

VIEWS and REVIEWS

by
Gil Green

(National Secretary, Y.C.L.)



A POWERFUL urge for knowledge is developing among America's youth. Young people crowd the public libraries. They want to know what is wrong with present day society and how they are to emerge from its blind-alley. Of course, entirely too many still waste their time on Macfadden trash, but the general trend is encouraging—and certainly one of ill-omen to capitalism.

Capitalist society cannot stand-up under objective criticism. It can only exist by creating illusions in the minds of the masses. Once the masses see capitalism as it really is—it is doomed. That is why Hearst is so alarmed about the increase of radical literature among the youth. That is why Hitler goes a step further and builds bonfires of all progressive literature—of the accumulated culture of the masses.

Truth On Our Side

THIS is where we come in. We have no reason to fear the truth. On the contrary, every fact of life is a weapon in our hands condemning capitalism. It is thus that we are the best exponents of education and culture. We more than any one else are interested in aiding youth in their quest for knowledge—in their desire to find a fundamental answer to their problems.

Our League as a youth organization should become the medium through which the largest numbers of young people receive an education, a working class education. Hearst gives us a lot of credit for what we have already done in this field. However, we are more critical of ourselves. We know we have barely scratched the surface.

One of the shortcomings of our present youth literature is its crude "manifesto" character. We have not as yet learned to produce a literature which will appeal to the interest of youth and at the same time serve to educate. It is time we learned from the bourgeoisie to bring our ideology to the youth through indirect channels, through fiction, romance, adventure stories, popular science and historical biographies. Such a popular class literature must be produced in the next period in order to reach the ears of the large masses of youth and inspire them for struggle.

We Want Your Views

IN ORDER to aid in the creation of this new type of youth literature, I would ask all readers of this column to write to us their opinion of the type of literature best suited to attract the wide masses of young people. We know you have ideas on this score and we want them.

While the production of a new type of literature is of great importance, and we on our part are working to solve this problem, another question of equal importance is that of the distribution of literature. Why? Because our movement has already at its disposal a wide variety of literature. Many good proletarian novels have appeared in the last two or three years. Furthermore, and of even greater importance, is the fact that many of the classics of Marx and Lenin and dozens of other theoretical and factual books on current questions have been published in the past years. These are an immense arsenal from which to arm the youth with class understanding and more than that, with a grasp of revolutionary theory.

But somehow our League has not as yet appreciated the full value of this basic literature. Important books come off the presses with hardly a stir in our ranks. As an example, let me take two books published in the past ten days. "What Is Communism?" by Earl Browder and "Rulers of America" by Anna Rochester. Both of these books deserve the greatest attention of Y.C.Lers and other youth who want to study the situation in the United States and the revolutionary way out.

"Burn the Midnight Oil"

IF WE are to educate the masses of youth, first of all we must get our own League members to pay more attention to the study of theory. At our recent national conference, Comrade Foster appealed to the League members to "burn the midnight oil" in order to master the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin.

Of course, many comrades who would like to study our classics and who would like to read the current literature, find it difficult to purchase these books because of lack of money. I know many comrades who have raised this question with me. But yet where there's a will, there's a way.

AT OUR national conference we proposed that every unit or branch of the Y.C.L. and every working class youth club be gotten to establish a circulating library. Certainly such libraries organized in every neighborhood could help solve this problem of finances not alone for our Y.C.L. comrades but for those youth around our League. Such libraries could systematically bring the most important literature to the largest number of young people.

I do not know how many branches or clubs have followed this suggestion in the weeks since our conference. I know a few have begun. But can we not hope to have hundreds of such libraries in the next months? Can this task not be accepted by every Y.C.L. unit?

In order to stimulate the development of such circulating libraries, I personally pledge to send a full set of Lenin's works to that unit which during the next month is first to establish a library of at least one hundred books.

Here is a challenge. Who will accept it?