

SPEAK YOUR PIECE

The Fight Against Bureaucracy

BUFFALO, N.Y.

Editor, Daily Worker:

When we first heard of the "cult of the individual" I agreed with the unanimous verdict that this was an inadequate and un-Marxist analysis of the betrayal of Socialist democracy. But when I see the reaction of much of our own CP leadership, I begin to wonder if the Soviet Union may not have been right in putting the finger on this as the major problem.

After the first agonized horror had of necessity been accepted, I think the most general feeling in the rank and file was almost relief: now we could speak up, many errors and injustices would be corrected, and we could go strongly forward. Our own Party's bureaucracy was freely discussed. But in all the more thoroughgoing articles from various levels of leadership, while bureaucracy was mentioned as something which of course existed, it was brushed off as being comparatively unimportant, among the more serious theoretical and organizational mistakes.

We originally translated the "cult of personality" as "hero worship." Perhaps it would be more correct to call it acceptance of bureaucracy. Actually the term would seem to include both sides of the coin: bureaucracy and its acceptance. I think it is of first rate importance that this be eradicated from our Party. It cannot be done either by studying to improve our understanding, or by changing the organization and name of the Party. It can only be done by concrete and personal criticism and self-criticism, which so far has been neglected.

Our people say: "Who me? I who was willing to and did sacrifice career, family, freedom, etc. I who was utterly devoted?" So was Stalin devoted. Khrushchev says part of the tragedy is that Stalin committed crimes in the belief that he was helping socialism.

As for the acceptance of bureaucracy, we of the rank and file have failed to hold our leaders to account, to speak out, to insist on a study of facts as well as theory.

Bureaucracy is so ingrained as a method of work in many of our leaders, that they are genuinely unconscious of it, do not even understand it when it is pointed out to them. Not that we should discard the experience and real devotion of many years and many trials. But leadership could be changed, divided.

Let the leaders become real club members, pay their dues, see problems from the bottom as well as the top. Let them go to work again, rub shoulders with reality. And let us in the rank and file speak up in friendly criticism and disagreement, thus accepting our share of the responsibility to keep the Party on the right track. —A.S.T.

The Fight for Housing

Editor, Daily Worker:

The recent plans for a middle-income housing project to be located at Baisley Park in Queens, which was killed after community leaders met in a private conference with the mayor—points up an area of work in which our party has failed to give leadership. The community was actively involved in discussion of the project, yet the party failed to adequately discuss the issue and took no position.

Those who find themselves in opposition to the project, both within and outside the party advance the following arguments, which I shall attempt to answer.

1. This is not really slum clearance, since it will be on largely vacant land.

Community leaders throughout New York City have been fighting for years to have projects built on vacant land, in order not to displace more people than could be rehoused in the same area. Only eight families would have been displaced, with full compensation for the investment in their homes. Also, people living in the nearby slum area would naturally be attracted to the better housing of the project, and this would tend to relieve the overcrowding in the slum. This, in turn, would put pressure on the slum landlords to fix up their properties.

2. It is insulting to the Baisley Park community to say that it is a slum.

Title III of the city housing code also provides for urban development, and it was under this provision that the project was planned.

3. Since the area is integrated in its housing, no white people will move into the project, and that puts us in the position of supporting jimcrow housing.

There are only a token number of Negro families in this area. But even if this were not the case, objectively more housing benefits all members of the community. A brand new project would be an excellent place to fight for integrated housing BEFORE a pattern of segregation is established.

4. If a project is built here it will lead to overcrowding of school and transportation facilities.

Tremendous overcrowding already exists, and at the rate the community is growing, will continue and will need all the efforts of the progressive forces of the community to see that facilities are expanded, EVEN IF THERE IS NO PROJECT.

5. The Housing Authority has ulterior motives.

Regardless of the motives, the reality is a housing project which will enable thousands of families to move out of local rooming houses and flood-ridden cellars into decent apartments.

6. A project always brings undesirables.

Progressives have to be very careful about this word "undesirables." Whom does it really refer to? In my experiences it means, with little real subtlety, to workers, foreign-born, Negroes and other minorities.

7. Since the feeling of the community is against the project, we can't support it, without isolating ourselves.

The Baisley Park Civic Association has been extremely loud in its opposition. What about the workers: the transport, distributive and hospital workers; the roomers on South Road, and the families living in the cramped basements of some of the fanciest Queens homes?

R. G. ASCHER

Minton's Successor

Editor, Daily Worker:

In your editorial on a successor for Supreme Court Justice Minton you state, "The challenge of the racists in the South—attempting to intimidate Negro and white children from attending school in accord with the Supreme Court decision—should be met by the appointment of a Negro justice."

It was an all-white Supreme Court that handed down the historic decision on ending school segregation. This is now the law of the land, and the appointment of a Negro to the Supreme Court would in no way affect the attempted defiance of this law by the Dixiecrats. For this is now a matter of law enforcement. Federal troops to Texas might be an answer to Shivers' outlawry, but a Negro Supreme Court Justice would not be.

The silly logic employed in this editorial, however, is the least. Raising a slogan such as "a Negro Justice to the Supreme Court" is simply more of that "reverse racism" which, if followed to its logical conclusion, can only result in quota systems. Raise the name of Bunche, Delaney, or any other outstanding Negro qualified for such a job and list your reasons for supporting him, and you would have the respect of every honest liberal.

