

# SPEAK YOUR PIECE

## 'KEY QUESTIONS'

Editor, Daily Worker:

Alan Max, in his article of May 15, urges discussion that will "churn things up to such an extent that the discussion we have had so far in the DW will seem tame by comparison." I believe this shows intellectual courage on the part of the editors, but also their awareness that the letters to date are a weak reflection of the deep inner turmoil that is rocking the party membership today.

Although most of the letters are well motivated, stressing the need for self-criticism and the shaking off of bureaucratic habits of thinking, only three or four have actually spelled out the basic questions that are being furiously discussed, on and off the record, at all levels of the party.

Key questions that must be faced up to and that will inevitably explode on the convention floor next December, include:

1. **Democratic Centralism**—should it be revised or scrapped?

Was the brutal suppression of civil liberties in the Soviet Union, Poland, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, etc., an abuse of democratic centralism, or was this suppression an inevitable outgrowth of DC—a system of party organization born in the bitter illegality of Tsarism and hardened under the martial law conditions of civil war and intervention?

Is DC compatible with the civil libertarian tradition of America where, regardless of how it may be perverted by capitalist parties, every man is proud of his "right to get up on my hind legs and say whatever I damn please?" (Unfortunately, most persons don't apply the gagging of the CP to themselves.)

Is DC to be revised—how? If it is to be scrapped—for what new form of party organization?

2. **Leadership**—to what extent is a radical change of leadership necessary?

What course should be demanded of our top leaders, most of whom are deeply incriminated in years of grave errors, bureaucratic practices and the wilful suppression of information from the membership?

Is formal self-criticism enough, or should those most incriminated resign their present posts—perhaps in favor of a provisional leadership by people who have been less compromised and discredited?

3. **The Party**—should it be perpetuated on the basis of self-correction, or should it be dissolved to permit the congrega-

tion of new forces and ideas that may serve as the groundwork for the building of a totally new party of socialism in the U.S.?

Some of these questions obviously reflect my own thinking, but I submit them because they are being discussed throughout the party.—J. F.

## Questions on Culture

Editor, Feature Section:

One is forced to welcome "Rocky's" broad-side against the role of the left in the field of literature because of his initiative. While Howard Fast's columns have been profound and provocative regarding theoretical reevaluations on problems reopened by the 20th Congress discussions, scarcely any other repercussion can I recall along this line. Readers with good reason wrote in to protest a "rave" review of a trickily depraved movie; their target was specific. If self criticism was aroused in the review writer, I failed to hear it.

With Rocky, too, self-criticism is faint. His volley is aimed far and wide; at villains already demolished and at "straw men"; but certainly he opens up a subject matter that has been ignored by you, so it would seem. Not only should you "invite comment"; but considerable comment should come from you. Explanation is owed readers, too, as to how much space our small DW can afford for all the verbal ramifications involved.

I think it would be valuable for us to know about other writings on the subject besides the discredited Zhdanov's essays on literature, philosophy and music (published in 1950 by New Century). How about the speeches made over a year ago at the Soviet Writers Congress and particularly reprinted in the May, 1955, Masses and Mainstream? These voiced and answered many of the questions raised by "Rocky." But if any left American writer evaluated them, for a casual reader such as the majority of us have been, then we were even more casual than I imagined.

More rocks than jewels were strewn around by our writer-writer, it seems to me, but hail to his initiative and let the chips fall where they may!

OLD-TIMER.

## Meyer Weise Criticized

Editor, Daily Worker:

"I am very much in favor of analysis of the American path to socialism," says Meyer Weise. Wonderful! Now that Weise has said he is for it, we can go ahead.

But is he really for it—when he writes "if it (socialism) is not on the order of the day, why speculate?" (Translation: don't worry about what's going to happen until it starts happening.) Or when he says that "whatever might happen in the future will best be judged at the time when the American people are faced with the . . . transition to socialism." Perhaps Mr. Weise will explain how it is possible to discuss the American path to socialism without discussing what "might happen in the future."

His own letter is a fine example of how not to discuss the question. Aside from his totally negative and obstructive tone, he proudly brings forth quotations from Khrushchev—as if that settled the matter. Having lost one "final authority" on Marxism, Weise is now busy looking for another. Khrushchev now batting for Stalin.

