

# Foster, Dennis Address Communists' Convention

Eugene Dennis, in his keynote speech at the opening of the Communist party's 16th national convention Saturday, said most state conventions, recently taking place, approved the estimate in the Draft Resolution that world forces of peace now definitely outweigh those making for world war.

At the same time, however, he said, they "correctly stressed the reactionary and aggressive role of U. S. imperialism" and the "provocative Eisenhower-Dulles Mid-East Doctrine."

In a speech following Dennis', read by Ben Davis, former New York City Council member, William Z. Foster, national chairman, agreed with the need for struggling for peaceful coexistence, but criticized what he termed a current "underestimation of the war danger and of the aggressive role of American imperialism."

While Davis, a member of the national committee, read Foster's speech, Foster, who is in failing health, sat on the speakers' platform.

Dennis urged the convention to adopt the pending main resolution "after making the necessary amendments," and Foster added his remarks were not against the resolution as such, but for amendments and strengthening of it.

Dennis gave credit to "substantial sections" in the party's membership and leadership who, when the party became enmeshed in a "bitter and divisive internal struggle and was in danger of being torn apart," intervened for neither the "Right" or "Left" but "to save the party."

In this situation, the party's struggle against doctrinairism and for making changes "long overdue" became "hampered by factional attitudes and extremism," Dennis said.

"Without going into the matter fully, I believe all of us on the National Committee must share responsibility for this situation," he said. He hinted, however, that certain members were more to blame than others.

Dennis said there still were "many serious differences in our ranks," some of which could not be resolved at the convention. He urged "patience with each other, and with old friends and allies whose patience we have sometimes tried to the breaking point," adding:

"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 difficulties. We should not forget that most of these stood firm during the roughest days of the cold war and McCarthyite hysteria. . . ."

He urged that the Communists "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. . . ."

Dennis declared that "around  
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## IMPARTIAL OBSERVERS AT CP CONVENTION LISTED

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Alfred Hassler, director of publications, Fellowship of Reconciliation.

Bernard Rosenberg, lecturer, New School for Social Research.

Bayard Rustin, executive secretary, War Resisters League.

George Willoughby, director, Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors.

The following three came as official observers from New York Civil Liberties Union:

The circumstances in which the impartial observers came to attend the convention were explained by the Rev. Muste as follows:

"The idea that it would be in the public interest and that the Communist Party would be well advised to invite a number of non-Communist observers to its National Convention originated in conversations in which Norman Thomas and I among others, participated. The suggestion was communicated to CP people and we were notified soon afterward that it was acceptable.

"The understanding was that we were free to ask any persons in civil liberties, peace and church circles who were well known as non-Communists and as people in basic disagreement at significant points with Communist philosophy and program and severely critical, for example, of recent Russian policy in Hungary; but who were also defenders of civil liberties, for Communists as well as others.

"It was understood that observers would not act as reporters during the convention; but that they were completely free thereafter to speak and write, individually or as a group, about the proceedings of the convention and, of course, about Communist theory and practice in general.

"It should be noted also that all observers are acting as individuals



MUSTE

and were invited as individuals and in no sense as some sort of fraternal delegates from organizations with which they may be connected.

"The actual composition of the group is partly due to the accidental factor that at comparatively short notice some people could be reached and were free from other imperative engagements at this time, whereas other deeply concerned people were not. I found a considerable number of cases also where individuals felt they should not undertake the risk of attack on their organizations which might follow from their presence as observers at a CP convention. That this situation exists in this country seems to me utterly deplorable, contrary to the best American tradition, and an indication that many people have a mistaken idea of what democracy means and of how to combat what is fallacious and evil in Communism."

## CONVENTION WIRES IKE URGING ACTION ON SOUTH

Following is the telegram unanimously adopted by the Communist Party's national convention: President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Thomasville, Ga.

The bombs are falling in Alabama, not in the Middle East. The threat to American democracy is not 5,000 miles away. It is here at home. Your rejection of a request of outstanding Southern Negro leaders that you speak in the South against the immorality of racist vio-

lence has shocked millions of Americans, Negro and white.

