

A LETTER TO OUR READERS

By THE EDITORS

IN OUR issue of June 26 we published an editorial indicating our position on the Duclos article and the resolution of the National Board of the Communist Political Association. We wrote then that we are convinced "the theories adopted by the American Communists in January 1944, were profoundly mistaken, and that NEW MASSES itself must accept its share of responsibility in giving currency to those ideas." That editorial initiated a time of stock-taking, of examination of past mistakes so that we can learn from them in order to gear the magazine for the onrush of today's and tomorrow's responsibilities. Heavy responsibilities indeed, as we shall indicate further.

That examination is predicated on what, by now, is a truism to NEW MASSES readers: that practice cannot be divorced from theory. We know that a set of erroneous premises impels a train of wrong actions. With that realization, we are, with the participation of NM friends and collaborators, reexamining the approaches we had to various aspects of our work—our handling of domestic, international, cultural issues; our practice in dealing with writers and individuals who differed with our outlook; our specific journalistic presentations; our fundamental relations with readers, writers, artists. In short our whole way of work. We shall soon begin publishing the conclusions drawn from these examinations for our readers' consideration; meanwhile we want them—you—to let us know what you feel, what you think; we want you to join us immediately in hammering out a magazine policy that will result in the kind of publication the times require. We want to make these pages real examples of Marxist journalism.

We know NM has fallen short of that, particularly in these past several years. The reader who took exception to our saying in the editorial that "NEW MASSES is a Marxist magazine" had merit in his criticism and was right in suggesting we should have said we "strive to be a Marxist magazine." We did not hit the bull's-eye. We were using a wrong range-finder.

To fulfill our responsibilities requires a complex of many attributes; mastery of the Marxist approaches, genuine collective work, improved liaison with our readers and contributors, stronger ties

with the progressive and democratic organizations in the country, particularly the trade unions, industrial and white collar, and various cultural groups; greater integration with America's writers and artists seeking to achieve cultural forms to aid the people's progress.

The times require this: we can already see the shape of things that reaction plots for America. It seeks to destroy the bulwark of our democracy, organized labor; hence we must become more integrated with trade union life. Evil men like Rankin and those who inspire him seek to pit veterans against labor, Negro against white, Gentile against Jew, middle-class against working-class. We must consistently expose the unfolding aspects of this plot so our people can be forearmed. In our particular milieu, we know that those who advocate an unbridled American imperialism, such journalistic hierarchs as Henry Luce, plan to bring out a devil's brigade of "magazines of opinion." They will assault the bastions of clear, honest thought on the political, economic and cultural issues of our time.

In short, the heinous effort to destroy the democratic coalition is upon us. Therefore our duties become all the greater. Though we know the democratic coalition has unprecedented power and rich experience, we are well aware that hard, grueling conflict is ahead, conflict imposed upon our people by the many pronged, powerful, well-heeled campaign of the economic royalists and their flunkies.

To gear ourselves for this is our—your—immediate concern. For this we want your utmost cooperation. The Duclos letter and the discussion of the Communist Political Association is dispelling a fog; Marxists can begin to see the shape of the terrain before them. It is hard, dangerous land, scarred with many pitfalls, but it is not impassible. To traverse that terrain successfully, we must march together, work together, united, help each other chart the necessary paths.

The draft resolution of the CPA has done a fundamental job in charting the road, and as we have indicated, we fully agree with its major tenets.

We would, however, like to see the following considerations added to the draft resolution: more specific attention

to labor's allies in the democratic, anti-fascist coalition—the white-collar groups, the professionals, the cultural and scientific workers, as well as the farmers. We expect the CPA to cope with these problems, but specifically, they fall within the orbit of NEW MASSES' regular attention. We shall continue to discuss these issues in greater detail, but we wish, immediately, to pose the following for our readers' consideration: the struggle for a genuine, anti-fascist democratic culture is one of NEW MASSES' primary responsibilities. We publish in an America that has powerful democratic well-springs, but we know that evil, fascist cross-currents flow swiftly. America is daily subjected to the racist, reactionary ideas of the Hearst-McCormick-Patterson Axis; our peoples' thinking is constantly assaulted by anti-labor, anti-Soviet, anti-coalition ideas in the weekly magazines of Henry Luce and his fellows; *Reader's Digest*, one of the most baneful influences in our national culture, reaches nearly 10,000,000 monthly; in many of our educational institutions pro-fascist ideas are disseminated covertly, if not openly; anti-Negro and anti-Semitic practices are far from uncommon in our universities where, in reality, the *numerus clausus* is accepted without second thought; Hollywood, for instance, continues to produce films libelous of the great Negro masses in America; our cultural workers and professional strata live and seek to fulfill their talents for the common good within a pattern of contracting livelihood, as we have recently pointed out. All these factors converge upon us with heightened impact as the nation moves into the transitional times of a peace economy. We must, therefore, refashion the magazine into a powerful, crusading champion for a vital, popular, democratic culture.

