

# Speak Your Piece

## Forums And Sectarianism

New York

Editor, Daily Worker:

Harold Collins' letter in *Speak Your Piece* regarding the December 9 automation conference of the American Forum raised questions which I hoped to see answered in the *Daily Worker*—namely: why is it that this forum, which received such extensive advance publicity in the *Daily* (thereby imputing to it great importance), was given such a sparse report after the event? Why were its negative features not underscored? Why was no rounded evaluation made of the conference?

Alan Max answers Collins in the December 18 paper by declaring it could be sectarian for Communists to "exclude themselves from a forum in which they are able to present their position." Perhaps so—but what has this to do with the question Collins raised and which I repeat?

Are the Communists to be so everlastingly grateful for the invitation that they must politely refrain from criticism? Or do Communists participate in the American Forum as equals and without having to forfeit their independent right to estimate the Forum's own activities?

True, as Max says, "Collins' views are not representative of a considered Communist position." No, not officially. But, then, neither are Max's. And when and if a considered position is forthcoming it remains to be seen whose position—Alan's or Harold's—it more closely resembles.

ARTHUR

(Note by Alan Max: Harold Collins concluded his letter this way: Will future accounts in the *Daily* give us enough of the whole picture so that we can judge correctly how well the American Forum is serving the cause of 'socialist education' and whether it warrants the great attention we are being called on to give it in the midst of our own crucial problems.)

(It seems to me unmistakably that Collins is here suggesting that the Communists may find it advisable to exclude themselves from the American Forum.)

## Communists' Role At a Forum

NEW YORK

Editor, Daily Worker:

Alan Max's "reply" to my letter on the American Forum, and how the *Daily* covered it, appeared with surprising speed; but it had so little to do with what I actually wrote that it might just as well have been published, not the day after mine, but the day before!

Where in my entire letter, for example, did he find even the implication, no less the outright assertion, as he tries to make it appear, that I proposed Communists should "exclude themselves from a forum in which they are able to present their position"? Is this Alan Max's idea of how to answer my charge that the *Daily* had presented a "distorted and misleading picture" of the Forum?

In my letter, I had pointed to "liberalism, anti-Communism, and sectarianism" as being, in my opinion, the "oustanding characteristics of the Confer-

ence." How does the "reply" deal with this?

"Quite naturally," says Alan Max, "they (the liberals present) presented liberal views"; "undoubtedly," says he, "it (sectarianism) existed in some of the views"; and as to the anti-Communism, with which an entire panel was literally drenched, even the "reply" will not so much as even admit that it was expressed! But my question remains: how could a reader who had not been at the Conference detect behind such phrases as "socialist-minded persons vigorously discussed"—which is the way the original account of the Forum put it—the existence, no less the predominance of such trends in the discussion, when they were not even touched on by that account, not to speak of their being criticized?

Of course, I am eager to have Communists take part in forums "in which they are able to present their position." My own record—with which Alan Max is surely familiar—makes me no "Johnny-come-lately" on such a question. But I am not content to gloat over the fact—so important to Alan Max—that Communists are able to be at this Forum or that; I am deeply concerned with what they do there. If they meet liberalism, or sectarianism, or anti-Communism, do they recognize them, identify them, challenge them? Or do they "enter the market-place of ideas" as Communists—unable or unwilling to defend or to advance "their (our!) position," happy only to have been invited—"like anyone else," I suppose—to "present" it!

More important for Alan Max, as an editor of the *Daily*, and for myself as a reader, is the question of how the *Daily* reports such events. At the very least, we have the right to expect it not to conceal in its news accounts what its editors will blithely admit in a "reply" to a later letter; and we surely have the right to expect that such a "reply" will not still further refuse to admit the presence of anti-Communism. Above all, we should expect, and strive to attain—Alan Max and myself and everyone else who cherishes the *Daily*—that honesty and openness of criticism and self-criticism without which we contribute nothing to the cause of Socialist education, no matter where we are invited, or by whom.

HAROLD COLLINS

## 3 Abandoned Children Given Christmas Party

ROME, Dec. 25.—Three little children abandoned by their penniless mother had a Christmas tree and Christmas cakes today. The children were Giorgio Lussu, 5, his sister Paola Anna, 3, and their brother Franco, 1½. Their unmarried mother, Epifania Lussu, a 28-year housemaid from Sardinia, abandoned them on the doorstep of a foundling home last Saturday because she was penniless.

She watched nuns of Rome's foundling hospital take in the children, reported her flight to the local newspapers and then vanished.

"They are as happy as we can make them," one nun said. "They are eating Christmas cake and playing around our Christmas tree. But they are asking for their mother."