

SPEAK YOUR PIECE

Shop Workers' Self-Criticism

CHICAGO.

Editor, Daily Worker:

At a recently held meeting of Communist Party shop workers, representing Party workers in a number of important industries in our city, we began to review some of our work in the labor movement.

We, arrived at some common opinions and agreed to write this letter.

We unanimously and emphatically rejected the idea expressed in some circles and reflected in some of the letters to the Daily Worker, that because of our past weaknesses and errors, "We have wasted 10 years of our lives." This mood results in avoiding responsibilities and trying to correct our errors.

Most of us spoke of our activity in the industries we are in, and pointed out the contributions made by the Communists as well as others, in helping to win gains for the workers. No one was at all satisfied that the Communists had made all the contributions they were really capable of. There was no attempt to minimize the serious errors we, as a movement have made. This affected the work of all Communists including us.

But all is not negative about our past. At least this is the feeling we had in reviewing our work.

Secondly, it was our feeling that the current discussion should concentrate more on the reasons for making mistakes and how to correct them quickly. There were a number of opinions expressed that a great part of the responsibility, especially in the labor movement, was due to the separation of the Party leadership from the experiences of the comrades in the shops and the unions.

It was felt that too often our Party tried to work out programs for the unions. Greater attention should be paid to carrying out existing trade union programs which in the main meet most of the immediate needs of the workers today. It is unfortunate that too many of the trade union programs remain on paper.

In regard to the discussion now going on, we felt that the American left should address itself, in the first place, to the errors made in our own country. While we were in agreement that there are mutual benefits to be gotten by criticism of errors made by

other Communist Parties, including those in Socialist countries, this should not obscure the fact that our independence as an American Marxist party will be determined, mainly, by the degree to which we help find the answers to the problems of the American working class.

Thirdly, we felt that in any review of our work we must begin to concentrate our attention to the many immediate pressing issues facing the American workers.

Lastly, we all agreed that it is of the utmost importance to secure the greatest financial support to the Daily Worker.

—A GROUP OF CHICAGO SHOPWORKERS.

Pittman's Review Held Unscientific

Editor, Daily Worker:

There has of late been a great hue and cry for an end to dogmatism and a realistic evaluation of the past and of future perspectives. In my opinion the discussion has not hit upon the underlying attitudes which created this dogmatic approach.

I feel that the attempt to fit facts to theory rather than fit the theory to facts is the crux of the problem. In other words the essence of the problem is: do we use a predominantly deductive approach or an inductive approach? It is my feeling that we cannot be "scientific" and use an approach which is predominantly deductive.

John Pittman gives us a good example of the use of the deductive approach in his book review of June 25 in the D.W. In this review Pittman states that the authors of the book come to the conclusion that racism is wrong and harmful, etc., but that "the overwhelming weight of their evidence . . . tends to support the racist notion of the Negro's inferiority." Pittman does not dispute the validity of the data, nor does he claim that the authors are racist; yet he implies that there is something wrong with the inclusion of this data because it could be used to explain rather than deny the racist claim of the Negro's "innate inferiority."

This to me is an absurd and unscientific position. Truth is what is important above all else and whether this data could or could not be used in a harmful manner is irrelevant. It is obvious from the review that the authors

of the report did not come to racist conclusions on the basis of their data; why should Mr. Pittman assume that others will?

A scientific approach to reviewing a report such as this should ask and answer the following questions: Was the data accurate in point of fact? Was the data biased by the exclusion of other relevant data which might have led to a different interpretation? Did the authors come to logical conclusions on the basis of their data? Did the authors exclude other possible conclusions, which might have been made based on the same data (assuming the data to be accurate)?

What Mr. Pittman does is to start with the assumption (in my opinion a valid one) that the Negro is not "innately inferior" and then to judge the material by how well it supports the assumption. This is not scientific.

The proper (inductive) procedure would be to evaluate the accuracy of the data, examine the report to see if it omits other pertinent data and then to come to conclusions.

