

RESOLUTION ON NAME AND FORM

The L.A. County Convention amended and voted approval of the National Committee statement on Name and Form. The Statement, as amended, appears below.

Proposals have been made to change the name and also the form of our organization. These proposals have been extremely varied and for the most part have not been examined in detail by our Party as a whole.

Some proposals concern themselves only with a change of name for our organization to dramatize and highlight the other changes called for in our Draft Resolution and Draft Constitution. Other proposals call for a change from a Party form of organization to a political Association or League. Other proposals are made by comrades who feel that any change in name and form should be made in conjunction with some forces not presently active in the Communist Party; while others favor a change in the character of our organization as well as change in form and name.

Advocates of these various proposals have taken note of certain moves towards a revitalization of the "Left" and for greater exchanges of views and common action by various socialist-minded groupings in the country. They believe that these developments can have considerable bearing on our Party's own decisions with respect to name and form.

To label generally, without regard for content, all these proposals for changes in name and form as liquidationist is wrong and violates the spirit of free discussion of all issues called for by the Draft Resolution. All proposals deserve to be studied and discussed on their merits.

It is equally wrong and divisive to insist that a change of form and name must be made at the February convention. It is wrong and harmful to insist that a change in name and form at this convention is a pre-condition for effecting other major changes called for by this resolution.

The basic changes that are urgently needed and which this convention must settle have to do with our approach to theory, the content of our policies, and the correction of bureaucratic methods in the inner life of our Party, and the development of our mass work and ties. What must be settled are the basic Marxist organizational principles, the organizational stability and unity of our organization must be guaranteed.

At this time when the content of our policies and organization are yet to be settled by the convention, the proposals for change in name and form give rise to fears amongst sections of the Party that these proposals may open the way for liquidating essential features of a Marxist organization.

Once the principles of our organization are soundly established on Marxist foundations as outlined in this Draft Resolution, once a Party program dealing more elaborately with fundamental theoretical and programmatic questions is drafted and discussed by the Party, such proposals as deal with form and name will be seen in their proper context, as subordinate to questions of program and policy and can therefore more readily be discussed on their merits.

We propose that this convention shall not undertake to change the name and form of our Party. This does not foreclose further consideration of these proposals. The National Committee recommends that the convention should instruct the incoming National Committee to explore all proposals on form and name, to consult with non-Party socialist-minded workers and leaders and to carry through properly organized discussion within the Party with the objective of reviewing this question when we adopt the proposed new Party program, or at some other appropriate time.

(amendment)

It is the opinion of the County Committee

--that the establishment of an influential Marxist political organization is a prime task for us as well as for all socialist minded forces;

--that while there is no basis for assuming that all class conscious and socialist forces will inevitably come to us, we believe that there is a basis for strengthening and improving the Communist Party;

--that laying the groundwork for a truly effective Marxist organization requires a many-sided process of development which must include the regrouping of thousands of class conscious and Marxist forces, as well as the strengthening of presently existing organizations, among them our Party;

--that the rebuilding and strengthening of our Party at this time which must be based on drastic changes, cannot be viewed as a contradiction but as a contributing force to any further development, inasmuch as our Communist organization continues to be the largest American grouping for socialism, whose membership and leadership have shown great courage, integrity and ability in making important contributions in the past, as well as in accumulating valuable experiences, and

That the Los Angeles County Convention is opposed, at this time, either to the dissolution of the Party or to a change of name, and

That the Communist Party seeks to encourage all forms of relationship (including debate and discussion, parallel action, united action, etc.) among all groupings and individuals dedicated to socialism, and

That the Communist Party will encourage and further all trends and currents contributing towards the establishment of an effective, Marxist vanguard party, and declares its readiness, when conditions have matured, and take whatever steps may be necessary to enlist the fullest support and allegiance for such an organization from all Americans dedicated to the cause of socialism, and

That the County Convention recommends the above for adoption by the State and National Conventions, and further recommends support by the conventions for all measures in connection with constitutional changes and propositions which are in accordance with the spirit of the above.

