

By William Z. Foster

THE MAIN RESOLUTION of the 16th National Convention of the Communist Party U.S.A. (February 1957), was essentially a compromise between the three important groups (Right, Center, and Left) then existing in the Party. So strong was the Right revisionist influence in that resolution, that John Gates actually claimed it as essentially his own. This was a lie, of course, as among its good features, the convention specifically rejected the main plank of the revisionists—the “political action association”—and declared for a Communist Party based on Marxism-Leninism. This saved the Party, and made the 16th convention of historic importance and value. Nevertheless, there were many harmful revisionist hangovers, and some lesser sectarian formulations, in the 16th convention resolution. By far, all of these errors were not eliminated in the Party theory and practice since the 16th convention, although many were corrected. It is imperative, in the resolution of the coming 17th national convention, to complete this task of elimination of revisionism and dogmatism. The 17th convention must present a genuinely Communist resolution.

The current National Committee Draft Resolution, which is the subject of this discussion, is of course much superior to the resolution of the 16th convention, in that it takes a more correct Communist position on many questions. However, the draft resolution must be strengthened. It is not the purpose of this article to evaluate all the formulations in the NC draft reso-

On the Draft Resolution

lution, good and bad. The aim of the present document is rather to signalize as amendments to the draft resolution a number of the most important questions which need to be emphasized in the final convention resolution and incorporated in the life of the Party.

General and Complete Disarmament.

On this central question, the draft resolution must be amended, in order to put our Party abreast of this most fundamental of national and international issues.

For many decades, the progressive men and women of labor have dreamed and fought en masse for the abolition of war. With the rise of socialism, the peace forces have made tremendous strides towards this great goal, making it a matter of virtual suicide for the sabre-rattling imperialists to embark upon great atomic and hydrogen wars. Now the peace forces are taking another great step in this historic work by mobilizing the peoples of the world for the complete and early disarmament of all the powers. To this great goal, Premier Khrushchev's speech at the UN was an outstanding contribution.

The war-making imperialists are already carrying on a determined campaign to defeat Khrushchev's historic speech, but their efforts will fail. He was speaking for humanity, and the great body of the masses of the globe will rally behind his imperishable plans. This plan points out the only road to drive a death nail into the coffin of imperialist war, and it will free the

world's masses from the wasted billions of war, as well as its wholesale slaughter. It opens the way to prosperity and progress generally. To wipe out all war armaments is a key task of world socialism.

The world issue of disarmament, like the international questions of socialism, peaceful coexistence, summit conferences, etc., are also profoundly American questions. It is altogether wrong, the idea that American workers cannot understand such international matters and are not interested in them. In reality, they are American bread and butter questions of the deepest character, particularly in these days of the changing world and the epic rise of socialism.

Sharpen the Trade Union Policy and Attack the Reactionary Trade Union Bureaucracy: The national committee draft resolution makes too mild a criticism of the trade union bureaucracy and its opportunist policies.

The trade union bureaucracy is following a program of class collaboration, in spite of the sharpening attacks of monopoly capital upon the trade unions. We must carefully analyze and criticize this policy, which is a first class detriment to the working class as a whole, especially the latest Meany collaboration proposal.

It is significant that Premier Khrushchev, on his recent trip, when dealing with certain American trade union leaders, stated that they were capitalist lackeys and talked like capitalists. Lenin said this years ago, when the American labor leaders were not nearly as reactionary as they are now. And Khrushchev, in his criticism, was dealing only with

the so-called Reuther "progressive" group, and not the Meany reactionaries, who refused altogether to meet with the Soviet leader.

We must reiterate in sharp and unmistakable terms a class struggle policy of working together with the progressive elements in the trade unions. The draft resolution, in one of its several partial improvements over the 16th convention resolution, does at least mention that we should make united fronts with the trade union center group. But this key policy, which the Party followed for many years with striking success, must be far more emphatically stressed that it is now in the draft resolution. Particularly, it must not be distorted into a united front with the Right wing bureaucracy. The wrong line of the 16th convention on this question was one of the worst errors made by the Party in its recent crisis period, and this should be pointed out clearly and definitely as an error. The Party must understand clearly that in the trade unions its basic line is active cooperation with the progressive forces. This includes all the trade unionists who support progressive policies, and in the fundamental way to put the unions as a whole fully into motion.

The Work in the Steel Strike: Our Party was inadequate in the general question of the long, bitter steel strike. It is one of the most insolent and dangerous attacks ever made upon the trade unions by the monopolists, and we must discover all means to speak out more frankly and to act more energetically against it. This situation offers a splendid opportunity to unite the entire labor union membership and a

wide section of the working class in the struggle against this employer attack, to rally the forces of labor generally behind this strike.

