

Dear Editor

Letters from Readers

The views expressed in the letters printed below do not necessarily reflect our own. However we are glad to present their opinions and invite others to write to this column.

Raspberry Barbs And Stalin

Dear Editor:

ROCHESTER, Minn.
On my little two acre place on the outskirts of Rochester, I raise strawberries and raspberries along with my vegetable garden. Perhaps some of you have a couple of raspberry bushes in your back yard.

Raspberries are very good right off the bush or made into jam and jelly, but raspberry canes are miserable to handle in the fall when the old canes must be cut out to make room for the new. They are covered with little sharp prickles which get under the skin and break off.



You can't see the annoying things, but you know they are there all the time, and it seems like they keep going deeper and deeper.

Now, this matter of Joseph Stalin affects me in a like manner. Almost overnight I am asked to believe that Stalin is not the great and good man I have considered him to be . . . I just do not believe it, especially since up to now no one as brought forward any proof of the charges. With all due respect to Gene Dennis, I do not believe his remarks on the matter of Stalin are very convincing.

The attacks on Stalin came after his death when he is unable to defend himself. These attacks remind me of Sokolsky's attacks on the dead Roosevelt. Why were these attacks not made when he was still alive? when he was still alive?

Why are we asked to take Khrushchev's word for all this? Where is the proof? They are saying that Lenin left a will in which he warned against Stalin. Trotsky also said the same. So Khrushchev and Trotsky agree? Is Trotsky, too, about to be vindicated?

Is the great Andre Vyshinsky who conducted the trials of the Trotskyites another stinker? Was it all just a notion of Stalin's? How is the "cult of the individual" built up without the consent of the other members of the Central committee?

Did we have a "cult of the individual" under Browder, and was it broken up by our own courageous Bill Foster? Why has the discussion of the Stalin question suddenly ceased in the Worker?

These are a few of the "raspberry barbs" which have been irritating me, and they need answering . . . I know our most important job is how to bring socialism to America, but we can work better if the irritating barb (the Stalin question) is removed and the wound cauterized. We can take it. Give us the works.
O. S. CUMMENS.

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Looking for Scapegoats

SPRINGFIELD, Mass.

Editor, The Worker:

I would like to comment on an aspect of "the cult of personality" which I think many of us have overlooked in all the discussions of the 20th Congress, an aspect that I will call "scape-

goatism." Particularly I would like to direct my remarks against the phrase "perpetrated by the Beria gang and their accomplices," which finds much currency these days, not only in the rank and file of our movement, but in the writings of our leaders as well.

This scapegoatism is not a new phenomenon. It was an important factor I think in all the frameups whose victims are now being rehabilitated. Another characteristic of this scapegoatism is the necessity to make every fallen idol a traitor from the year one—thus Rajk was not only an agent of Tito and the U.S., but had been one since at least 1936, and earlier.

Many of us have really missed a main point of the 20th Congress—the attack against dogmatism. Let us stop thinking in oversimplified terms of right and wrong, and consider events in terms of the movement and complexity of class forces. We have discarded our demi-gods. Let us also discard our devils.
SPRINGFIELD WORKER.

The Case for Majority Rule

ABERDEEN, Md.

Editor, The Worker:

For years Communists have cited Lenin's phrases about a party of a new type, discipline and democratic centralism. This leads me to ask myself, in what way democratic centralism differs or should differ from the familiar American principle of majority rule.

Majority rule is very clearly defined in the minds of our workers, farmers, Negro people and women, the American masses. What does it mean to them when applied to a people's organization?

Majority rule means that once my organization has agreed by democratic discussion on its basic principles and aims, and once it has established its qualifications for membership, I must abide by these principles and qualifications, and make some contribution toward accomplishing these aims or forfeit my right to membership.

It also means that I should conscientiously and continually express my opinion as to how best to further my organization's aims.

If a treasurer refuses to pay a bill that has been ordered paid, he will be replaced promptly unless he can persuade a majority that he was right after all. Majority rule does not require that he should keep quiet when he feels that a serious mistake is being made, but it does mean that he must either pay the bill under protest, be convinced of his own error, win his point in open discussion promptly, or step aside.

Suppose a union member violates the basic principles of trade unionism by scabbing. Does anyone think this person should be allowed to retain his union membership? Disagreement with the timing or strategy of the strike is no excuse. Or suppose a trade union leader sells out. Does anyone think he should be kept as a union leader? Only the employers and his own personal machine. And what do we recommend as the surest means of preventing sell-outs? A constant, vigilant fight for majority rule within the union. Free discussion in any place where the employer's ears do not reach, the greater possible attendance and participation at meetings, and strict adherence to union rules of order.

We may hesitate to say that democratic centralism is the same thing as majority rule because we have seen so many organizations where majority rule has been fraudulently converted into minority rule. But this does not affect the validity of majority as a principle.

E. P.

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Editor, The Worker:

Perhaps we had better stop stretching our necks towards the USSR, cease speculating, as Marxists certainly should not do, and instead think of what has happened in terms of the American revolution . . . as has already been the case with Alan Max and others. Perhaps then there would be less confusion, and more clarity.

Let us assume, since the question of civil liberties is so much involved, that the latter days of Stalin corresponded roughly with those of John Adams, when the Alien and Sedition laws were in full force. Let us further assume that Stalin is a sort of Alexander Hamilton, the instigator and author of those laws and that Khrushchev and friends are the party of Jefferson.

