

# Independence, Unity Feature CP Parley

By LESTER RODNEY

"The Party Won." That was the ringing conclusion stated to 300 cheering delegates in different ways by William Foster, John Gates, Benjamin J. Davis and Eugene Dennis as the historic 16th national convention of the Communist Party of the United States came to a close Tuesday night.

For four days and nights at the old Chateau Gardens in New York's East Side there had been a spirited, often sharp and sometimes bitter exchange of views among men and women from all corners of our land, facing up to the party's relative isolation and inner crisis of the past year and determined to do something about it.

The debate had been conducted in a spirit of down-to-earth democracy and fullness of expression which registered a giant step away from past top-heavy bureaucratic practices, one of the major problems the con-

vention tackled at the outset.

The new sense of unit, though leaving many questions still to be resolved, was based on historic steps to square the party around the full participation in the great issues confronting the American people, first of all the battle for full citizenship for the Negro people, and the fight for peace.

★

AFFIRMING the organization's existence as a political party, and rejecting for now the concept of a political action association, the delegates from 34 states overwhelmingly voted for a fully independent American Marxist party standing on its own feet in interpreting theory for its own country and in fraternal relations with the parties of other countries. The convention named its main task in ending its isolation as breaking decisively with the "left sectarian" practices of the past.

The agreement on these issues was reflected in the tre-

mendous votes and in the closing remarks of Foster, Gates, Davis and Dennis, speaking as four of the 20 members-at-large of the new national committee elected at this convention. Forty more are to be elected from the regions. Seven of the 20 are Negroes and one a Mexican-American, with top vote going to Miss Charlene Alexander, a young Negro woman from California.

"I support the general work of this convention," said Foster with vigor, "I voted for all these resolutions. This was a new kind of convention, with rank and file playing a tremendous role in solving problems." The 75-year-old Communist leader went on to say: "It is silly to say that all our problems have been resolved, but we have resolved most of the main ones and laid the basis for resolving the others."

"What has happened here," he continued, "has not reversed what has taken place in our party, the increased meaning of

rank and file participation, but brought it to a climax. This was a victory for the party, not for any faction," he concluded to applause. "The enemy expected a split, and it didn't get one. Nothing is more precious than the unity of our party."

Gates, Editor-in-Chief of the Daily Worker and The Worker also evoked applause when he said that there were different points of view at this convention, that "some of us may have lost out in our points of view, but the party has won." He called the adopted program "a new kind of program, genuinely a historic one, one which will have an enormous impact on our country." The convention, he said, had affirmed the American road to socialism.

"We have rid ourselves," he said, "of our old approach to Marxist theory as a strait-jacket and can use it as the science it is. We have laid the basis for unity and I look now

(Continued on Page 13)



# Communist Party Convention

## 20 Elected to C.P. Committee

(Continued from Page 1)

with full confidence to the future. I believe we have a program which enables us to earn the confidence of the American workers and nation."

Davis, prominent Negro leader and former New York City Councilman spoke for the adopted program "as a contribution to unity." He received stormy applause when he spoke of the existence of factions, circles and groups in the recent period and said "Let's have an end to these now!" There are still differences to be fought out, he continued, "but I believe we are becoming experienced in the new democracy which must infuse our party from top to bottom and will fight them out in that spirit."

Dennis, who did not speak at this time, had given the keynote address to open the convention. On Tuesday afternoon, when a particularly heated floor fight threatened to consume precious time in procedural wrangles, he made a dramatic and effective plea for all to "subordinate these secondary differences to the interests of the party." The party members, he said, and people of the country generally, "won't understand that this convention could not get to its vitally necessary work and programs because of interminable points of order and special privileges not on principled questions. Let us act as Communists."

★

**SHARP DEBATE** marked discussion of the definition of the party's basic theoretical concepts, with chief attention centered on the proposition that the CPUSA "interpreted" Marxism-Leninism for its own country's conditions. The question of whether Marxism was to be "interpreted" or "creatively applied" has been an issue in regional conventions. The key sentences proposed for the draft resolution were:

"The Communist Party bases its theory generally on the cultural heritage of mankind, and particularly on the principles of scientific socialism developed by Marx, Engels and Lenin. These principles the Communist Party of the U. S. interprets, and applies, and strives to develop further, in accordance with the requirements of the American class struggle and democratic traditions. We must learn much better how to extract from the rich body of this theory that which is universally valid, combining it with the specific experiences of the American working class in the struggle for socialism in the U. S. In doing this, the Party must distinguish better between those additions to Marxist theory which are valid for all countries and those which reflect exclusively certain unique features of one or another country."

It went on to say that the CP will have to be bolder "in re-examining certain Marxist-Leninist theories which, while valid in a past period, may have

become outdated," citing such examples as the now obsolete thesis that war is inevitable under imperialism, and the inevitability of violent revolution, stating that the party now recognizes "the possibility in our country of a peaceful, constitutional transition to socialism."

The debate was marked by applause for Steve Nelson when he quoted Karl Marx as telling American socialists: "Just don't quote me as scripture," Nelson said it was "time for us to grow up," and pointed out that "if we don't interpret, someone else will do the interpreting for us." As an example he gave what he termed "an attempt by Jacques Duclos to interpret Marxism for the American party," and said: "This convention will make its own interpretations."

