

# Keynote Address

By Eugene Dennis

Comrades and Friends:

In the course of its 38 years of existence, our American Communist Party has weathered a good many storms, and more than one stormy convention.

This convention meets at an especially difficult moment in our party's history. We have been engaged in a painful and searching effort to correct past errors, to surmount losses sustained during the cold-war decade, to overcome our relative isolation, as well as to probe a host of new problems arising out of the changing world in which we live. This already protracted endeavor is by no means over. But we anticipate that our convention will go forward, making some imperative changes and that we shall emerge a wiser, stronger, and a more united party.

Our problems are part of those confronting the American working class as a whole, some of these arise from the objective situation which, together with new opportunities, presents difficulties for all of America's working people. Attempts to revive the cold war, to suppress the Negro people's struggle for equal-

ity, to shackle the trade unions with the Taft-Hartley Act persecutions and "right-to-work" laws, and to rob the workers of the benefits of automation and atomic energy—affect Communists and non-Communists alike.

It is to equip our Party to cope with this complex situation, especially to play a more active and influential role in the rising struggles of labor, the Negro people, and the peace forces—that we are determined to solve our own grave internal problems.

Of course, the vested corporate interests are not going to make our task any easier. Reaction continues its campaign of repressions; and monopoly's ideologists step up their psychological warfare against Marxism, socialism, and all progressive thought and activity.

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Starting with the April National Committee meeting, our party took some important first steps toward grappling with the most pressing of our many complicated problems. We correctly emphasized, among other things, the urgent need to eliminate from our ranks all dog-

matic views and sectarian and bureaucratic practices. Shortly thereafter we laid the basis for further progress by approving the main political approach of the Draft Resolution, and submitted the Draft for general discussion and amendment.

But, during this same period, when the facts in the Khrushchev speech on Stalin became known in this country, and again after the tragic events in Hungary, important sections of the party at *all* levels were temporarily disoriented and demobilized. Some tried to start a stampede. Some wandered into strange pastures; while others exhibited a hardening of the political arteries.

Temporarily thrown off balance, the Party began to become enmeshed in a bitter and divisive internal struggle, and was in danger of being torn apart. In this situation, the struggle against doctrinairism and for effecting big and long overdue changes in our functioning and style of work, in our relationships with masses, as well as the fight against revisionist tendencies, became hampered by factional attitudes and extremism.

Without going into the matter fully, I believe all of us on the National Committee must share responsibility for this situation. But some of the N.C. members who, at least until recently, clung to inflexible policies and pursued extreme political objectives will perhaps take on themselves more than the common share.

Fortunately, as the zero hour approached and the danger of a split in the Party loomed as a possibility, substantial sections of our membership and some of the leadership rose to the occasion. As distinct from the conciliators of either the "Right" or the "Left," they began to intervene forcefully. They combined a resolute struggle to save the Party, defend Marxist-Leninist principles and make the necessary changes, *with* an all-out effort to preserve its unity.

This is not wishful thinking; and we should not let the heat of controversy obscure this important fact. For it is significant that most state conventions, while submitting various and much-needed amendments, have approved the main political direction of the Draft Resolution which is based on a sound, scientific socialist approach to our own American conditions and problems.

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Thus there is substantial agreement that the world forces of peace now definitely outweigh those making for world war, and that hence the peace aspirations common to all peoples, including our own, have become more attainable.

World war is no longer inevitable. If the popular peace forces everywhere, together with the socialist, the Bandung and neutral states, actively unite their efforts—world war can be successfully averted.

In approving this estimate, on which the Draft Resolution bases its outlook of a realistic perspective

for promoting peaceful co-existence, most state conventions have correctly stressed the reactionary and aggressive role of U.S. imperialism. They have emphasized the need for vigilance and struggle against the provocative Eisenhower-Dulles Mideast Doctrine, the atomic war buildup, and other sinister attempts to revive the cold war.

Yet most have recognized that even such explosive events as the British-French-Israeli aggression in Egypt and the imperialist-backed attempt at counter-revolution in Hungary have not reversed or cancelled out the basic world trends and relationships making for peace.

Our task here is greatly facilitated by the partial success of these principled efforts to achieve party unity, which had a positive effect on many state conventions. I am sure we all appreciate the special contribution made by the New York State convention when it achieved unity on the thorny question of Name and Form, and on support for the general line of the Draft Resolution as supplemented by appropriate amendments.

As a result of the New York and several other state conventions, it is clear that the bulk of our members have affirmed the continuance of our Communist Party and opposed its replacement by a political action association. They have overwhelmingly re-emphasized their unshakable conviction that the American workers, like the workers in every other

country, need an independent, working class, Marxist-Leninist vanguard organization devoted to the welfare of our people and the national interests of our country. They have also made it clear that any and all proposals to change the name, form, or policies of the Party can and should be examined and discussed on their merits, in accordance with regular party procedures—in accordance with the provisions of the Draft Constitution.

It is true we still have many serious differences in our ranks on a host of important questions, some of which we shall not be able to resolve at this convention. Nonetheless, we are now in a position to hammer out a collective and unified approach to many programmatic questions and to most of the pressing issues facing us and the American people generally.

While these developments aggravated international tensions and jeopardize the peace, the strength of the peace camp was and is so dynamic and powerful that the aggressors in Egypt were quickly checkmated, and the imperialist designs in Hungary were thwarted. Obviously, the world of 1956 is qualitatively different from that of 1946, not to speak of 1936.

Nonetheless, the American people know all too well that we are not free of the danger of an atomic holocaust. They recognize in the H-bomb tests the possible rehearsal for such horrors, and see that the radiation

from these tests already threatens the health and future of the entire human race.

This is why the mass of the people in our country are prepared to help assure that a third world war will never occur. The peace sentiments of the American people helped bring peace to Korea and facilitated the Summit meeting at Geneva. These peace aspirations are an integral part of the new world relationship of forces which can yet assure the fulfillment of the great promise of Geneva. Thus it is that around the paramount issue of peace, the basis now exists for united action with the widest sectors of the American people, including with many Social-Democratic and reformist leaders and groups in and outside of the ranks of organized labor.

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General agreement has also been expressed on the Draft Resolution's estimate that conditions are maturing which will make possible the crystallization of an anti-monopoly coalition led by labor, embracing wide strata of trade unionists, farmers, the Negro people, small businessmen, scientists and cultural workers.

For the coming period this is the main strategic task, the concrete way to curb the monopolies, effect a new democratic political alignment, and pave the way to significant social advance.

This convention will no doubt help to deepen our understanding of all that is implied by an anti-trust

and democratic coalition led by labor, particularly as it probes deeper into the effects of the giant corporate mergers and the economic situation and trends within the country. But our common understanding of this concept will best be advanced as we work to popularize this idea which we, as a vanguard, have projected, especially in the course of our active participation in the mass political and economic struggles now unfolding.

The state conventions further affirmed the Draft Resolution's emphasis on the democratization of the South as the Number One task for the *whole* nation. They responded enthusiastically to the need for strengthening Negro-white unity, especially the alliance of labor and the Negro people; for mobilizing all-out support to the Negro people's great and heroic struggles in the South, as well as everywhere in the country; and for stimulating the drive for the trade-union organization of the unorganized in the South on the basis of Negro-white unity.

Just what we *mean* by placing the struggle to democratize the South as the nation's Number One task will best be spelled out by what *we do* to make it the Number One task for our whole party and those whom we influence.

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The Draft Resolution's concept of our advocacy of and endeavor to chart a peaceful, democratic, and constitutional road to socialism in America has also been approved

overwhelmingly. For this concept expresses what we American Communists strive for, and is a further development of our established position. It embodies our basic view that socialism can be established only through a radical and fundamental extension of American democracy and a revolutionary transformation of all property relations. And it emphasizes that *all* roads to socialism are roads of mass struggle, waged under the leadership of the working class and its Marxist vanguard. But now this concept takes on new meaning in light of the profoundly new and favorable changes in world relationships.

The state conventions also reflect a serious effort to come to grips with the complex question of how we fulfill our vanguard role under changed conditions, at a time when the merged AFL-CIO and other influential mass organizations are giving day-to-day leadership in many important economic, social, and legislative struggles.

There is an increased realization that the Left, inclusive of the Communists and other socialist-minded forces, has a special contribution to make in the struggle for militant and united labor action; for defending the economic interests, rights, and social welfare of labor and its allies; for trade-union autonomy and democracy; for organizing the unorganized; for advancing the struggle for Negro rights—including in the unions and on the job; for promot-

ing independent political action and a broad people's democratic alliance, having as one of its initial objectives to break the Dixiecrat-GOP roadblock in Congress; and for promoting labor's solidarity at home and abroad.

There is also a growing understanding in our ranks that trade-union militancy does not automatically grow into socialist consciousness; and that even very big struggles do not imbue labor with class consciousness, or spontaneously make the working class aware of its *class role* in leading the nation to the next big democratic and social advance.

The state conventions further reveal that we are agreed on the need to put an end to harmful bureaucratic practices, to the distortions of democratic centralism, which plagued us in the past and led to many violations of inner-party democracy. There is emphatic agreement on the paramount importance of democratizing our party.