Well, what would have happened here, had Jefferson not succeeded, and had the aforesaid laws not been revoked, and those imprisoned by it not been released? No use answering that one.

The main thing is that under Stalin, Khrushchev & Co. . . . our Communist counterparts of Jefferson, even though they knew they were faced with a clear usurpation of power on the part of Stalin, did not have either the means or the power to unseat him until he was thoroughly dead. And even then, such was his prestige and his living machinery, they had to proceed with caution.

We keep asking why? What were they doing? Why? To put it frankly, because heads would have rolled, and no man, not even Khrushchev, not even Jefferson if he were alive, likes to lose his head, especially when, by saving it, he can also do something in the way of see-



ing to it that such usurpation of power on the part of individuals or cliques will never occur again.

So the main question before us is still that momentous one of inter-party democracy . . . how it can best be safeguarded . . . how our proletarian lives and happiness can best be guaranteed against the encroachment or usurpation of rugged proletarian individualists.
—A.W.

*

Critical Attitude Is Important

NEWARK, N.J.

Dear Editor:

Lenin wrote in "What is to be done" . . . "the Social Democratic movement is essentially an international movement. This does not mean merely that we must combat national chauvinism. It means also that a movement that is starting in a young country can be successful only on the condition that it assimilates the experience of other countries. In order to assimilate this experience, it is not sufficient merely to be acquainted with it, or simply to transcribe the latest resolutions. A critical attitude is required towards this experience, and ability to subject it to independent tests."

The conclusion I draw is that our movement, a long time ago, in its early stages began the process of assimilating the experience of the international working class struggle and es-

pecially that of the Russian working class without Lenin's advise that such assimilation must be done with a critical attitude" and by "subjecting (such experience) to independent tests" based on the conditions, traditions and national historical background of our country.

This failing of our party in years gone by has so encrusted itself in our thinking and daily work that it became a style, a method of thinking and working to such an extent that it expressed itself in every thing we did. . . .

How often in the past have we in districts, sections and branches taken a national resolution, or a Convention decision, and without spending the major time digesting them, with the aim of trying to apply them to the concrete situation existing in the district, section or branch, we attempted to foist and superimpose such resolutions upon the membership and those in friendly working relations with us in a manner which was impossible to carry out.

In the process the cadre became sterile in thought, and the membership was left with "take it or leave it" this is national policy. I believe this is one of the new problems facing the C.P. We need a process of re-education of personnel, not limited to those on the top.
J. BRANDT.

Inspired By May Day Story

DETROIT.

Dear Editor:

It is not often that I can sit down and write a letter. Many of us find it easier to put it off for another time. But after reading Joe North's "Assignment U. S. A." in this weekend's paper, I felt so moved that I had to sit down and write impromptu.

Mr. North's beautifully descriptive words make one feel alive again, and renews one's strength of ideals. The whole weekend edition is very well written, and here in Detroit we are going to try to sell all our copies out. With a little effort this should not be too hard.

Being a native New Yorker, I sorely miss the exciting and glorious May Day parades from which a most unified strength emanates. . . . I hope the good flow of letters keep coming in. It's a pleasure to read many of them.

I. L.

Ads Press Gadget-Living

Dear Editor:

Without waiting for the second and third installment of your excellent series "Occupation: Housewife," I want to tell you about my mother. She passed on this year at the age of 70. All her life, unfortunately, she put in almost the 100-hour week you mention, but in raising six children, slaving for us night and day, sometimes in ways that were unnecessary.

However, she never had the "gadget-bug" you so rightly say plagues the modern housewife. The tasks (like laundering and home-canning) that you said "began to leave the home around the beginning of the century" she was glad to see go. She always sent the clothes to the laundry and never did much baking or any home-canning, even to save money. But your article failed to state

that modern women are increasingly high-pressure advertised into gadget-living, called gracious-living in the slick women's magazines, newspaper, radio and TV.

My mother wasn't high-pressure advertised into deserting her traditional values (some going back to Rousseau, and to the French-Americans of New Orleans) in favor of those of the market-place. She found time, maybe at the expense of housework—who cares—to play the piano occasionally and cultivate and encourage the arts in the home, even write a little book and such poems as she could.

If she had any time "off" she taught classes once a week in a line that was her hobby, wrote letters on peace and social-significant subject to newspapers, spent prodigious emotion petitioning welfare offices and cold-blooded prisons and mental hospitals in behalf of friends and relatives, worked pro-



digiously in helping the sick and other needy.

She was on old-age pension her last five years, but because she had never worked outside the home it was inadequate; and constant worry and harassment from county welfare offices made the end of her life harder. But her courage and fighting optimism and "William Jennings Bryan crusading" won her hosts of warm friends and the devotion of her children.

While I'm on the subject of "the eternal feminine" and have mentioned Russia—the delegation of Russian farm experts to Iowa were reportedly most intrigued at our individual household gadgets and the "efficiency" of the American home and modernized farm home.

I'm sure Russian women, even if they acquire our gadgets eventually, will, because of their political philosophy and socialist system, not make a Moloch of bourgeois-type housewifery as some of their American sisters have done. If, as you say, Elizabeth Lawson, American women's working hours are longer because of our gadgets, then we should indeed do something about this paradox. We should change our philosophy of life.
Margaret.

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