

~~Sebastian~~

PRESS RELEASE
July 12, 1948

MAIN RESOLUTION
OREGON STATE CONVENTION 1948
COMMUNIST PARTY, USA

Adopted July 11, 1948

The American people have gone through crises before and have faced crucial issues before, but never have the American people been in the position we are in today. The actions of the United States will determine whether the world shall have cooperation and peace, or disruption, chaos and war. The actions of the United States are a determining factor whether the peoples of the world will be free to cleanse themselves of the rotten feudal overlords, kings, quislings and nazi collaborators, or be burdened once again with decadent, unpopular and reactionary governments.

The American people are beginning to recognize that the foreign policy of a government cannot be separated from the domestic policies. Fascist Italy and nazi Germany began their preparations for world war and conquests by first conquering their own people. Behind the smokescreen of "saving the world from Bolshevism" they destroyed the peoples parties, unions, cooperatives, youth and sport organizations and any and every group that could not be used effectively for their war program. Today the American people face the same attacks on their persons and rights. The passage of the Taft-Hartley law, the loyalty oaths and purges, persecution of writers, composers, actors and other professionals, the deportation drive, the increase in lynchings in the south and the Mundt-Nixon bill are the domestic results of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. The similarity between the course the United States is following and that of the Axis is frightening.

But not all of the developments are negative. A large and powerful section of American labor has not complied with the Taft-Hartley law: such as the United Mine Workers, National Maritime Union, Steel, United Electrical, etc. A growing realization of the meaning of the Marshall Plan is

spreading, defense of professional rights and freedom of thought is growing, strike struggles in defense of labor's living standards have developed, and last, but not least, a new peoples political movement with its roots down among labor and the people is gaining breadth, depth and momentum.

Oregonians as Americans face all of the economic and political problems that America faces, plus quite a number of their own.

The war years changed the complexion of Oregon--from a predominantly farming state before the war, Oregon emerged as an industrial state. The war brought hundreds of thousands of workers to Oregon, some skilled, some unskilled. They came from the industrial centers of the east, from the dust bowl area of the med-west and from the south. While some came as trade unionists, in the greater majority they got their first taste of unionism in Oregon. The first experience in the case of the Negro worker with unions in Oregon was, with some honorable exceptions, a sad one. He found that Jim Crow and exclusion was not an exclusive southern product.

The tremendous influx of Negro workers focussed attention on the plight and problems of the Negro workers already living here. The Negro in

Oregon today has tremendous difficulty in finding a decent job with union wages and unemployment among Negroes is on the increase. A large section of the Negro workers find it necessary to supplement their regular menial wages with other part-time work in order to keep up with the cost of living. Out of this hard-earned money he must pay exhorbitant rent in dilapidated Jim Crow areas. A Negro in Oregon cannot eat in the average restaurant or get lodging in a hotel, and in some cases, cannot visit a movie or amusement park.

The tremendous influx of workers to Oregon has also aggravated an already bad housing situation. Thousands of families were herded into makeshift

housing projects. The respect and responsibility the local real estate interests and powers that be showed these war workers and veterans is seen by the fact that most of the projects were located in unsanitary and unwanted places like Guilds Lake which is located near a garbage dump, and Vanport, Oregon's second largest city, located on marshy lands protected by wholly inadequate dikes.

The national disaster, the Vanport flood which horrified the nation, fulfilled a prediction of labor and the clear-thinking people of Portland that disaster was invited when people were housed in the unsafe location of what was Vanport. The callous attitude of the housing authorities ignored these protests and built Vanport. The criminal negligence of all of the agencies concerned in the Vanport disaster was in line with the attitude that the authorities took towards these people from the very beginning of their emigration here. The Vanport disaster is a symbol of the predominance of the dollar above human life under the vicious man-consuming system of capitalism.

Housing, as critical as it was in Portland before the Vanport disaster, is even more acute as a result. Real Estate will hound not only the helpless victims of the flood with still higher rents and cost of homes, but all of the people of Portland. A critical housing shortage is not confined to Portland alone but exists in all of the cities of Oregon, and ironically enough, the worst are the lumber centers of southern Oregon.

Besides housing, the Vanport disaster has focussed attention on the pressing need for an adequate flood control system, and the need for the immediate enactment of the Columbia Valley Authority. The Willamette Valley has for years cried out for flood control. These two kindred problems must be fought out to a victorious conclusion.

