

SPEAK YOUR PIECE

Listen And Learn

BALTIMORE

Editor, Daily Worker:

For 20 years, non-Party progressives and honest workers have complained to me that Communists are real nice people—until they begin to argue. Then they become smug, arrogant and contemptuous of other's opinions, said my friends.

Naturally I always disagreed with these critics and "straightened them out." Today, especially, their criticisms no longer apply to the great bulk of the Party membership. We have had to straighten ourselves out and most of us have done so.

Which is why, since the current discussions began, I have read with growing amazement the so-called "polemics" of some of our outstanding leaders against the Daily Worker, its editors and writers, and against the National Committee itself.

Some of the writings of these comrades seem to have lost all ties with reality. How else could anyone accuse the National Committee and the Daily Worker staff of political "corruption"? Will Comrade Lannon bring charges against these "corrupt" members? If so, on what evidence? Where are his facts? Are they the same kind of "facts" on which he bases his stand on the Hungarian situation?

Then we have this statement: "Among the most notorious offenders of the fundamental interests of the Negro people are the responsible editors of the Daily Worker. They are also strongly anti-Soviet. It is also notable that if a Negro opposes their anti-Soviet policy he becomes a victim of anti-Negro bias."

Who wrote this? Is it really the contribution of one of the Party's most respected leaders? If so, will Comrade Ford furnish facts? And will he go to the Negro people with these charges against the Daily?

Who knows better than the Negro people that the Daily is "notorious" for its outstanding militant defense of their interests?

I have picked just two examples, and they are admittedly extreme examples. In the Soviet press there is another "extreme"—the article in the Soviet theoretical organ "Kommunist" which replied to the Daily's mild criticism by calling it "babble." This, too, is perhaps an extreme—but doesn't it reveal the thinking of the most influential circles in the USSR—and their apparent contempt for criticism?

There are also the various statements of Comrades Foster, Dennis, Davis, James Allen and others directed against the editors and writers of the Daily.

Perhaps their thinking is in no way reflected in the above three "extremes." But their cupboard of facts is just as bare, and their resistance to criticism is—well, monolithic.

These comrades will just have to get used to something new; namely, that nobody in the Party, however respected, is going to get anything he says or writes accepted on faith alone anymore.

There are those who brand as "Party liquidators" many comrades who are at least making an effort to square our organization with reality. Yet nothing could possibly liquidate the Party faster today than pursuing our old habit of talking at people—within as well as without the Party. We are at our best when we act like human beings—not like the Wizard of Oz.

Is there any Party crisis—however great—which cannot be solved if the Party membership once and for all digs in and listens and learns from the people, and the Party leadership once and for all starts to listen and learn from the membership?

A BALTIMORE ORIOLE

Non-Violence In Montgomery

NEWARK, N. J.

Editor, Daily Worker:

The Montgomery Improvement Association recently conducted a week-long Institute on "Non-Violence and Social Change", which was attended by 3,000 Negro citizens! The Institute marked the victorious end of the year-long "non-violent" bus protest and the beginning of the "non-violent" struggle for the actual integration of Negro and white people on the busses.

Our Lester Rodney reported attendance at this Institute in a very interesting article in the Dec. 16th Worker. The National Guardian also gave good coverage to the Institute in the Dec. 24th issue. Lester Rodney's article was illustrated by a drawing (copy enclosed) of a booted foot representing the bus boycott kicking over "the cradle of the Confederacy" and roughly spilling out racism, the KKK, and the White Citizens Councils. The National Guardian article was illustrated by a picture of a dove superimposed on a group of members of the Montgomery Improvement Association. In the background are the pipes of a church organ.

Although the Guardian picture may leave much to be desired as a work of art, it does catch the "spirit of Montgomery", as the Worker picture does not. It is certainly true that the bus boycott and the ensuing struggles will overcome racism, the KKK and the White Citizens Councils, but it is very important to

recognize that the bus boycott did not kick like The Worker's boot but did carry the olive branch of the Guardian's dove.

Lester Rodney indicated in his article that he did not fully comprehend, as he attended the meetings, the stress laid on "love and non-violence". This is not surprising and would probably be true of most of us. The concept is a new one to us, and certainly not part of the theory familiar to the left. It takes time and study to grasp it, especially if one is not part of the "non-violent" movement.

Very possibly the concept can be utilized in many other struggles, and it might even be one important factor in bringing about the peaceful path to socialism which we all so ardently desire.

The Rev. Martin Luther King, leader of the Montgomery Improvement Association, has said in an article on the philosophy of the movement. "There is a victory in this situation. But it is a victory for truth and justice, a victory for the unity of mankind."

