

# SPEAK YOUR PIECE

## Minimum Wage Law In the Soviet Union

Editor, Daily Worker:

While the Daily Worker should be congratulated for finally recognizing that all is not well in the Socialist world, it should not go overboard by accepting without qualification the clap-trap that appears in the commercial press. The Daily Worker has apparently done this in its report on the new minimum wage law in the Soviet Union. The first paragraph of the article, which was published on Sept. 10, read as follows:

"The Soviet government has introduced a minimum wage which puts the floor on monthly pay at between 300 and 350 rubles in cities and 170 rubles a month in rural areas. Officially the ruble is valued at 25 cents but is somewhat lower in actual purchasing power." (My italics).

If the Daily Worker statement is to be taken at face value, one would have to conclude that about 8,000,000 Soviet workers (the approximate number affected by the law) are probably starving to death. These workers would be receiving an income of less than \$75 a month in the cities and \$67.50 in the rural areas. And this income would buy less than it would buy in the U. S. It would place these workers below the subsistence level.

While Soviet workers do have a lower standard of living than American workers, it is highly improbable that the standard of living of even the poorest paid Soviet worker is anywhere nearly as low as that implied in the Daily Worker article.

The Daily Worker has apparently accepted the distorted economics especially prevalent in the N. Y. Times' articles on the USSR. These articles try to equate two separate things, the price of the ruble in relation to the dollar with the purchasing power of the ruble in the Soviet Union.

Many Americans have complained—and with some justification—that they should receive more than four rubles for every dollar. It is undoubtedly true that if the ruble were traded in the so-called free markets, it would have a much lower value than 25 cents. This is because Soviet exports to the U. S. are small, the number of tourists going to the Soviet Union is still negligible and the Soviet Union has very wisely not offered American bankers and financiers any "investment opportunities." In other words, because the demand for rubles by Americans is

small, the "free market value" of the ruble in terms of dollars is less than the official value of 25 cents.

But this is not the same thing as saying that the purchasing power of the ruble in the Soviet Union is less than 25 cents. Under today's conditions of restricted trade the value of the ruble in the world market bears little or no relationship to its purchasing power in the USSR. This factor must be taken into account when Soviet wages and prices are discussed. To say that the purchasing power of the ruble is less than 25 cents gives a false impression of Soviet living standards.

It is indeed refreshing that the Daily Worker has stopped glorifying every action of the Soviet Union. But it would be regrettable that if in the process of re-evaluating its attitudes it becomes less critical of and less vigilant toward distortions of Soviet reality by the enemies of Socialism.

### AN OLD FRIEND

[Ed. Note: A careful analysis of the Soviet worker's budget by our correspondent in the USSR from 1950 to 1953 published shortly after his return showed that the real purchasing power of the ruble was somewhat lower than 25 cents. This took into account social security and other benefits. Those in the lowest categories were not "starving to death" because others in the family worked and many also received pensions. But the new Soviet legislation was recognition that the lowest paid workers and pensioners had inexcusably low standards as the Soviet leaders have pointed out.]

### Chick Mason Explains

Editor, Daily Worker:

My wife tells me that my article, "Sources of Our Dilemma" in a sense puts me in politics and so I must develop a thick skin.

Unfortunately I have not developed said thick skin, so please pardon some thin-skinned remarks on three varied items.

1—Benjamin J. Davis said (Sun. Sept. 2 DW) in obvious reference to my article, "... It is inevitable, in the present state of the party, that other dangers besides sectarian ones appear, some honest and some not.

"A lengthy document is being widely circulated in our party calling openly for a return to Browderism. In my opinion we should return to nothing, since

there is no previous period like this one."

I don't know whether Davis meant my "danger" as one of the honest ones, so I'll pass on this.

But I hadn't realized that I wanted a return to Browderism until I had read the Davis article. It is quite possible that Davis is correct, for after all the writer sometimes reveals himself more to the reader than to himself.

I hope however that my fellow members will reserve their opinion as to whether his conclusions are in my words, at least until they have an opportunity to read them.

I'm sure that Davis did not mean to imply it, but this sort of thing conjures up an oversimplified mental filing system, with my card labelled: CHICK MASON—BROWDERITE (honest or dishonest).

2—From the DW, Friday, Aug. 21. "... A forthcoming issue of Party Voice will carry the Mason article, and another, critical of it.

"It should be clearly understood that the views expressed by Mason are his own. While there are some differing views in the N. Y. state party leadership, all, however, are in direct disagreement with Mason's views."

