

SPEAK YOUR PIECE

"New Mass Party Of Socialism"

LOS ANGELES.

Editor, Daily Worker:

In the Daily People's World, there was an article taken from the N.Y. Daily Worker dated June 6, 1956. Its last paragraph read as follows:

"The editorial concluded with an appeal for 'an all-out effort and cooperation of all socialist-minded forces' in the United States, in order to bring about a new mass party of socialism here, 'without unnecessary delay, and as quickly as circumstances will permit.'"

This concept of a "new mass party of socialism" is one about which I haven't the slightest understanding, nor, have I heard it mentioned at any time prior to reading it in the People's World. Because the concept seemed entirely new and categorically demanded immediate or almost immediate action I felt the need for some clarification on both it, and, the manner in which it was presented.

As I understand it we are now entering the process of examining our past work, for which purpose the National Committee met recently in order to make such an evaluation, and, present to the party its conclusions for the future as a basis or beginning for a pre-convention discussion.

Now there is no question but what the National Committee has the function of presenting both its evaluation and proposals for increasing the future effectiveness of our work. However, I do not understand this presentation of the concept of a "new mass party of socialism" on or about the time we are supposedly entering a pre-convention period. And I understand a good deal less the "without unnecessary delay, and as quickly as circumstances will permit."

If the pre-convention discussion is for the purpose of doing our best thinking in order to arrive at conclusions which will improve our future activities why has this proposal been made in a manner which suggests that it is already our future program? And if it is, will the pre-convention discussion be merely the amount of time considered necessary for an explanation of how it is to operate?

I hope an explanation will be made as soon as possible.

—West Coast Communist.

Vague Formula On Negro Question

Editor, Daily Worker:

I would like to comment on the Dennis report.

On the Negro question—the report still talks about a "national freedom front." Besides being a term that no one can clearly understand, it bears no relation to what the Negro people really want—which is complete equality and first class citizenship.

The statement on the 1948 electoral campaign is a masterful study in double talk. It says whatever you want it to say and mean. It was right—it was wrong—yes, no and maybe. There is complete contradiction built into this statement.

There is still a tendency on the part of the leadership to use mechanical translations of terms and phrases. Newspaper articles, speeches and pamphlets sound like poor foreign translations. It almost seems that everything humanly possible is done NOT to sound American. How about "cult of the individual"—instead of hero-worship, or "dialectical materialism" instead of "scientific method," "democratic centralism" and not majority rule?

And we do not tell the American people how Socialism in the USA would work, nor do we assure them that the democratic structure of free elections and a country, run by the people, for the people would continue and be extended.

In view of all the errors by the leadership enumerated in the report and of the fatal results, the statement that an entirely new approach is needed but that "this of course does not call for any move to try to form a new party of socialism prematurely" is now condescending and shows that these admissions of faults are not really being taken seriously enough!

I say—a reorganization cannot come too soon and is long overdue. I feel that the leadership though devoted and loyal is completely frozen in their habits of both work and expression and are not able to make the very sharp changes demanded by history for America.

In spite of its faults, the party has made an important contribution to the USA and will in time, march with the American people into Socialism.—OLD TIMER.

Verses on Cult Of Personality

Editor, Daily Worker:

Here's my contribution:

Cult of Personality

October was his catapult,
To whence he built his selfish cult.

Becoming ever more occult,
To live with him got difficult.
E'er fewer colleagues he'd consult,

He'd often friend and foe insult

Who did not o'er his works exult.

The end could have but one result,
Joe's comrades having turned adult,
Posthumously, denied his cult.
—S. Murray.

Defense of Miss Strong

Editor, Daily Worker:

P.D.A.'s letter in the June 20 DW is full of self-righteous indignation against Anna Louis Strong because she, according to P.D.A., did not "raise her voice in protest" against the "atrocities" in the Soviet Union.

I suspect from the tone of P.D.A.'s letter that had she done this before P.D.A. became acquainted with Khrushchev's speech she would have met with the same outraged, virtuous indignation that is now leveled against her.

Perhaps P. D. A. has super-human vision so that he, unlike Miss Strong and most people, can evaluate a situation immediately, but as "opportunistic" as it may be, human beings generally cannot come to pat conclusions about world-shaking events without the benefit of time which lends perspective.

—VINCIT OMNIA VERITAS

An Inflexible System of Thought

Editor, Daily Worker:

In his letter of June 12, Herbert Aptheker is critical of a Daily Worker editorial for implying that facts regarding the brutalities of the Stalin era were available but we wouldn't listen.