VOTE

147 - for
15 - against
13 - abstain

Following this action a straight vote was taken on whether or not to retain our present name.

VOTE

160 - for retaining name
24 - against
18 - abstain

The Convention also voted on a motion to request the National Convention to conduct a referendum on the question of the Communist Party or Communist Political Association of some kind.

The motion was adopted:

VOTE

133 - for
35 - against
8 - abstain

(A) Minority Report on Name and Form

Thousands of people in our country want socialism. Tens of thousands of these people have passed through our party. The objective conditions alone cannot explain our party's inability to hold these people.

American history, starting with the Committees of Correspondence, is replete with instances of organizations, not identified as political parties, which have had tremendous impact. The American concept of a political party is primarily an electoral one - which the Communist Party never fitted. Our role of being a party working within other parties has tended to confuse even our closest friends.

The struggle for socialism will not become an electoral issue in this country in the immediate future. However, there will be sharp struggles between the people and the forces of monopoly which may assume many forms, including electoral struggles. Victory for the people in these struggles will require the broadest kind of coalition, including the Communists. Elections of coalition candidates could include Communists depending on the extent to which they merge with the people. The perspective of socialism at present is mainly educational. We can bring to people an understanding of what socialism could mean to our country, how the tremendous technical achievements, the finest consumer goods, the best of food, and educational advantages could be brought to all our people if they owned the means of production.

We feel it is wrong to cling to an outmoded form of organization - a form which will remain to rigid in spite of attempts to democratize it. Our organization should be a dynamic one attracting thousands of people to it, particularly the youth, instead of driving them away in droves. We urge that our party become a political action organization based on scientific socialism with a minimum number of offices and meetings to encourage every member to become a real part of community life. The real test of our leadership is the extent to which we are willing to enter into the struggles of the people rather than initiating new ones. There are huge questions before the American people today - peace, growing Negro rights struggle, automation with its danger of unemployment - just to mention a few. If we are to give any leadership at all to these struggles, we are going to have to be part of them.

We are told that we must decide questions of policy before we can decide questions of organization. Such questions as "Can we have peaceful transition to Socialism?" and "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" are raised. On the one hand, we submit that these are questions that cannot be definitely solved within a given time limit like a year. On the other hand - even if we could - is this not again a bit of arrogance - that we will solve the basic political questions and then present them to other socialist groups and the working people in this country.

All discussions and articles lead to the question of what kind of party. The presentation of a Draft Constitution makes it mandatory that we discuss organization. A change in organization is a logical step at this time to permit greater discussion and study, to facilitate working with other socialist groups and people, to give our people greater opportunity to enter into organizations and community activities. To postpone a change which practically all agree will probably come in a year means to doom our organization to an additional year of stagnation. By that time, the objective conditions which we shall be investigating will have changed. And certainly, life will not stop so we can catch up to it. This is our chance to show we are capable of great change now.

The really important questions before us and the American people are winning a lasting peace, developing further the Negro liberation movement, and achieving additional gains for labor. Our major task is to become a part of these movements as they now exist, modestly taking our part in the struggles of the people in our country. Only by merging ourselves with these movements shall we ever be able to break with old habits of applying incorrect theory to practice instead of applying practice to create an American theory.

We feel that we are losing sight of our major goal of socialism and are substituting for it the maintenance of our Party as it is now. A political action association would be a far more flexible organization and would permit us more leeway to work in all facets of community life.

The right of dissent would be more fully guaranteed under a political action association. Instead of being limited to dissent just within our organization we would be guaranteed the right to raise our ideas and therefore establish contact with other socialist groupings and individuals.

Too many times in the past, we have said an organization that does not grow, dies. Can our Party survive another year of drastic losses without additional recruits? We think not. We further believe that our present organization deters any growth of any significance both through its rigid specifications for membership and because of the tremendous demands on its members.

For these reasons, we propose that our party become a political action association and change its name accordingly. Our tremendous energy and knowledge will be used to help enrich and create socialist theory and development in our country.