Al Lannon of New York, opposing the resolution, held that "we are throwing the science of Marxism-Leninism out of the window" and contended that "a strong right opportunist tendency permeates the Draft Resolution."

The report was carried with only 15 nos and 7 abstentions.

A section on relations with other Marxist parties, also overwhelmingly passed, stressed that "international working-class solidarity includes the right to friendly criticism of brother parties or the actions of socialist governments." Such criticism, it added, had to be "within the framework of recognition that the fundamental conflict of all peoples is with the forces of imperialism."

★

**WHAT** has been called the "main line" of the draft resolution, stressing errors of left sectarianism as the primary mistake of the past period, also came in for hot debate. A majority and minority report were originally offered.

The minority report wanted sharp emphasis on opportunism, the Right danger. When in the course of the debate it became apparent that unity between the two viewpoints was in sight, that virtually nobody contested that left sectarianism was the party's main handicap, the committee went back to work and emerged, to applause, with a unanimous reworded resolution.

This was in actuality the majority report, with a few amendments from the minority. "The struggle," the final wording noted, "must be conducted on both fronts, with the main emphasis against that which threatens the Marxist line of our party at a given moment."

This threat was specified to be left sectarianism, the "main reason," along with McCarthyite repressions, for the party's isolation. Recognizing this danger as primary, it went on, there should be a struggle against "existing right opportunism," but stressed that this "must be carried on in such a way as not to weaken the main task."

Heavy responsibility for the erroneous "left" policies was, laid on the leadership which was the resolution stated, "in the main responsible for the formulation of these sectarian policies and estimates without the widest consultation of the membership." Better inner-party democracy might have avoided or corrected more quickly many of these mistaken policies, the resolution said.

**THERE WERE** many other important conclusions reached and resolutions passed, too many for a single post-convention story, which does not pretend to be a complete account of what happened. The Worker will deal with some of them in subsequent issues as matters of the greatest interest to advocates of American socialism, to workers, the Negro people and all democratic forces in our land.

In addition to the fraternal message from the Central Com-

The members of the Communist Party's national committee who were elected Tuesday are:

Miss Charlene Alexander, Los Angeles, 210 1/3 votes.  
Claude Lightfoot, Chicago, 201 2/3.  
James E. Jackson, Richmond, Va., 186.  
Dorothy Healy, Los Angeles, 176 1/3.  
Benjamin J. Davis, New York, 174 2/3.  
Eugene Dennis, 174.  
William Z. Foster, New York, 172.  
Earl Durham, Chicago, 167.  
Doxey Wilkerson, New York, 143 2/3.  
Carl Winter, Detroit, 143 2/3.  
John Hellman, Butte, Mont., 141 1/3.  
Fred M. Fine, Chicago, 141.  
Anna Correa, Denver, 140.  
Carl Ross, Minneapolis, 136 1/3.  
Al Richmond, San Francisco, 134 2/3.  
John Gates, New York, 129 1/3.  
Sidney Stein, Newark, N.J., 129 1/3.  
David Davis, Philadelphia, Pa., 118 1/3.  
Charles Loman, New York, 118 1/3.  
George Blake Charney, New York, 115 2/3.

mittee of the French CP, greetings were received from the parties of China, the Soviet Union, Mexico, Italy, Puerto Rico, Canada and most of the Latin American countries.

Throughout the turbulent four days there was an undercurrent of deep, hard, responsible work. Many were the red-rimmed, sleepless eyes by 10.15 p.m. Tuesday night, when the convention adjourned with a great cheer and the singing of the national anthem. Voting for the National Committee members had gone into the wee hours of Tuesday morning. Many served on committees virtually without rest, with food brought in while they worked.

When it was over, the delegates started back by plane, train, bus and car for their cities, shops, farms and communities, many to reconvene state conventions. There were varying estimates of how far the party had come out of its crisis in these four days. There was clearly much more to be done to straighten away and get back to effective work for peace and a better America today, for socialism tomorrow.

But by and large, there was agreement that in the words of Foster, Davis, Gates and Dennis Tuesday night, the main thing that had happened could be summed up in three words — "The party won."

## Non-Communist Observers Attend

A group of non-Communist observers attended the Communist convention at the invitation of the delegates. They included:

Rev. A. J. Muste, secretary emeritus, Fellowship of Reconciliation.

Dr. Stringfellow Barr, former president of St. John's College, Maryland.

Dorothy Day, editor, Catholic Worker.

Rev. John Paul Jones, Bay Ridge Presbyterian Church, Brooklyn.

Lyle Tatum, Peace Education Secretary, American Friends Service Committee, Middle Atlantic Region.

Carl Rachlin, Ernest Migdall, Dr. Marie Jahoda, representing the N.Y. Civil Liberties Union.

Roy Finch, national chairman, War Resisters League.

Alfred Hassler, director of publications, Fellowship of Reconciliation.

Bernard Rosenberg, lecturer, New School for Social Research.

Bayard Rustin, executive secretary, War Resisters League.

George Willoughby, director, Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors.

## Weisberger New Head of Sailors Union

SAN FRANCISCO.

Morris Weisberger, 49, New York port agent for the Sailors Union of the Pacific, was elected head of the union last night to succeed the late Harry Lundeberg.

By an unanimous standing vote, an estimated 1,500 union members chose Weisberger secretary-treasurer of the SUP, the top job in the union.

Weisberger has been a member of the union since 1926. He was elected New York port agent in 1939.