At your press conference last Wednesday you defended your refusal on the grounds that you were too busy.

What business could be more important than enforcing the Constitution of the United States now under attack by a small minority of southern white hoodlums backed by state and local officials? You  
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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."

He said the struggle to democratize the South was "the nation's Number One task."

All roads to socialism, he said, are roads of mass struggle, "waged under the leadership of the working class and the Marxist vanguard."

While the American party always has been an independent party, Dennis stressed that it is now grappling with "the need of achieving full independence of thought. . . ."

In struggling to change old habits of mechanically and uncritically viewing some of the analyses of other Marxist parties, however, he said, "we reaffirm that there are universally valid Marxist principles." He condemned cynicism and hostility to the Socialist countries and any view which saw only violations of socialist principles without the achievements.

## FOSTER'S SPEECH

Foster urged the convention to adopt the resolution passed at the recent New York state convention of the party which affirmed continuation of the Communist Party of the U. S. He declared "rededication to Marxism-Leninism" and to the party itself "the most vital business before the convention."

Foster found "a serious weakening of its proletarian internationalism" a phase of the party's "present crisis." He declared

against "sniping at the Soviet Union," "scorn for the opinions of foreign comrades regarding our party's policies" and what he termed "a pro-Tito orientation."

Expression of such ideas, he said, did damage "to our press and also the Party, by isolating us from American workers and world Communist forces."

(4) Our worst mistake in this general respect, he declared, was in connection with Poland and Hungary. Here we tended to put the national question of political independence ahead of the higher questions of world peace and Socialism. While criticism of the Hungarian and Soviet Communists for previous mistakes was undoubtedly in order, our press greatly overdid the matter. The National Committee also misunderstood the grave danger of war and to Socialism that had been provoked by American imperialism in this crucial situation. This wrong line was especially expressed by the National Committee Resolution of Nov. 20 which, overlooking the grim necessity of the situation, took the impossible position of neither justifying nor condemning the Soviet military occupation of that country. This was an impermissible yielding before aggressive American imperialism.

Foster called for re-vamping the National Committee position on Hungary, "recognizing that under the existing dangerous circumstances the military and political actions taken by the Soviet Union in helping to defend Hungarian Socialism against the acute threat of fascism and war was imperative."

He declared the National Committee had attempted to "straddle" the question of name and form of

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the party, by by-passing a vote on the proposed political action association. He urged correction of what he termed an "incorrect 'unity' formulation of Marxism-Leninism, and the statement that the political action association is not liquidationist."

He said the convention should direct its main weight against left-sectarianism but include in its ideological perspective a growing danger of Rightist mistakes. Saying the traditional weakness of the party was Left-sectarianism and doctrinairism,, he said: "I myself made my share of these errors of the characteristic sectarian type of the period. It is a misjudgment of my position, however, to allege that I now underestimate them."

He called for more worker members, Negroes, youth and women, saying, "We must become really the party of the working class."

And while he condemned any move to abandon the party or "to consider a 'new mass Party of Socialism' as an early possibility," he said the party did want many changes incorporated in convention documents, listing as examples:

"Marxism-Leninism, freed from all forms of dogmatism and doctrinairism and closely developed and applied to the American situation; more Party democracy, less bureaucracy, and a Party discipline based upon democratic agreement and not upon "command"; greater participation of the membership in policy-making; more genuine self-criticism by the leadership; a refreshment and reorganization of leading bodies upon a local, district, and national scale; broader united front practices and less sectarian conceptions of the Party's vanguard role; more co-operative relations with other American Left groupings; comradely criticism of brother Communist Parties and the countries of Socialism; the cultivation of more political initiative by the Party, etc. In this spirit the convention should handle the general question of Party change and progress."

Both Foster and Dennis called for refreshing leadership, Dennis suggesting a combination of new and old leadership on all levels. Foster declared the party's "grave crisis of leadership" had "done far more to disorient the Party than the government attack on us."