

SPEAK YOUR PIECE

Asks Fast: Is He For Capitalism or Socialism?

BROOKLYN, N.Y.

Editor, Daily Worker:

Following is an open letter to Howard Fast written after his last Sunday (Oct. 13) TV interview by Martin Agronsky on WRCA-TV (Channel 4).

JEAN SMITH,
10/15/57.

OPEN LETTER TO HOWARD FAST

Dear Howard Fast:

It was indeed a shocking experience watching you on TV last Sunday afternoon. Your physical appearance itself was that of a soul in torment who has not made peace with himself. We have not forgotten the hero of Peekskill, the soldier of peace, the writer of fine books, the courageous citizen who served a three-month prison term of defense of the Bill of Rights. Yet your performance last Sunday was most unjust, not only to those of us who have hitched our wagon to the star of socialism, but to yourself as well.

In answer to the question put to you by the moderator as to why you joined the Communist Party originally, you might have said, for it is the truth:

"I was a sensitive author who wanted to see people opening up like flowers and developing their potentialities to the full. I was appalled by the moral degeneration of my beloved country. I hated the vulgarity and the money-grubbing where magazines like *Confidential* flood the newsstands and pollute our people; where the American college graduate aims for a safe occupation, studies business administration, or publicity and advertising, and winds up in a grey flannel suit as an executive with a big corporation; where the pursuit of science is scorned and scientists viewed as freaks.

"I was repelled by what the U.S. was doing to its writers, turning them into grossly vulgar materialists. And when I saw dedicated people, as the members of the Communist Party appeared to me to be, I went along with them.

"I hated the oppression of the Negro people, the subtle and open anti-Semitism. I was aghast at the fact that our schools are so decrepit. I wanted education for all the people. I sided with all the educators that wanted to change this. And when I saw dedicated people, the people in the Communist Party, I joined with them."

These, and more, are some of the things you might have said with greater kindness to yourself and greater truth of us. But you did not say this. You said the Communist Party was "rotten" and called on decent people to depart.

In saying this you do those of us who remain a grave injustice. For while we are not of a religious bent, we do believe in science. We believe that the ills of the world can more quickly be ended by a knowledge of the laws of the society in which we live, how they operate and how to make the best use of all knowledge in the interests of the people. As with any science, there are times when things go wrong. Things did go wrong, there is no question of that. But we thought we were doing what was right. That is perhaps a tragedy. And it would indeed be a greater tragedy if we stopped there. But we did not stop there. We looked for the source of the errors.

What was the source of one of these mistakes? We saw McCarthyism, terror, reaction.

We saw the indifference of the population. We became impatient and looked to the small number in our ranks to substitute for the people as a whole. This was a mistake. This was the source of some of our errors. As scientists, we have acknowledged them and will correct our course.

As for the Stalin revelations, are you not ignoring the recent and most encouraging developments? For to see only a part of the truth is not to see the whole truth, is not to see the truth at all. While I myself do not think the Soviet leaders have reached the stage of handling matters as Marxists, in a socialist country should (and undoubtedly will in time to come), nevertheless it can be said that they have made some steps forward. Certainly Molotov, Kaganovich and Malenkov were not accorded the treatment they meted to others.

And what does the launching of the first satellite by a socialist country show? That the people there are engaged in the things you would have all of us aspire to: the pursuit of science, for one thing. Mrs. Roosevelt states that wherever you go in the Soviet Union, people are reading books—serious books, good books, not pornographic literature. This is one of the dreams you have for the American people, is it not?

You chose to leave the Communist Party. No one questioned your right to do so. You revised your opinions of the Party. However, when you left the Party most of us had been led to believe that you had not abandoned your interest in socialism and your desire to work in its interest, though perhaps outside the Party. Under certain circumstances that is comprehensible, and some people have chosen to do so. But in your presentation on the TV program, you made no reference to socialism. You left the impression that you feel American monopoly capitalism is the answer to all you are seeking. There was a great deal of ambiguity on this score.

Where do you stand on this question? Is it a fact that you have concluded that capitalism in the United States is the answer to all your dreams and hopes and those of the American people; that this is "the best of all possible worlds?" Or do you still believe that socialism is historically inevitable, infinitely more desirable, and a cause worthy of your time and energy?

I think you owe us the courtesy of a reply.

JEAN SMITH.

Chrysler Cuts Rest Time 5% At ABD

DETROIT. — A membership meeting of 4,000 workers at Chrysler Automobile Body Division (ABD) has asked the UAW International officers to authorize a strike. Some 18,000 are employed at the ABD plants when they are working full blast.

Reasons for the strike request are that there has been asked by Chrysler of the union that it will agree to a 50 percent decrease in fatigue time. At present workers get 6 minutes every hour to rest, this has been in practice since 1937.

Chrysler wants to cut it to three minutes an hour. In Metal division it used to be, one relief man to take care of seven workers, now Chrysler proposes one relief man to take care of eight.

Two relief men who refused to go along with this were fired and the shop walked out. Then two chief stewards were fired, then two more workers were fired, then 16 workers were given two days off.