If this was done in this review I'm sure Mr. Pittman would have concluded that the data show that the Negro is in fact in an inferior position to the white but that the basis of this inferior position can be found in the oppression of the Negro rather than in any "innate inferiority."

This lack of a scientific approach has been manifested in many areas of Marxist thought with which I have come in contact and makes ridiculous the claims of Marxists that they have a scientific approach to history and society. The history of the past 20 years bears me out in this. I believe that Marxists can have a scientific approach and that they must have one if they are to survive and flourish.

—STUDENT

Brotherhood And the Realities

Editor, Daily Worker:

There are times when reading a Daily article almost makes one despair. Talk, talk of "fight sectarianism," but practice the most fantastic sectarianism.

In his "Assignment USA" of June 29 Joe North says about Irish Catholics and Jews, "Today their children go to the same public schools, belong to the same teams, respect, in their

majority, their religious differences. . . ."

NOT IN NEW YORK CITY THEY DON'T. Most Catholic children go to Catholic parochial schools, and only 182,000 in public schools (World Almanac, 1956, page 715).

And they do not play together, except in the pre-school age groups. As soon as they start to go to separate schools, the children start to boycott each other. I live on East 14 Street, Manhattan, and I know the neighborhood and its playgrounds where my children have been playing for the past 12 years, and this is so in a highly mixed neighborhood. Most neighborhoods are mainly one or the other.

In addition there has been a great spread of private Jewish schools in the past 10 years throughout the city.

Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops are almost all sponsored by one or another denominationally sponsored groups. They are all-Jewish, or Catholic, and their activities reflect it. Jewish girl scouts hold annual assemblies at Temple Emmanuel. Catholic Scout troops hold similar denominational activities.

It was an experience to walk the picket line up in Parkchester when the residents lined up to glare at these of us who came up to support the one Negro family that was there for a while. Try to convince the mothers in a public school PTA that they must welcome the Puerto Rican mothers in to their midst.

And in general the "Left" in New York has hardly ever acted as if it knew that New York was 47 percent Catholic.

—A. JACKS

A Point Lost In Cutting

Editor, Daily Worker:

The June 26 issue of the DW carries a letter over my signature. In writing what was evidently an overlong letter one of the points I consider important was lost in the cutting. I would like another opportunity to question what I think to be incorrect conclusions and proposals made by the DW as a result of the line of thought of some of the DW's editorials, articles and columns.

The June 10 editorial that "we do not consider the speech (Khrushchev's) to be the last word on just how Stalin terror control came into existence and

maintained itself for 20 years and the role of the other Communist leaders."

The editorial goes on to conclude that "the present situation in our opinion, underlines the urgency of the outlook put forward by Eugene Dennis at the National Committee meeting of the Communist Party of a new 'mass party of socialism in our country.' . . ."

It seems to me that in quoting the Dennis remarks IN THE CONTEXT of the editorial on Khrushchev and by the kind of emphasis given them by the DW proves that the DW is violating both the spirit and the intent of Dennis' statements on the subject of eventually forming a broad socialist party.

This editorial gives exactly the impression that Dennis warned against! He emphasized that the situation 'does not call for any move to try to form a new party of socialism prematurely' and that the precondition for doing so is not the weakening but the necessity to 'strengthen the Communist Party, politically, ideologically and organizationally—and above all to extend its mass influence and United Front relationships.'

It appears to me that the DW could make a good beginning in this direction by overcoming some of its own present tendencies to foster obstacles to this objective. The DW has placed the matter of a new party of socialism in a way that is not only fantastically sectarian and premature. It does so in a way that is indeed without perspective!

I dissociate myself from certain tendencies reflected in the DW which fail to recognize that the present situation calls for the strengthening of the Communist Party as the starting point for creating the conditions for the rise of a mass party of socialism in our country. These harmful tendencies, which I reject, above all appear to reflect the thinking and direction of Max Weiss' prolific writings. —HARRY MANN.

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