Not so, says Aptheker. He mentions a few dignitaries of the bourgeois world who also were "convinced of the truth of the charges," presumably against those tried in the purge trials of 1936 and 1938.

Aptheker winds up his letter by saying the question of truth about the USSR "is not to be shunted off in terms of what 'should have been' and who 'should have listened to whom.'" I agree. But I'm afraid that in criticizing the Daily Worker for doing this, he is equally guilty.

The point here is that the Communists in this country, as in all countries, were operating within an inexorable system of thought, one which brooked no criticism of the USSR. Whether we had access to the facts or not is irrelevant. In any case, there was no question of examining them objectively. Nor is it a case of the responsibility of this or that leader or individual. All of us operated within this fixed system, and we either accepted it or went elsewhere politically—as many did.

In the early days of the USSR, when its existence was extremely precarious, one could argue that this system might have had

a measure of justification. We now know that beyond this it reflected a profoundly false relationship between the Marxist movement of our country, as of other countries, and the land of socialism. The problem of a proper relationship is highly complex and needs a lot of thought. It is fundamental for us today.

One wrong tendency that has appeared so far, in my view, is a re-assertion of this false relationship, a return to apologetics and an uncritical acceptance of things as they now are in the USSR. Just as it was a denial of historical materialism to have viewed the infant socialist state as a Utopia in the Stalin era, so is it a denial of reality to expect the present Soviet leadership to overcome overnight the undemocratic practices and procedures which they pursued under Stalin.

I believe Eugene Dennis' statement in the D.W. of June 18 contains an element of this return to apologetics.

The opposite error denies the enormous advance of socialism in the world today, and its great impact upon the forward movement of history. Though yet in its infancy, this new era in world civilization has made incredible advances in behalf of the people living under socialism, and has decisively influenced the liberation from colonial oppression of half the world's population. As in all historic development, the legal-superstructure lags behind the socialist material base. We know it will catch up.

I believe either error, if persisted in, can be disastrous for our movement.

—MAX GORDON

Dennis Article

LONG ISLAND CITY

Editor, Daily Worker:

Dennis on Khrushchev in the DW of June 18—Seven columns of platitudes, a rehash of ideas already expressed in the "Speak Your Piece" column, and cautious fence straddling.

—A READER

Science

Editor, Daily Worker:

Marx, Engels, and Lenin wrote on economics, political theory, history, philosophy (including a theory of knowledge, dialectic materialism) as well as tracts. Not all of these writings are universally valid, being descriptive of, or directed to problems of a particular place and time. For instance, Marx's "Value, Price and Profit" is not meaningful for a capitalism where huge aggregations of capital are frozen, where labor is specialized, and neither can

move freely from industry to industry.

We have not convinced Americans that Marxism-Leninism is a continuation of the tradition of Jefferson, Lincoln, and Debs. Most Americans consider it a foreign ideology. Even many party members are vague about the meaning of terms like "Marxist-Leninist Party," "Marxism-Leninism is no dogma," "Marxist-Leninist science," etc. These terms convince most people that we adhere to a huge body of writing, much of which was directed to specific problems of other times and countries.

Why not quit relying on phrases from Marx and Lenin, and rely on their methodology? That's what we mean when we talk of creative Marxism. That is the heritage they left that has universal validity. We should be applying the dialectic method to conditions in the U. S. to discover the road to scientific socialism. For this we need:

1. An examination of the writing of Marx, Lenin and others, not to substantiate a policy, but to discover what are the universal principles of scientific socialism.

2. An analysis of the capitalist economy today, particularly the American economy—in the same spirit.

3. A history of the U.S. from the standpoint of historical materialism.

4. A review of the operation of democratic centralism. Most discussions have been merely to convince rank and file of the correctness of policies framed by leadership, not collectively to decide the policy. Most important is the presentation of minority opinions on every level. Aptheker's letter and Schrank's comments about Clark and Starobin indicate differences of opinion that have never reached the membership. We are entitled to debate policy, not merely to discuss a majority report labeled unanimous.

5. Re-appraisal of our leadership who, despite great personal courage, have surely over the past twenty years made so many costly errors as to cast doubt on their ability to use objectively the science they boast of.

6. The selection of a leadership dedicated to the unity in action and organization of all who believe in socialism.—A.

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