Oregon labor is still tied to the apron strings of the two bosses' parties and has forgotten the glorious tradition of independent political action of the past. The rank and file of labor has not as yet seriously challenged the Kelly Loes, S. Eugene Allens and the Fadlings. The joint action of the State Federation of Labor, State Industrial Union Council, Oregon State Grange and the Farmers Union in opposition to the Idaho power steal and the vicious sales tax while praiseworthy, was a top heavy affair and did not permeate sufficiently to lower levels of the component organizations.

These very same organizations have not as yet learned any lessons from the successful results in joint political activities by taking the leadership in forming a new party, a party of labor, farmers, pensioners and all who oppose the reactionary boss politics and want peace and security.

This does not say that nothing is being done in developing a new people's movement. On the contrary, a new breeze is blowing in Oregon politics today. The building of the Progressive Citizens of America, the development of the Wallace movement and the victory of the Roosevelt Democrats in the primaries was but an indication of the latent power in the rank and file of the people of Oregon. These victories and achievements were a result of a real grass roots movement and in spite of the bitter opposition and sabotage of reactionary leaders. The strategy developed by the Oregon progressives of developing the maximum unity of all progressives, of those who are firm advocates of a new party with those progressives who remained in the Democratic Party certainly bore fruit in the primaries. This strategy assures a united front of all progressives in the finals and thereby makes victory possible. It has also shown that Oregon progressives have matured both organizationally and politically.

The success of the Wallace tour in Oregon shows that Oregon is a strong Wallace and progressive state. This sentiment is not by any means all organized and directed. Much more work on organization must be done if the full progressive strength is to be felt in the final elections.

The issues that the people of Oregon face are:

- (1) Immediate enactment of a Columbia Valley Authority which would prevent repeat performances of the Venport disaster, furnish power for industry, thereby creating jobs, and furnish irrigation and reclamation for the farmers. It is empty talk to berate eastern capital and Wall street, to demand an end to Oregon's colonial status in American economy without an all out determined fight for a CVA, and now.
- (2) Federal and state aid for widespread low-cost permanent housing units for rent and sale in all of the major cities of Oregon. Preference shall be given to the flood victims as the first units are completed. These housing units are to be open to all regardless of race, creed or color. There is absolutely no reason for a housing shortage in Oregon-- a lumber state.
- (3) State Fair Employment Practices Act. The stench of southern bourbonism must be eliminated in Oregon and access given to employment for the thousands of Negroes and other national minorities.
- (4) State legislation and city ordinances on civil rights. This to cover all businesses that cater to the public. Such legislation to have teeth in it by revoking licences of all violators.
- (5) Immediate Federal and state aid to the flood refugees in the form of cash payment for losses of personal effects and jobs for the jobless.
- (6) State pensions to all senior citizens of not less than \$100 per month.

RESOLUTION ON NEGRO WORKERS

- WHEREAS: The drive of reaction against the Negro people in our state is an attempt to beat down even further the growing unity of Negro and white workers, and
- WHEREAS: With increasing rapidity, the Negro people are being thrown out of work and forced on to sub-standard relief welfare, and relegated to low-paying and degrading jobs, and
- WHEREAS: The Vanport catastrophe has heightened and put an additional burden on the backs of the Negro people, and
- WHEREAS: Already doubled up in overcrowded homes due to the policy of Jim-Crowism and restrictive covenants, the Negro people feel very sharply the acute shortage of homes, especially as a result of the forced evacuation of Vanport, and
- WHEREAS: The reactionary 80th Congress and state legislature refused to pass a civil rights law or an FEPC law, thus continuing the ruling class discriminatory and Jim Crow practices in regards to employment and equal rights, therefore be it
- RESOLVED: That this convention goes on record to fight for:
1. The passage of a Civil Rights Bill with teeth enough to put out of business any firm, restaurant, institution, or club that practices white-superiority ideas.
 2. For the passage of national, state and city FEPC laws.
 3. For legislation to outlaw the poll tax and for passage of anti-lynch law.
 4. For abolition of all forms of discrimination in armed forces.
 5. For the immediate building of new low cost homes on a non-discriminatory basis with priority to victims of the Vanport disaster.
- 5-A For slum clearance in Albina District and building of low-cost federal and state housing.

