

THE RIGHT OF ASSENT

IN THIS SPACE on Monday, I quoted a number of press comments on the recent Communist Party convention. Among those I quoted was Roscoe Drummond, Washington correspondent for

the New York Herald Tribune. Drummond is an example of that section of the press which feels compelled to admit that something new happened at the convention but "I suggest we wait," to use Drummond's own words, before agreeing that the CP is an independent organization.

Drummond discussed the resolutions adopted by the convention on independence in relation to interpretation of scientific socialism and to fraternal relations with other Communist Parties—resolutions with which, in my opinion, the American Communists are performing a fairly



unique service to the international movement for socialism. But the Herald Tribune writer says it remains to be seen whether the stand of the convention was sincere or only a "prudent tactic" to upset the findings of the Subversive Activities Control Board.

"The judgment of the Subversive Activities Control Board that the Communist party is in fact a 'Soviet tool' rests upon a long record of acts, not on words alone," Drummond writes.

Acts? Well, let us see.

"When Russia attacked and annexed part of tiny Finland," Drummond explains, "the American Communists THOUGHT it was dandy. They HATED Hitler one month and LOVED him the next—after Stalin made his deal with Hitler. When the Nazis attacked Poland and France and Britain, THIS WAS an 'imperialist' war. But when the Nazis attacked the Soviet Union, then to the American Communists it was time to resist—not before." (My emphasis—A.M.)

You can read this paragraph forwards, backwards or standing on your head but it is clear that the only "acts" of which the Communists are accused are thoughts, emotions and words. The Communists "thought" something was dandy; they "loved"; a war was "imperialist" to the Communists up to a certain point and thereafter they viewed it differently.

LEAVING aside Drummond's method of describing Soviet policies and American Communist opinions of them during that period, I am certain that if the Communists had it to do all over again, they would deal with many of these matters differently. But there is nothing in the record—except the testimony of discredited informers—to make the Communist Party subject to the McCarran Act, any more than there is anything in the U.S. Constitution which makes this thought-control statute constitutional.

The Subversive Activities Control Act is, in fact, relevant to the question of Communist Party independence—but in quite a different way from what Drummond suggests.

What cannot be overlooked is that the Communist Party, as in independent American organization, must have the right to SUPPORT those policies of the Soviet government which it feels are right and in the interests of world peace.

The Communist Party at its convention marked a turning point in declaring its independence and equality in theoretical matters and in fraternal relations. This is a matter among various Communist Parties. But the right to AGREE with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union or with the Soviet government is a basic right for every American.

I, for one, have been critical in this space of Soviet policies on Hungary and Poland and would not hesitate to express any disagreements I may have in the

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future. But I insist, as an American, on my right to agree as well!

As a matter of fact, the real purpose of the McCarran Registration Act is to prevent ANY organization from having a policy of peaceful coexistence with the Soviet Union—which necessarily includes negotiations and, at certain points, AGREEMENT. We need only look back a few weeks to the invasion of Egypt to see what would have happened if our country had been unable to agree with the Soviet Union and to join with that country in supporting the UN action.

In my opinion, the Communist convention, in making its declarations of independence, strengthened the right of all Americans to AGREE as well as to disagree, with the Soviet Union where that is appropriate. In this way the convention made a contribution to peaceful coexistence and therefore to the peace of our own country.