

# SPEAK YOUR PIECE

## Criticizes Bureaucracy

GARY, Ind.

Editor, Daily Worker:

From what I've read in the discussion so far, especially the articles by Foster and other leaders of the Communist Party, they all harp on Browder as the symbol of hero worship and one man leadership and they hint that when we got rid of Browder we freed ourselves of those bad practices. It seems to me that that is not true. As a matter of fact, the hysterical atmosphere in which the discussion was then conducted, prevented the expression of honest differences and made impossible the creation and development of collective leadership.

The truth is that bureaucracy and one man leadership was further consolidated on a national, state and local level continues. The exaggerated eulogies on the occasion of Foster's Birthday in the Daily Worker was only a small example. In the Daily Worker and in P.A. party functionaries continue to refer to each other as "leaders of the American Working Class," "leaders of the Negro People," "Great Women Leaders," etc. If these self proclaimed titles were true, our troubles would be over.

The truth of the matter is that CP leaders and functionaries have been for most of their lives, inner party functionaries, isolated from the people and have no organizational ties with the mass organizations of the people.

In the postwar period, the CP leadership behaved as though war and fascism was just around the corner. It is this sort of thinking that caused them to arrive at a whole number of wrong and very harmful policies. For example, Was it not wrong to make the Marshall Plan a breaking point issue within the labor movement and thus provoke the expulsion of a million members from the CIO? It seems to me that Marshall Plans come and go, but the unity of the labor movement is the primary consideration. This needs public explanation. I hope it will be forthcoming soon.

The sectarian adventure of the middle class lead Third Party (Progressive Party) was pretty much dictated by the same consideration. The conviction that war and fascism was inevitable . . . that every one has already chosen sides and that the last ditch fight was at hand. This policy cut us off from active political activity along with the mass of labor and the people.—A. W.

## Rather Right Than Marxist?

Ann Arbor, Michigan

Editor, Daily Worker:

A letter in Thursday's issue (April 19) disturbs me. Referring to the capital punishment issue, A. S. writes: "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?"

The implication is that if Marxists in the U. S. come to disagree over a particular issue with Marxists in the Soviet Union, it is we who are in error and must give way. The Soviet position, as if by definition, is "the Marxist" position. What kind of critical thinking is that?

I feel that some Marxists use the term "Marxist" like certain friends of mine use the term "Christian." Whatever is true, just, and honorable, they say, is a "Christian principle." This usage renders it the vaguest of all terms, applicable to anything and everything; so that Socrates, for instance, becomes an exponent of Christian principles.

So some Marxists would incorporate every true proposition into the body of Marxist theory; and if some hitherto accepted idea proves to be false—well, it wasn't really a Marxist idea.

(1) We could define Marxism in terms of certain fundamental propositions enunciated by Marx, Lenin, and other writers: propositions defining dialectical and historical materialism, the Marxian analysis of capitalism, the class, etc.

(2) We could define Marxism as the position of the Communist Party. Such a definition would have to include a reference to time, since as a consequence of learning from experience, the development of new situations, etc., the Party position does change. A definition without reference to time would imply a continually changing content of Marxist theory.

(3) We could define Marxism as the position of all those who call themselves Marxists. This would certainly allow some queer and contradictory propositions into Marxism!

(4) We could define Marxism as containing all those propositions that are true, and none of those that are false. Then the adjective "Marxist" becomes logically equivalent to "true."

Alternative (1) seems to me most reasonable.

The times call for some deep, critical thinking. A notorious enemy of honest thinking is persuasion by the undue prestige of an authority, or by the desire to conform with our associates, or by the label attached to an idea. A thorough, soul-searching self-criticism demands the slogan: I would rather be right, than Marxist!

As a Marxist, I offer this paradoxical slogan as a small contribution to the revitalization of the Communist movement.

—A STUDENT.

## On Using Scientific Method

Editor, Daily Worker:

I have been a Communist for close to 20 years and have heard "criticism and self-criticism" beaten up, down and around with the shallowness of an empty barrel cliché. Yet it basically carries the meaning of the soundest barometer of Marxist theory . . . a testing, an examination of events transpired and the role of individuals in order to evaluate the validity of these theories and actions, to move on to an improvement in action, for the future. This, to use American phraseology, is nothing different from what we Americans and all the world know as the scientific method.

Any scientist, including a social scientist, needs to regularly assemble his materials or evidence or data and examine them objectively in order to evaluate his work. He examines what is presented, studies the data for what is wrong or what is missing, examines what he has done or not done. This is an objective and scientific process known the world over and practiced by scientists in order to ensure progress. What method of appraisal more sound or profound could be more appropriate to an organization founded and based on scientific socialism? I suggest that we abandon the meaningless term "criticism and self-criticism" and utilize the term evaluation or scientific evaluation or scientific method to say what we really mean.

In America one grows and lives in a most highly competitive society, where one succeeds only at the expense of another's failures; where one child's marks are high in relation to another's being low. The criteria for success is an individual one, not a collective one. To be right is synonymous with success. To be wrong or incorrect is synonym-

ous with failure and personal inadequacy. This emotional undercurrent to the whole concept of "criticism and self-criticism" has, I feel, a particularly intense quality for Americans. Communists are no exception.

Only a Party in which the leadership fosters an atmosphere of safety, comfort and dignity for both itself and for the average individual in this scientific and objective approach can hope to promote the necessary scientific appraisal so necessary to our work. That, I am sure, is what is fundamentally meant by the term "criticism and self-criticism."

Brooklyn Reader

## Guarantees of Justice Needed

Editor, Daily Worker:

The experience of humanity in its long history in fighting for freedom cannot be by-passed, even under socialism. So long as people execute the laws every safe-guard ever devised to protect the people must be zealously watched. Power is as corrupting as money. My fear of what one individual with too much power can do has always been greater than what the people will do with freedom for expression, etc.

American communists fought a battle of words in our attempt to fight chauvinism. The gain of all this for the Negro people was nil. It was painful to watch the wrath between the comrades instead of saying it for the class enemy who are the real chauvinists. All we accomplished was to convince the Negro people we had in our ranks incorrigible chauvinists.

We are great talkers with answers for everything—slogans, quotes, and of course characterizing before explaining. Terms such as you are subjective, sectarian, leftist, rightist, etc., are used too freely and without understanding. When you kick a guy in the teeth, don't wag a finger at him and say you're subjective because he is hollering. The ability to listen should be cultivated.

—I. K.

## Agrees With Editorial

Editor, Daily Worker:

Congratulations on your editorial calling for an end to capital punishment, on Grievous Deeds; also to Howard Fast for many fine columns in the last few weeks.

I cannot feel that the prediction that our transition to socialism here will necessarily be peaceful is anything other than premature. We who cherish democratic liberties of course hope that they will be preserved, made real, and amplified. But the transition to socialism in this country is so far in the future that surely it is rash to predict what the strength of reactionaries in our borders will be at that time. Among other factors, new destructive technical inventions may make a handful of rich men able to use power in ways we cannot now imagine. Sectarianism and opportunism are equal dangers; we must take every precaution to chart a realistic course between these two evils.

Would it be possible for the Daily Worker, in the same spirit in which it called for an end to capital punishment, to urge the Soviet Union, unilaterally to end all tests of nuclear weapons. I realize the risk is great, but 1. The whole world knows the Soviet Union has those weapons and is well ahead in its study of the uses of atomic power. 2. Though I do not doubt that extreme care is taken in that Socialist country, so that whenever a test is undertaken, there shall be as little danger to human life as possible, still, nuclear poisons are nuclear poisons,