Point out that such qualified men are not even considered by the President because of racial prejudice, and you have a valid point. But please don't confuse the issue by holding that a man should be appointed to the Court because of his race. That is what your editorial says, and that is racism, in my view.

If, as you say, it is a blot on the Court that there has never been a judge from among the one-tenth of our population that is Negro, it is five times as much of a blot on the Court that there has never been a judge from among the more than one-half our population that is female. Of course, both blots could simultaneously be eliminated by the appointment of Edith Sampson as justice. But at this moment in history it seems that the Daily Worker should be far more concerned with the legal philosophy of Minton's successor than with his origins.

A justice who will side with Douglas and Black is the one who will best advance democracy in this country at present. It would be a blot on the Court and on the Constitution if Minton's reactionary views on civil rights continue to find expression on the Court—regardless of the origins or the color of the skin of the judge issuing such interpretations.

If it is the Daily Worker's view that Ralph Bunche, for example, is best able to add democratic weight to the Court, then say so, and say why. If the paper thinks there is no possibility of getting a serious expression of support for him, or if there is another who is better qualified to interpret democracy consistently, then stop raising extraneous issues. Leave such criteria to the racists. —A.H.G.

Housewife Finds Two Good Books

Editor, Daily Worker:

While dusting off the bookcases recently, a couple of titles caught my attention: "Writings and Speeches of Eugene V. Debs" and "Letters to Americans" by Marx and Engels.

I started to leaf through the pages, and what I read made me decide to let the dust rest another day or two while I took time to look inside the covers.

Here are a few quotations that I offer with the hope that others will be stimulated to settle down and learn from those who struggled before us.

In 1887 Engels wrote to Sorge, "... What is more, 40 years ago you were Germans with German aptitude for theory, and that is why the Manifesto had an effect at the time, whereas, though translated into French, English, Felmish, Danish, etc., it had absolutely no effect upon the other peoples. And for the untheoretical, matter-of-fact Americans, I believe simple fare is all the more digestible, since we experienced the story told in the Manifesto, while they did not."

Again, in 1887, Engels: "... and I must know my Americans badly if they do not astonish us all by the vastness of their movement, but also by the gigantic nature of the mistakes they make, through which they will finally work out their way to clarity. ..."

"The annual elections, which

force the masses to unite over and over again, are really most fortunate. ..."

In another letter, to Florence Kelly: "... Only it (the American movement) will take unexpected forms. The real movement always looks different to what it ought to have done in the eyes of those who were tools in preparing it."

Debs, in 1912 said: "The matter of tactical differences should be approached with open mind and in the spirit of tolerance. ... In the matter of tactics we cannot be guided by the precedents of other countries. We have to develop our own and they must be adapted to the American people and to American conditions."

"I believe, too, in rotation in office. ... The natural tendency of officials is to become bosses. They come to imagine that they are indispensable and unconsciously shape their acts to keep themselves in office."

I urge people to read these speeches of Debs, not for formulas to apply mechanically, but in a creative way. We learn from experiences, our own and those of others. How can we possibly presume to think we are capable of influencing the movement for socialism if we are completely ignorant of the lessons, the struggles of those who represent the early days of our movement?

Debs writes about a fellow American, John Swinton, "When Swinton asked Marx what he saw in the future, the latter buried his face in his hands for a moment, then raising his head he answered, laconically, 'Struggle'."

Well, that's it, for now. It has been a struggle to write this. Now my immediate struggle is to put the supper on the stove. And so progress is made.

—BUSY HOUSEWIFE

Resolution

By a CP Club

Editor, Daily Worker:

Please print the following resolution in "Speak Your Piece" as passed by a Manhattan club of the Communist Party.

"Resolved, that this club (Yorkville) goes on record as declaring its complete and wholehearted opposition to liquidating the Communist Party, reaffirming that there must exist a Communist Party based on Marxist-Leninist science. We, the members of this club, are Com-

munists, strong believers in Marxism; this is the bone and muscle of our life, and we always will be Marxists. But we can change, and need to change, in many ways.

"We need to become a more democratic organization. We need to believe in and respect people of other opinions and differing belief. Our growth depends upon our working with people and respecting their often opposing beliefs. We cannot act as we often did in the past, as if we knew all the answers. We cannot advance Socialism in America without them; we can learn even from people who do not believe in Socialism, and from others who believe in Socialism but differ with us in methods.

"This attitude of understanding would result in greater democracy and tolerance within the party, and should allow difference of opinion to be expressed.

"We feel that with this new approach we can tackle new goals, and that in time it will come about that we can enter into a united front with other groups and even change our form or be consolidated with them."

Distributive Workers' Stand

Editor, Daily Worker:

The following resolutions were approved by a group of distributive workers and submitted for publication.

1—Resolved that there be no liquidation or dissolution of the C.P.U.S.A.

2—Resolved that Regional, State & County Conventions be held prior to the National Convention.

3—Resolved that the National Convention be postponed for six months to allow time for ample discussion.

4—Resolved that the leadership of the C.P. U.S.A. through Party publications express their views on the problems facing our movement.

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