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6. For outright congressional grants of direct compensation to the victims of Vanport flood on a non-discriminatory basis, amounting to \$2,000 for each adult, \$1,000 for each child plus other property compensation.
7. A decided effort to root out white superiority ideas in the Party through education and struggle and at the same time to put into practice the decisions of the Party on Negro work on a day to day basis.
8. A determined struggle to fight Jim-Crow policies in those unions that persist in practicing white chauvinism.
9. Development of a militant coalition of Negro and white organizations committed to a fight for Negro rights.
10. A more determined sustained effort to develop the independent role of the Communist Party among the Negro people.

The above resolution was adopted at the Second Oregon State Convention of the Communist Party of Oregon on July 11, 1948.

UCPWA 172

PREL. RELEASE
July 12, 1948

The following statement was concurred in by the Second Oregon State Convention of the Communist Party of Oregon on July 11th, 1948.

The tragic 1948 Columbia River floods, which were climaxed in the Memorial Day disaster at Vanport, are the fruition of years of criminal disregard and unconcern for the safety and comfort of thousands of men, women, and children who made their homes near this great river.

Untold suffering and dislocation, death, and destruction along thousands of miles of the Columbia and its tributaries in three states and Canada have resulted from the selfish practices of giant private power and timber interests. It is they and those akin to them, including their agents in Congress, who have successfully sabotaged the development of public power, conservation, reclamation, and flood control and the many other values which would result from the harnessing of this great natural resource. Therefore, they bear direct responsibility for the chaos now so apparent in these states.

The Vanport disaster exceeds in sheer magnitude and in importance to human beings any other single event in the history of the Northwest. Therefore, it has received and will continue to receive the serious attention of the Communist Party of Oregon and progressives in general.

More than 18,000 people were made homeless; irreplaceable personal properties were lost; and many lives were thrown away, all because of criminal negligence on the part of various agencies and officials. The Communist Party of Oregon charges that those responsible for building a city in a swamp demonstrated long ago, with their policies of discrimination and segregation, mistrust of tenants, and greater concern for property than for people, were incapable of understanding and fighting for basic human needs. That situation has not changed.

By their infamous "Vanport is Safe" leaflet, the Portland Housing Authority indicted itself a few hours before the dike broke. Also, because of its consistent refusal before and after the flood to take necessary steps to secure much-needed permanent federal housing for the Portland area, this real-estate dominated commission has shown beyond a shadow of a doubt that it is unfit to serve.

No less guilty are the Governor, the Mayor of Portland, and Oregon's entire Congressional delegation, who have been derelict in providing for decent minimum needs of the flood victims.

What are these immediate needs?

Erection of decent stop-gap housing, not trailers and barracks.

Planning and construction of thousands of permanent homes by the Federal Government for all in need of them.

Dike and farm repair which, with construction of housing, could provide for the full employment of disaster victims and other jobless.

Payment of compensation to all flood victims.

Fixing of responsibility for the Vanport disaster.

Discharge of the Commission of the Portland Housing Authority.

These needs are not being met. Instead, the pleas for help on the part of the flood victims are met with scorn, anger and indifference.

The indignation on the part of Governor Hall, Mayor Riley and others, and the injection of the false issue of "Communism" into the matter by Hall and by his and Riley's stooges in the Portland Police Department are devices whose purpose is to confuse and demobilize the people of Vanport and other flood-ravished areas through the ancient tool of "Divide and conquer".

The people of Vanport and their friends have effectively demonstrated that this device won't work. Too much is at stake.

What of the role of the Communist Party in this situation?

Let this be understood: It is nothing new for the Communist Party of Oregon and the Communist Party of the U. S. A. to fight for public power and decent housing--in short, for all immediate and long-range needs of the people. It should be clear to all that a basic principle of the Communist Party's program of Socialism is that our country's natural resources belong to all the people, not to the self-chosen few who for years, as they squandered these resources, have prospered at the expense of the many. Therefore, the Communist Party, which includes flood victims among its members, does not intend to remain silent on these crucial issues. To do so would be to desert the people of Vanport, who need all the support they can get.

The Communist Party of Oregon will work with the flood victims and other progressives--in fact, with all persons who have a genuine desire to see that basic needs are met. These needs are clear, and the homeless and destitute victims of the Nation's Number 1 disaster will not permit themselves to be swerved from their legitimate goals.