

SPEAK YOUR PIECE

On Capital Punishment

Editor, Daily Worker:

As briefly as I can, I should like to comment on the letter by James Allen, and John Gates' reply, (April 12).

Without a doubt, it seems to me, we have not only a right but the duty to condemn injustices wherever they occur, and, not less, but even more sharply when the injustices occur in Socialist countries. As part of the international workingclass, we most certainly should demand that all those who are guilty of having violated Socialist justice should be publicly tried and punished. In this, as can be seen, I disagree with James Allen.

I disagree with Johnny Gates when he defends the Daily's call that the U.S. Government move in the United Nations "to secure a world covenant ending capital punishment."

First, it appeared that we are calling upon the U.S. Government to rise and rescue justice in the Soviet Union, which I consider harmful and not a Marxist position. But the main point I wish to make in connection with this is the following: Suppose we succeeded in developing popular pressure upon our government to a point where it really brought such a proposal before the UN, and the Soviet Union opposed it, as I am sure it would, what sort of Marxist position would we be in? Of course, no conditions exist to actually bring such a situation about; but I am carrying the Daily's proposal to its logical conclusion to show how foolish and ill-thought out it is.

Why would the Soviet Union oppose such a proposal? Because capital punishment in a Socialist country exists not as an instrument of terror against the people, but as a still necessary security measure for the country.

We have now found out that it has been abused, and we are properly aroused against it, but that does not mean that we should take a permanent position that proclaims: even under Socialism there is no hope for true justice. The painful corrective that is now going on is a refutation of such a position.

Under Socialism, there will be no problem of doing away with capital punishment once the true security of the state will no longer require it.

Capitalism, on the other hand, maintains capital punishment as an instrument of terror

against the people. It will give it up only when it is forced to do so by overwhelming popular pressure.

Conclusion: I am for eternal — INTERNATIONAL — vigilance that proletarian justice shall not be violated in any Socialist land.

I am for the abolition of capital punishment in the United States, and wherever capitalism exists.—A.S.

Denies Foster Gags Discussion

Editor, Daily Worker:

It seems to me that E.K.'s letter entitled "No Gag on Discussion" (Daily Worker, April 11) violates the spirit and essence of criticism and self-criticism, and decency with respect to Comrade Foster.

It is, in my opinion, the kind of critique that causes the discussion to border on anarchy.

Every Marxist, and every democratic-minded person is gratified that the Daily Worker can still be published "despite the government's heavy-handed attempt at suppression," as E. K. writes.

"I trust," writes E.K., "you will continue to defy those who would wipe out all dissent in our country." No one is surprised by the government's acts. But E.K. then plunges into the allegation that Comrade Foster is stifling discussion.

"But it is distressing," writes E.K., "to see in William Z. Foster's article—'Lesson from the Stalin Question'—a tendency to clamp down on the recent surge to free discussion. . ." Whether it is intended or not, E.K. actually lumps Comrade Foster with the aims of our bitterest enemies.

This simply is not so. On the contrary, Comrade Foster is strengthening the discussion and preventing it from collapsing in anarchy. Moreover, Comrade Foster is a person and has a right to his views which, in my view, are healthy.

He also has the duty to do what he can to prevent enemies of free discussion from plunging us into confusion and frustration. They could not dare criticize their mistakes and errors because they are inherent in their system. In behalf of their own class interest the monopolists would like to turn discussion in our ranks into its very opposite.

Why not say it? The accusation against Comrade Foster is unjustified. E. K. is throwing stones where they do not belong. The title of E.K.'s letter,

namely, "No Gag on Discussion," does not at all fit Comrade Foster.

Anyone who has associated with Comrade Foster and really knows him, or has observed his actions and methods of work, knows that he is not a Comrade who stifles thinking. The record speaks for itself here.

—James W. Ford.

Fraternity with Socialist Countries

PHILADELPHIA.

Editor, Daily Worker:

Editor Gates' arrogant rejection of James Allen's criticism is an example of the wise-guy attitude that undoubtedly paved the way for the type of injustices which the socialist countries are courageously exposing. Pouncing on certain weaknesses in the criticism, Gates tried to demolish the central arguments, which were for a fraternal and modest approach to our brother parties. These arguments will appeal to worker-Communists.

The unions and other working class organizations have learned by bitter experience the need for fraternity and solidarity. An inspiring example of such solidarity has just been seen in the Westinghouse strike. Solidarity is most needed at critical moments when past mistakes must be corrected.

