

What's Happening to 'Peoples Voice'?

By Doxey A. Wilkerson

Formerly Editor of "The People's Voice," member of the National Committee of the Communist Party

WHEN A FORMERLY militant and progressive Negro newspaper lauds the demagogic spokesman of American imperialism, cringes before the red-baiters, and plays "Uncle Tom" to price-gougers in Harlem, the Negro people and their labor-progressive allies have good cause to be disturbed. This, unfortunately, is the editorial path down which The People's Voice has been moving in recent months.

ONCE A FIGHTING "PEOPLE'S PAPER"

The initial appearance of The People's Voice, a Harlem weekly newspaper founded nearly six years ago, marked a new development in the field of Negro journalism. Here was a genuine "people's paper," militantly fighting for the rights of the Negro people and of organized labor. Proud of its slogan, "We Cannot Be Bought—We Will Not Be Sold," PV did not hesitate to challenge the powerful business and political forces of anti-Negro reaction, even at the loss of advertising and other income.

This was The People's Voice of old, whose growing influence and prestige served to mobilize and guide the Negro people in vigorous struggles for full democratic rights, and to strengthen their ties with progressive allies in the white population. Its average audited (A.B.C.) circulation rose to nearly 30,000; and it merited and won the good will and support of ever increasing friends of democracy in America.

But that PV has just about

ceased to exist. Its three main columnists—Paul Robeson, Lena Horne and W. E. B. Du Bois—still write as fearless and consistent champions of progress. But the editorial policy of THE PEOPLE'S VOICE of today is moving along quite a different path—one which can lead only to the betrayal of the basic interests of the Negro people and the alienation of its progressive white and Negro readers. At the end of that path lies either death for the publication, or its frank and open service to the cause of reaction.

A few illustrations of PV's current editorial policy should suffice to make this development clear.

I

PRESIDENT TRUMAN'S demagogic speech before the N.A.A.C.P. Convention several months ago was hailed by The People's Voice (July 12) with paeans of praise. His high-sounding platitudes, which included not even one promise of definite action to protect Negro democratic rights, were greeted by PV with unqualified editorial approval.

There was a time when The People's Voice would have cautioned the Negro people against illusions based on vague generalities uttered by a politician seek-

ing re-election, when its editorial message would have been: "Let us not be misled. We will have to fight for whatever rights we obtain, united among ourselves and with our labor-progressive allies. We cannot rely upon the benevolence of a President who dares not even speak out to condemn the lynchers of our people, and who is now the willing servant of Wall Street imperialism."

But the PV of today is obviously trying to act as cheer-leader for the author of the "Truman Doctrine," a fact made further evident by the lead editorial in the current (Dec. 20) issue. The editors attack Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt for opposing the Soviet proposal to have the United Nations declare violence against racial and religious minorities a crime punishable by law. Then they make this astounding and false assertion:

"Her position is diametrically opposed to that of our present President who has repeatedly urged the Congress to adopt legislation that would outlaw the poll tax, to make lynchings a crime, and to create a fair employment practice act."

Perhaps the editors of The People's Voice have simply been taken-in by President Truman's sweet and hollow phrases. Or could it be that they are trying to prepare a place for PV on the lucrative band-wagon of the Democratic Party?

II

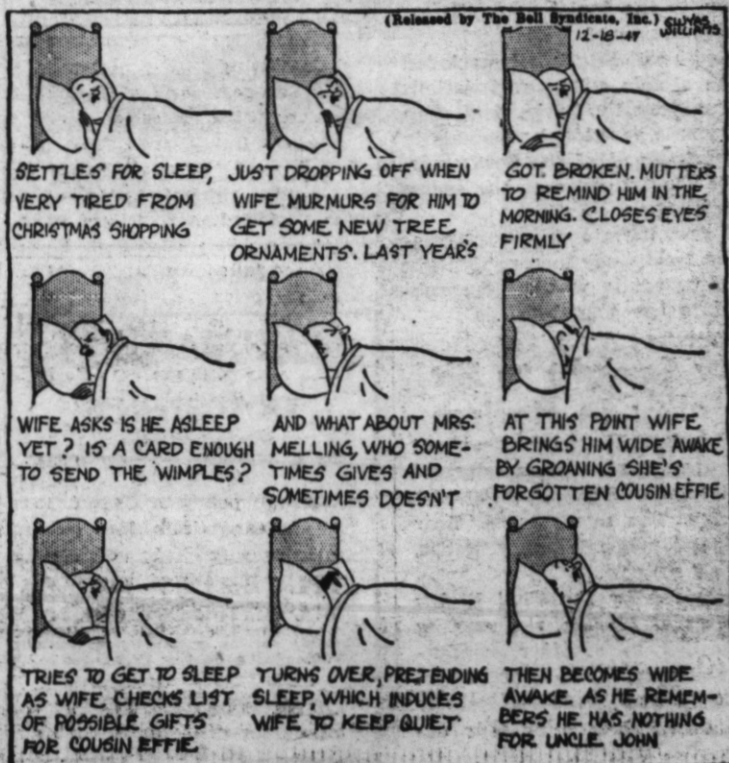
JUST RECENTLY (Nov. 22) The People's Voice issued a new policy declaration, heralded by a five-column front page streamer: "PV Announces New Policy. This new statement of policy consists of a series of innocuous generalizations, tucked away among which is this really important message the editors want to get across:

"Politically, The People's Voice is non-partisan. It is neither controlled by nor allied to any political party."

At first glance, one interprets this as reaffirmation of the non-partisan policy which PV announced in 1942 and adhered to in succeeding years, a policy of resolution defense of the Negro people against their oppressors, with no regard to narrow partisan interests. Viewed abstractly, there is nothing here with which anyone

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could justly quarrel.

On second thought, however, one begins to see that there is something "new" in this non-partisan policy declaration, after all. Interpreted in the context of the current hysterical drive against all progressives under the guise of fighting the so-called "communist menace," the above statements could mean, and are intended to mean, only one thing—that **PV** is cowering before the witchhunters, proclaiming to all and sundry: "Our political skirts are clean."

There was a time when the People's Voice disdained to retreat in the face of red-baiting; when, indeed, its editorial voice was raised more clearly than that of any other Negro publication to expose and condemn the reactionary political forces which press their attacks upon the people's liberties behind the smoke-screen of "anti-communism."

But the **PV** of today is obviously trying to make its peace with the red-baiting enemies of the Negro people and of all that is democratic in American life. Its new "non-partisanship" means the newspaper is now giving up the struggle.

Continued Tomorrow