There is also a realization that the more truly democratic we become, the more we need to be a cohesive and united organization which guarantees the minority's right to dissent *at* all times, but does not at *any* time give it a veto power over policies and programs of action that have won majority support.

Further, I believe that there is much sober thought being given to what we mean by a new and sounder relationship with other Marxist parties, including those in the socialist countries.

We American Communists, who have always constituted an independent American political party, have been unaffiliated with and organizationally independent of other Marxist parties for nearly twenty years. But we are only now beginning to get straight on the need for achieving full independence of thought within the framework of a common Marxist ideology; on the need to combine our unshakable feelings of close fraternal solidarity with all Marxist parties *with* the understanding of the equality, creative responsibilities, and the independence of our own indigenous Communist movement.

There is no contradiction between the true national interests of our own people and the common working-class interests of the peoples of all countries. It is by starting with the needs and interests of our own people and by creatively utilizing the science of Marxism-Leninism to help solve the problems of the American people, to effectively resist and help check the predatory drive of monopoly capital,—that we will best promote international working class solidarity and peace, that we will best advance the friendship and anti-imperialist cooperation of the peoples of the USA and Latin America, Asia, Africa and Europe.

We still have a long way to go to grasp the new relationships now developing among Marxist parties. For the habits of nearly a life-time are very difficult to break. It will take a long time to overcome the deeply in-

grained tendencies to try to apply mechanically the experiences of other Marxist parties, and to view uncritically, unscientifically, some of their analyses.

But in struggling to eradicate these habits, we re-affirm that there are universally valid Marxist principles. We condemn cynicism of and hostility to the socialist countries and to their Marxist parties. We reject any view which sees only the gross violations of socialist principles which have occurred, but does not see the historical achievements of the USSR, the Peoples Republic of China and the other lands of socialism, and the processes of self-correction and dynamic advance of these new social systems which are now taking place.

Despite the "critics" of socialism, it is the world of imperialism that is in profound crisis, is becoming smaller and is torn apart by insoluble contradictions, whereas the socialist third of the world is not "falling apart," but is growing stronger. It embraces almost a billion people who are building a new society in which the working people, for the first time in history, are shaping their own destiny. And it is *this* development which makes it possible to prevent another world war and to achieve peaceful co-existence.

We welcome and are proud of the fraternal greetings we have received at this convention from so many Communist Parties of other lands. We appreciate their observations and expressions of solidarity. And we are not taken aback by the fact that

among these valued greetings, here and there, there may be an open or an implied note of criticism.

In our judgment, mutual fraternal exchanges of opinion and criticism among Marxist parties is a beneficial and necessary development. We believe it is most useful when exercised in a scientific, objective, and comradely way, on the basis of equality and fraternity.

It is in this spirit that we are happy to receive the greetings of all brother parties. In respect to the misgivings expressed in the greetings signed by Jacques Duclos, let me say that we American Communists firmly believe in our great majority that the main line of our convention resolutions is Marxist-Leninist in content and fully in accord with the interests and democratic traditions of our country, with proletarian solidarity and with the new and ever developing generalized experience of the international working class.

In any case, our decisions will be our own, made by the collective judgment of this convention, and will be based on *our* Marxist understanding of American reality and the needs of our people and nation.

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After making the necessary amendments, this convention, I trust, will adopt the Draft Resolution and the new Constitution. It will also act upon a much-needed program of immediate action. In mapping out such a program, I hope the convention will consider what can be done in-

dependently by the party, as well as what we can do in cooperation with others to help promote the broadest kind of unity of action.

I hope we shall get away from rigidly conceived national campaigns, but rather seek flexibly to focus attention locally and in the states on specific issues already projected by the labor and people's movements.

High among these are such vital demands as: enforcement of desegregation everywhere; reduction of the arms budget; cutting of taxes on low income groups; introduction of the 30-hour week; extension of social security; repeal of all legislation which violates the Bill of Rights; banning all H-bomb tests and atomic weapons; the calling of a new Summit Conference.

Whatever program of action we project for the coming months, I am sure we shall give high priority to waging a many-sided struggle for the enactment of a federal civil rights program. I hope that this program will lay special stress on what can be done to get city councils and state legislatures, as well as trade-union locals and civic and church organizations, to memorialize Congress and the President, as well as to act on urgent community and shop demands to end all jimcrow practices in housing, schools, and employment.

This kind of activity would get down to the grass roots level, and, at the same time, exert effective influence on Congress and the Admin-

istration, on state legislatures and municipal councils, as well as on the national mass organizations of the people.

I strongly recommend a similar approach to the supremely important issue of banning the genocidal H-bomb tests and weapons.

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Whatever else this convention does, it must at least lay the foundations for grappling with these big mass problems which have been neglected in the heat of our internal struggle: *how* to expand our working-class base, ties, and influence; *how* to help promote the united action of labor, of Negro and white, of the people against the trusts, the white supremacists and the warmongers.

To pose these key questions is to suggest that one of our special and major contributions will be made in the ideological arena. I am not proposing we become a Brain Trust, or act like self-appointed "idea men" for the existing mass organizations. On the contrary. We must ourselves engage more fully in all mass struggles if we are to aid these movements to attain their objectives, to go forward and to deepen their understanding of all economic, social and political issues.

The battle of ideas—in which the monopolists have for too long maintained the initiative—is bound to grow much sharper as we move deeper into the age of atomic energy

and automation. Both their good and evil potentialities are becoming apparent to millions of Americans. But these millions are not yet aware of their collective power to decide the outcome, and are still less conscious that the die can be cast against catastrophe only through a united and resolute mass anti-monopoly movement, led by the working class.

Within this context there are, and will be, new opportunities to advance our basic socialist aims and concepts. We should exercise a new initiative to make known what we are doing here to develop our program, to widen the exchange of views among those of socialist persuasion, and to reach new sections of the working class with the goals, ideas, and principles of scientific socialism, of Marxism-Leninism.

To bring to the millions, already concerned about the future, greater consciousness of why and how its shape will be determined by concerted popular mass action to curb and eventually break the power of the monopolies—this is labor's and our greatest challenge. The place to carry on this education is in every school of experience where large numbers of people are learning through mass activity.

In this connection, the *Daily* and *Sunday Worker*, and the magazine, *Political Affairs*, can be exceptionally significant. This requires that we take extraordinary measures to preserve them and to increase their cir-



ulation and use, and markedly improve their Marxist content and readability.

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In emphasizing all of these questions, I do not mean to imply that we are already out of the woods of our internal difficulties, or that the crucial question of Party unity has already been settled.

On the contrary. We still have sharp and unresolved differences on a host of vital questions. We still face inflexible tendencies to crystallize an extreme polarization of views which foster dangerous divisions and factionalism.

Therefore one of the central questions before this convention is: What are some of the prerequisites for achieving that principled unity which is indispensable to the life and progress of our party, to enable us to enhance our contributions to our people and country?

Communist unity can be forged and maintained only on the basis of working class, Marxist-Leninist principles. These scientific and universally valid principles must be fought for firmly, and in a comradely spirit.

But it is not enough to recite or proclaim these Marxist principles. They must be grasped scientifically and applied creatively in accord with the concrete conditions of our country and the needs of the American working class. We need to study more deeply the science of Marxism-Leninism *and* American traditions

and conditions. We need to synthesize and enrich these, bearing in mind the big and favorable changes in the world *and* the new trends developing in our own country.

Our unity must be founded on a common policy and on a practical program of mass activity that expresses the interests of the people, and the collective experience and the will of the majority of the Party membership. I am confident that the political orientation and the changes proposed in the amended Draft Resolution and the Draft Constitution will provide a sound basis for such unity, and that it will be further strengthened by the subsequent drafting and adoption of a basic party program.

I believe too that what has happened in regard to Party unity and the lessons of the past decade underscore the great need for boldly refreshing our Party leadership at all levels, for effecting a united team which embodies the best of the old and the new, with special stress on Negro, shop, trade union, women, and youth representation.

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Let me also suggest a few additional guideposts to aid us as we strive to weld the unbreakable unity our party so sorely needs:

(1) The enemy of the American people is our enemy. That enemy is not here in Houston Street; its headquarters is in Wall Street. The differences that divide us here are not

irreconcilable contradictions arising from a conflict of class interests. They are essentially conflicting opinions of Communists which have to be hammered out collectively, in comradely discussion.

(2) We must therefore not permit criticism of the Party's errors to degenerate into undermining the sterling contributions and role of our Party. We must make sure that all our criticism is constructive, that it deals with issues on their merits, that it does not degenerate into personal vilification, and that it does not give the class opponent comfort or political ammunition. We may use a sharp surgical knife to cut away the chronic disease of dogmatism or to curb the growth of revisionism. But let us not forget that our purpose is to save and strengthen the Party, and that no operation can be considered successful if it leaves the patient low in morale, mutilated and half-dead.

(3) We must use our heads—not lose them. It is better to make haste slowly than to improvise gimmicks in the false hope that we can come up with all the answers at once. And in this respect, we must understand that this convention cannot definitely decide all questions with which we are confronted.

(4) We must guard against one-sidedness in our thinking, our work, our decisions. For instance, I believe my report to the April National Committee meeting was correct in emphasizing as the main danger the

serious Left-sectarian errors of the past and in sharply calling attention to our weakness and defects for the purpose of highlighting the crucial need to overcome them.