Shocked by this item, I checked with state C.P. officials. I was told that an editorial would appear in P.V. pointing out that state leaders had not been polled as to their agreement or disagreement with my article. They had been polled only as to whether it should be printed.

If this is the fact, don't you think your readers are entitled to a correction on your original story?

If this correction is forthcoming, please forgive my impatience.

3—Joseph Lash's article in the N.Y. Post said that I had distributed my full article to 200 party leaders.

My correction of this should imply no criticism of either Lash, or his source of information, but it is of some importance to me that the record show:

That I had mailed or delivered practically all of a little more than 100 copies of the pamphlet, which were mimeographed at my own expense, to the offices of the national, state and county committees at their request, and to various offices of party publications when printing of my article was delayed.

While I had no control as to where these copies were distributed from there on, I have every reason to believe that no

attempt was made to keep them from the membership.

As a matter of fact I have preferred these copies to have been distributed among the membership. I have believed that our members have at least as much right to read my article as does the leadership.

This is said to make it perfectly clear that at no time was any restriction placed on my circulating the pamphlet among the membership. My failure to do so was only limited by time, energy and lack of copies. My article is not and has never been part of any anti-leadership opposition or movement.

Nor is it part of, nor does it take sides in any real, or fic-

titious disagreement among our various members of our national and/or state committees.

Surprising as it may seem to many, it is exactly what it purports to be, the result of some "do it yourself" thinking and over three months of research on the part of a member who is proud of 25 years in the party, and who is anxious that we once again play a vital role in the preservation of the peace, prosperity and democracy of our country and of our fellow Americans.

—And who hopes that we shall once again be as concerned with man in particular as we are, and were, with man in general.

CHICK MASON

## CP LEADERS GREET MINDEL ON HIS 75th BIRTHDAY

The National Committee of the Communist Party yesterday extended its "warmest, most heartfelt greetings" to Jacob Mindel on the occasion of his 75th birthday.

"Comrade Mindel, known as 'Pop' to two generations of his students, comrades and fellow-workers," said the committee, "reaches this milestone in his life secure in the affections of the many thousands of members of the Communist Party as well as numerous non-party advocates of socialism who have had the advantage of knowing him and being taught by him.

"Pop Mindel's special contribution to the movement to which he has dedicated his life from boyhood to the present time has been in the field of teaching the principles of scientific socialism. Today, as for years past, his pupils are to be found deeply involved in the people's struggle of American political life. Thus, his own immediate contribution has been multiplied and magnified by the work of those who have at one time or another come under the influence of his instruction and guidance.

"Pop emerged this month from the prison to which he was sent almost two years ago as punishment for "teaching and advocating" peace, democracy and socialism. These ideas cannot be jailed. They are finding ever new adherents among all forward-looking people not least of all in our own land.

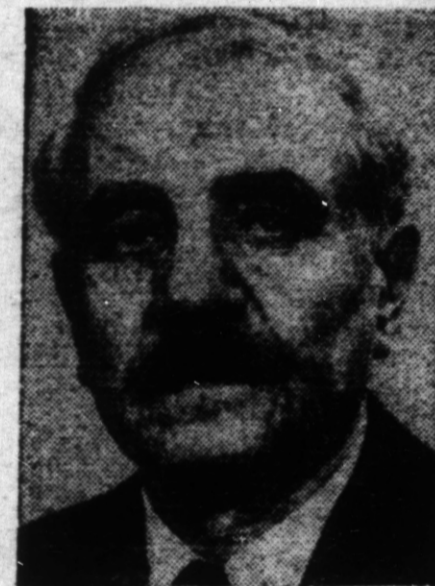
"We are proud and pleased that in spite of the illness which marked his later years, Pop Mindel has emerged from prison to celebrate his 75th birthday with his dear wife Rebecca, his family and comrades, still vigorous enough to give a challenge to his oppressors.

"We say 'Happy Birthday to Jacob 'Pop' Mindel and wish him many more years of fruitful life.

"National Committee Communist Party, U.S.A.

"William Z. Foster, Chairman.

"Eugene Dennis, General Secretary."



MINDEL

## Asks Ellis Island Be Made a Shrine

WASHINGTON, Sept. 17.—Rep. Emanuel Celler (D-NY) today urged President Eisenhower to cancel the sale of Ellis Island, longtime immigration center in New York harbor.

Celler said the island should be set aside as a national "shrine." "Over 40 million immigrants have passed through its gates," Celler said in a statement. "They sought asylum in America from religious, political and economic persecution. Their contributions to our welfare were incalculable. They and their descendants made America great."