To grapple with these problems adequately, we want your help. NEW MASSES is not an organization; it is a magazine with readers scattered across these forty-eight states; readers who have wide, intimate contact with the heart of America. We cannot gather in a hall to talk over these problems, to hammer out a policy. But we can achieve the possible. You can write NM what you are thinking, acquaint us with your reactions to the various aspects of our work. What you feel is good in our

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when they encounter a first class army in open warfare. (The Japanese Sixth Army under General Kamatsubara was wiped out in a matter of days at Nonmanhan.)

The most vulnerable sector of the "redoubt," however, is in Inner Mongolia. Without discussing idly the probabilities of the entry of the Soviet Union into the conflict, it can be said with assurance that the Japanese, whatever we do, will keep the cream of their continental troops on that front, which will help us considerably.

Thus from all appearances Manchuria, perhaps this winter, will be the scene of Japan's last struggle.

The GI Comes Home

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on unemployment insurance is wholly inadequate, especially when he knows that these payments will be deducted from a future bonus. When he returns for his old job he may find that it is not there, or that the industry is faced with reconversion. Many return incapacitated and unable to handle their previous jobs. The GI Bill of Rights is inadequate. Much more is necessary. Here the reactionaries are taking advantage and speaking up with Rankin as champion. Actually only labor can help. Its voice must be heard!

IN OTHER words, we soldiers are a very uncertain lot and our minds are open. If we're like that we're open to anyone and everyone, friend and foe alike, fascist demagogue and labor-progressive. Those that speak out the loudest and create the impression of doing the most will be listened to attentively. Therefore it is important that our real friends, labor in the first instance, be alert, informed and active in relation to all the problems we face, because we will soon be the nation's number one problem, good or bad, positive or negative. Labor can help to see that we are part of progress.

Labor's enemies are working feverishly to make inroads among us. Representative Rankin of Mississippi, as chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs in Congress, never lets a day pass without blaming labor for the veterans' problems. Pro-fascist groups with an anti-labor bias and many thousands of dollars behind them are cropping up among veterans, groups like the American-Veterans in Texas, etc. These are danger signs. They must be recognized for the tremendous menace they are. Labor, however, can block them.

Ben Davis and the ALP

IN FAILING to give its official designation to the candidacy of Benjamin J. Davis, Jr., for reelection to the New York City Council the American Labor Party has done itself and the cause of progressive unity in the city a serious disservice. Davis has made an enviable record in his first term. The Negro and white people who elected him two years ago want him to return to office this fall. He is the acknowledged leader of his community in the metropolitan government. His progressive role in all phases of the city's government has earned him the praise and support of all groups who aspire to defeat reaction and corruption.

For the American Labor Party to withhold its support will do more harm to its own prestige and to the election chances of its present candidate, Eugene Connolly, than it will to the candidacy of Ben Davis. It is for the very reason that New York progressives cannot afford to see the ALP weaken itself by such a blunder that a widespread demand from unions and other mass organizations is being made upon the party to correct this error.

The arguments advanced against designating the Communist incumbent, Davis, are specious. If the ALP's present position is taken from fear of being Red-baited it may as well shut up shop. For Red-baiting can never be cured by Red-baiting oneself. If its failure to endorse Davis arises from ALP secretary Eugene Connolly's fear of competition on the ballot, he should be reminded that he will lose far more votes by isolating himself and his party from the Negro people, the progressive unions and other democratic forces in the city.

For these reasons NEW MASSES joins a host of other voices in urging the American Labor Party speedily to designate the candidacy of Ben Davis.

Finally, collectively and as individuals, we come back as much stauncher and stronger Americans. As a group we return with a tremendous potential strength, with great pride and confidence in ourselves. A man who goes through combat and comes out all right is stronger, more experienced and surer of himself. As individuals we have more wisdom and are more worldly, even if it is only from that trip on a boat and meeting new and different people, something most of us would never have normally experienced. We come back greatly matured and advanced in our thinking, certainly on matters of war, peace, intolerance, the Negro, the Soviet Union, etc.

President Truman placed the question well when he said, "In the next generation the veterans of this war are going to lead the country. They fought to save it and now they want to fight to maintain it and that is their duty."

I personally return proud to have been a part of a great Army, and am confident that with proper attention and leadership the veterans can be on the side of labor, for progress.

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work, what is bad, what we ought to know that we miss. We invite you to do this in letters up to eight hundred words, since space is one of NM's problems. You know many others we have and we are sure you will take them in consideration in your proposals for improvement. You know that we cannot, like commercial magazines, adequately pay for articles we need; hence we rely on the good will of our writers. We rely on their morale, their self-sacrifice for a common objective. All of us search for a better life for our nation, for humanity. Since all of us share that common objective we must close our ranks, march together. That, in practice, means your fullest cooperation in the discussions we are instituting in these pages; your acceptance of responsibility for hammering out a policy. We sincerely invite your participation. If we succeed in getting your thoughtful, active cooperation we shall truly be sure of "getting back on the high road again."