However, that report would have been better balanced if it had presented more fully the positive and noteworthy contributions of our party during the cold-war decade, and if it had forewarned more explicitly against the growth of Right-opportunist tendencies in our sharp turn against Left-sectarianism.

The curse of one-sidedness has become even more pronounced since the emergence of new problems and points of controversy. This is all too evident in the approach of many comrades to the inter-acting dangers of Left-sectarianism and Right-opportunism—both of which are clear and present today.

Dogmatism and doctrinairism are still the main danger, and will be the main danger and the chief obstacle to effecting a decisive turn in our relations with masses for some time to come. They are too deep-seated to be eradicated by the mere adoption of resolutions. They still afflict our mass work and policies. They even lead to a narrow and undialectical approach to such profound Marxist-Leninist documents as the recent statement of the Communist Party of China "On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat."\*

\* Published in *Political Affairs*, Feb. 1957.—Ed.

Therefore it is necessary to wage the most resolute and systematic struggle against dogmatism and Left-sectarianism. At the same time, we must sharpen up and wage a more determined struggle against opportunist and revisionist tendencies which, far from disappearing, are growing in our party.

Another thing: in the process of correcting mistakes, whether of the Left or Right variety, we have too often failed to help friends and allies understand *what* it is we are trying to correct—and *why*. It does not necessarily follow that when we make changes in policy we also break off united front relationships, as we seem to have thought sometimes in the past. We are agreed that in many instances, our estrangement from the Left and Center forces in the trade unions was largely our fault. Let us try to correct our mistakes in a manner that will help end those estrangements and establish new mass ties and cooperative relations.

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We are going to need a lot of patience with each other, and with old friends and allies whose patience *we* have sometimes tried to the breaking point. In the past period some comrades have left us because of the impact of certain grievous departures from Leninist principles in the socialist countries, as well as because of our slowness in overcoming our own internal mistakes and difficul-

ties. We should not forget that most of these stood firm during the roughest days of the cold war and McCarthyite hysteria, and that today most of them are not lacking in courage, and that many remain adherents of socialism.

Let us be slow to condemn the temporarily disoriented, and ever ready to help those who wish to find their way back eventually, or who presently may engage us in friendly discussion or join in united-front activity on certain specific issues. Let us distinguish between those who have been shaken by recent events and seek clarity, and those who have forsaken Marxist principles. But at all times let us vigorously defend the honor, integrity and morale of our Party.

Finally, let us remember that there is legitimate place in our ranks for differences of opinion, both before and after the majority arrives at a decision. But there is *no* place in our Party for factions or factionalism.

At this critical juncture in our Party's life and history, we would do well to heed the sage counsel of Abraham Lincoln: "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

If we collectively keep uppermost in our thinking and endeavors the common socialist aims and principles to which we are dedicated, then I am confident that our house shall stand and will be built ever stronger; and the ties of comradeship and high purpose which bind us and all

other like-minded people can and will be strengthened.

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Comrades, today our Party is small in numbers and in many parts of the country is relatively limited in its mass influence. But we are learning from our mistakes. We are looking and moving forward. In the process we are beginning to establish new mass ties and relationships with valuable friends and allies.

Moreover, we are a party in league with the future, a party based upon and representing the fundamental interests of the American working class—Negro and white. We are an American party, based on the traditions of Sylvis, Debs, and Ruthenberg—and with ideological ties of fraternal kinship to the hundreds of millions moving toward world peace, national liberation, and socialism. We should not lose sight of that truth, even though now and then the winds shift.

Frederick Douglass once wisely observed that: "If there is no struggle, there is no progress."

Well, comrades, struggle is what we are going to have plenty of. For whatever the state of the economic barometer, political and economic struggles of great magnitude lie ahead.

Labor, the Negro people, and the great mass of Americans are unwilling, as they are unable, to retreat before monopoly's offensive against their living standards, their democratic rights, and their peace aspirations. Nor are labor and the people, in this era of automation and atomic energy, either able or willing just to stand still. Our Party's ability to contribute more effectively to the American people's struggle to defend what they have won and take a giant step forward will depend, to no small extent, on how we meet the challenge that now confronts us.

Our task is indeed a difficult one. But if the convention tackles it boldly, with confidence in America's working people, and with truly creative Marxist-Leninist understanding, I am sure we will make the necessary changes and do what needs to be done.

# On the Main Draft Resolution

## A. On the Nature of the Party's Errors

(Reported by William Schneiderman, co-chairman of the sub-committee on "The Party")

*In submitting the majority Report, Comrade Schneiderman said: "The Convention should see as its main task that of directing its main blow in such a way that all comrades will see it without any confusion or obscurity—the task of fighting against Left-sectarian errors, not only as errors of tactics or political estimates, but of striking at the deep-seated dogmatism and doctrinarism which has hung so heavily on our Party in the past." After a minority Report by Comrade Esther Cantor, the Convention sent the Committee back for further discussion, which resulted in the unanimous recommendation of the following amended section which was adopted by the Convention.—Ed.*

In our struggle for a mass policy we base ourselves on the following Marxist-Leninist propositions:

- a) that both Left-sectarianism and Right-opportunism have objective roots in reality—in the system under which we live;
- b) That the struggle must be conducted on both fronts, with the main emphasis against that which threatens the Marxist line of our Party at the given moment.

*The most important mistakes made in the period under review were Left-sectarian in character. These Left-sectarian mistakes, in the context of sharp attack against the Party, are the main reason for the unprecedented degree to which it*

*was possible for Big Business and its political representatives to isolate the Party.*

*To end its isolation and expand its mass work, the main task of the Party today is to overcome completely the influence of Left-sectarian estimates, policies and tactics in all fields of work.*

*In the process of carrying out the main task, the Party must struggle against existent Right-opportunist tendencies, combatting them at all times. This is especially necessary in view of the extremely sharp turn which the Party is now making in many of its basic policies. The necessary struggle against Right-opportunist errors must be carried on in such a way as not to weaken the main task.*

## B. On Marxist-Leninist Theory

(Extract from Report by Max Weiss, co-secretary of the sub-committee on "The Party")

OUR COMMITTEE was called upon to debate one of the most decisive ques-

tions before the party. A motion was made in the committee to strike the

word "interpret" from the Resolution and substitute for it a paragraph which would speak only of "creatively applying" the principles of Marxism-Leninism. This motion was defeated by a vote of 14-12.

The position of the majority of our committee which supported retaining the word "interpret" was substantially as follows:

Such an assertion is necessary as an explicit declaration of the independent and equal status of our party in relation to all other parties in the world Communist movement on matters of theory.

This has not always been the case. The past history of our relations with other Communist Parties has largely been one in which we too often tacitly assumed that the interpretation of the principle of Marxism-Leninism as made by the CPSU was ipso facto valid, and that all we had to do was to creatively apply their interpretation to our conditions.

But this past history, and the present situation, proves that conflicting interpretations of these Marxist-Leninist principles inevitably arise. There is, for example, the present controversy between the French and Italian parties over whether the slogan of the Italian CP for the reform of that country's social structure violates the principles of Marxism-Leninism. The French CP interprets the principles of Marxism-Leninism in such a manner that the Italian Communist position is a departure from these principles.

There are, for example, the dif-

ferent interpretations given to the Marxist teaching on the absolute and relative impoverishment of the masses. The French Communist Party, as expressed in a report of Comrade Thorez, makes one interpretation. Others, however, like the Italian Party, support a somewhat different interpretation of this principled question.

The message of greetings to this convention from the Central Committee of the French Communist Party, signed by Comrade Duclos, is another instance in point. This letter makes it clear that the interpretation of the principles of Marxism-Leninism as made by the Central Committee of the CP of France is such that the main resolution of our convention embodies departures from these principles. Our Party, and particularly this convention, is called upon to decide for itself whether it agrees that the interpretation of these principles is such that we consider our resolution as being consistent with them. Clearly, there are two different interpretations of what these principles are.

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The majority of the committee was of the opinion that our Party must continue—while paying the closest attention to the valued opinions of other parties, especially the CPSU—to decide for itself the interpretation of Marxist-Leninist principles.

Why did the majority of the Committee feel that we should not accept the proposal to substitute

the formulation "creatively apply" for the word "interpret"? For this reason: the creative application of a principle depends on the prior act of interpretation of that principle. We cannot agree with any position which implies that some other party will interpret for us what the principles of Marxism-Leninism are while all that we are called upon to do is to apply as creatively as we can their interpretation.

Therefore, the motion to substitute the formulation "creatively apply" for "interpret" was rejected by the majority of our committee.

Now, many comrades agree fully with the necessity to declare clearly, unmistakably and publicly that it is our Party which must interpret these principles as best we can, that no other Party in the international Communist movement no matter in how great esteem we hold it, should be assumed to have any authoritarian, ex cathedra right to interpret these principles for us. However, these comrades have expressed fears that as originally formulated in the draft resolution, doubt might be cast on the objective character or the universality of the principles of Marxism-Leninism. Therefore, a reformulation was made of the sentence containing the word "interpret." It was broken into two sentences and an explicit formulation added to the beginning of the paragraph in order to remove any possible basis for inferring that there is any doubt

in our minds about the universality or objective character of the principles of Marxism-Leninism.