True, the socialist countries are not in crisis. Still, the mistakes they are now correcting are most painful and unquestionably shocking to the citizens of those countries. That is just the reason why socialist minded workers everywhere should take an attitude of fraternal solidarity in discussing those mistakes. That is not the tone of the D.W. editorial which Allen objected to:

Further, we must certainly show our independence of other working class parties. However, the main way to do this is not by attacking other parties. The main way to show our independence is by independently attacking our own weaknesses before other parties have to suggest them to us. This is how we will win the respect of the American working class. We will not win their respect by blustering about other parties' faults.

The bitterness of the subsequent editorial berating our Soviet comrades around the tragic injustice to certain Jewish leaders shows a continued rejection of the concept of fraternal solidarity. —R. M.

On Road to Becoming An American Party

NEW HAVEN, Conn.

Editor, Daily Worker:

The "Daily Worker" has been my favorite newspaper since I was a boy, and I'd like to tell you that I was never so proud of it as on the days you published the editorial, "The Rajk Trial," John Gates' answer to James Allen and the editorial, "Grievous Deeds."

Perhaps it is not too much to say that these contributions reflect the conscience of our movement today. They, plus the articles by Max Weiss and George Morris, have been long in coming, but having come they accurately expressed some of the sentiments many of us privately held for some time and which we feel must be forcibly said today.

It seems to me that if the direction given by these statements were to be applied to all of our work, we will at last be on the road of becoming—not only in our own minds—but also in the eyes of the American people, a really genuine, independent American party of Socialism.

To help achieve this we must also break with another cult, one which has afflicted us far worse than the cult of the individual, that is the cult of the Soviet nation, to use an apt expression coined by a fellow Conn. Smith Act defendant in a recent discussion.

The horrible, shocking disclosures of the unforgivable crimes committed against innocent people by the Stalin-Beria regime shows how necessary it is to maintain a critical attitude towards all questionable features in the Socialist countries. How much higher our stock would be with the people if we had done so in the past.

In all frankness, I do not feel that the contributions of either Foster or Dennis, though informative and necessary, are attuned to what is truly required today. The obviously detached tone of their writings, in contrast to the sharp moral indignation of the Daily Worker's editorials and its realistic appraisal of the position we are in is extremely disturbing.

Some of Foster's articles, for example, raise as many questions as they seek to answer. As for Dennis' "Questions and Answers," I feel one would like to learn, not only that "we often tended to gloss over problems and shortcomings in the Soviet Union," but rather why he permitted an atmosphere to prevail in the Communist Par-

ty only six years ago, in which legitimate criticism of such questionable Soviet developments was definitely discouraged.

We are all horrified to learn now of the murder of the group of Soviet Jewish writers, but when they dropped out of sight in '48 and '49 many of us began to ask questions. In July 1950, I believe, in an article in the "Political Affairs," John Williamson, on behalf of the National Committee, was empowered to answer these vexing questions. He flatly stated that those who are anxious and concerned over the fate of these writers had fallen victim to "ravings" and that people who raise these questions "should be criticized."

It is this narrow, intolerant attitude which has alienated many honest would-be supporters of the movement and this attitude has got to be ended too. Socialism has proved its superiority over capitalism in every way, and if it isn't all that we expected and hoped for, we will not help matters by discouraging just criticisms of the disappointing features which appear in the Socialist countries.

The "Daily Worker" and its courageous editors are on the right track. Keep up the good work.

—Sid Resnick,
Conn. Smith Act defendant.

Clear and Forthright

Editor, Daily Worker.

Congratulations on your editorials of April 2 and 13. It fills one with joy to see the discussion unfolding on the pages of the Daily Worker which represents a bold attempt at independent thinking. Numerous articles written by Wm. Z. Foster, Alan Max, Max Weiss are expressing accumulated thoughts and pent up feelings of many of us.

The articles by Steve Nelson and Johnny Gates are clear and forthright. Steve's letter contains many fine statements, particularly one when he says: "That the leaders of socialist lands should be accountable to the supporters of socialism outside of their countries." The fact that they are the leaders of victorious socialist lands doesn't give them immunity from criticism nor a license to do things not accounted for.

In my opinion Johnny Gates' arguments against James Allen are correct. I agree especially that "capitalism cannot rule without injustices, but injustices under socialism cannot be condoned."—R.F.