Finally, his letter is loaded with the same old "Marxist" jargon—"revolutionary content," "revisionism," "order of the day," "a ruling class does not give up peacefully" (how about the British imperialists in India, and so forth). How did he manage to leave out "forces of reaction"?

These tired phrases once had meaning. But they have been so often reused that they have become not a means of expressing thought but a means of avoiding thought. This outdated sectarian gobbledygook has enabled bureaucrats like Weise to make speeches and write articles by the dozen in which any resemblance to reality—and Marxism—was purely coincidental.

These "theoreticians" like the scholastic philosophers of the Middle Ages, are experts at hair-splitting and picking holes in the writings of others. But when it comes time to criticize their own inadequacies and (for once) do a little new and original thinking, they "just fade away."

Yours for an end to "final authorities" whether they be named Stalin, Khrushchev, Max Weiss or Meyer Weise!

Fraternally,

R. W. C.

## Lincoln's Formulation

Editor, Daily Worker:

In January, John Gates said that "we are Constitutional Communists." Milton Howard, April 1, 1956, spoke of the "Marxist appreciation of the revolutionary-progressive role of the American Constitution." Max Weiss, April 5, 1956, said that "we believe that it is possible for the American people,

# DENNIS REPORT TO CP PUBLISHED AS PAMPHLET

Publication of the report delivered by Eugene Dennis on behalf of the Communist Party's National Board to the enlarged meeting of its National Committee held in New York City, April 28-May 1 1956, has just been announced by New Century Publishers. The report appears under the pamphlet title, "The Communists Take a New Look" and is available at 25 cents per copy.

The main body of the report is devoted to a critical review of his Party's work over the last 10-year period, and a final section on tasks and perspectives.

Dennis examines the degree of the Party's isolation from the point of view as to whether it was indeed inevitable.

Policy and tactical errors in the struggle for peace, in the estimate of the fascist danger and the imminence of economic crisis are examined. A searching analysis of

by majority decision, to establish a socialist government in our country by peaceful, constitutional means."

It is misleading for Howard to talk of the "revolutionary-progressive" role of the Constitution without indicating the fact its "revolutionary" content was in terms of the rising American capitalist class of that time and that its "progressive" role today is in terms of protecting the civil rights of the people from the depredations of a monopoly-capitalist government. Taken as a whole, it is neither revolutionary nor progressive in terms of a Socialist State. To say that we are "Constitutional Communists" is a very neat and glib slogan but it is also very empty and un-Marxist.

It is proper for the CP to advocate a transition to Socialism by peaceful means; it is those who possess private property rights in the means of production who resort to force and violence to maintain those rights. But it is not Marxist for Weiss to claim that this transition will be by "Constitutional" means without indicating that the present Constitution would require a revolutionary transformation to serve that purpose. And That Too Is Part Of The American Tradition even though it is not included in the Constitution and naturally would not be. May I remind you of the words of the Declaration of Independence:

"... that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends (the "inalienable Rights" (it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles

left-wing errors with regard to the split in the CIO; electoral policy in 1948 and subsequent political and tactical errors, leads Dennis to declare that "most of the erroneous analysis and tactical mistakes our Party has made since 1945 has been chiefly of a Left sectarian character."

The report by Dennis, the Party's General Secretary, is the first of three reports presented to the National Committee meeting which are to serve as the materials for the currently developing discussion in the organization. The other reports, by Max Weiss and Claude Lightfoot, will be published shortly.

It is noteworthy that the Dennis and other reports are presented as a basis for discussion, and comment, suggestions and criticism from members of the Party as the general public are solicited.

and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness."

Lincoln confirmed this in his first Inaugural Address when he said: "This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it, or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it."

The CPUSA could well afford to emulate Lincoln in the clarity of this formulation.

—A. J.

## Silence on The H-Bomb

Editor, Daily Worker:

In Nazi Germany when millions of people were wiped out in concentration camps the German people maintained a peculiar silence—the silence of assent.

Now in the U.S.A. we see the government exploding H-bombs. Yes, the Daily Worker is now and has been in the past been protesting bitterly. Yes, finally Mr. Stevenson and Mr. Reuther have come out and said something. These men have travelled and have seen and felt world opinion.

But the American people, it seems to me, have not spoken up in sufficient numbers. And I think by silence we are condoning the bomb explosions.

A READER.