The paragraph now reads as follows:

Marxism-Leninism is a scientific analysis of the universal and objective laws of social development. It is the generalization of the experience of the working class of each country and of all lands, and like all science, is an international product. The principles of scientific socialism were first put forward by Marx and Engels. They were further developed in the imperialist era by Lenin. They were later enriched by contemporary Marxists in many countries. 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 United States 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 United States. 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.

## C. On Relations With Other Marxist Parties

(Report by Nemmy Sparks, co-chairman of the sub-committee on "The Party")

WITH THE emergence of socialism as a world system, it has become necessary to recognize, besides the contradiction between the forces of imperialism and the people, a new type of contradiction: a contradiction between socialist countries, or between the Communist parties of different countries.

In the early days before World War I, it was generally thought that national boundaries and national consciousness would disappear with the coming of socialism, but Lenin insisted even before World War I on the continuing importance of the national question.

As it happened, the socialist revolution was not world-wide in 1917, but succeeded in only one country. Since then, socialism has developed within national lines and in a world where national consciousness is stronger than ever. This greatly complicates the problems of proletarian internationalism.

Thus today, despite their common aims and outlook, we find that the unity of the socialist world is by no means automatic. It was chiefly to the solution of this question that the Chinese Communist Party recently devoted their excellent article, and the visits of Chou En-lai to the Soviet Union and the People's Democracies.

The method of solution of this

contradiction between socialist countries is the method of criticism and struggle, but that criticism must be within the framework of recognition that the fundamental conflict is between the forces of the peoples and the forces of imperialism. We were correct in recognizing this new type of contradiction, but it must be admitted that in dealing with it recently, we made many errors, either confusing the two contradictions, or failing to maintain the primacy of the fundamental contradiction. Undoubtedly it will take some time and further experience for all of us to learn how to handle this new type of question correctly, through all the maze of historical events that characterize the period we live in.

The failure to recognize the complications of the historical development of socialism led also to our uncritical acceptance of the developments in the Soviet Union, and our tendency to accept uncritically the views of Marxists of other countries. We exaggerated the possibilities of a single world view, not recognizing that it can provide only a general guide. This resulted in strengthening doctrinairism on our part, led us to mistrust the observations of our own members working in the field, and hindered the normal development of our



theoretical work.

As long ago as July, 1943, the Communist International gave as one of the main reasons for its decision to dissolve, the following judgment:

"The profound difference in the historical roads of development of each country of the world, the diverse character and even the contradictions in the social order, the difference in level and rate of their social development, and finally the difference in the degree of consciousness and organization of the workers, have also conditioned the various problems which face the working class of each individual country."

How much more true is this today with the vastly greater complications of the situation? Therefore, more than ever, must we be, as Comrade Dennis placed it in his keynote "not only organizationally independent, but ideologically independent."

We should carefully study all criticism and opinions, as we, in a fully responsible way, criticize others, but no opinions from elsewhere can determine our policy.

Only those policies, which arise out of our own interpretation and application of our Marxist-Leninist scientific principles to the needs and interests of the American working class and people can be valid for us.

Therefore your committee proposes the adoption of this section of

the Draft Resolution, page 57 through the top of Page 59 with only one amendment. This amendment is based on a Resolution by the Illinois State Convention and was adopted unanimously by your committee.

It reads as follows:

New problems of relations have arisen as a result of the emergence of socialism as a world system comprising a number of national states in place of one encircled socialist country. Serious mistakes and shortcomings in the relations between the USSR and other socialist states—as in the examples of Poland and Hungary—have been revealed. Efforts are being made to correct these mistakes and certain important corrections have been made on the basis of a further development of the Marxist-Leninist principles of proletarian internationalism, national independence and equality. Correction of errors in relationships between socialist states is facilitated by the fact that the fundamental basis of such relations is common ideology, common aims, mutual assistance and cooperation.

International working-class solidarity includes the right and responsibility to friendly criticism of brother parties or the actions of socialist governments. At the same time it requires that such criticism shall be within the framework of recognition that the fundamental conflict of all peoples is with the forces of imperialism.

# On the Draft Constitution

(Report by Fred M. Fine, co-chairman, Constitution-Organization Committee)

A CONSTITUTION is a basic document. It is a statement of principles and purpose. It is a codification of the structure of our organization, and the rules that govern its conduct. It is a spelling out of the means and procedures to implement our organizational principles, and to enhance the maximum effectiveness of our party as an organized body.

It was inevitable that out of so fundamental and searching a discussion as has engaged our party during the past year there would emerge a new fundamental charter for our organization. Inevitably, too, consideration of a new constitution increasingly involved consideration of the most fundamental principles of a Marxist party—vanguard role, monolithic unity, democratic centralism, the party's class character. It would be useful—if there were time—to trace the evolution of the discussion. But there is only time enough to say that as the discussion developed, the attention of our membership increasingly centered on questions relating to organizational principles and their

expression as constitutional provisions. The National Committee has received hundreds of resolutions from clubs, sections and state organizations, and from individual members concerning these questions. The major time of many of our party conventions at other levels was devoted to such questions.

The formidable job tackled by the Constitution-Organization Committee was to seek a synthesis of the many expressions of opinion that would embody the will of the membership. Before proceeding to the questions that occupied the committee and will be presented for your consideration, a word about the status of the Party.

Your committee recognized that at this convention we will not be able to have the "traditional" organizational report, nor a discussion of the specific and detailed organizational problems we face in the Party today. These are important questions, but the answer to them is dependent upon the main political direction we chart and the constitution we adopt. *We propose that the convention instruct the National Committee to convene a national confer-*

\*Owing to the pressure of time, this Report was not actually delivered, but a motion was passed to include it in the record of the Convention.—F. M. F.

ence on *Organizational Problems* in early autumn, when they can get the attention they merit, and when we have some experience under our belt in carrying out the policy adopted at this convention.

In drafting a constitution we are, of course, in the first instance shaping a charter that will embody *our* principles and govern *our* conduct. But we would be shortsighted if we did not recognize that what we do affects our relationships with others. Like Robert Burns, we might well hope for the gift to see ourselves as others see us. While that is an elusive gift, it is readily recognizable that *many are* looking at us today. Thousands of words have appeared in the newspapers and journals of opinion in our country, many of them recognizing the pregnant nature of our internal debates, and the promise they give of new initiatives and advances by our Party.

What we do in our convention will have an influence on the direction of the Left as a whole, enhancing our ability, together with other Socialist-minded Americans, to enter into a new stage of the movement for socialism in our country. An essential fact is that the changes which this convention will inaugurate have already—in large measure—begun to be put into practice in the very course of our pre-convention discussion.

This is recognized by many observers, anti-Communist, as well as liberal and socialist-minded, who have written about our discussion in

such journals as the Catholic *Commonweal*, the *Progressive*, the *Reporter*—and even in *The New Leader* and *Fortune* magazine.

Sidney Lens, an official of a Chicago labor union, writing in the *Progressive*, speculated that American Communists will “develop new forms and new approaches different from those of Yugoslavia, Poland and Hungary” and that “American Socialists and liberals, who will clearly not rush to embrace it [Communism], will be watching with profound interest.”

I could, given the time, cite other such expressions of opinion.

But if all this is being noted as significant by observers outside our orbit of influence, it must be even more important for the thousands who at one time were members of our Party, who left with no hostility to the cause of socialism, but who, for a variety of reasons, found membership and activity in our organization difficult or impossible because of disagreement over some policy or our methods of work.

The changes we are debating are also of great consequence to those in our ranks who have doubts about their continued association with our party, and are wondering whether this convention will and can in fact answer the problems we face in a way that will give them good reason for continued active association with our party.

Thus, the policies and Constitution we adopt can initiate a renaissance

of activity and growth, which will renew the power of attraction our party can and should have for many thousands who wish to enlist in the ranks of a socialist movement.

I now pass on to some of the specific elements of the Constitution.

## THE PREAMBLE

First: the Preamble. What is our preamble designed to achieve?

The preamble is designed to place new emphasis on the Party's indigenous character, its native roots, its devotion to the class character of the American working class and the national interests of the American people—and this in conjunction with a reaffirmation of the cardinal principle that there is an identity of interest and historic destiny that serve as the common bond uniting the workers of all lands. In this light, we indicate the new relationship among the workers' parties of various lands, based on fraternity, equality, independence, and mutual assistance in the form of comradely and constructive criticism.

The preamble is designed to emphasize our departure from the dogmatic and doctrinaire rigidities of the past, and to give expression to a more creative, more flexible, more self-reliant approach to our theory, a theory which exists objectively and has universal validity, but which comes to life for us and grows in effectiveness as it is applied and developed in accordance with the tra-

ditions and realities of the American class struggle.

The preamble is designed to affirm that the American Communist Party seeks no narrow partisan monopoly in the struggle for socialism, while it continues to play its vanguard role. Our party fights side by side with all who struggle for socialism and seeks to cooperate with other socialist-minded Americans in working toward our ultimate goal. Our Party, which many years ago recognized that there were various roads to socialism and that the American working people would travel their own road, now gives a new dimension to the movement for socialism as we emphasize our advocacy of a peaceful, democratic road to socialism.

