

# U.S. REDS CONFESS PARTY MISTAKES; DRAFT REFORMS

## Convention Resolution Would Assail Left Wing and Urge Labor and Negro Ties

*Excerpts from resolution by  
Communists on Page 80.*

By **PETER KIHSS**

American Communists issued a 23,000-word statement yesterday confessing past errors and proposing to reform their party. The key points appeared aimed at sidetracking left-wing front groups and stressing efforts to work through labor, Negro and Democratic party organizations.

The document was technically a draft resolution adopted by the Communist National Committee Sept. 13 for submission to a national convention here next Feb. 11-14. It said party leaders since 1951 had "tended to accept a status of illegality" and termed the party now "dangerously isolated."

The party confessed it had "tended to accept uncritically many views of Marxists of other countries." But it asserted it had "already discarded as obsolete Lenin's thesis that war is inevitable under imperialism" and "long since discarded as incorrect Stalin's thesis about the alleged law of inevitable violent proletarian revolution."

Eugene Dennis, general secretary since 1945, said estimates by state leaders indicated the party's membership was now "somewhat between 20,000 to 25,000." Membership lists, he said, have "not been kept for a great many years" because of persecutions. The peak membership claimed by the party had been 80,000 in 1945.

### Leadership Changes Seen

Important leadership shifts at the convention would seem foreshadowed. But Mr. Dennis and Simon W. Gerson, the party's convention arrangements spokesman, said all members and alternates of the national committee who participated had unanimously approved the draft as a "basis for the pre-convention discussion."

William Z. Foster, the party's 75-year-old chairman, and former City Councilman Benjamin J. Davis Jr., were said to have voted "yes, with qualifications" that they would make public "shortly."

Eleven others endorsed the document, according to Mr. Gerson. He named them as Mr. Dennis, Fred Fine, John Gates, James E. Jackson, Claude Lightfoot, William Schneiderman, Jacob Stachel, Sidney Stein, Martha Stone, Ed Strong and Carl Winter. Three other members are abroad and six are in prison.

The resolution looked to a new constitution to be adopted by the convention, providing for an enlarged national committee and greater democracy and publicity for intraparty proceedings. Minority expression would be "guaranteed" but without tolerating "factions."

The door still appeared closed

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# U. S. REDS PROPOSE REFORM OF PARTY

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against Earl Browder, the party's former general secretary, who was expelled in 1946. The statement rejected "proposals to liquidate our party" or transform it into "an educational league" or "a political action association." Mr. Browder had turned it into a short-lived Communist Political Association in 1944.

## First Convention Since '50

Mr. Dennis said the draft had been prepared after discussions at various party levels. National committee members are to speak and write in discussions starting Nov. 1. The convention, the Communists' first since 1950, will have about 250 delegates, Mr. Gerson said.

The statement said "the most important mistakes" in the post-war era had been "left-sectarian." One error, it said, was "indiscriminately supporting the establishment of left-led organizations," overlooking a "new role" by other organizations in "the main currents."

Politically, the Communist document went on, labor and "popular forces" had already helped oust reactionaries from control of the Democratic party in Michigan, Texas and Louisiana.

"In the long run, the working class and its allies will have to have their own anti-monopoly coalition party," the statement said. But "pre-conditions," it asserted, could be created by "the expansion of labor's independent political role and all serious efforts to transform the Democratic party by ousting the Dixiecrats and undermining the influence of big business."

In the labor movement, the Communist paper said, the party had set unrealistic "standards of achievement" until "progressive-led unions" wound up ousted from the Congress of Industrial Organization. The party has now begun "serious efforts to influence the left-led unions to re-enter the mainstream of the labor movement."

The party was also held to have supported left-led Negro organizations, "incorrectly identifying the militancy of the Negro masses in their battle for equal rights with anti-capitalist or anti-imperialist consciousness."

## Denies External Discipline

As to its own affairs, the party said it "is not subject to any external allegiance or discipline either of an organizational or political character." But it said it had "mistakenly" shied from "public criticism" of the Soviet and other Communist parties to avoid weakening international working-class solidarity.

The party said it had been "entirely unprepared for and deeply shocked" by the anti-Stalinist revelations by Nikita S. Krushchev, Soviet Communist leader. It now assertedly believes in "the right and duty of the Communists of all countries to engage in comradely criticism" of each other.

Promising constitutional reforms, the party said "wrong concepts of leadership discouraged full and free participation of the membership in the discussion of policy and tactics." But since 1953, it said, there has been a "gradual abandonment and finally complete liquidation of unnecessary and extreme security measures."

The Communists asserted they had been elaborating "a program for a peaceful and constitutional transition to socialism" since the rise of a Fascist danger in the Nineteen Thirties.

"Some have challenged this view," the statement said, "on the ground that the capitalist class of the United States is strong and the forces of repression at its disposal are powerful. They point to the character and sharpness of the class and people's struggle in the past and today.

"These points are unquestioned. The trusts will continue to try to promote demagoguery, division and force and violence to halt social progress and democratic advance.

"Titanic economic and political struggles will intervene in our country before the majority of the people take the path to socialism. In the course of and as a consequence of such struggles of the working class, the Negro people and others, the power of the monopolies could be drastically curbed through the election of an anti-monopoly government."

## Post-War 'Errors' Listed

The party's post-war "errors" were set forth as including:

Overexaggerating the danger of war when the power of the "imperialists" actually was diminishing, so that it wrongly "excluded the possibility of the peaceful settlement of differences except through a major change in the relation of class forces in the United States."

Overestimating "the Fascist menace" in the United States, causing a wrong decision to reduce the size of the party in 1950 and later virtually giving up "the fight for legality."

Erroneously forecasting in 1945, 1949 and 1954 that economic declines would become major economic crises, because it failed adequately to analyze "the specific features of American capitalism."

As an illustration of the party's troubles, Mr. Gerson said there had been 160 indictments of Communists on Smith Act charges or related ones since July 20, 1948, resulting in 114 convictions. The Smith Act prohibits conspiracy to teach and advocate the overthrow of the Government by force and violence.

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