

New Division at Top Revealed in U.S. Communist Party

By Harry Ring

DEC. 31 — Significant new shifts are taking place in the deeply divided Communist Party leadership. While Daily Worker editor John Gates has not mobilized substantial support among party leaders to defeat a proposal to discontinue the Daily Worker, a new division has taken place in the party's National Executive Committee on the crucial issue of independence from Moscow.

A Dec. 20-22 meeting of the NEC saw a realignment on the independence issue of those who had been assumed to be part of a "center" group led by Eugene Dennis. The bulk of this group, including Organization Secretary Sid Stein, voted with

the Gates forces against a return to subservience to the Kremlin. Dennis voted with the Foster group in favor of such a course. A press release issued by the National Administrative Committee says that the NEC meeting also heard conflicting reports by Dennis and Stein on the CP's organization crisis. (The release appeared in today's Daily Worker.) Last July Dennis and Stein jointly opened a short-lived drive to "reconstruct" the battered party apparatus.

Leads Opposition

The division on the independence issue came on the question of endorsing the declaration issued in Moscow last month by twelve "Communist and Workers Parties of Socialist Countries." The Gates group views such endorsement as repudiation of the independence mandate of last February's national convention. The 12-party declaration demands re-establishment in all Communist parties of "proletarian internationalism," which in Stalinist parlance means unchallenged authority of the Kremlin. The NEC voted 11-7 against endorsement with two abstentions and two absent.

The line-up in the NEC, which is a subcommittee of the 60-member national committee, is symptomatic of the sentiment



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among rank-and-file members. While there is wide disagreement in the ranks as to what the party's policy and perspective should be, there is strong opposition to any return to the days when all-important questions were settled abroad.

This opposition in the ranks was mirrored in the vote cast against endorsing the 12-party declaration by most of those NEC members who are leaders of state and district organizations. On the other hand, those who supported the Foster line were mostly national functionaries with little direct rank-and-file contact.

Among those who voted with Gates are Dorothy Healy, head of the Southern California District and Mickey Lima, a top figure in the Northern California District. The others were Fred Fine and Claude Lightfoot, Chicago; Martha Stone, New Jersey; Mike Russo, Massachusetts; Carl Ross, Minnesota; David Davis, Philadelphia; George Charney, New York; plus Stein and Gates.

Voting for the Moscow declaration were Ben Davis (New York), Eugene Dennis, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, James Jackson, Hy Lumer (Ohio) and R. Thompson. Carl Winter (Michigan) and Jack Stachel abstained. Foster and George Myers were absent.

The new division in the NEC is also manifested in sharpening

of factional warfare on the organization plane. The account of the NEC meeting reports that by the same 11-7 vote as on the independence issue the committee strongly censured the Fosterite majority of the National Administrative Committee — a subcommittee of the NEC. The Fosterites had apparently used their majority on the NAC to vote endorsement of the 12-party declaration and then tried to make this public as a statement of party policy without consulting the NEC.

The NEC voted "sharp criticism of the failure of the NAC to function within the limits of its clearly defined administrative role. It instructs the NAC that there shall be no repetition of such an action in the future."

Hardening of factional line-ups was also seen this week in the publication in the Daily Worker of a letter by seven of its staff members (probably a majority of the staff) defending Gates against a public attack by the NAC for his statement to the press on the question of the Daily Worker's future. The letter pointed out that Gates issued the statement only after the press had obtained the information about the decision to give up the paper. Meanwhile, according to the reports of the NEC meeting, the fate of the daily will not be finally decided before the full National Committee meeting in February.