

# SPEAK YOUR PIECE

## Rewarding Worker And Daily Conference

MILWAUKEE.

Editor, Daily Worker:

I have just had one of the most rewarding experiences in my 27 years of membership in the Communist Party. I was able to attend, as one of a delegation of four from Wisconsin, a conference on the content and circulation of the Daily Worker and Worker, held in Chicago over the past week-end, with representatives from Michigan, Ohio, Minnesota and the Dakotas, Illinois, and our state.

I found this conference inspiring in several respects. First, this was a gathering of nearly 50 socialist-minded people, mainly workers, spending most of two days in discussing one question with one common objective. They pooled their experiences and thought of ways of improving the content of the Marxist press, increasing its circulation, and strengthening its financial position.

There were many differences among the delegates on developments in Hungary, and on other matters being debated on the Left. But there was common agreement that though our press can be considerably improved, it is the best in our country. There was also common agreement that our press must be supported, helped through its critical position, and widely circulated as the voice of the workers and working farmers, the Marxist movement, the Negro people, and a unifying force of the Socialist-minded people of our country.

Merging their experiences and thoughts in these common channels, the people there made this conference breathe that old militant spirit which so inspired many in previous years to rally great numbers of people in winning imposing victories over reaction.

We disagree now on many questions. Such disagreement is a new experience for us. We don't know yet how to disagree and still find it possible to work together with full energy for the many things we want to achieve in common. There are many more things we agree upon than those we disagree about. Perhaps the things we agree on are a lot more important. Certainly this conference showed that despite other disagreements, these 50 people were agreed on the need and possibility of supporting, improving and strengthening the influence of our press.

I felt this conference breathed determination, and the delegates

worked out practical guarantees to achieve their common aims. Secondly, the conference once more revealed the great power that lies in the will and thoughts of those who do the every-day "Jimmie Higgins" work of the socialist movements of our country. The tremendous reservoirs of strength and creative thought and energy that lie in the ranks of the common people were shown in the organizing work described in earnest and modest words by the delegates, all of them active boosters and spreaders of our press, and by their sharp, yet warmly fraternal criticisms and suggestions for improvement.

Thirdly, those delegates who made constructive suggestions showed special concern for people, for the common people, not in mass but as individuals. They seemed to indicate that the road to knowing and influencing thousands and millions begin with knowing and influencing ones and twos of one's own neighbors and shopmates.

FRED BLAIR.

## No Compartments in Policy on Hungary

Editor, Daily Worker:

Many Communists agree we made serious errors at the time of the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact in failing to make clear our continued opposition to Hitler fascism as the main enemy. They also agree that the starting point of our policy must be the conditions and needs of the American workers and people. Yet much of the clarity and agreement we seemed to have achieved has been overwhelmed by the complicated developments in Hungary, with a new surge of feeling that it is our role at all times to defend the Soviet Union above all else—and to charge that any failure to do so means going over to a position of "making a fetish of criticism of the Soviet Union."

James E. Allen writes (Nov. 15th) to criticize the Daily Worker position on Hungary:

"Why does the Daily make this serious mistake? The same editorial gives the answer. In trying to explain the turn of events in Hungary, the editors place first and major responsibility on the 'gross distortions of socialist principles introduced by the Soviet Communist leadership and the Rakosi group in Hungary.' They place second in order of importance and emphasis 'The continuous attempts by reactionaries in Hungary openly supported and encouraged by Washington, to over-

throw socialism.' I think that this approach has been the source of the Daily Worker difficulties over these many months."

And further, "The Daily Worker is standing on its head when it puts the mistakes first and the threat of counter-revolutionary overthrow 'second.'"

In other words, we must start by criticizing our "own imperialism"—whether or not that is the root or primary source of the tragic and catastrophic Hungarian developments!

I submit that such an approach negates completely all that our National Draft Resolution says about developing a new approach to the Soviet Union. The new approach takes into account both the tremendous contribution Socialist countries have and will make to social progress and peace, but also recognizes that the leadership of these countries are human beings, not infallible demi-gods. As such they make mistakes, even as you and I.

