

U.S. REDS TO TRY COLLECTIVE RULE

Won't Elect a Leader Until 1959 in Move to Reunite Factions, Regain Influence

By PETER KIHSS

The American Communist party has decided to try a system of collective leadership in its effort to reunite factions and regain influence.

This would avoid electing any party chairman or general secretary until the next national convention, some time in 1959. The party has been bitterly divided—both over policy and power—into groups led by William Z. Foster, chairman emeritus; Eugene Dennis, former general secretary, and John Gates, editor of The Daily Worker.

The decision was shown with the publication of a 352-page record of proceedings of the party's sixteenth convention, held here last Feb. 9-12. The sixty-member new national committee, including all three leaders, was empowered only to elect "a permanent group of secretaries." This group would handle various fields.

Record Sells for \$2.75

Newsmen were barred from the convention, but received briefings by spokesmen and non-Communist observers. Three thousand five hundred copies of the proceedings, printed by New Century Publishers, 832 Broadway, are now to be sold publicly at \$2.75 a copy.

Speaking for the national committee, Dennis said that the publication "challenged the contention" of J. Edgar Hoover, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, that the convention had been a conspiracy.

The document was said to have been abridged only for space limitations, but to include "every speech in the substantive discussion," as well as the main

resolution, the new constitution and greetings from major foreign parties.

Sixty-five delegates were identified by name in debates. First names only were used for forty-two, and others were merely labeled "delegate." The party said that this was to avoid endangering their private jobs.

The detailed proceedings confirmed dissension at the end of the convention, even though the three main leaders proclaimed unity. William Mandel of New York was quoted as declaring himself a Gates supporter, but predicting that "after the constitution of the full national committee, the Foster-Dennis forces will be in full command."

Resolutions Postponed

Foster and Dennis, he added, "lost all possibility of respect" among Jewish members "when they didn't open their mouths against the contemptuous and chauvinistic action of Pravda in deleting from Dennis' article on the Stalin cult his words on the extermination of Jewish cultural figures."

The proceedings showed postponing of resolutions on Soviet

intervention in Hungary and Soviet handling of Jews.

A speech by Max Weiss, former educational director, said "it should be known that, when our party's exposition of the possibility of a peaceful transition to socialism in the United States was first made public, there were important Communist parties which considered this position to be a departure from the principles of Marxism-Leninism."

Perhaps three-fourths of the delegates were hard-core members, dating back to the pre-World War II era. A credentials report said there had been 298 delegates and twenty-six alternates from twenty-five states. Fifty-four—about one in six—were Negroes.

Of 283 whose party tenure was analyzed, 220, or 78 per cent, had been members longer than fifteen years. Only six, or 2 per cent, had belonged five years or less. Of 279 analyzed by age, 109, or 39 per cent, were more than 45 years old; 126 others, or 45 per cent, were over 36.

New York State was said to have had 140 delegates, nearly half the total. The breakdown

of forty national committee seats to be chosen by districts, in addition to twenty at large, showed New York, eleven; California, five; Illinois, four; New Jersey, Eastern Pennsylvania, Michigan, Ohio and the South, two each, and New England, Western Pennsylvania, Maryland, Indiana, Wisconsin, Connecticut, Minnesota and the Dakotas, Oregon, the Rocky Mountain area and Washington-Idaho, one each.

Sunday Worker Declines

No over-all membership was reported. But the circulation of The Sunday Worker, Communist newspaper here, was said to have fallen from 80,000 in 1949 to 14,500 last January. The daily edition was down from 20,000 to 6,700.

In the Puerto Rican-inhabited Lower Harlem area, one delegate reported membership had been 1,400 in the Nineteen Thirties. As late as 1954, it was still 400, but "today we have dwindled to less than 100, of which only about a third are active."

In an editorial included from the April issue of the monthly, Political Affairs, the party was termed "weaker organizationally, than it has been in many years." However, it was said to have had "only 7,000 dues-paying members" in 1930 after "the defection of the Trotskyite-Cannon group and the Right-opportunist group led by Jay Lovestone." It then went on to achieve its major growth in the Nineteen Thirties.