

SPEAK YOUR PIECE

Bandwagons And Bureaucrats

Editor, Daily Worker:

Americans generally, and we Communists are no exception, tend to go to extremes, to make quick changes, to accept new ideas easily when they are "packaged" convincingly, and to act upon them at once. Our urban capitalist culture is fast-moving, superficial, suspicious of theory, impatient with "long-haired" intellectualism, eager for slogans, always "on the move." Subway trains rush by, electric signs flash on and off, staccato music beats in our ears, magazines and books are made pocket-size to be read on the run. There is no time for meditation, no place for theory; we are saturated with pragmatism.

Of course, there are positive values in this fast-moving culture of ours: old ideas are easily discarded, prejudices are quickly outgrown, fears or suspicions drop away, and when the American working class moves into action it is militant, brave, and boldly demanding of its rights. This in spite of its notorious lack of political consciousness, its indifference to philosophy or any real thinking - through of where its basic interests lie.

Today many of us are ready to plunge into new political waters, to "follow the leader" with only the mildest reservations or questions, to act first, and think later - if at all. Although the original Soviet statement about Stalin was balanced and careful in its evaluation, we are ready to jump to extreme conclusions.

After 30 years of accepting Stalin's genius as inseparable from the achievements of the Soviet Union and of world Socialism, we are ready to accept in a superficial way the judgment of the new Soviet leadership against him; should there be a newer, reconsidered evaluation from them in 10 years, we might be equally ready to accept this!

If our Party has tended to glorify one-man leadership in the past (and many of us were aware of it), we must be equally careful not to take everything at face value in the present: we must demand proof, documentation, reason.

Some of our fastest-moving leaders are embracing the recent developments with indecent haste because they bring us closer to the liberals and anti-Communists who have been charging us with "totalitarianism and terror" for the past 30 years; these "new look" Constitutional Communists are already revising Marxism and

overhauling our most basic beliefs in order to justify faith in parliamentary change, peaceful transition to Socialism, belief in the Democratic Party as the instrument of progress, and a detailed chart of civil liberties for capitalists under the future American Socialist state. And if they are suddenly in disagreement with Lenin that "a Marxist is one who extends the acceptance of the class struggle to the acceptance of the dictatorship of the proletariat" (State & Revolution, p. 30), then where is the scholarly study of current history, of the countries that have undergone changes towards Socialism in our time, to document their claims?

To project a Utopia of gentlemanly capitalists politely arguing the merits of their system while the majority of the American people peacefully "reorganize society along socialist lines" is mere wishful thinking.

This is not a time for easy acceptance by our membership of new decrees, any more than it is a time for one-man leadership or bureaucracy in our Party. It is a time for Marxist study, for questioning, and re-evaluation. -ALICE JEROME.

Urges Realistic Approach

Editor, Daily Worker:

To me, the current battle against the "cult of the individual" taking place in the Soviet Union is of great importance to us here. For one, it highlights the fantastic amount of idealism in practice, which abounds in all levels of U.S. Communist leadership, and starts at the top.

Secondly, it teaches us the importance of really listening to honest criticism which many Party and non-Party people have made of the Communist movement in this country.

Unfortunately, we Communists are much too eager to teach than to learn from people. Too many of us think we have all the answers.

But it is not too late to learn to listen, and listen to learn.

I would like here to mention a few of the valid criticisms and suggestions made to us, but ignored:

- None of our literature has popular appeal. This is very sad in an age of picture magazines, TV, movies, etc. Is it not astounding, and much deserving of criticism, that there is not one popular pamphlet telling what U.S. Communists really believe in.

- Our attitude towards psychiatry is unscientific. Milton Howard's articles on this subject has created the impression that

Marxists believe all psychiatry is reactionary and bad. The record should be set straight on this question, if we are to have people believe we are fighting against dogmatism within our ranks.

- We are too often unrealistic about the amount of activity groups and individuals can perform. This often leads to hostility against us, both within and without the Party, since our unrealism leads us to pressure people to do what we ask, rather than discuss what they can actually do.

- We have not learned what the bourgeoisie have learned, that work among youth requires the guidance of people who have studied youth group work scientifically. Such trained individuals, who also are grounded in Marxism, can and must be found and developed. I believe that such persons can really help build powerful left-wing youth organizations in this country. Or, at least, much bigger than the current left youth groups, which are in reality almost carbon copies of adult left-wing outfits, and have been for the 20 years I have observed them.