Our new draft Constitution, in its Preamble and various clauses, reiterates and makes clear that we have no room in our ranks for those who advocate force or violence or terrorism, or who by word or act seek to subvert, undermine or overthrow the institutions of American democracy through which the majority of American people can maintain their right to determine their destinies. Our Party, which has pioneered in the struggle against all forms of national oppression, national chauvinism, discrimination and segregation, makes it the obligation of all of our members to struggle against the ideological influences and practices of racial theories such as white chauvinism and anti-Semitism, and

makes it one of its cardinal principles to wipe out the system of jim-crow and to fight for the full social, political and economic equality of the Negro people and to promote the unity of Negro and white as essential for the advancement of their common interests.

In a sense, the preamble serves as a capsule summary of a Party program. As you know, the drafting of a full Party program is a job that is still before us. The draft resolution recommends that this convention instruct the national committee to draft a new, more comprehensive and more adequate program for our Party and present it to the Party for discussion and action within the next year. The Constitution Committee associates itself with this proposal.

### VANGUARD ROLE

In treating the next specific issue before the committee—vanguard role of the Party—I again revert to the preamble.

The Draft Preamble describes the Communist Party of the United States as "an American working-class political organization which bases itself upon the principles of scientific socialism" and which "champions the immediate and fundamental interests of the workers, farmers and all others who labor by hand and brain, against capitalist exploitation and oppression."

This cogently describes the character of the Communist Party and delineates its vanguard role. Since

considerable pre-convention debate revolved around the question of the "vanguard role," it is proper that we spend a few minutes on this question, preparatory to hearing the report of the sub-committee.

The Constitution and its preamble re-affirm that the Communist Party places foremost the interest of the entire working class and all the oppressed people. As an organization of advanced workers, it strives to bring a socialist outlook into the working-class movement and to heighten the political initiative and understanding of the working class and its allies in the solution of the day-to-day problems in their current struggles. This is a role for which our Party is uniquely equipped in that our program and policies are based on the theory of scientific socialism. It is the creative, flexible application of this theory, tested in the crucible of the class struggle and enriched by the experiences of the workers in their daily struggles, which endows our Party with the ability to participate in all struggles of labor and the people for progress. With such application, this can be done in such a way as to help make the working class conscious of itself as a class, help it grasp the relationship of class forces, the meaning of specific struggles, the interconnection of these struggles with the necessary and inevitable victory of socialism.

The gross errors we committed in the past in the mechanical, arrogant way in which we assumed the role

of "the vanguard party" as though we were the sole and exclusive embodiment of leadership of the working class—and at a time when our Left-sectarian attitudes and practices caused us to suffer the most painful isolation from the working class!—has nothing in common with the genuine and realistic position we strive to hold in American political life, particularly in relation to the working class and its allies, a position of fulfilling the role and maintaining the quality of a *class vanguard*. As a foundation for effective leadership, we strive to earn the esteem of the working class, listening and learning from the workers, participating in their everyday struggles at the level at which they are being waged.

The concrete expression of this leadership role will of necessity be different today in the presence of a powerful organized labor movement and Negro people's movement than it was in the early '30's when these movements were much smaller in size and narrower in content. The advanced programs brought forward in recent years by many labor and people's organizations and the initiatives taken by many of these organizations on many issues pose new challenges on how we strive to fulfill our role.

In answering this "how," we must differentiate between what is our vanguard role ideologically and politically and how we express our so-called "independent role." Our

independent activities — which include the projection of program, mass educational and propaganda activities, the activity of our members and organizations in the communities on the issues, our relations as a party per se within united fronts — help to fulfill our vanguard role. In this area, we must give new and deep consideration to the question of how we look as an organization to the masses of the people, how clearly and well we are able to project our socialist outlook and win adherents to the perspective of socialism, how skillfully we develop tactical approaches for implementing the strategic aim of an anti-monopoly coalition and government as an important stage in the transition to socialism, how to project demands which meet the needs and serve the best interests of the working class and its allies in particular moments in the struggles on issues.

In striving to fulfill an ever greater role of leadership ideologically and politically, it is first of all necessary to grasp the essential quality of the Communist contribution in the struggles as they unfold in today's conditions. A resolution adopted by the Michigan State Convention describes this contribution in the following way:

In the current struggles of labor and the people for progress, led by their mass organizations—such as the daily job struggles, the fight for Negro liberation, work for peace and democracy—the Communists in these move-

ments assist by their experience and understanding, their tireless efforts and devotion, in furthering the unity and effectiveness of these movements.

In the past, we gave some grounds for the idea that we sought "harmful factionalism" and "infiltration within other organizations for sinister purposes." This must be shown to be entirely false. The Draft Constitution (Article VI, Sec. 9) states:

"All Party members in mass organizations (trade unions, farms and fraternal organizations, etc.) shall cooperate to promote and strengthen the given organization and shall abide by the democratic decisions of these organizations."

Finally, in our opinion, the draft trade-union resolution made a signal contribution in its examination of the relationship and role of Communists and the Party to the trade unions and labor movement. This resolution states:

It is not the policy of the Communist Party to interfere with, "bore from within," or to seek to capture or control the trade unions. We reject any allegation that this is our policy. We respect the complete political and organizational independence of the trade unions and other organizations of the working class. We Communists seek to influence the organized workers by persuasion, discussion, and example, as we do any other section of the population.

Alongside of this, the trade-union

resolution concludes with a listing of the reasons why Communists are needed among the workers:

For their conscious participation in the daily struggles; for their ability to help draw lessons from each battle and to help chart the course ahead—for an anti-monopoly coalition of labor, the farmers and the Negro people; for their unreserved position on the side of the workers in the class struggle; for their conviction of the identity of interest of the workers of our country with the workers of others; for their profound belief in the desirability and the inevitability of a socialist transformation of our country.

In striving to overcome our isolation from the people's movements and in once more entering into the movements and struggles on a whole variety of issues stirring the American people today, we must be mindful of our present status. This requires the most realistic appraisal of our strength and capacities which inevitably set certain limitations on the scope and character of the plans of action we shall undertake and on the load of activity we can expect our organization to carry. It requires further a far more penetrating examination of the kind of tactical approaches we develop in the fight for unity on the issues, in implementing our policies in the day-to-day activities among the people, always taking into consideration the thinking and desires of the people with whom we are working. Such exami-

nation and planning must be concrete, down-to-earth and realistic. Now is not the time for grandiose plans and projects. Now is the time to begin to test in work, in mass activity, the new direction of our Marxist organization, undertaking such activity as our membership and organizations are capable of measuring up to with some expectation of progress. Among our foremost and decisive tasks is a new initiative in building the Marxist press. With a few victories under our belt we can raise our sights.

#### DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM

Now—to Democratic Centralism. Without a doubt, no other single question has attracted so much and such intense discussion in the ranks. Obviously, a great deal of discontent existed in our Party over democratic centralism as it has been practiced. Possibly in this field we had the worst manifestation of a dogmatic, doctrinaire and inflexible application of a principle. For that reason, a fresh and creative approach is needed—indeed, is demanded by the whole Party.

Is our need more centralism? I hardly think so. The cry has been for more democracy. And our problem is how to expand, enrich, and deepen the democracy in our Party—while retaining the capacity to act as swiftly as the exigencies of the struggle might require, and to act with cohesion and strength.

I do not need to cite the specific forms that bureaucracy has taken in our Party. For every example I could cite, any comrade in this hall could cite another. Of course, there are—there have been and will be—individuals with bureaucratic inclinations and institutions with bureaucratic tendencies within our party. But the question we must face is one of climate and soil which permitted such individual inclinations and institutional tendencies to flourish so luxuriantly that, like certain parasitic plants, they threatened to strangle everything about them. There is no question that we in the leadership have been guilty of commandism and other forms of bureaucracy. It is not to excuse the individuals or the leading committees responsible for such practices that we examine some of the principles and methods of organization that our Party has had from its inception.

Where did we go wrong? Manifestly it is not a matter of terms. It is, in the first instance, a matter of practice, of the content we imparted to the principle called democratic centralism. Our first concern, therefore, must be with the practices we have followed and the content of our organizational methods.

The classic objective of democratic centralism is a maximum of unity of action based on the will of the membership. In substance, this presupposes a flexible, a dialectic unity of opposites. In my judgment, there is no contradiction between the clas-



sic objective of democratic centralism and the *new departures from past practices* called for by the new Constitution.

Democratic centralism has been defined as "a flexible system of party organization which guarantees all the conditions for combining the conscious and active participation of the whole Party membership in Party life together with the best forms of centralized leadership in the activity and struggles of the Party and the working class."

In practice, of course—and not only during the recent past, or during the Browder period—democratic centralism guaranteed no such thing. Which should prove once again that parroting a phrase and the meaning it is supposed to have is no open sesame to the solution of our problem.

By the same token, the simple abandonment of a term does not solve anything either.

We have got to get at the substance of the question—which means uprooting bureaucratic practices that have become systematized, encrusted and hallowed by tradition. Which means guaranteeing full democracy at every level of the Party. Which means a recognition that unity is not conformity, that discipline is not obedience, that effective action flows from conviction and not command.

As to monolithic unity. Originally, this term means 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 large sections of our Party have spoken out in favor of dropping the term because of the harmful practices and connotations that have grown around it.

