

We Like Criticism

by Robert Minor

SOMETIMES adverse criticism of what we write arouses our sympathy more than the most enthusiastic approval. Criticism is more useful than blind approval. This is generally true even when the critic is mistaken, provided his opinion is based in honest thinking. Such is the case with several letters we have received expressing disagreement with my article, *That Communist Issue*, in the *Daily Worker* of Nov. 7. So interesting are these letters, so obviously sincere and thoughtful, and so useful can they be as an occasion for answering questions that are current in the minds of many people, that we publish one of them today in full, as follows:



Editor *Daily Worker*—Dear Sir:

"I find myself in sharp disagreement with one of the statements contained in the article by Robert Minor in the paper of Nov. 7, 1944.

"I can understand the importance of pointing out that there need be no world depression after the war; that in fact there may be, and can be, real prosperity which would, of course, benefit the working class, as well as industry and capital.

"It is entirely in order also to point out that for the first time we may be witnessing the comparatively unfettered functioning of 'free enterprise,' and it is, of course, proper and correct to support at this time the representatives of an enlightened capitalism, who are determined to bring to the country prosperity and social reform as against those forces who would atavistically return us to the Hoover days when 'free enterprise' was being throttled by the grossest evils of monopoly capital.

"However, anyone who has ever been engaged in a competitive business or profession, even under enlightened capitalism, must know that it inevitably makes honest,

decent individuals into greedy, dishonest and degraded individuals. In consequence, society is similarly degenerated. Even the most enlightened capitalism, giving full sway to 'free enterprise' cannot avoid this result, because of the necessities of the competitive profit system, the jungle morality and its do-your-neighbor-before-he-does-you ethics.

"It is true, and it is important to remember that the people of the United States are certainly not politically ready for a change and that the overwhelming majority of the American people want to retain the capitalist economy, and it is, therefore, correct to indicate that perhaps for many generations to come we must, whether we like it or not, live under such an economy. But it is certainly going too far to say that it is better for the laboring class that this is so.

"In my humble opinion, no form of capitalism, however enlightened and however free 'free enterprise' may be, can begin to approximate the healthy mental and physical rejuvenation which stems naturally from the political effects of a socialist economy.

"Nor is it enough to add that the enlightenment of capitalism has been brought about by reason of an alliance with the only socialist country in the world. That still does not prove that with us, or with any other people, capitalism in any form is preferable at any time to socialism.

"That we are due to live under capitalism for some years to come is apparent. But that is so only because historically many are not ready for the next higher form of economy. Are we committed to a philosophy of what is, is right?

"Very truly yours,

"J. HART."

ANYONE who has ever raised his head above the dust and dared to dream of a better civilization must regard such a letter as the above with respect. The highest achievements of political thought of the past 100 years are reflected in the words: ". . . no form of capitalism, however enlightened and however free 'free enterprise' may be, can begin to approximate the healthy mental and physical rejuvenation which stems naturally from the political effects of a socialist economy."

Nevertheless, the writer of the letter is, in my opinion, quite mistaken on several points. In future issues of the *Daily Worker* I will try to show it. Meantime, it is fair to remark that Mr. Hart is not fully correct in saying that I said "free enterprise" may be functioning unfettered "for the first time," nor in understanding the passage in my article in which I used the expression "the best system of production." Such questions can never be clarified by asking what social system is "preferable" — "at any time." Such a "timelessness" as to what is "best" puts the problem on an unhistorical plane where no clarity is possible. Nor did I say the people are "not politically ready for a change," but that the overwhelming majority has "opposed socialist solutions," which is not the same statement. It seems to me Mr. Hart mistakes the quite valid idea of peace "for many generations" as implying a condition of changelessness that is quite unknown to history. His question, "Are we committed to a philosophy of what is, is right?" suggests that the reply must touch some fundamentals. But I like Mr. Hart's letter.

Worth Repeating

ELECTION RESULTS, as seen by the jovial Howard Brubaker in the current (Nov. 18) *New Yorker*: Republicans take comfort in the fact that Roosevelt got 17 fewer electoral votes this time than he did four years ago. If this trend continues, the GOP can count on sweeping back from exile in the autumn of 1964.