Much needed non-conformist thinking based on a true materialistic approach is needed to deal with the above, and many other valid criticisms of U. S. Communists.

Such thinking has been lacking by the top Communist leadership, whom I believe to be true American heroes and heroines, but not always right.

I have confidence that they will grasp the many general lessons to be learned from current happenings and give much more effective leadership to U. S. Communists. -Dick McGrath.

Disturbed by 'Unanimity'

Editor, Daily Worker:

In greeting the announcement of the proposed 18th national convention of the Communist Party I must express one strong reservation. The Worker reports that "after a vigorous three-day debate the National Committee unanimously adopted a report submitted by Eugene Dennis. . . ."

Considering the variety and complexities of the problems facing us this announcement of "unanimity" has a spectacularly hollow sound. Since the report apparently did not evade the main problems one can only conclude that our leadership has a greater fear of expressing differences and dissent than exists today in our C.P. clubs and sections.

This persistent urge to pre-

sent an "unanimous" front to the world seems to me to be compounded of several evils:

1. A lack of confidence in the membership, the working class and the Negro people.

2. An unwarranted fear of a split.

3. Despite all the talk about criticism and self criticism a failure to see that vigorous, publicly expressed dissent, will lead to sounder decisions, deeper and more abiding unanimity. So what if the N. Y. Times had been able to speculate about splits, if divergent opinions were vigorously expressed and reported. Such a course would help the rank and file play a greater role in determining policy. -H. W.

Questions Value Of May Day Rally

Editor, Daily Worker:

The recent May Day demonstration in Union Square should not have been held, in my opinion. Nostalgia is not a sound basis for political activity. Whatever May Day in America has meant in the past, and whatever it may again mean in the future, we must face the fact that today it only serves to dramatize our isolation from the labor movement, including even its left trends which are not, under present circumstances, demonstrate with us on May Day.

My conclusion is that our tactics must stem from existing realities and relationships and look to the future from the past and the present, not the past skipping the present. -L. B.

CRITICIZE BUT DON'T DEMAND

Editor, Daily Worker:

This letter should have been written long ago, but here it is, finally. You will, I am sure, understand if I bring up some things that were discussed even a couple of weeks back.

First off, I would like to say that I agree with those who feel that it is wrong of the DAILY to demand certain things of the Soviet Union, or of any government other than our own.

Certainly criticism is necessary - perhaps criticism of the Soviet Union is more important for us in the U. S. than for them - but a couple of the editorials seemed to me to be arrogant. We know that there was no official policy of anti-Semitism, for one thing, at any time in the U.S.S.R. The practices of some individuals, or even an organized clique, do not make an official government policy. The tragedy lay in the fact that there

were apparently inadequate brakes applied (or unapplied) and that it took so long to uncover the mess.

The question of the purges of the '30's still appears very confused to me, and so I can't say much about it.

The very positive things that came out for me were mainly two: The strength of the Soviet Union in freely admitting its errors to the world and setting about correcting them, and the fact that I will be very careful hereafter in whatever I take for granted, which, needless to say, won't be much.

As for Stalin, Foster pointed out that he was never a betrayer of Socialism. He was a human being who made many errors, as too many of us were prone to forget. Again, the misfortune was the lack of criticism and ability to put an end to his errant ways.

Changing the subject only slightly, I wish to say that I have rediscovered Howard Fast these last few months. He has emerged as a thinker and literary critic of the first order, and it may be that his criticism is developing into a more important aspect of his work than his novels - which of course is not to take away from them. I read every column of his with great interest (he's taken me away from the Sports Page as my first column), and find always something of interest, insight and importance.

-Dr. G.

Welfare Cases Up 25% in Detroit

DETROIT, May 8-(FP)-Largely because of auto layoffs the Detroit Welfare Department told the city council that relief cases are running 25 percent above the average for the season. The number is 4,265 instead of the customary 3,700.

The council appropriated \$1,265,900 to meet the increased load for the rest of the fiscal year. State-aided cases, to which the city contributes a part, also are above average, numbering 5,843 instead of the budgeted 4,400 cases. Total council deficiency appropriation for the department was estimated to rise to the requested amount while the state would pay \$933,500 as its share.

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