

Speak Your Piece

Bittelman On Trade Unions

Editor, Daily Worker:

Alexander Bittelman's series of articles "I Take a Fresh Look" are welcome. His articles contain very valuable ideas. The important things that stand out is his focusing our attention on the new role of trade unions and the necessity of establishing correct relationship between the C.P. and trade unions and mass people's organizations.

Bittelman lists many factors that brought about a crisis within the C.P.

Among other factors he merely cites the declining effectiveness of Communist and left influence in the life of trade unions. Such decline in influence came about as a result of sharp attacks by trade union officialdom directed against the left and their subsequent expulsion. The left during the period of 1945-49 often raised issues which were not understood or accepted by the unions.

Bittelman's assertion that unions today are economic and political leaders of the working class merits some consideration. Such generalization appears to be to be incorrect. Some unions concern themselves with an advanced economic program—such as an anti-depression program, guaranteed annual wage, extension of social security. They also pay attention to social and political problems, conducting legislative activities in various states. Others concern themselves with the elementary economic questions, with hardly any attention to social and political problems. For instance, at the recently held Teamsters convention there was hardly a mention of a rising cost of living. Very little was said by the trade unions in connection with Little Rock events.

Can it be said that unions are political leaders of the working people in a class sense? Definitely not. Union leaders tell the workers that their political objectives can be attained through the Democratic or Republican parties. The committees for political action exist in many unions but they do not function consistently and very little political educational work is done by them. Do the workers accept and follow the political recommendations of their leaders? In many instances they do not. The workers of the industrial centers of Ohio voted for Taft.

The workers in other industrial communities often vote for anti-labor candidates, contrary to the wishes of their leaders. While it is true that the demands of some of the unions objectively lead in the direction of curbing the monopolies, it is an exaggeration to state, as Bittelman does, that the logic of these developments (curbing monopolies) is understood by large and decisive sections of the labor movement.

Is it not a fact that membership attendance in many unions

ranges between 2 and 5 percent—Where will this understanding by the large numbers come from?

Nevertheless it is correct to recognize that the trade unions rose to a position of effective leadership in the economic field.

But what are the practical forms by which Communists can be recognized as the most resolute members who push the entire labor movement forward? A great deal is being said about the emerging period of peaceful co-existence. But it cannot be taken for granted. It must be fought for. A considerable number of labor leaders are against it. Since it is a matter of survival it is up to the trade union membership to bring about a change in the position of this leadership on this question.

Rich material is contained in Bittelman's articles, but after finishing them a question arose. Why is it, that after so many economic and political struggles, in which the American working class was and is still engaged, and after the existence of various socialist movements over a period of 75 years, there is so little residue of socialist thinking in our country.

ROBERT FREEDEN

Review Course On Marxism

A new review course in the fundamentals of Marxism will be launched Thursday evening at the Academy Hall, 853 Broadway, as the latest addition to the classes on "Marxist Theory and Its Applications."

Designed especially for those who have had previous study of Marxism and as a "refresher" class in the light of recent developments, the class will also be opened to those who wish to begin the study of Marxism. It will deal with the question of Marxism as a science and the problems of change and continuity in theory, as well as reviewing the basic Marxist conceptions of capitalism, democracy, imperialism, and socialism.

The class will be held for seven Thursday evenings, from 6:45 to 8:15 p.m. starting Nov. 7 and will be taught by Harold Collins, who also gives an introductory course on Thursday evenings from 8:30 to 10 p.m. Fee for the seven sessions is \$6.

Final registrations will also be taken this week for other classes in this series. They include: "U. S. Labor Since 1900," with Philip Foner, on Tuesdays at 6:45, "Philosophy of Art" on Wednesdays at 8:30 with Sidney Finkelstein, and "Human History," with Henry Klein, on Thursdays at 6:45.

All registrations are taken by the instructor in each class.

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