

PROS and CONS on the CP Draft Resolution

McMANUS:

It sidetracks
the struggle
for socialism

THE Communist Party as presented in the Draft Resolution, McManus emphasized in his remarks, seeks only immediate reforms, at the expense of the ultimate goal of socialism. His views, he said, were accurately expressed in a document from which he quoted, without identifying the writer, except to say that the author had made a critical study of the Communist Party which covered the last 20 years.

"I can concur in this criticism," he said, more readily than in the draft resolution and read the following from the document:

"On the excuse that socialism is not the order of the day, the Communist Party defaulted indeed, if not in conscious word—and deeds are more important than words—on its responsibility to build a body of American Socialist theory based on the special features of our country, and to adapt these theories so that they would illuminate and give perspective to the struggles of the working class."

"By abandoning this principal task, it permitted a whole generation of Americans, including the millions who were organized into the labor movement to reach maturity without the vaguest notion that there was a practical, moral, liberating, and historically inevitable alternative to the dog-eat-dog capitalist society with its motivating impulse of profits instead of social usefulness."

This criticism, McManus remarked, applied to 20 years of failure on the part of the Communists to build a body of socialist theory. He continued to read:

"Except for some isolated, fragmentary, and academic efforts, there is not a single piece of current Communist literature that makes the case for socialism in terms of American experience and tradition. There is not a single pamphlet, which tries to

convince American workers to join the party of socialism. In fact, major statements and resolutions have been issued by important sections of the Communist Party which did not even mention the word socialism."

McMANUS cited an article in the October issue of the magazine, "Progressive," by Sidney Lens, a liberal trade unionist. Lens points to the fact that in the past those who professed to be socialists, but who were willing to forget the ultimate goal of socialism for such mundane reforms as better sewers and so on, were called "sewer socialists." Lens criticizes today's liberals as "sewer liberals," who have abandoned liberal goals for the goals of the Pentagon.

Similarly, it is my opinion that unless the Draft Resolution is changed the Communist Party is by way of becoming the sewer socialists of today, McManus said, because it puts aside the struggle for socialism for symbolic sewers.

It is my belief, from reading the resolution, that the Communist Party is letting its socialist program lag, while working on immediate issues. If the Draft Resolution is not an abandonment, it is at least a sidetracking of socialism by the major party of socialism in this country.

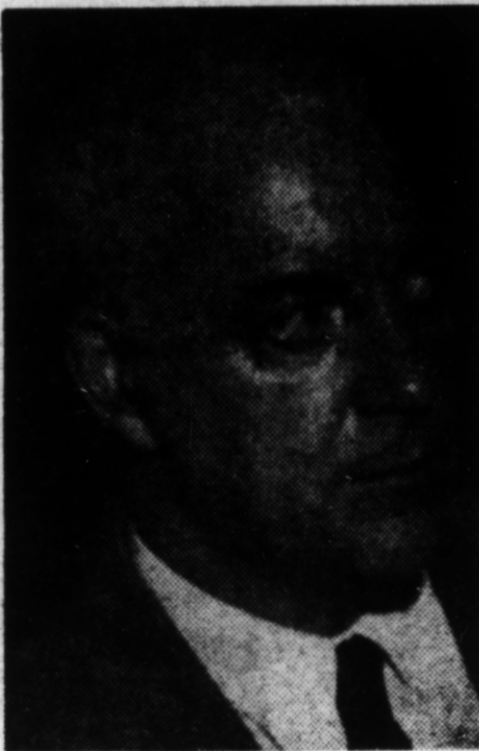
If the Draft Resolution is to be a guidepost to socialism, I regard it as a complete failure, he declared.

Quoting Sidney Lens' article, McManus concludes:

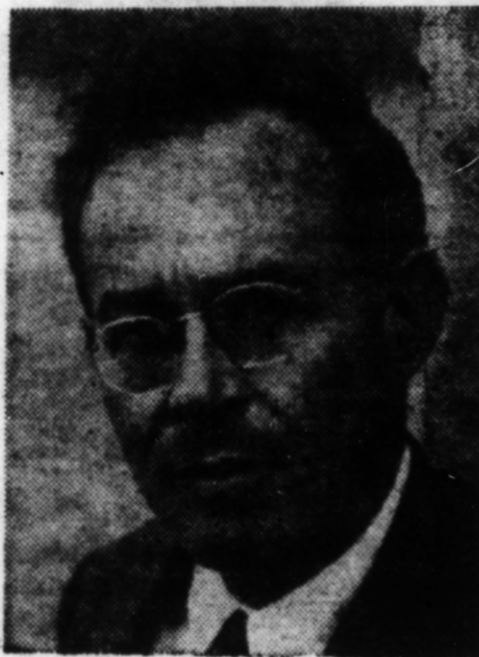
"The time is here for a re-dedication of American liberalism (and the American left). The time is here to mount the soapbox, to find our voices, to drop our fears, to move the truth from the subconscious to the conscious, to stand up against conformism.... Otherwise, just as surely as sewer socialism has been obliterated from our social scene, and merged with tepid liberalism, so will sewer liberalism be blended into "middle-of-the road conservatism."