I cannot here offer polemics in favor of "non-violence", but I do recommend that we give careful attention and study to the whole philosophy and method developed by the 50,000 Negro people of Montgomery, Alabama.

Enclosed is \$10 for our paper. Long may it live!

J. DANIELS

Ford's Attack Held Unscientific

Editor, Daily Worker:

My first reaction on reading James Ford's attack on Rodney's Clinton articles was that his letter was disgraceful. On second thought, I can only say that Ford's remarks are ridiculous.

His attack on the Daily Worker ("... among the most notorious offenders of the fundamental interests of the Negro people are the responsible editors of the Daily Worker") is tantamount to slander.

One gets the impression that Ford, outraged by Lester Rodney's forthright article on the Hungarian mess, sat down to read the Clinton pieces looking for something to jump on. In his eagerness to pin an anti-Negro label on Rodney and the Daily Worker, Comrade Ford makes the serious error of fundamentally minimizing the historic struggles of Clinton and Montgomery.

A few years ago, such a vitriolic attack by a Negro leader of the Communist Party would almost certainly have led us inevitably to the "Rodney case" and our former sports editor would have had to engage in some abject apologizing or been booted out of the movement.

Fortunately, today such a development is hardly possible.

The bitter, narrow, unscientific point of view which James Ford's letter represents is as outdated as the Model A Ford. Every once in a while we see one of those old jalopies out on the road. But we know by its creaking engine and perennial rattle that it's the most undependable type of transportation. An American Communist Party of 1957 needs 1957 leadership.

I. S.

Harry Raymond Comments On James Ford's Letter

Editor, Daily Worker:

One of the most distributing notes of the current discussion on this page was sounded, in my opinion, by my good friend James Ford in his letter of Dec. 28. I can understand his impatience and anger over the failure after years of struggle to lift all the roadblocks barring the way to full freedom and first-class citizenship for the Negro people in the South. I am sure Ford is aware that I, along with many more of his colleagues in that struggle, are impatient and angry, too.

But I can't understand Ford's charge that the responsible editors of the Daily Worker are "among the most notorious offenders of the fundamental interests of the Negro people." This is an appropriate characterization for members of the Ku Klux Klan or White Citizens Councils. But on what grounds, with what evidence, can such a charge be made against the editors of the Daily Worker?

As a correspondent for the paper, I have worked with these editors for many years, have disagreed with them on many occasions. But I have never found them lacking in zeal to press forward the struggle for Negro rights. And they have carried on this fight effectively in the columns of the paper with meager facilities even though, as in all walks of life, every plan and hope and aim was not fulfilled to perfection. Where, indeed, is the perfect man?

John Gates, Alan Max, Abner Berry, Joseph Clark and George Morris—they are the responsible editors. Don't ask me, but go out and poll the readers of this paper and see how many votes you get supporting the claim these five men have suddenly become "the most notorious offenders of the fundamental interests of the Negro people." You will find many who disagree with them on one question or another. But no one, not even the most bitter enemy of the paper, will agree with Ford's characterization in all fairness.

I am appealing to you, Jim

Ford, to think it over. Don't you believe now your statement was rash and unfounded? I think you owe the editors, the staff and the readers an apology.

I think, too, that Ford's denunciation of Lester Rodney for his reports from the South on the school desegregation campaign was unfair, to put it mildly. Is it forgotten that Rodney was a spark plug in the successful fight to end jimcrow in baseball? And what if he did say after coming out of Clinton, Tenn., he was "feeling a little better about these United States"?

Certainly jimcrow has not been licked in the South. The millenium has not arrived. But a big struggle is on in the South. It is widening and winning. Things look better today in Tennessee than when I was down there during the historic Columbia events. Although there is still a long way to go for final victory over jimcrow, I must join with Rodney saying I am feeling a little better, too.

What we should be discussing is how to give more aid and new strength to the spreading crusade for freedom in the South.

HARRY RAYMOND

Unity on Poland

DETROIT.

Editor, Daily Worker:

As reported in the Daily, a meeting of about 800 persons took place a month ago in Detroit to hear A. J. Muste, Carl Winter, Bert Cochran, Sidney Lens and Max Schachtman debate the road to world peace.

There was one interesting facet of the meeting that seems to me important enough to write about.

Although there were the sharpest differences in estimating the worth of the Soviet Union to progress generally and to Hungarian progress in particular, there was a significant unity of opinion on events in Poland.

All supported the course of the present Polish government; all hoped it success and even seemed inspired by its handling of very severe problems and especially by its strongly democratic tone.

The Polish government and Polish people may well be building in the course of their work a vitally important bridge between Communists and Socialists in this country and possibly in other countries as well.

This is one more reason why Communists in our country should do everything possible to help the Polish people and government in their present endeavors.

A DETROIT WORKER