More Emphasis on the Labor Party:

It is one of the good things in the draft resolution that it departs from the 16th convention's incorrect line which virtually abandoned the slogan for the Labor party. But the draft resolution could be clearer on this question. It must stand out definitely that our Party's main electoral line is that of fighting for the creation of the Labor Party.

In this respect, we should be careful to guard against opportunist influences from the results of the British Labor Party in the recent election. The great mistake that the British Labor Party made before the election, was to reduce its program of socialism to a minimum. They also abandoned the peace initiative to Macmillan, the leader of the conservatives. This resulted in a serious defeat for the workers in the election. Now the Right wing Labor Party leaders, compounding their errors, are considering giving up socialism almost entirely. This is the fatal path to amalgamation with the Liberals.

The draft resolution, besides taking a sharper stand on the Labor Party, should state more clearly its attitude towards the two old parties, particularly the Democratic Party. We cannot ignore the fact that, as things now stand, the great bulk of the working class, in spite of the monopoly control and political treachery of the so-called friends of labor in the Democratic Party leadership, is going to vote for the Democratic Party candidates in the main. This is no contradiction to the emphasis of the slogan for the La-

bor party, and the fight against monopoly. The coming election will undoubtedly be a very important one, and therefore our Labor Party policy can play a significant role, in conjunction with our independent Communist Party activity.

Amend Sharply the Resolution on Negro Work: There has been inadequate discussion and consideration on this complicated question, now in process of reformulation. In the present resolution, there are many questions that need to be reworked. For example: the resolution, too exclusively, restricts the exploitation of the Negro masses to monopoly; it states incorrectly that the Negroes do not know who their enemies are; that the characterization of the Negro question as a national question by the Communist Party was purely and simply a mistake; it underplays the role of the Party in the Negro people's struggle; it fails to show sufficiently the connection between the Negro liberation movement and socialism; it fails to give the dynamics and historical evolution of the Negro question; etc. These examples, and various others could be added, show the inadequacies, and often incorrectness, of this resolution.

Organize a Youth Movement Without Further Delay: One of the greatest errors made by the Party in its crisis period and afterwards, was the liquidation of the Labor Youth League. This was an act of revisionism and liquidationism. It was done after the 16th convention. It is therefore indispensable that a new youth organization should be formed as quickly as possible. At the beginning, the youth movement will be pretty much a Communist organization, but it must be broadened

out in the mass work. The 17th national convention should take this matter most earnestly in hand.

End the Delay and Confusion on the Jewish Question: During the past few years, one of the most troublesome and uncertain questions of the Party was that of the Jewish national question. It has been consistently used by the revisionists to disrupt the Party line. This situation must be ended at the coming convention, by our Party definitely adopting a communist line on this question. The draft resolution practically ignores the Jewish question.

Stronger Proletarian Internationalism: The Party must greatly intensify its international work among its broadest allies. Particularly, it must actively support the many campaigns conducted by the socialist countries and their allies, to abolish armaments and the cold war; the Party must also demand that the United States get out of Taiwan, and keep its hands off Tibet and other territories of People's China; that the United States end its political and economic boycott of People's China, extend full diplomatic recognition to the Chinese People's Republic, and abandon its opposition to the seating of People's China in the United Nations; the Party must fully recognize the Hungarian People's Republic, and remove from its books the resolution on Hungary that was adopted at our 16th national convention. The Party must also give the most militant support to the Cuban, Iraqi, and other revolutions. On all such policies, the Party should especially combat the reactionary line of the conservative trade union bureaucracy, and seek the building of a militant united front. The

draft resolution could be strengthened in all these respects.

The Right Danger Is the Main Danger in the Party: In the National Committee meeting of April 1956, the Party made the serious error of stating that the Left-sectarian danger was the main danger within the Party. This error, which contributed greatly to the growth of revisionism, was persisted in, wholly or partly, all the next year, into the 16th national convention, and for a long time afterwards.

The draft resolution does not yet completely correct this very important error. While it says that "exposing and combatting revisionist ideas and practices . . . is our main ideological task," the resolution makes the contradictory error of clearly implying throughout its text that the main danger is Left-sectarian. The disastrous result of such wrong conceptions has been that there has been no membership drives (such as are common communist practice all over the world), since the last convention, to bring back into the Party many sound elements among the thousands who quit the Party in confusion during the crisis period.

The primacy of the Right danger must be expressed clearly and unmistakably. We must fight both the Right and "Left" dangers, but the Right danger must be singled out as the main one and the most serious menace, not only ideologically, but practically as well.

Reestablish Correctly the Indispensable Communist Principle of Self-Criticism: This has not been developed effectively in the draft resolution. Seldom was self-criticism more needed in the Party practice, and seldom was it less expressed in a Party resolution.

