

PARDON MY FEELINGS!

A READER complains in a letter that I tell what I "feel" when "what we want is Marxism-Leninism." I did not know we were supposed to check our feelings outside upon entering the Marxist movement — although I have seen it happen without specially good results.

At the risk of being called unscientific, let me give my feelings about a few of the many letters the paper has been receiving.

One thing that bothers me is the fear which a minority of the letters — and some articles too—seem to express over any new idea or any new approach to an old idea. Many new things have been written in the DW in the last few weeks and I am certain that not a single one of them contains the last word or can't be improved



upon, developed, amended or even discarded for still other ideas. Certainly every new idea needs to be subjected to rigorous examination. But some of the readers appear to be dismayed that anything new should be raised in the first place and they seem impatient for it all to end. However, there is no sign of it ending. On the contrary, the Communist Party itself is opening up a discussion and a new look at EVERYTHING preliminary to its convention at the year's end. I expect that this discussion will churn things up to such an extent that the discussion we have had so far in the DW will seem tame by comparison. At least I hope so.

A FEW READERS seem to think that discussion and even new ideas are all right—so long as only the leaders of the movement do the thinking and discussing, while the rest of us wait for final pronouncements to be handed down (a practice especially appealing to some leaders). It is true that some in-

stitutions (mainly religious) have endured for thousands of years on this principle. But no social—and certainly no socialist—institution can flourish under it. That's one of the things they discovered in the Soviet Union.

The idea has been raised—it is not a new one—that we American Marxists suffer from a disease of swinging from one extreme to another. It is true this has happened. But it is not our main trouble, in my opinion. The blight we suffer from is sectarianism. Everytime the smallest step is taken to break out of it someone is always on deck to warn us we are in danger of going to the "other extreme" and to tell us the safest thing is not to move at all.

ONE IDEA which particularly seems to disturb some readers is the possibility of peaceful transition to socialism. This seems to have hit some readers like a bolt from the blue. Without going into the merits of the question—and its exact meaning—let me merely say this is no

bolt from the blue. It has been raised by American and other Communists over the past ten years. It came up in practically every Smith Act trial. But I am afraid some readers believed what the prosecution told them—that this was only a legal trick by the Communists. When William Z. Foster was raising the question not only during the trials but even BEFORE there were any arrests, this was not a bit of hocus-pocus. It was a matter of principle. It is the Justice Department, not the Communists, who have been engaging in legal tricks.

HOWEVER, I hope those readers to whom I have been referring will continue to write in and say exactly what they think. Space limits and the repetitions that inevitably occur have made it impossible to print all the letters we receive. But we have gone out of the way to make room for those which take sharp issue with the position of the DW itself. This is the surest

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way to reach greater clarity and unity in the end.

The majority of our readers, however, have not arrived at the letter-writing stage at all. From conversations with dozens of readers, I know that almost all are excited by the letter column, read it regularly, discuss whether a particular day's column is more or less stimulating than the previous day's, but never think of writing a letter themselves. Or, when they think of it, don't manage to get around to it, or feel what they have to say has been said by others. No doubt it is difficult to overcome the habit of years (for which the DW was largely responsible by our bad habit of ignoring critical letters). But so many questions still need discussing—particularly on the problems before us right here. So come on, friends, let us hear your ideas (even your "feelings")! After all, even a new day won't last forever unless we all make sure it does.