The Worker presents in these pages the summary of three different points of view on the Communist Party Draft Resolution, presented by three speakers in a forum at the Jefferson School of Social Science on October 5.

John T. McManus is general manager of the progressive weekly, The Guardian. Joseph Starobin is a student of foreign affairs, and author of the book, Paris To Peking. Sidney Stein is a member of the national committee of the Communist Party.



McMANUS



STAROBIN

STAROBIN:

The party itself
cannot generate
revival of the left

STAROBIN, who spoke after McManus and before Stein, said he considered the Resolution was an effort of the CP leadership to grapple with its problems and considered most important features of the Resolution were those which recognized the need to reexamine Marxist-Leninist theories which have become outdated and obsolete, and also the recognition that past errors were of a left-sectarian nature.

But he believed that the Resolution was very inadequate because it did not explore the source of these left-sectarian errors, and because it did not really try to apply what it called "creative Marxism" to the perspectives in the United States.

He asked why the CP leaders admitted that all attempts to correct left-sectarian policies had "met with strong resistance in the party and resulted at times in conciliation or continuation of sectarian policies and practices"—and yet nowhere in the document are the reasons for this state of affairs explored. While calling for a re-appraisal of Marxist and Leninist theories, the party is not really given any.

IN HIS remarks, Starobin declined to speculate on the explanation in terms of ability of stronger men to over-ride weaker ones, but he suggested that the trouble lay in the inability of the party to recognize, a decade ago, that the era of co-existence was at hand, and to fight for it in full confidence that it could be won. To do this, he said, would have required a recognition that there were objective forces at work within American capitalist life favoring co-existence, despite all bellicose appearances and intentions. Any program of action cannot be simply an expression of defiance, or hope or will but has to coincide with these objective processes.

Starobin felt that the resolu-

tion shows all the signs of an intense struggle between two conceptions of Marxism, which never were compatible with each other and which were always compromised. The strong resistance to change, dramatized by Foster's change of vote on the resolution, is still operating to compromise and conciliate a clear-cut stand, and this is why the resolution is full of the same double formulations visible in the Dennis report six months ago, and the Stevens report three years ago, declared Starobin.

IN OUTLINING his own views of a positive program for the future, Starobin emphasized two points: that an American Socialist movement could not move in step with Socialist and Communist parties elsewhere and hence should not try to do so, and second, that the whole era in which we were now living was dominated by the problems of peaceful competition between the two systems. He said that Socialists should take part in that competition because it was through this era that the path toward American Socialism would be found.

Only in terms of such a view of the future did he feel that problems of what organizational form a Socialist movement should take could be resolved.

He criticized the resolution for lack of candor, suggesting that perhaps among the many thousands who left the Communist movement there were many who had fought against left-sectarianism, but one would not know it from the resolution.

In this connection, he noted the absence of any mention of Earl Browder, whose policies, he declared, may have been erroneous in many respects but whose conception of peaceful co-existence as the main framework of the post-war era had been sound and was deeply relevant to present problems of the American Left. This lack of candor in the

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PROS and CONS

STEIN

Draft Resolution Takes Reality as Basis of Outlook

McMANUS is concerned that the resolution does not express adequately the goal of a vanguard party for a socialist transformation of our society. It is my view that the resolution has socialism as its main impetus and concern. In fact the whole resolution is precisely about socialism and how to get there.

It deals with the need for a political realignment and an anti-monopoly people's government, not only from the standpoint of the objectives of labor, the Negro people, and other progressive Americans in the immediate future, but also from the point of view of its relation to the goal of socialism. In so doing, it makes the decisive connection between socialism and the developing movements of the people.

Furthermore the resolution deals with the American road to socialism, with the peaceful constitutional transition to socialism, and with specific features of American socialism in a section devoted to these propositions. The very heart of the resolution is its effort to break down the barriers that today isolate the advocates of socialism from the labor and people's movements and to help create conditions that would lead to the unification and emergence of a strong united socialist movement in our country.

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(Stein then discussed the third party question "as it relates to the current election campaign.")

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I AM GLAD to note that the Guardian in its latest editorial on the elections has departed from its previous position and is urging progressives to exert their influence in this campaign to exact a "price" for their support to the Stevenson-Kefauver ticket and generally veers away from a position of "sitting out" this election.

From the Guardian editorial on the subject I am led to believe that the position arrived at was greatly influenced by expressions of opinions from Guardian readers. The editors of the Guardian (in my opinion, wisely) did not want to be isolated from their readers. This in a sense is the same motive that leads us to take our position on this election and on political action generally. If it is necessary and wise for the Guardian editors to maintain their connection with their readers, how much more imperative is it for us not to be isolated from labor the Negro people, and other progressive Americans. . . .

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STAROBIN HAS apparently been surprised at the ability of the party to produce this resolution. It is clear that he had no confidence that the party, its membership and leadership could or would face up to the challenge before it. Tonight he is backing away from his categorical statement in the letter to the Nation where he flatly said, "They cannot alter the party as such." They can and they are altering it! . . .

Starobin contends that the source of sectarianism is the refusal to recognize that we had entered into an era of peaceful coexistence right after the war.