Repudiate the Revisionist Slanders Against the Party: Throughout the Party crisis (1956-58), the revisionists indulged in the most unrestrained and persistent slander of the Communist Party, its history, its theory, its practice, its leadership, its international affiliations, and its general life. This was kept up for many months. In very large part, this shameful Billingsgate went unanswered. It must be condemned, at least in blanket form, in the coming convention. The draft resolution does not deal with the question. The Party cannot possibly permit such a deluge of lies, innuendoes, and misrepresentations, to go unanswered.

Strengthen the Question of Socialism: Socialism is the most important economic-political-social question in the world. It is handled altogether inadequately in the draft resolution, and must be greatly emphasized, without fail. At the present time, the world relationship of forces are at a tip between socialism and capitalism, with the balance steadily running more in favor of socialism. The international forces of socialism and peace are daily demonstrating their growing predominance and superiority in the world. They have prevented the imperialists from deluging the world in a new war, and are in the forefront of the struggle for peaceful coexistence. The monopolists are no longer able to run the world as they see fit to satisfy their profiteering greed.

The United States is profoundly interested in the question of socialism, not alone because of its domestic need of socialism, as by its position in a world which is rapidly turning to socialism. In the recent visit of Premier

Khrushchev to the United States, in his advancing the question of peaceful coexistence and universal disarmament, the Soviet Premier set the whole American people agog with his militant presentation of the question of socialism.

The resolution must be rewritten to the effect of raising the question of socialism to the level of its true importance nationally and internationally. It is impossible for our Party to play its proper role in this country and on a world scale with this gross underplay of socialism.

The Restoration of Democratic Centralism Is an Urgent Task: To work out democratic centralism in theory and practice was one of the greatest achievements of Lenin. During the recent crisis in the Party, one of the main objectives of the revisionists was to destroy democratic centralism in the organization. This is the inevitable course of revisionism. This is because the best possible means of developing a strong Communist Party (which the revisionists do not want) is by organizing it thoroughly on the basis of democratic centralism. As a result of the confused situation in the Party, caused by the raid of the revisionists on it, the whole system of democratic centralism, on which not only our Party but every Communist Party in the world is built, was thrown askew.

Democratic centralism has two major inter-related objectives. One is the system of democracy, upon which the Party as a whole is constructed. The second is the building of a centralized leadership, free of bureaucracy. The Party cannot prosper if it lacks either of these propositions, or both. The result of the 16th convention was to

create a bad situation in both directions. We came out of the convention neither with a good system of democracy, nor with a practical method of centralization. These deficiencies must be remedied at the coming 17th convention.

Abolish the Decentralized, Federalist Method of Electing the National Committee: One of the many distortions of democratic centralism that were injected into the practice of the 16th national convention by the revisionists (with an assist from the ultra-Leftists), was the wrong method that was adopted or election of the national committee, under a false slogan of democracy. That is, one third of the national committee was elected by the convention, and two thirds were referred back to the districts for later election. This method threw the Party into a state of confusion and delay for many weeks following the convention, and produced a national committee that was mainly responsible to the districts and not to the Party as a whole. The French Communist Party, journalistically reporting our convention, correctly stated that this was a system of federalism. At the coming convention, the full national committee should be elected at the convention, defeating the remaining decentralizing, federalist tendencies. This will insure democracy and efficiency, and more effective, unified, centralized leadership, which is so badly needed.

Abolish the Remnants of Factionalism: The Party, with its new leadership elected at the 17th convention, must make a determined effort to eradicate all remnants of factionalism.

There has been a considerable amount of this in the Party.

For a Party Membership Drive: From the birth of the Party, it was always the custom, every year or two at convention time, etc., to make a special effort in a drive to recruit into the Party the likely prospects that have been developed in the Party's mass work. Our Party had a special need for such a drive particularly following our 16th convention; there were lots of good elements who found themselves out of the Party as a result of the general confusion, and many of them easily could have been brought back into the Party. Proposals were made that steps be taken to actively re-recruit these essentially good elements, in carrying on the mass work. This was never done, however, on a serious scale nationally.

Following the 17th convention, this deplorable condition should be remedied by an organized national effort by the Party to recruit new members (and essentially sound ex-members) into our ranks. Opportunist ideas and tendencies against mass recruiting should be cast aside. This drive should be interwoven with our regular mass work, and it will improve it. Before their recent convention, the Canadian Communist Party successfully conducted a mass recruiting drive, which increased their membership by 15 per cent. We can at least do as well, or better.

The 17th national convention of the CPUSA must work out a sound program, strengthen the leadership, and lay the basis for a rapid growth of the Party. The Party is in the mood for a unified and effective leadership and program. Let us realize it.