

Untrammelled Discussion Marks Opening of Socialist Forum

By LESTER RODNEY

The revival of untrammelled political discussion by American radicals and a confident resurgence of socialist thinking—these were the dominant notes struck at the first public meeting of the American Forum for Socialist Education Wednesday night. Over 600 persons, including many youth, turned out on the hot night to fill the Community Church on 35th St., near Park Avenue. The theme was proclaimed in leaflets announcing the meeting: "ALL VIEWPOINTS WILL BE HEARD, DESPITE SEN. EASTLAND."

In opening the meeting, the Rev. A. J. Muste, who received a warm ovation, revealed that the American Civil Liberties Union had informed him that if he were subpoenaed by Sen. Eastland the ACLU would "regard it as a duty and honor" to join in his defense.

With soft spoken wit, the veteran pacifist supposed there was someone from the FBI, and asked that person to carry back his message, which included a characterization of J. Edgar Hoover's attempt to silence the Forum as "prostituting" his high position.

Another criticism, he said, alluding apparently to the New York Times attacks, was that you "can't engage in discussions with Communists." He said that, for one thing, discussions of all kinds were an absolute necessity in the world of today, and added that events of the past year and a half within Communist Parties show clearly that "to say that every Communist must be regarded in the image of Stalin simply flies in the face of reality."

He then went briefly into the



A. J. MUSTE

position (held by the Socialist Party) that it was "all right to discuss with Communists but wrong to put them on the national committee, since that meant the old kind of united front". Dr. Muste called the distinction foolish in an organization devoted precisely to stimulating discussion of varying points of view.

"We live in a new age", he said "We have to find out what are the problems before socialists in these days, and to do that we must communicate and discuss, on all levels".

Educator Dr. Stringfellow Barr was introduced by Muste as one who "says it is time to stop discussing discussion and to start the discussion!".

Dr. Barr began by saying he wasn't really a socialist.

"I suppose it's just the idea of doing something so wicked," he said to laughter, "And speaking to an unscreened audience, how exciting!"

Seriously, he went on, his main impulse in joining the Forum was that he was "sick of the political

apathy which had come over our country, when it became dangerous not alone to answer questions, but even to ask them."

Questions which should receive "hard socialist thinking," he said, include the "mystery of modern corporations, their ownership, their control," and the question of racism in our land.

The most "exciting group of Americans to non-Americans," he said, as the audience broke into applause, "live in Montgomery Alabama."

Another "question" he put forth wryly, was this: "I for one would welcome a change of diet from Strontium 90."

He likened the reassurances of the government to someone who went to two doctors, heard from one that he had a bad case of cancer, from the second that he was in fine health, and said, "I prefer to believe the second and so that settles it."

Dorothy Day, editor of the *Catholic Worker*, observed that she was the only woman on the platform. "Woman should have more to say about these things," she observed mildly, "The question of the bombs exploding in Nevada, of conscription of the young people, of war or peace—women happen to have some interest in these things."

Miss Day described the philosophy of her movement with its stress on "free will." She felt that most here agreed on what they wanted, a society of brotherhood and abundance in which "each gives according to his ability and receives according to his needs," but differed on the "confusion of means and ends." Too often, she said, "means have become the end."

Conrad Lynn, Negro civil rights Attorney, referred to the "apparent serenity" on the U.S. economic

Ford Recovering After Operation

James W. Ford, secretary of the National Committee to Defend Negro Leadership and former vice-presidential candidate of the Communist Party, is recovering from a serious abdominal operation, it was learned yesterday.

Ford is at the Beth Israel Hospital, Stuyvesant Square East and 17th Street, where get-well cards can reach him.

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scene. In fact, he said, "if you look back you will find that Congress has passed no social legislation since 1938".

The reason why the reactionaries were so perturbed by the announcement of the Forum, he said, was that, "the very announcement means that the torpor is at an end . . . the days of frightening and isolating people are on the way out, all people dissatisfied with the status quo can get together and talk about it".

The Khrushchev interview created "such consternation", he said, because despite what he considered oppressive things in the Soviet regime, "Khrushchev appeared as a human being, and millions of Americans seeing a reasonable human being will decide you can talk to human beings, that the H-Bomb is not the only measure that communication is clearly possible".

The attorney pointed to the current Saturday Evening Post series "The Deep South Will NEVER Desegregate". The south, he said, "is a great open shop bastion, and to keep labor disunited is a way to keep it that way. That is the reason for such articles. These right to work laws and amendments are intended for the same purpose, to cripple labor. They are preparing for the next crisis—when livelihoods will once again be at stake."

An early question on the Communist Party attitude toward free discussion between socialist-minded groups brought from Doxie Wilkerson, member of the CP National Committee, a ringing endorsement of the American Forum's purpose.

In response to a question, Tim Wohlforth of the Young Socialist League reported he found youth definitely interested in socialist thinking and regroupment "including," he said with a smile, "many members of the Socialist Party. One thing we forget in speaking of bringing this group and that group together for discussions. We forget that new elements are attracted by the signs of life on the left, attracted to the process." There was a dramatic advance in meetings and discussions over several years ago, he said.

A question to Farrell Dobbs of the Socialist Workers Party referred to "the enmity" between the SWP and the Communist Party and asked what he thought of the CP role. Dobbs said he felt the basic achievement of the Forum was that no view was excluded, that he would defend the right of Communists. He then mentioned differences with the CP such as his belief that in socialist lands "working class revolt against Stalinist bureaucracy" was needed, and that the CP's advocacy of an anti-monopoly coalition here was "class collaboration."

While stressing that the Forum's function was in no way to intervene in party differences, Dr. Muste as chairman then called on Dr. Albert Blumberg, a member of the Communist Party State

Committee, to comment on Dobb's remarks.

Dr. Blumberg said he felt it would be unfortunate if people got the impression that such a meeting was "primarily concerned with the issue of the CP against another party."

"Our conception," he said, "is that while these discussions have a place, the Forum's main direction should be OUTWARD, not inward, a spreading and relating of socialist thinking to all labor and progressive currents in our land."

This point won general applause.

As for the question of what role the CP could play, he said, "It is our conviction, or we would not be here, that what the CP has been through in the last year has enabled it to correct much that was wrong, to move on sounder lines and in so doing to enable it to make a real contribution."

He fully backed the non-exclusion principle. "The presence of the SWP," he said, "does not mean we cannot participate. However, in our opinion, our differences with them are of the gravest character. We will exercise our right of opinion both within the Forum and in our publication. But primarily we feel the role of the Forum is to move outward with socialist thinking."

Dr. Muste closed with the announcement that the Forum was in the midst of plans for the Fall, which will include pamphlets under the Forum's imprint, including one on "If Socialism comes to the U.S., what would it be like?" It would probably consist of a statement by someone, he said, with others dealing with the statement.

Shows How Automation Displaces Oil Workers

PHILADELPHIA, June 13. — What automation is doing to the labor force in the oil industry was demonstrated here in an illustrated lecture to a group of financial analysts by Stanley Learned, chairman of the executive committee of the Phillips Petroleum Co.

He showed a color slide of a well at which the pumping, separating, treating, sampling, testing and gauging of the oil and gas and their delivery into separate pipelines is conducted without a single worker on the location. Once a month an employe gathers the automatically recorded data and resets the controls on an electronic brain.

By this and other labor-saving methods resulting from a scientific study of operations, the company's producing division was handling 419 more wells and 199 more leases at the end of last year than the year before, with nine less workers.

"This," Learned declared, "is AUTOMATION — the shape of things to come in the oil industry and IN INDUSTRY GENERALLY."