Defeated

for-----	17
against----	151
abstain----	18

(B) Minority statement by individual

WHEREAS: Throughout history a struggle between two classes in society has been going on - the class which produces all wealth - the working class; and the class which controls the means of production and distribution - the

capitalist class, and

The concentration of wealth and political power controlled by the capitalist class deprives the working class of the enjoyment of the wealth it creates, and leads to insecurity, poverty, discrimination, oppression and wars, and

We believe that in the future, the people of our country as well as the peoples of the world will view this system of exploitation of man by man just as inhuman and criminal as chattel slavery is looked upon today, and

Only through organization and united effort in economic and political struggles can the working class secure the right to enjoy the wealth and political power to which they are entitled by their constructive role in society, therefore be it

RESOLVED BY DELEGATES ASSEMBLED IN THIS CONVENTION TO FORM THE WORKERS PARTY OF THE U.S.A. IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THE FOLLOWING AIMS AND PURPOSES:

- 1) To advance the immediate and fundamental interests of workers, farmers, and all who labor by hand and brain.
- 2) To advocate abolition of exploitation of man by man through peaceful reorganization of society on a socialist basis.
- 3) To educate and advocate extension of democratic rights of all the people for abolition of all forms of racial, national, religious, social and political discrimination and for unconditional equality of the Negro people.
- 4) To actively participate with and support economic and political struggles of other organizations of workers, farmers and their allies, the Negro people and middle class organizations, and to fight with them for peaceful transition to Socialism, which we believe, will bring about the realization of the great purpose and dream of the founding fathers of this nation to establish the "right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" - to utilize the great advances of science and culture for the needs and enjoyment of all people of this great and beloved land of ours -
- 5) To cooperate with movements and organizations of workers in other lands, especially with our neighbors in the Americas for an exchange of knowledge and experiences and for cooperation in the struggle against colonialism and to prevent imperialist wars. To fight for peaceful coexistence of all nations regardless of their economic or political systems, without interference of one country into the affairs of another; For the strengthening of the United Nations Organization as a universal instrument for peace.

defeated

for-----	2
against-----	154
abstain-----	2

(C) Minority statement by two members

Both the Draft Resolution and County Committee Report to the opening session of this Convention indicate a crisis condition in our Party. Loss of membership and isolation from the American working class are but surface symptoms of this crisis. The above resolution and report document the various errors which were made. Among these are the following: failure to employ a consistent Marxist method of analysis; the shifting from right opportunism to left sectarianism etc.

These constitute an accurate listing of the errors which were made, but nowhere do they explain why "our Party has been unable to root itself in the American scene." To point out that "dogmatism and doctrinairism (are)..the twin evils which have dogged the American Marxist movement since the 1880's" as is done in the County Committee Report is to offer indeed a limited service. Unless the root causes of our "dogmatism and doctrinairism" are fully exposed, we will be left with our "sincerity" and with no understanding of how to overcome these evils. Any issue of Political Affairs in the last ten years, selected at random, and opened to any page at random, will be found to contain at least one statement decrying "dogmatism and doctrinairism". Yet there has been no change.

It is true, as the report points out that a "contributing factor in our failure to adapt Marxism to the American scene was our literal translation of Russian life

and experiences to American soil." But this ignores the fact that the crisis is world wide in scope. All the Communist Parties throughout the world, including those which have state power are undergoing serious convulsions. What has created the crisis in the world communist movement?

The thread that runs through our history of errors, (as well as those of other CP's) is the fact that we were instruments of Soviet foreign policy. It was not because we defended the Soviet Union that we became such an instrument. It is in fact the duty of all socialists and Marxists to defend the interests of socialism from the attacks by the capitalist class. However, subordinating the interests of the American working class to the needs of Soviet foreign policy ultimately was no defense for either the Soviet Union or the American working class. Nor was it in the best interest of socialism anywhere ~~else~~ in the world.