Bureaucratic methods of work exact a terrible toll in our political work; they disrupt Party unity, stultify policy and work, and weaken our organization. Our Draft Political Resolution graphically placed the problem which we must attack:

Bureaucratic concepts of Party organization, systems of leadership and relations between the Party and the masses have been a prime factor in contributing to our errors. They hindered the early and timely correction of these errors. Wrong concepts of leadership discouraged full and free participation of the membership of the discussion of policy and tactics. They stood as insurmountable obstacles to the efforts of comrades in mass organizations to challenge sectarian policies and tactics. They contributed to the weakening of inner-party democracy. In many cases they resulted in departure from the very procedures established by their own constitution. They resulted in disciplinary actions which further inhibited expressions of disagreement. They made the life of the Party largely routine, devoted, at least between pre-convention discussion periods, to the organization of a multitude of campaigns without adequate exami-

nation and testing of our policies and tactics in actual life by our members in the shops and organizations.

These bureaucratic methods of work, system of leadership and organization have been accentuated in part by the mechanical application of certain principles of organization adopted by other Communist parties that functioned under different historical conditions.

Our new Constitution attempts to outlaw such practices. The important new provisions that buttress the right of dissent and the new methods for electing leadership and making all leading bodies more responsive to the will of the membership are historic innovations for our Party.

Nevertheless, even the best possible constitution is only as good as the life that is breathed into it. There have been periods in our Party life when the Party constitution was a lifeless document which had little meaning in our everyday life. In re-

cent years many of our members never saw a copy of our constitution, and few of our Party bodies lived by the provisions of the constitution except in a general way.

I believe the present mood in the Party won't permit this to happen again. The new constitution is the true, democratic and thoughtful product of our whole Party, and a far better constitution than the one being supplanted. There is a universal determination to base our functioning on its principles, and to respect and enforce its provisions. This constitution can become a living, growing instrument in the process of making our Party more democratic, more cohesive, more effective, and better understood by the great mass of American workers.

It is in this spirit that we submit through the reports of our sub-committees the draft for our new Party Constitution.

# Preamble to the Constitution

THE COMMUNIST PARTY of the United States is an American working-class political organization which bases itself upon the principles of scientific socialism. It champions the immediate and fundamental interests of the workers, farmers, the Negro people and all others who labor by hand and brain, against capitalist exploitation and oppression.

The Communist Party believes that the abolition of the exploitation of man by man, of poverty, war, racism and ignorance will be finally achieved by the socialist reorganization of society—by the common ownership and operation of the national economy under a government of the people led by the working class. The Communist Party holds that there are various roads to socialism and that the working people of our nation will find their own road to socialism. We advocate a peaceful, democratic road to socialism through the political and economic struggles of the American people within the developing constitutional process.

The Communist Party seeks to advance the understanding of the working class in its day-to-day struggles for its historic mission, the establishment of socialism. Socialism, through the achievement of a vastly

widened democracy, will fulfill the promise of an atomic age and guarantee the realization of the right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," turning the epic achievements of American labor, science and culture to the use and enjoyment of all men and women.

The Communist Party upholds the achievements of American democracy and defends the United States Constitution and its Bill of Rights, particularly the 14th and 15th Amendments which guarantee equality to the American Negro, against those who would destroy democracy. It fights uncompromisingly against imperialism and colonial oppression, for curbing and breaking the power of monopoly, against racial, national and religious discrimination, anti-Semitism and all forms of chauvinism. It regards the struggle to wipe out the system of jimcrowism and to win immediate and full citizenship and unconditional equality for the Negro people as basic to the fight for democracy.

The Communist Party holds as a cardinal principle that there is an identity of interest which serves as a common bond uniting the workers of all lands. It recognizes that this common bond is strengthened when

working-class movements operate in an atmosphere of independence and equality and exercise the right of fraternal and constructive criticism. It holds further that the true national interest of our country and the cause of peace and progress require the solidarity of all freedom-loving peoples, peaceful coexistence of all nations, and the strengthening of the United Nations as a universal instrument of peace.

The Communist Party bases its theory generally on the scientific, humanist and democratic heritage of mankind and particularly on the principles of scientific socialism as developed by Karl Marx, Frederick Engels and V. I. Lenin. These universally valid principles the Communist Party of the U.S.A. interprets, applies and strives to develop further in accordance with the requirements

of the American class struggle, democratic traditions and customs. In the struggle for democracy, peace and social progress, the Communist Party strives to carry forward the democratic traditions of Jefferson, Paine, Lincoln and Frederick Douglass, and the great working-class and socialist traditions of William Sylvis, Eugene V. Debs and Charles E. Ruthenberg. In the struggle for socialism the Communist Party seeks no narrow partisan monopoly. It fights side by side with all who struggle for socialism and seeks to cooperate with all socialist-minded Americans to achieve socialism.

For the advancement of these principles, the Communist Party of the United States establishes the basic laws of its organization in the following Constitution:

# On the Struggle for Negro Freedom

(Resolution presented by James E. Jackson, Chairman of Sub-Committee on Negro Rights and Negro-White Unity)

The Negro people of our country are fighting with unbending will and irresistible resolve to secure now the whole measure of their constitutional rights as free and equal citizens. The determination is dramatically portrayed in the massive battles they are waging against segregation in the South today.

Over a half million Negroes in deep Southern cities are participating daily in *organized direct actions* to break the Jim Crow barrier in bus transportation. More than a hundred thousand are engaged in organized campaigns on a single issue—to secure the right to vote; they aim to utilize the ballot as a weapon in the struggle to *desegregate and to democratize Southern life*.

Millions of Negroes the country over are giving moral and financial support to the legal battles being waged in hundreds of school districts against the Jim Crow barriers to equal and non-segregated education. And fiercely proud and courageous Southern Negro parents commit their children to the battle. These daring girls and boys defy hate-inspired mobs to attend “desegregated” schools. They are the heroic

“Young Guard” of a people fighting for their freedom.

In scope, militancy and effectiveness the Negro People’s Movement has reached a maturity unparalleled in recent generations.

MASS FIGHT FOR FREEDOM:  
MOST VITAL FACTOR IN  
NEGRO LIFE

This fact of glorious struggle is the most vital reality in Negro life today. Not the quantity or character of their recent gains, not even the continuing depths of their daily oppression—but *the compelling magnificence of their united struggle* is the most distinguishing and socially significant factor in the lives of 17 million American Negro people.

The Southern ruling class responds with frenzied violence to the Negro people’s insistent demands, the mass assertion of their just, human and constitutional rights. The struggle reaches a climactic phase.

Over a hundred ministers among the Negro people’s leaders have been arrested. More than a score of churches and homes of leaders have been bombed. Women have been shot on busses. Homes and cars

have been fired into. The racists have spilled the blood of the protesting victims of Jim Crow tyranny.

But the army of Negro freedom fighters stands firm. Each day new recruits join the ranks, new fronts of struggle are opened.

The massive movement and heroic struggles of the Negro people are daily etching into the consciousness of millions a new sense of the enormous import which an oppressed people's fight for equality lends to the general cause of social progress in the nation.

#### ALL PROGRESSIVE SECTORS BENEFIT FROM NEGRO LIBERATION MOVEMENT

Millions, hitherto indifferent, now begin to realize that the tremendous economic, political and social potential of our country can never be achieved so long as any barrier to Negro equality remains standing. Millions begin to see that the particular needs of all progressive social strata of the population are served by this urgent struggle of the Negro people. They begin to grasp the social truism that what is good for the Negro people is good for every progressive sector of white Americans—both for the fulfillment of their immediate needs and the accomplishment of their long-term aspirations.

The Negro people's leaders, therefore, serve the nation's best interests no less than their people's dire needs

when they issue a call to action to all who honor our nation's democratic heritage, to all who aspire to a nobler future for our common country.

Now is the time for all progressive Americans to add the full force of their power to the great lever for democracy forged by the brave struggles of Southern Negroes. Now is the time for all believers in democracy—by strengthening and heightening even further the great Negro people's offensive against hidebound reaction—to raise to new heights the whole plane of democratic opportunity *for all* to struggle for social progress in our country.

#### INTERNATIONAL SIGNIFI- CANCE OF THE NEGRO FREEDOM STRUGGLE

More than this, the Negro people's struggle is an increasingly potent factor in the world-embracing battle for democratic rights in subject lands, for freedom from colonial domination, for peaceful relations among nations. The protestor against bus segregation in Montgomery and Tallahassee draws inspiration and precept from the colonial revolts of the East and the independence stirrings in Africa. He sees himself debased by the same shibboleths of white supremacy, the same imperialist arrogance and violence which would deny to Egyptians sovereignty over the Suez Canal and to Nigerians control of their rich and ancient land.

He knows, and the world knows, that the monopolists' protestations of democracy are rendered a hollow mockery by the persistence of Dixiecrat rule of the South and dominance in the federal Congress.

*The question of Negro freedom, then, is the crucial domestic issue of the day, and a factor of growing international consequence.*

#### NATIONAL NEGRO UNITY FORGED AS WEAPON TO ACHIEVE INTEGRATION

The circumstances of their common oppression and the unanimous demand for equality of rights and status as American citizens are the ties that bind together all strata of the Negro population. The steadily growing unity of the Negro people is manifested in the continuing growth of their mass organizations and institutions, in the singularity of their basic demands, in the militancy of their advocacy and action for equal rights, in the developing coordination and collaboration between the respective organizations which constitute the Negro People's Movement.

