

SPEAK YOUR PIECE

Conditions Facing CP

Editor, Daily Worker:

Some of the letters in "Speak Your Piece" are beginning to sound a little petulant, when they lambast the party, and especially its leaderships, for past mistakes, without apparently taking into consideration some of the conditions in life at the time (I won't say "objective conditions" because the less of that jargon from here on, the better!) which might have accounted at least in part for those mistakes.

For they were certainly caused, at least in part, by the heavy attack against the party from the Truman and Eisenhower administrations, which was designed for just that purpose—to cripple it, harass it and make it difficult to work. To the extent mistakes were made, to that extent the attacks were successful. In criticizing "leadership" and "lack of democracy," let us, please, bear the following in mind:

1) The present top leadership of the party has been in prison for several years; previous to serving sentence, it was tied up in a gruelling long trial which made its work—and clear thinking—somewhat difficult; 2) the men and women who were in party leadership while Dennis, Davis, etc. were in prison, are now in prison, and previous to going there, were also operating under the handicap of having to defend themselves, raise funds, etc. while administering the party; 3) the lower echelons of the party were operating under fearful handicaps: hunted, harassed, with meetings next to impossible, funds more difficult to raise, etc. (the continuing arrests of state leadership show this is not over.)

In overlooking or disregarding these circumstances, critics lay themselves open to the charge of seeking merely to destroy or undermine confidence in our leaders.

Under the guise of increasing democracy, minority voice, etc., some of the recent proposals in your columns are raising a far more basic issue, which should be labeled and examined for what it really is: namely, should we re-examine the validity of the kind of party Lenin envisaged and created in the Soviet Union—a monolithic party of a new and special kind, in the United States today?

For to the degree that former concepts of discipline, unanimity and centralism are abandoned (there is no question of course that democracy has not been adequate and can be improved), to that degree we are going to substitute for a "Communist" Party something more like the "Socialist" Party, with commensurately less effectiveness in action albeit with far greater opportunity for everybody saying what they have to say, ad infinitum!

Maybe what our letter writers are groping for is that they do not think we can have a "Communist" party as we have thought of it, acceptable to, and becoming a mass organization of, American working men and women. . . . —F. E.

Why No Discussion By Membership?

NEWARK, N. J.

Editor, Daily Worker:

The publishers note to Eugene Dennis' report, "The Communists Take A New Look," to the National Committee of the Communist Party, states that the report was approved by the National Committee. On the basis of 22 years membership in the CP it's my opinion that when the General Secretary of the Party makes a report, and it is "approved" by the National, the content of that report becomes line, the policy of the Party.

Why couldn't the National Committee hear the report, discuss it, and then, without any "approval" present it to the membership as a basis for dis-

ussion? How can the N. C. "approve" a report which in many respects is obviously inadequate? To give just one example: on the Negro question. A position is stated, but no argument, absolutely none, is given to back up the stated position. There is considerable difference of opinion in the Party on this question. It is impossible to arrive at an authoritative conclusion on it without the widest discussion within the Party, among the Negro people, etc.

Further, three of the reports—by Gene Dennis, Max Weiss and Claude Lightfoot are being printed. Good. But why not a fourth pamphlet containing at least excerpts of the positions, differences and disagreements expressed by other members of the National Committee on various questions discussed? The membership of the Party should know these things. It would help them in arriving at conclusions, and would vastly enrich the discussions. Why do we only get the "approved" reports?

—CHARLIE NUSSER.

Some Truth In Stone's Remarks

Editor, Daily Worker:

To be sure, I. F. Stone did come home with some "severe conclusions about the Soviet Union," to use a phrase written by Joseph Clark. Clark refutes Stone's accusation of "intellectual bondage" by pointing out that there are "few publications of the Left which have carried as much of a sustained, untrammeled, free-wheeling and highly controversial discussion as has our own Daily Worker under the title of Speak Your Piece."

It is very heartening to see the increased self-criticism in our paper. However, I believe that the National Guardian has shown much more criticism of work on the Left because it has criticized from its inception. It is only in the last few months that we can successfully point out our lack

of "intellectual bondage" with editorials on the Rajk case, the Soviet Jewish writers, etc.

To probe more deeply, our source of criticism has been spurred on by the Soviet "new look." We are more intellectually "free" now than we have ever been, but we must be honest and realize that the Soviet Union had to criticize itself before we began to criticize ourselves. This is not to say that we shouldn't follow a good example, but it must be a good example and not be accepted by the mere stamping of a USSR label.

Here is another point connected with criticisms of ourselves and of other Communist parties: the only articles which have appeared in the Daily Worker on the French Communist Party's stand on the Algerian situation have been reportage of suppression of certain articles in L'Humanite. This evidently shows that L'Humanite is conscious of the anti-colonial struggle in Algeria, but why has the French Communist Party voted with the imperialist forces? Isn't this stretching "coalition" a little too far? Where is the Daily Worker's explanation and/or criticism of the French Communist Party's action?

Clark was correct in pointing out the criticisms in our paper, but there is still some truth in Mr. Stone's remark.

—D. M.

A Positive American Program

Editor, Daily Worker:

As a group of Communists who gathered for a pleasant evening, our conversation inevitably approached a discussion on the Soviet 20th Congress. We were able to discuss much that has been published on the 20th Congress until someone brought up the issue of the American Presidential elections, at which point we realized that there was little clarity on this important issue. As a matter of fact, there was great confusion! No two of us

could agree on the proper approach.

As young Americans, and as Communists, we are naturally concerned with what goes on in Socialist nations. However, we are even more concerned with what goes on here, for the American people want answers now. This is a Presidential election year, and as such, all issues concerning it should be foremost in our thoughts and discussions. We should not allow ourselves to fall into the same trap that engulfed us in the past by concentrating on other countries' vital issues and not our own; more specifically, by concentrating on a defense of the Soviet Union—the result being that we become the tail end of vital issues and not the vanguard.

There are too many discussions on the 20th Congress. The majority of letters printed in our paper revolve around the 20th Congress. The majority of discussions at club meetings, we feel, stress the 20th. Admittedly this is important. However, such a stress neglects and subdues the American scene. It suffocates clarity on burning issues immediately surrounding us.

We want a positive program of American policy now, one that caters to and is sensitive to the interests of the American people at this time of our history. Moreover, not only such a program is needed but a determined effort be made to carry out this program. Let us learn from our mistakes. Let us become truly a Communist Party of the American people! . . .

—Four Communists.

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