resolution found the main roots of this sectarianism in: 1. The dogmatic and doctrinaire manner in which we had been attempting to apply Marxism to the American scene. 2. Our oft-times uncritical 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

(Continued on Page 14)



CP HEADS URGE FULL, FRANK DEBATE

(Continued from Page 7)

certain considerations. We are convinced that the membership and leadership of our Party is capable of and will resolve many basic issues.

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.

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 may 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 had 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 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.