This new strength of organization not only provides for the greater mobilization and exercise of the fighting power of Negro Americans to effect change; it also establishes the basis for more formal and equitable alliance relations with organized labor and other progressive organized formations of the general population.

The struggles of the Negro people and the resultant significant advance inspired Negro Americans with a new quality of self-confidence. A profound spirit of national consciousness and pride in their racial identification permeates the Negro people of the U.S. today. It fires their determination to build ever closer their unity in order to wage the struggle even more militantly to break down all barriers to their exercise of any and all political, economic and social rights enjoyed by any other citizens.

Negroes unite *not* in order to separate themselves from the political, economic or social life of our country. They unite to more effectively employ the strength of their own numbers and the weight of their alliance with other parts of the population *to level all barriers to their fullest* integration into all aspects of the economic, political and social life of the American people as a whole. *They are forging an internal national unity to facilitate their struggle for full integration as free and equal American citizens.*

The Negro people's movement is today's standard bearer in the struggle to open up the now-restricted areas of democracy. It is the decisive strategic ally of the working class in the current struggles for liberty and livelihood and in all stages that lead to the subsequent achievement of the necessary fundamental transformation of American

society from the present capitalist exploitative system to that of socialism. Now to cement the Negro-Labor alliance, through powerful mass struggles for Negro rights, is to lay the cornerstone for that broad anti-monopoly coalition of labor and people's forces on which the progressive future of our country depends.

### THE SPECIAL TASKS OF COMMUNISTS

Against the background of this estimate of the Negro people and their liberation movement, what are the special tasks and responsibilities of Communists? First and foremost it is the obligation of the vanguard party of the American working class to lend every support to the Negro people's struggle. *This is the main uncompleted democratic task of our country; and its fulfillment will enormously advance the goals of the working class and our entire nation.*

Communists are also called upon to make their maximum independent contribution towards winning the just demands of the Negro people.

It has for three decades been the honorable task of Communists to set a high standard of devotion to and energetic leadership in the fight for Negro rights. Recognizing the special national character of this question, we have raised our voices among the workers when others stood mute. We have stirred masses to battle against the barbarities of

Jim Crow while others chose simply to deplore injustice from the sidelines. We have in the past often been the pace-setters when others lagged behind.

This vanguard role of the Communists in the fight for Negro freedom has been correctly based on a fundamental concept of Marxist-Leninist social science; that the working class can achieve its class aims only by wiping out the divisions and the inequities created and fostered among the workers by the Jim Crow system of the ruling class. On this basis the Party can and must play a decisive role in forging an unbreakable link between the Negro people's movement and the organized labor movement.

In a real sense the Communist Party, with its insistence on full political, economic and social equality for the Negro people, with the example of Negro-white solidarity achieved within its own ranks, has served as an indispensable forerunner of today's tremendous struggles for freedom.

As the advance guard of the American working class, the Communist Party must continue to make its contributions to the fight for Negro rights, under the changed conditions of today, as effectively, as honorably, as it did in previous periods of struggle. The fight for Negro rights needs the contribution which Communists, guided by Marxist-Leninist theory, are in a position to make.



It is essential, therefore, that we thoroughly appraise our policies and tactics, our internal functioning and our external relations to the cause of Negro freedom. In this connection, we must assure the early completion of the study and reassessment now underway of our previously asserted theoretical position on this question.

### MAIN WEAKNESS OF THE PARTY: ISOLATION FROM THE STRUGGLE

The primary weakness of our Party on the front of struggle for Negro rights during the past decade has been our relative isolation from the struggle. This has been partly due to the political attacks against the Party and the McCarthyite anti-Communist poison pumped into the bloodstream of the workers' movements.

It has also been due, however, to our own errors. The Party's work for Negro freedom has been hampered by doctrinaire concepts, hangovers from past periods, which have resulted in outmoded practices and a sectarian method and style of work. These sectarian practices have resulted from a failure to fully grasp the significance of the new forces, the new level of struggle and the new possibilities for victory that have become apparent in the Negro people's movement in the course of the past decade.

Another weakness has been that

many comrades, Negro and white, have responded to the failures which accompany both sectarian and opportunist practices by recoiling from *any* significant participation in the Negro people's struggle, by deprecating any project which assigns to Communists a leading role in the struggle—by abstentionism. A prevalent form of this abstentionism is a lack of initiative and imaginative action in moving broad white masses to act.

A third reason for the isolation of the Party in this field of work has been the failure to establish and sustain new norms of Negro-white unity—norms which must reflect and correspond to the new level of the demands for full, not conditional, equality being advanced by the Negro liberation movement itself. These new norms must have their reflection in a higher standard of inner-Party Negro-white unity.

Over the past few years, there have accumulated innumerable problems of personnel in the field of Negro work; an unsatisfactory deployment of Negro personnel in leading positions on a national and district scale; strong manifestations of bureaucratic methods in dealing with problems of Negro work and inner-Party relationships between Negro and white; the failure to reflect in our Party the leading role played by Negro women in the Negro people's movement; in some cases a pronounced tendency to give insufficient attention to the repeat-

edly-expressed views of Negro personnel; and a serious loss of Negro membership.

The improvement of the level of the Party's fight for Negro rights and the enhancing of the quality of Negro-white unity within the Party require the maximum participation of and consultation with Negro comrades at all levels of Party work in the formulation of policy and the disposition of personnel. Special measures must be taken and guarantees provided to ensure such participation.

It should always be borne in mind that the improvement of the Party's work in the struggle for Negro rights will have vitality and will succeed to the degree that it meets the needs of the Negro people and wins the support of the Negro membership in the first place, and of the membership as a whole.

#### STRENGTHEN THE IDEOLOGICAL BATTLE AGAINST RACIST REACTION

A further factor tending to explain our weaknesses in the struggle for Negro rights has been the recent failure to sustain a continuous and effective ideological campaign against racism, against every manifestation of "white supremacy" thinking and big nation chauvinism. It has been and remains the duty of Communists to patiently and persistently point out to the workers that anti-Negro racism is the ideology of the

ruling class, that its purpose and effect is to wring super-profits out of the sweat of the doubly-exploited Negro workers and to frustrate the demands of the trade unions and all workers for a greater share of their production. It has been and remains our duty to point out, without ceasing, that the racist denial of political and social rights to the Negro people of the South is the shield behind which the Dixiecrat-minded capitalists restrict the exercise of democratic rights by all Southerners and foist the reactionary rule of monopoly on the country as a whole.

Particularly in light of the upsurge for colonial independence in the East, in light of the historic achievements of the Chinese People's Republic, the emergence of India as a potent world factor, the straining of the whole African continent against centuries-old shackles, it is our responsibility to convince all sections of the American masses that the cause of Negro freedom serves the cause of world peace.

*Solid bonds of unity between Negro and white Communists and progressives can be realized and sustained when white Communists and progressives, living and working among the white masses, are engaged actively in struggle against discrimination and manifestations of racial prejudice. When white Communists fail to join the struggle for Negro Americans to share in and enjoy all the rights and opportuni-*

ties which they are privileged to exercise—be it in matters of employment and promotion rights, housing, cultural or recreational pursuits, or the simple amenities and courtesies of everyday relationships—then the Party forfeits its stellar role in the freedom struggle of the Negro people, the bonds of unity dissolve, suspicions and antagonisms replace mutual confidence and Party unity deteriorates.

The exploiters of the Negro people and the working class thrive upon and incessantly propagate "white supremacist" ideas among the popular masses; and we must equip all our members to recognize and combat this divisive ideology. To neglect or weaken the fight against white supremacy ideas or practices within the mass movement or their influences without our own ranks would constitute abandonment of principle, destruction of the foundation for Negro-white unity and the lowering of the Party's proud banner of equality and comradeship.

#### ELEMENTS OF A PROGRAM OF STRUGGLE FOR NEGRO RIGHTS

All Communists, and all progressive Americans, are called upon to marshal their maximum strength to enhance the liberation movement of the Negro people. This requires:

1. *Full participation in and support of the all-sided anti-segregation*

*movement in the South.* This is a battle to remove a festering, unsightly sore from the national body politic; to free the Negro people of the unequal opportunity and the social degradation heaped upon them by a system which renders them outcasts; to enforce the Constitution of the United States as interpreted by the Supreme Court. A popular and irresistible demand must arise for Congressional action to end filibustering and pass civil rights legislation, for effective federal executive intervention to stay the murderous hands of the Southern racists, to enforce integration in all aspects of public life, in all Southern states, *now.*

2. *The strengthening and broadening of the battle for the unfettered right of suffrage for all Southerners. The right to vote and to be voted for must not be restricted by race or property.* Poll taxes, which persist in five Southern states, must be abolished. Discriminatory registration practices, aimed at disfranchising Negroes and white working people, must be ended. Intimidation and terror, still the customary accompaniment of elections in Southern states, must cease to bar the way to the ballot box. This struggle for democratic elections in the South must be buttressed by *intensive campaigns to increase Negro representation on all levels of government, both North and South.*

3. *An intensified struggle for equal employment and upgrading practices in all industries, everywhere*

*in the nation.* The trade-union movement will be greatly strengthened to the degree that it insists on the slogan long inscribed on its banners; equal pay for equal work. Apprenticeship training must be opened up to Negro youth on an equal basis with young white workers. The strengthening of the activities of the anti-discrimination committees of the AFL-CIO, and of international and local unions, should continue to be regarded as a matter of urgent concern for the labor movement. Special attention should be given to advancing Negro participation in the leadership of the trade-union movement at all levels. The American labor movement must be helped to understand that racism and unionism are fundamentally incompatible.

