

SPEAK YOUR PIECE

A Reader's Reappraisal

Editor, Daily Worker:

This is an attempt to reason publicly with a number of ex-Communists and non-Communist friends.

These friends are all unhappy because I've changed my mind about the recent Communist national convention. Originally I thought it was a failure because it failed to take a stand against Soviet intervention in Hungary and the cultural disabilities still faced by Jews in the USSR.

I still think that the Communist Party doesn't have much of a future unless it exercises not only the right to agree with the USSR, but the right to disagree on things that count. However, a number of things have happened since the Communist convention that I didn't foresee, and I must ask my friends how they explain, or ignore them.

One of the reasons for my conviction that the C.P. was up a blind alley, was its inability to obtain a hearing in the market place of ideas, and the successful blackout practiced against it in the press. I thought that was partly its own fault, due to its uncritical, unthinking attitude toward the USSR.

The 16th convention, however, obtained coverage in press and radio equalled by none of the 15 that preceded it. Since the convention, students at the University of Pennsylvania, Queens College, CCNY, the University of Minnesota, Rutgers, the University of Chicago, and the N.Y. School of Social Work have asked to hear Communist spokesmen.

When the city colleges refused to permit the meetings to occur, two clubs at Columbia extended invitations, and the American Civil Liberties Union took the unprecedented step of scheduling a meeting solely to hear a Communist speaker. The N.Y. Post, reaching those New Yorkers most open to advanced ideas, had prominent stories under large headlines every day for two weeks, plus editorials, letters, and an inquiring photographer quiz. The N.Y. Times carried smaller items regularly, and an editorial. Radio and the press services carried the issue across the nation.

"Ah, Ha!" I can hear my friends saying, "the issue was civil liberties, not socialism." No Communist claims that, even in its heyday, his party had much success in winning Americans to socialism, but what success it had was through its services to democracy: Negro rights, organization of labor, social insurance. For the past ten years its services to this country has been that

it defended the liberties of all Americans by upholding the right of complete dissent with the existing system. Until the recent convention, this effort suffered because the C.P. was itself undemocratic, and refused to condemn violation of democracy in and by socialist countries. But when the convention conducted itself democratically, refusing to oust from leadership those who had advocated the right of political dissent in the USSR as well as in the USA this greatly strengthened the argument that the civil liberties of Communists deserved defense. It also strengthened the backbones of the Civil Liberties Union, the N.Y. Post, and the N.Y. Times, while making it vastly harder for them to avoid expressing themselves for civil liberties for Communists.

It may be that Communists have made more spectacular contributions to American life, but I know of no more significant contribution than spearheading the breakthrough against encrusted McCarthyism. So I believe that the convention was a resounding success, and hereby eat anything I may have said to the contrary.

My friends tell me that by changing my mind in this way I am forfeiting the "moral authority" they say I acquired by holding out for common sense on the Soviet Union in years when the C.P. painted it in all rosy hues. Unfortunately, I find no reason to change my mind on the Soviet Union at all. I believe it to be socialist, but unnecessarily undemocratic. As to my view of the Communist Party, what "moral authority" does one retain by clinging to attitudes that changing events convince one are wrong? I thought it was just such stiff-necked stubbornness on the Left that my friends wish to change. Are they putting forth a "new orthodoxy" which says that people must condemn the C.P. in order to hold honorable citizenship on the Left? Trotskyites and Socialists held that view for years. Many of them seem to be abandoning it—thanks to the "unsuccessful" Communist convention.

May I direct questions to those friends who believe in change in name and form of the Communist movement, and who have left the C.P. You say you don't believe in monolithic unity. Then why not grant the right of your organization to have three trends of thought, and not just your own? You say you believe in democracy. Then why not accept with good grace the fact that your convention policies reflecting all three views to some degree, and that the leaders it chose are required

to compromise their statements accordingly? What "moral authority" do you expect to enjoy in my eyes if you toss in the towel because you didn't win by a knockout in the first round?

You would be justified if the other side had won by a knockout, or were to do so in the future. And so would they be, if you won and refused to grant the democracy you proclaim. But, since the convention, there has been a whole series of deeds by non-Communists to indicate their belief that important changes did take place in the very direction you desired, in your Party. Is this a time for you to pull out and weaken the possibilities of change? Do you have such contempt for your comrades of many years that you believe nothing can possibly swing the balance in your direction?

Do you see such an upsurge of socialism in the America of 1957 as to offer you an organizational home elsewhere, in a vital left movement rooted deep in the people? That would be lovely, but it just ain't so. When it is, or even appears on the horizon, nobody will push harder to join it, whatever organizational changes are required, than those whose permanent objective is a united party of socialism.