Our main responsibility is to find the ways to a more effective movement for Socialism in this country. Yet we find ourselves more and more embroiled in an analysis of the Hungarian scene. I believe that our basic position on Hungary should not attempt to analyze the various stages but to recognize the overall-outcome of the developments there—which certainly must be characterized as a tragic setback to Socialism. The way to repair that setback must be a firm, consistent effort to overcome past errors.

A principled position will give us the strongest moral and political vantage point from which to oppose the constant activities of Project X and the current efforts to increase war tensions around Hungary—and not the other way around. Otherwise, we give the spokesmen of U.S. imperialism a clear field for posing as champions of humanity and democracy. We must sharply condemn efforts to play politics with the Hungarian events by those who have the blood of the Spanish people, the Guatemalan and others on their hands. But first we must show that we are unyielding in our own adherence to principle.

I therefore believe that in no way can we in this country blur over a basic position of being sharply critical of the Hungarian situation. To attempt, as some do, to divide our attitude into stages, or compartments, approving one aspect and disapproving another, begs the question and leaves us with no

clearly defined position.

The National Committee letter, while placing the main weight of criticism on the errors (and I believe correctly so) does not come to grips with an overall position which is sufficiently clear and consistent. It states that it leaves questions open for further discussion.

I for one am writing this letter to indicate my deep conviction that we must have a clear policy to present both to the American workers and people, as well as to measure up to the truest and best concepts of international solidarity. Failure to do this will make impossible the continued existence of our movement and bar our ability to play a constructive role in the struggle for Socialism in this country.

LILLIAN GATES.

## The Smith Act Prisoners

Editor, Daily Worker:

Because of the deep inner-preoccupation of our Party, there is grave danger that the Smith Act victims now in prison may be forgotten. That would be a crime.

Behind bars are many Communist and other militant leaders—Negro and white—who are among the bravest and most self-sacrificing fighters for peace, democracy and social progress, for the best interests of their country.

First of all, the imprisonment of Bob Thompson is a disgrace to any civilized nation. Thompson has a major cranial injury, which originally almost took his life, and which is still a danger of serious proportions. This he sustained at the hands of a provocateur, inflamed by the government's cold war hysteria, while he was in prison. Responsibility for this falls upon the government, which also refuses to give him immediate freedom though he is still suffering from the effects of that murderous attack. Thompson, in the name of humanity alone, should be immediately set free.

Henry Winston, Gus Hall, Gil Green and Thompson are bearing the brunt of the savage sentences imposed upon Communists, with seven and eight years each.

Then there is Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, one of the great leaders of the American working class; Arnold Johnson, Louis Weinstock, Alex Bittleman, Pettis Perry and others.

In addition many Communist leaders are either facing trials or imprisonment. Others have been cruelly torn from their land—

among them Claudia Jones, John Williamson and Irving Potash.

Considerable aid is being given by the Families Committee under the leadership of Peggy Dennis, Dorothy Blumberg and Hattie Charney. They need maximum cooperation and assistance particularly in view of the coming Xmas season.

Above all, there should be a big stepping up of the amnesty campaign for the freedom of all Smith Act and other political prisoners. Political amnesties have been granted by almost every other government in the world, except this one, including those in the socialist and people's democracies. They can be wrenched from the Eisenhower Administration too, provided there's a will to do so accompanied by the skill to enlist the aid of broad sections of the American people who are ashamed of this government's suppression of dissent and free thought. Communists, among others, are not without the necessary will and skill.

A special campaign for Winston has been launched by the National Committee to Defend Negro Leadership, also for Perry, Marie Richardson and Rosa Lee Ingram. It deserves full support.

The labor and Negro people's movements, the cause of peace and democracy, are in great need of the abilities of these experienced fighters and leaders. We must not permit them to become "forgotten men."

BENJAMIN J. DAVIS.

## Lenin on National Independence

Editor, Daily Worker:

In a recent letter William Weinstone quoted Lenin on national movements and self-determination to justify Soviet intervention in Hungary. The statements cited were written before the Russian revolution and concern situations not remotely similar to the recent Hungarian events.

However, after the Russian revolution Lenin did write about situations which were similar to those in Hungary today. For example, Lenin wrote:

"Only equals can come to an agreement. For the agreement to be real, and not a conquest marked by phrases, the parties must have equal rights."

Also: "The Finns must say that they have the right to decide their destiny according to their own lights and the Russian who does not want to accord them this right is a chauvinist."—L.P.L.