

Discussion on Recent Convention of the CP

Dear Comrade Argus,

I have read carefully your letter, published in the March 11 Militant, in which you give a participant's account of the political developments in the Communist Party as well as your estimate of its recent convention.

You present your analysis of the convention as counterposed to the evaluation I made in the Feb. 18 and 25 issues of the Militant. I will comment here only briefly, but I think a full discussion will demonstrate that while we may disagree as to the most significant feature of the convention, we do share a common view as to the roots of the CP crisis and the steps that must be taken by those of its members who, like yourself, seek to build a party of genuine Marxism-Leninism.

As I understand it, your criticism is that my analysis failed to give proper weight to the role of the worker-militants in the party who opposed the liquidationist policy of Gates and who looked to Foster for leadership in a fight against the Gates line. Foster's refusal to make a fight on program and his emergence from the convention in a minority position, you view as a setback for these militants.

You are of course in a better position than I to determine the extent to which those who want a Leninist program supported or

opposed one or another group in the leadership. However, it has been clear throughout the discussion that many members opposed Gates on the basis you indicate and we have frequently commented on this.

But at the same time we have emphasized the fact which you underscore in your letter; namely that neither Foster nor Gates can lead the membership back to authentic Leninism, and that the most vital need of the present situation is a continuation of the discussion until the thus-far obscured issue of a class struggle policy vs. reformism is squarely faced. In my opinion, the convention resolved the issue of free discussion in a manner favorable to those who oppose the reformist program shared by Gates and Foster.

Those favoring an unfettered continuation of the discussion were confronted by the Kremlin intervention via the Duclos letter. This letter came as part of the international drive by Khrushchev and company to stifle the storm of discussion touched off in the Communist parties by the 20th Congress. Foster made clear by his welcome of the Duclos letter that he supports this campaign to shut off the discussion and I think that is why many of the convention delegates voted against him while at the same time refusing to give a solid majority to Gates.

Incidentally, I think your statement that I "gloated" at the defeat of A. R., 21st candidate for the national committee results from a misunderstanding. I had no reason to express any view about his defeat. I simply cited the fact as one demonstration that many delegates were not committed to either wing of the leadership. Foster polled a much higher vote than Gates in the election but could not carry his motion to add A. R. to the committee.

In my analysis I attached much importance to the fact that many of the delegates, while not committed to Gates, were opposed to Foster's proposed return to bureaucratic centralism. If you saw in the analysis any expression of political support to Gates, then I failed to make myself clear.

My estimate of what happened at the convention might be boiled down to the observation that the uncommitted delegates "were more anti-Foster than pro-Gates." Your appraisal is that they were more anti-Gates than pro-Foster. I think, though, we can arrive at agreement on the basis of your view that "education of the militants as to the role of the Soviet bureaucracy, its origins and historical foundations, has still to be completed. Their ideological rearmament is the key to the whole solution."

Fraternally,
Harry Ring