It was the Soviet Party that demanded this subordination of every Communist Party in the world. How else explain the wiping out, literally, of the entire Polish central committee, the murder of Bela Kun, the break with Titó, the framed trials and executions in the Eastern European countries etc.

The Draft Resolution states that "Our Party has also suffered from an oversimplified approach to and an uncritical acceptance of many views of Marxists and Marxist parties in other countries." In view of recent history, this is a masterpiece of understatement. It is interesting to speculate as to whether the failure to mention the Soviet Union specifically constitutes a continuation of the subordination to imagined Soviet interests. Who were these "Marxists and Marxist parties in other countries"? Were they the CP of Greenland, or Australia, or Great Britain?

It is in fact neither "anti-Soviet" nor "anti-Socialist" to criticize the Soviet Union seriously when the Soviet Union has been indeed seriously in error. Failure to have done so in the past has hindered the Soviet Union and the cause of world socialism. Freedom is still the recognition of necessity.

If the subordination to the imagined interests of the Soviet Union has been the well spring of our past errors, then the ending of the subordination is the precondition for the launching of a viable American movement for Socialism. And if such a movement is to draw its strength from the American people, then it must objectively analyse the peculiarly American conditions existing in the country today.

The United States today is the world center of capitalist strength and capitalist ideology. Marxism has no standing in any significant sector of the population. The working class is hostile to it and views it as an alien philosophy. The youth in the schools are brought up today in the spirit of militant anti-Marxism. A combination of circumstances, into which enter the errors of our movement, have conspired to bring Marxism to the lowest state in its American history. The American labor movement, soothed by sixteen years of relative prosperity, is in neither a militant nor a revolutionary mood. And despite all of the "viewing with alarm" of the "soft spots" in the economy, and the utter assurance that this period cannot last forever, none knows how long it will last. In this period in American history, we must recognize that no matter what our party does it will have no qualitative effect now on the American scene. Our problem is to take those steps which will enable us to give useful leadership to the working class when it again moves into action.

This is not really a new idea. Lenin pointed out, "Of course, without at revolutionary mood among the masses and without conditions favouring the growth of this mood, revolutionary tactics will never be converted into action." He further said, "As long as the question was, and in so far as it still is, one of winning over the vanguard of the proletariat to the side of Communism, so long, and to that extent, propaganda, took first place, even propaganda circles..."

The report to the County Convention places it very well when it states that the "primary aspect of the vanguard role should be in bringing socialist and class consciousness to the working class." What is possible today is a broad democratic socialist organization which has as its main job education -- free of the taint of the past, based on American tradition, and the American application of the science of Marxism.

The report to the Convention stated, "We can become a sect if we fail to comprehend the new conditions present and transform our organization accordingly." To date we have failed to transform our organization and are presently a sect. If a profound break with the past is not made, the CP will remain a mere sect, a vestige of fossilized American radicalism. If the CP cannot make this profound

change it is in the interest of American socialism that it be dissolved. If the idea of socialism remains identified with a party rejected by the American workers, the ideas of socialism may likewise be rejected by them. And it will also be of service to close the "revolving door" which many vigorous young American radicals have entered confidentially and left dejectedly.

It is not easy to dissolve an organization which has become a "way of life". There will be those that will keep the organization going based on "confidence" that eventually the organization can make the change. Where are the objective factors to support such "confidence"? Lacking any, one can only conclude that this will be merely the wreckage of what was once the most promising radical organization on the American scene. In this event, those present members of the Communist Party will have no choice but to attempt to get clear of the wreckage. Those who remain will be those who need the party per se more than they need to continue the fight for socialism.

In summation the two prime questions facing the party are these: 1) what steps will be taken to insure that this Party becomes an autonomous American Marxist organization and 2) in keeping with the present situation in America, how can the Party reshape its organization and ideas in the interests of education for socialism.

The present crisis in the Party is not merely tactical; it is a life and death struggle. Those of us who love life will go where there is life, be it in the Party or out.

No action taken on this statement.