This view is wrong on at least two counts. (1) It refuses to recognize that the basic sources of sectarianism have been with us for decades including the period in which Browder was in the

Adjoining are excerpts from the statement by Sid Stein. Stein said that because of time limitations he would confine himself to those aspects of the draft resolution which had been discussed by McManus and Starobin.



STEIN

leadership of our Party. (2) It denies that a real danger of war existed. A denial which runs counter to historic fact, which refuses to see that hundreds of millions of people throughout the world and in our own country had to conduct a long and arduous struggle before peaceful coexistence and competition overcame the forces that were driving for atomic war.

The resolution bases its major estimates on the fact that we are entering an era of peaceful coexistence and competition between the socialist and capitalist world. Many positive developments are to be expected from this competition. But we do not foresee that the capitalist world and the monopolists in our country will in the process of this competition rehabilitate their system or overcome its basic contradictions. . . .

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IT IS NOT the task of American Marxists or progressives to enter into this period of peaceful competition between the systems on the side of "our own capitalism" or "to make capitalism work for the benefit of the people."

If capitalism could be made to work for the benefit of the people, Starobin would be right in wanting to "supersede the American Communist Party." If this peaceful coexistence could develop progressively towards the capitalist system being forced to adopt socialist modes and finally "grow into socialism," Starobin would be right in placing his reliance on the emergence of some new socialist movement based on general education and propaganda of the merits of a socialist society. But, of course, such views and outlook have nothing in common with reality, scientific socialism, Marxism or Leninism.

Starobin underrates completely the great efforts that the monopolists will make to halt the forward motion of the American people. He does not take into account the great struggles that will mark this era. He refuses to see the tremendous effort, organization and activity that is still necessary to make peaceful coexistence a lasting reality, and what it will take to wrest the fruits of this peaceful coexistence

and competition from the hands of the monopolists.

Nor does he take into account that the transition to socialism even under the most peaceful conditions requires a very high degree of organization of the working class and a Marxist movement that can be its guiding force in the titanic struggles that lead up to and are part of the revolutionary transformation of a social system. Starobin's ideas of the road to socialism are indeed as nebulous as his outlook for a united socialist movement, they lack the substance of reality. The Draft Resolution takes reality as its basis in approaching both of these questions.

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AS TO THE ROLE of socialist-minded Americans, their eye should be on the ball of fighting the American monopolies in unison with the American worker and people. Their relations to the socialist countries should be based, as the resolution states, on our common science, and on international working class solidarity. While at the same time making it abundantly clear that these relations will not result in an uncritical approach to events, or ideas put forth by Marxists of other lands.

It would not be amiss to point out here that while we recognize what was wrong in our relationship to Marxist parties of other countries, it would be well for other socialist currents and groupings to have a new look at their past attitude to the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries. Surely it is high time that they drop their uncritical acceptance of the State Department view of the socialist world.

The resolution is forthright in its support for the building of a united socialist movement. It expresses the readiness of Communists and their desire to work with the existing socialist groups and currents, to join with them in united action and in friendly and comradely debate on these issues which still divide us. Likewise, the Communists look with sympathy on all efforts by socialist-minded Americans to organize and develop further Marxist organizations.

Our basic disagreement with Starobin does not arise, therefore, from his avowed intention and call to build some new form of socialist organization. We disagree most sharply with Starobin's estimate of the role of the Communist Party in this developing movement. Starobin holds that the Communist Party must be superseded, no matter how one talks around this point, its meaning is clear. This is a voice for the dissolution of the strongest, most experienced, organized socialist group in our country.

While Starobin talks about some as yet nebulous socialist groupings twenty thousand American Communists are engaged in discussing this Resolution. Their purpose is to strengthen this Marxist party by making the necessary deep going changes dealt with in the resolution. This is a concrete contribution towards opening the way for a united socialist movement based on scientific socialism.

It is my view that anyone who is serious in wanting to see the emergence of a strong united socialist movement in our country should help the Communist Party in its present great effort rather than hinder it. . . .

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Pros and Cons

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resolution was one of the reasons, he felt why it carried no conviction.

He concluded by restating his views expressed in the Aug. 25 Nation in which he said that the CPUSA could not of itself generate a revival of the American Left, and that a new Left would have to be formed outside of it, superseding the American CP. He said that the challenge to the CP was not resolved by the resolution, and only as the CP's course was clarified could it hope to play a part in the reconstruction of an American Socialist movement.



IN THE LIVELY discussion, including questions and answers which followed, Starobin said he did not believe all danger of war had been eliminated, but that an American-Soviet conflict was not a probability in the foreseeable future. He elaborated his view of what peaceful competition would mean as a stimulus to American social change and as the framework for transition to Socialism; he considered that in the course of such competition, American monopoly capitalism would be revealed as the obstacle to progress, to peace and to the expansion of American living standards as well as to democracy.

Only in fighting to make democracy work within the framework of competition with the Socialist world that Americans would see the need for further social change. A new Socialist movement, he thought, would have to include forces outside the CP, including former CP members, and would come out of the labor movement and the struggles in the South from those who would not find the CP at all a satisfactory form of expression.