

SPEAK YOUR PIECE

Flesh Pots Of Coney

Editor: Daily Worker:

Life must go on, regardless of the gravity of the political situation. Joe North sings of the aesthetic values of Jones beach; I sing of the flesh pots of Coney.

Let me spell it out, three hundred and fifty million barrels. Because there is an awful finality in spelling it out. And besides there is less chance of a typographical error. Three hundred and fifty million barrels of sewage pour into the Lower Bay daily, hard by the Statue of Liberty, from the Jersey area. And according to time and tide and tracer floats, within a period of six hours this sewage finds its way to Coney Island.

But don't let this elementary fact deter you. Because, especially on a sunny summer day, it does not deter the masses, the millions who do not have the where-with-all, though they might have the inclination, to go elsewhere. Besides, they do not come there to swim in the sewage. Only a minority swim at all. The vast majority are sun worshippers.

Are there any appreciable number of pagans at Jones Beach? Do they unashamedly, in the best tradition of their hemispheric forebears, the Incas and Aztecs, worship the sun? I doubt it. Otherwise Joe North, an astute observer, would surely have reported it. So the first thing one learns from Coney is that the ancient instincts of humanity are still very much in evidence today.

The second thing one learns is that middle-age America, both male and female, is rapidly, eating itself into a premature grave. Scarcely one, over 40 years of age, but what does not possess sufficient corpulence in susceptible areas for two or three ordinary mortals. Middle-aged Coney is positively Gargantuan in this respect. Is this true of Jones Beach? If Joe North had even so much as spotted anything more dangerous than a slice of tomatoe or a leaf of lettuce we would have known about it forthwith and outright.

What could be more contradictory than sewage and faith and fat? Yet it is there and there's no use shutting our eyes to it or holding our nose with thumb and forefinger. Besides there are immense compensations . . . in the sprightliness and comeliness of youth, in the excited wonder of a child as it retreats before the advancing breaker, sewage saturated though it may be. The vast, colorful, teeming beach is like a stage, and the boardwalk overlooking it and running parallel to it, is like a balcony, each independent of the other, yet constantly interchanging, flowing from one to the other. And last, but not least, is the subway station, the last stop for

Coney, at Stillwell Avenue and 14th St., which disgorges the flowing millions from the five boroughs and beyond into the immediate vicinity of the sea. To see them come trooping down the steps, all ages, carrying beachgear, outlandishly rigged, chattering so gayly, their faces illuminated with expectancy, is a sight that would warm the cockles of the most pessimistic heart.

No, Joe. Thank you very much, but it's Coney for me every time.

—M. H.

Why Not Speak?

Westchester County, N.Y.
Editor, Daily Worker:

The letter from I. H. of Schenectady appealing to the "leading committee to lead" gets my support. At this point, I would even settle for much less: why don't they just SPEAK?

From where I stand, the discussions now taking place seem somewhat repetitive, formless and aimless. I feel this is not so much due to lack of organized "guidance," although that might help, as to another factor which is disturbing many people with whom I speak.

I feel that the leading party committees and individuals are not being honest and above-board with the rank and file members, and this feeling is beginning to work real havoc.

Surely W. Z. Foster, Ben Davis, Jr., Carl Winter, Jim Jackson, Jim West and a score of other national leaders have ideas on the questions being presently discussed. Where are their letters? No need to write a book about these questions.

Where are the various state and county leaders from all over the country? Where are the contributions from Lil Gates, Ben Davis, John Louis, Horace Marshall, Herb Wheeldon, Don Lester to mention a few in N.Y.? In the past, whenever there were things to be done, these leaders were prolific. And now?

An perhaps most important: why are the discussions and debates which many members know are taking place among leading members not publicized? We know there are basic disagreements—which is the healthiest thing that has hit this Party since its inception—among leaders. Why are differing positions and those who take them not brought to the membership? We were to be trusted to expose ourselves to sacrifices and hardships and jail during the past 20 years, but not to differences of opinion among leading members? What kind of apprenticeship is necessary to prepare to share an opinion with a national committee member?

Not many things about our political future are certain. But one thing I do feel is certain is that if these Star Chamber pro-

ceedings continue with the obvious desirable differences hidden beneath a worn-out shibboleth of "monolithic unity," those leaders now responsible for keeping the rank and file uninformed and ignorant of Party proceedings will find themselves without a corporal's guard to lead.

In addition to writing more freely and briefly on current issues, and instead of debating among themselves, ad infinitum, our national, state and county leaders would also do well to attend a local club meeting every night in the week and listen to what is going on down below. Then they should state their own opinions freely—and briefly—so members know what kind of people they are and where they stand. Maybe in this way some of us will begin to feel that the "leadership" is truly interested in leading, not pontificating.

—S. T.

About Self-Criticism

Editor, Daily Worker:

I would like in all seriousness to ask what is meant by the term "self criticism"? In all the years that I've been around and heard explanations of it, I've never seen any examples forthcoming. Of course, I've heard people "plead guilty" to this or that charge or weakness. But is this all there is to it? Shouldn't it have something to do with explaining, clearing up confusing points so that past errors won't be made again? Shouldn't it help us to better judge whether the Self-Criticiser can be entrusted to continue in whatever position he's in?

I raise this point because of the two recent articles which appeared in The Worker by Albert Blumberg. In them he undertakes to analyze the trends in the wide-ranging discussion that American Communists are engaged in. And to offer advice as to which way it should go. He also plunks for the Dennis line of a "broader new mass party of socialism." Which of course is his privilege.

But, at the bottom of the first column of the first of these two very long articles, he digresses for exactly one paragraph, to mention the field of political action in which he had a particular responsibility, and to which he says, "Not only did I share in the mistaken estimate around the formation of the Progressive Party and its continuation after 1948, but I helped compound the errors by a mechanical and rigid implementation of wrong policies."

Now, I'd like to know if this is an example of self-criticism. Of course, if he's discussed his weakness elsewhere, he should have said so; and please excuse me for my ignorance in raising the matter.

—O. L.