4. *The unfolding of major campaigns to break down segregation in housing.* Hemmed into the dilapidated tenements and ramshackle dwellings of our urban ghettos, the Negro masses are made the prey of merciless rent-gougers. They are thrice robbed by higher prices for inferior commodities and services in the stores of the Jim Crow communities. Housing segregation is another barrier to the unity of Negro and white workers. Public funds spent for housing developments, whether public or private, should be administered so as to combat Jim Crow practices and make housing available to all who need it. *Communists and progressives are called upon to lead the fight for in-*

*tegrated housing in the communities, neighborhood and multiple-dwelling units in which they themselves live.\**

5. *Action for desegregation of public schools.* In the South this requires support of the program of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and other organizations of the Negro people to accomplish desegregation of the schools in accordance with the mandates of the federal courts. It will require, in some instances, federal protection of the lives and limbs of Negro students of "desegregated" schools. In Northern communities the fight against school segregation, which is still widely maintained, involves primarily the struggle to re-district school lines on an integrated basis. Fundamental to a correction of this discriminatory practice is the fight to end Jim Crow housing.

6. *Intensifying the ideological struggle against racism.* Since the Supreme Court decision of May 17, 1954, the country has been flooded with an ocean of racist literature, and television, radio and newspapers have been used in the South to saturate the minds of white masses with the false doctrine of "white supremacy." The task of propagating the truth of the equality of all peoples, the necessity of convincing the white workers and the democratic masses

\*See Appendix, for elaboration.

generally that equal rights for the Negro people is a matter of their own self interests, is more urgent than ever before.

### THE WORKING CLASS COMPONENT OF THE NEGRO LIBERATION MOVEMENT

All of the class strata in Negro life have a stake in the goals of and are represented in the Negro people's movement for democratic rights and equality. Nevertheless, the Negro people are, in class composition, essentially a working people. The preponderant membership of the Negro people's mass movement organizations is of the working class and toiling farmers.

This working-class component, working side by side with white workers in shop, mine and mill, sharing in the activities of the common unions of all workers, is the guarantee that the bonds of fraternity will be strengthened between the liberation movement and the working class. Its preponderant strength in the Negro people's movement for freedom enhances the prospects for the development of this movement in conformity with the aims and interests of labor. This is the major factor which gives substance to the outlook and the program for complete integration which characterizes the Negro liberation movement today.

Similarly, because of its experience and discipline in the struggles

of the American labor movement, the working class component of the Negro freedom movement will of necessity leave its imprint of militancy and united mass action on that movement. It may be expected increasingly to influence program and tactics of the Negro liberation movement, and more and more to contribute outstanding personalities to its leadership. Our Party must base itself on this working-class strata of the Negro people.

### FORMS AND METHODS OF STRUGGLE

The tactics and modes of struggle of the Negro people's liberation movement are decisively determined by the relationship of class and national forces in the nation as a whole and in the South in particular. They are also influenced and shaped by the objective class relations within the Negro people's movement and the common social and cultural life of the entire Negro people. Those forms of struggle which prevail at a given moment are likely to be those most congenial, familiar and acceptable to the Negro people themselves. Their tactics of struggle correspond to the realities of the circumstances and conditions within which the struggle unfolds.

It is therefore not the tasks of Communists or any other group to impose upon the Negro people new forms of struggle, tactics alien to their historic development as a peo-

ple. Rather it is the task of all supporters of the Negro liberation movement, including the Communists, to lend their unreserved support to, and to take an active part in those programs and techniques of struggle which now embrace and propel into action the great majority of the Negro people.

#### NEGRO LIBERATION: NUMBER ONE SOCIAL TASK OF AMERICAN PROGRESSIVES

*The great labor movement of our country and all democratic forces in American life are called upon to recognize in the struggle for Negro rights the decisive task before the country today. The Communist Party sees in this struggle the number one challenge to action for all Communists. It is the portal to new advances in all spheres in the fight for social progress.*

Without the enfranchisement of the Negro masses in the South the road to an anti-monopoly people's government will remain blocked by the Dixiecrat reactionaries who dominate Congressional committees by virtue of the disfranchisement of Southern masses.

The organization of the unorganized Negro workers in common unions with their white brothers in the South is the surest security against the runaway shop and the prerequisite for labor's further advance on the economic front of struggle to raise the living standards of all who work.

The plantation system, which still holds some 5 million white and Negro farm workers under barbarous conditions of exploitation and oppression, must be eradicated. In the mounting struggle for the democratic reconstruction of the South, there must be special efforts to win governmental measures to secure land and land tenure for Negro croppers, tenants and small owners, and to provide cheap credit and capital goods for agricultural cooperatives.

Equality and full integration in the economic life of the country would force the monopolies to disgorge the \$25 billion in super-profits which they now rob from the Negro people's just share of the gross national product and add to their mountainous store of privately-owned public wealth. The restoration of this \$25 billion to the Negro people must be regarded as a vital element in any sound anti-depression program in our country.

Success in the struggle for Negro freedom will add moral tone to the national democratic spirit. It will radically advance the progressive potential of the American people in determining their domestic affairs and influencing the international relations of our country in the service of democratic and peaceful relations among nations.

Much as the destruction of slavery in the South became imperative for the forward movement of our nation a century ago, so the destruction of the Jim Crow system centering in

the South has become necessary for the democratic progress of our country today. Now, as in the 1850's, ever larger sections of the American people—foremost among which is the organized labor movement—can be won as powerful allies in the struggle for Negro rights.

The Communist Party of the United States pledges itself to the accomplishment of this task.

## APPENDIX: HOUSING

The question of decent, desegregated housing is one of the most urgent life-and-death needs of the Negro people the country over and in Northern cities particularly. Within Negro communities there is an almost unbelievable degree of overcrowding, accompanied by untold human misery, disease and death from fires.

During the last census decade, 1940-50, overcrowding of Negroes increased 11 per cent. Of the nine million new dwellings built since 1935, less than 1 per cent went to non-whites, who are more than 10 per cent of the total population. In New York's Harlem alone there occur 2,500 rat bite cases a year. The pressure of a steady flow of Southern migration has made this an irrepressible focal point of the sharpest struggle. Forced into sub-standard dwellings and paying "luxury apartment" rents, and prevented by Jim Crow and mob violence from moving from the confines of segregated areas, the Negro people demand solution of this problem now.

Jim Crow in housing exists primarily because it is profitable to a host of parasites who make money directly out of

the existence of the ghetto. This includes the rent-gouging landlords, real estate sharks, merchants and others who rob the Negro at every turn.

But the vultures are not the cause of the corpse. Nor are the greedy landlords and blood-sucking loan sharks the cause of the Negro slum. The real cause is *segregation itself*, and no remedy for the Negro housing question can be successful which does not come to grips with this evil.

There is good reason for the special hostility to integration in housing. For segregated housing is fundamental to the whole system of Jim Crow in the North. It is this which perpetuates segregation in the schools, almost as effectively as if it were done by law, as well as segregation in recreational and other facilities. The existence of the ghetto slums also serves as a powerful means of feeding the myth of "white supremacy," and by the same token the freedom of Negroes to live where they please would deal a powerful blow against this myth.

What is required is a large-scale program of integrated low-cost and middle income housing, built *outside* the existing Negro communities. White liberals and progressives, by undertaking in a really mass way the fight for interracial housing, can make a great contribution to the struggle against segregation and the further democratization of American life, and at the same time strike a blow against the gouging of white as well as Puerto Rican, Mexican-American and Negro tenants and home owners by the real estate and banking monopolies.

To be really effective, a housing program must be both comprehensive

and directed at the goal of eradicating segregation. And it should be carried forward by the concerted action of both Negro and white citizens dedicated to bringing it into life. It ought to occupy a high place of emphasis in the action programs of labor and all popular organizations. Such a program should include some of the following elements:

1. An extensive program of low cost housing on a non-segregated basis, and the full integration of all existing projects;
2. An end to the victimization of Negro home owners and buyers. Making credit and insurance available on reasonable terms and without Jim Crow strings attached, wheth-

er through banks, government agencies, or other institutions;

3. Vigorous action against vandalism, bombings and other racist violence;
4. Enforcement of the building and sanitary codes, adequate collection of garbage, street cleaning services, etc., in Negro communities;
5. Positive steps to outlaw all restrictive covenants.

Such a program, if fought for in Congress, State Legislatures and City Councils, with the support of the churches, trade unions and community organizations, Negro and white, could change the segregated patterns of our cities. It would provide the foundation for a new quality of Negro-white unity, with far-ranging consequences for the social progress of the nation.