

Convention Adopts Plan For Aid to Marxist Press

By MAX GORDON

LAST WEEK'S Communist convention took a sober look at the sharp contraction of the Left press in the U.S. in the past several years, and decided the party had better act fast to help save what was still around. A report to a special con-

vention committee on the subject revealed that progressive publications have been especially hard hit. On the west coast, the Daily Peoples World gave up being a daily just a few weeks ago and transformed itself into a somewhat expanded weekly. Such journals as March of Labor, Freedom and Challenge have gone out of existence. Several foreign language newspapers have either been wiped out, or have switched from a daily newspaper to one to three appearances a week.

Circulation of the major Marxist papers, the convention report noted, has been severely curtailed. Worker circulation today is 20 percent of what it was in 1949. And Daily Worker circulation has declined by two-thirds since that date. This has placed the lives of these two papers in constant danger, the convention heard.

Since the purpose of any Marxist movement is to place its case before the people and win them to its program, including social-

ism, this contraction of the press is viewed as an especially heavy blow to this movement. Historically, all socialist and militant movements have considered distribution of the printed word, and especially of periodicals, as central to their political activity.

For Communists today, the convention noted, it is particularly essential because large numbers of former Communists, while no longer associated directly with the party for one reason or another, maintain their contact with the Left solely through these papers.

Reasons for the decline in Daily Worker and Worker circulation are varied. According to the convention report, one factor was, and remains, government and industry persecution of Communists and those suspected of being sympathetic to Communists. Thus, many people cannot receive the papers in ways which will identify them, or they fear to do so.

A SECOND REASON, the re-

port confessed, is that the Communists, who are the main supporters and promoters of the two papers, have virtually abandoned sustained efforts to circulate them as a systematic part of their political activity. This was done, first, because of miscalculations regarding the danger of fascism made during the early days of the McCarthyite hysteria. The job of circulating and distributing the papers and even receiving them, was viewed as leaving the people involved open to identification and persecution by onrushing fascism.

After this was overcome, Communists centered their attention on "mass work," which likewise viewed circulation of the Marxist press as a hampering influence.

After hearing a report on this, and the disastrous effect on the circulation and financial condition of the two papers, the convention determined to throw the party's energies into a drive to

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maintain the two papers and help spread their circulation.

"This convention recognizes that circulation of the Marxist press is a fundamental necessity of our party and resolves to end the party's long neglect in this regard," declared the resolution on the subject passed by the convention. "It considers that *The Worker* and *Daily Worker* are major journalistic expressions of the viewpoint of the Communist movement, and that this viewpoint must be widely presented to American workers Negro people, small farmers, etc.

"It thereby instructs the incoming national leadership, and calls on all incoming state and local leaderships, to reorient their relationship to press activity, and to make circulation of *The Worker* and *Daily Worker*, as well as all other Marxist and Left publications, a continuous, essential part of their political activities."

The resolution "instructed" all forthcoming state and local party conventions to make this a major part of their business.

It decided to suggest to the staffs of the two papers that they revitalize their current circulation campaign, and undertake their usual \$100,000 spring fund drive by combining the two in a \$150,000 joint fund and sub drive to go until June 30th. The sub drive itself was estimated to yield \$50,000 in subs, according to the *Daily Worker*.

The convention also called on the party to back a major effort to put the papers back on the newsstands throughout the country. In the past eight years the papers have been driven off the stands in many cities by the combined efforts of self-appointed "vigilante" groups and the more subtle intimidation of the FBI. In New York, stands carrying the paper have been reduced by two-thirds, and these in most cases carry it "under the table."

The convention proposed, too, that the party assist the two papers in expanding their circulation and financial apparatus "in all possible industrial groups and communities."