WILLIAM MANDEL
March 26, 1957.

Speak Your Piece Is Permanent

Chicago.

Editor, Daily Worker:

I am a left-winger who has received all kinds of literature in recent months. Some of this literature has come from Socialists, others from Trotskyites and others from Party comrades.

Obviously, all of this literature is meant to influence my thinking during this crucial period of debate within the Party. I believe that some comrades feel that with the Convention concluded the Speak Your Piece column has come to an end. They, therefore, resort to personal communications.

I think that the Daily Worker should make it clear that the Speak Your Piece column will continue in order to permit comrades to say what they have to say without inhibition and without restraint.

Let's make the idea of dissent a reality.

—J. N.
(A professional)

Disagrees On 'Rainmaker'

Editor, Daily Worker:

I do not know who A. H. is, but my impression from his (her?) review of "The Rainmak-

er" is that of a deeply cynical individual, totally lacking in poetic feeling.

I do not agree at all that "Playwright N. Richard Nash must be having a busy time explaining to his friends just what he had in mind when he wrote" the play.

While a critic is entitled to his opinion, he cannot be so estranged from his fellowmen that he views as ridiculous a charming story with some good homespun philosophy. A. H. considers it "a witless production".

What is wrong with the message that an unfulfilled life can be as barren as the earth without rain?

What is wrong with the idea that self-confidence is an important ingredient in human happiness, and that the brother who constantly chipped away at his sister's hopes was hurting, not helping her? In the world we live in, it is all too common for our friends, neighbors and close

relatives to inflate their own ego at the expense of others, often by left-handed complements amounting to downright cruelty.

The author of "The Rainmaker" makes the point that part of the truth is never the whole truth; that being "down to earth", one must also dream. The message comes through to most viewers that by dreaming the author means confidence in oneself and in the future.

It is a measure of the ingrained sectarianism and sheer blindness of some of our comrades that they should see "male supremacy" in the effort of a man to restore the faith of a woman reduced by the stupidity of her well-meaning brother to despair.

Everyone I know that saw the picture enjoyed it immensely. Many of them are readers of the Daily Worker. They all share the sentiments expressed in this letter.

Jeanie with the light-gray hair.
March 26, 1957

CALIF. BAR HITS ABUSE OF LAWYERS BY UN-AMERICANS

LOS ANGELES, March 28—The California Bar, in a formal protest to Congress, yesterday denounced the treatment of lawyers by the House Committee on Un-American Activities as "improper and lacking in dignity and impartiality" and as "grossly offensive."

The Bar Association's board of governors stated that conduct of the committee tended to "seriously impair" the right of witnesses to counsel.

The organization proposed that the American Bar Association draft and propose to Congress a "system of committee procedure which will adequately protect the rights of witnesses and of counsel appearing for witnesses."

Copies of the statement were sent to the Speaker of the House, the Un-American Committee and the American Bar Association.

The statement said:

1. Several witnesses were asked whether they knew as a Communist the lawyer appearing for a witness but not himself a prospective witness.

2. A lawyer accused by a witness of being a Communist thereafter was referred to by committee counsel as "comrade."

3. Lawyers who tried to object to such treatment were ejected from the hearings even though they were not "disrespective, unruly or boisterous."

The committee hearings here were conducted by Rep. Clyde Doyle (D-Cal.) as chairman of the subcommittee, which included Gordon Scherer of Ohio and Harold Velde of Illinois, Republicans.

"Conduct on the part of any tribunal before whom a lawyer is entitled or permitted to appear, which attacks the lawyer's reputation or otherwise subjects him to obnoxious personal consequences, inevitably deters lawyers from accepting employment to appear before such tribunals," the Bar Association statement said.

The California bar group charged that the House Committee on Un-American Activities "impaired" the client's right to independent counsel when called before the committee.

Romania Extends Power of Local Councils

BUCHAREST—A bill extending the power of the people's councils was passed last week at the closing session of the Grand National Assembly of Rumania. The bill also aims at increasing the role and responsibility of the councils in guiding local economic, cultural and social work.

According to the bill, people's councils at all levels shall be organs of state power in regions, cities, districts and communes. Their duty is to safeguard civil rights, approve and carry out local economic plans and budgets, develop local industry and commerce, lead the socialist transformation of handicrafts and agriculture, and improve the people's livelihood.

The executive committees are to be the executive and administrative organs of the people's councils.