

China Friendship Assoc. Debates Priorities

In the nearly two years since its founding, the U.S.-China Peoples Friendship Association (USCPFA) has forged ties of friendship between hundreds of thousands of people in this country and the people of China. As its Third National Convention approaches, discussion is widespread throughout USCPFA about how to improve this work and how best to broaden this people-to-people friendship with socialist China.

At the organization's National Convention last year, a resolution was hotly debated which called for putting a priority of the association on outreach to workers and minorities. The proponents of the resolution argued that people-to-people friendship means mainly friendship between the Chinese people and the working people, who are the great majority here in the U.S.

Of course, there is great interest in China among all stratum of Americans, and the USCPFA must expand its work among students, intellectuals, housewives and businessmen as well. But the backbone of China friendship must be the working and minority people.

This resolution was widely supported and passed by a two-to-one margin despite the opposition of the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) who, through a series of parliamentary maneuvers, tried to amend the resolution out of existence. The view of the RCP,

an organization influential in the USCPFA at the time, was that the USCPFA should concentrate on work among the middle class and businessmen and leave work among the workers to the RCP. They have always looked down on the view of bringing political issues to the working people or into the Friendship Association. As RCP Chairman Bob Avakian said recently, "Economic struggle must be the center of gravity of our work."

While the resolution passed by a wide margin, implementing it has been another question. New opposition has emerged even among some of the leaders of the Association who originally supported the resolution at the convention. Among the most vocal of the new opponents to working-class and minority outreach is the USCPFA Chairman William Hinton. Hinton is representative of a group which is calling for an open alliance with a section of U.S. big business, while negating the role of the working class in the U.S. people's movement.

At a recent National Steering Committee meeting of USCPFA, Hinton stated that outreach to the workers and minorities "is not the yardstick by which our work is measured." Hinton added that, "We have a natural constituency among professionals, students, middle-class people and some bigger bourgeoisie that has by no

means been exhausted. It has hardly been tapped."

Members of the Eastern Region of the Friendship Association won an important victory in the struggle to expand working-class outreach at their June 5 Regional Conference. A regional resolution was adopted which put some teeth into the first national one. The resolution called for future trips to China to have greater working-class and minority participation in them; for adequate scholarship money to enforce this; for all tour orientations to contain a session on racism, and for greater working-class and minority participation on all regional committees. This resolution was passed by a three-to-one margin, with the forces who support the line of the RCP voicing the only opposition.

The September 5-6 National Convention in Philadelphia will see more discussion of this important question. The workers and oppressed nationalities of the U.S. are the real "natural constituency" for friendship with China. China-U.S. friendship is in their interest, and they have expressed that interest in a multitude of ways.

The USCPFA has the potential to attract millions to its ranks from all walks of life. By making outreach to the working and minority people a priority, the Association will be able to make the words "U.S.-China Peoples Friendship" a reality.