

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.

From the Jefferson School

New York

Editor, Daily Worker:

The spirited debate on theoretical and political questions now going on among American Marxists is an extremely wholesome development. One of its most welcome features is the sharp criticism of dogmatism in our approach to theory and the call for a new creative quality in our study and interpretation of Marxism-Leninism.

The need for such a turn as we are now making has been evident for some time, and certain efforts in this direction have been made during the recent period. We are indebted to the 20th Soviet Party Congress for greatly accelerating this development.

Recognizing that we at the Jefferson School have shared the past ideological weaknesses of other Marxists and have a prime obligation in the struggle to eliminate them, our faculty held a special meeting last week to begin a systematic review and strengthening of our educational program. Some of the agreements reached at that meeting should be of interest to the readers of these columns.

First, there is no question that our approach to Marxism in large measure reflected the doctrinaire weakness prevailing in Marxist circles generally. We have too often assumed the posture of defenders of The Truth according to the classics. We have not always examined

critically the generalizations developed on the basis of working class experience in other lands and periods. We have tended to study and teach Marxism as a thing in itself, rather than a guide for the creative analysis of American experience. Our chief emphasis has been on what the classics say and mean, not enough on how (if at all) this or that proposition applies to developments in the United States.

This non-dialectical tendency in the study and teaching of Marxism has limited our ability to bring theoretical clarity to our students, and thus to help them in their struggles to advance the cause of progress in our country. We have got to learn to combine what is universal in Marxism with what is unique in the experiences of the American working class and nation. We must increasingly discharge our true responsibility for the study and illumination of a whole host of questions relating to the past and future development of our country.

Second, although dissent has always been permitted at the Jefferson School, we have tended in one way or another to discourage any really serious questioning of our teachings. Students already predisposed to accept uncritically what is taught have been further conditioned in this weakness, rather than helped to develop truly scientific attitudes. Our classrooms and forums must come to be centers of lively discussion

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Letters from Readers

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and controversy—where every proposition is subjected to the tests of logic and experience, where the struggle over ideas is encouraged as indispensable for true learning.

Third, we have given scant attention in our teaching to the works of bourgeois scholars and non-Marxist socialists, from many of whom we have much to learn. Course materials have been restricted very largely to writings by Marxists in our country and abroad. As a result, an unwarranted parochialism has characterized the intellectual atmosphere of our School. We must greatly expand our educational horizon, and guarantee that our program reflects the full breadth of American ideological and cultural life. Scholars and public figures with views different from ours should find a platform in our forums and classrooms, and serious study should be made of their works.

Fourth, with notable exceptions, we at the Jefferson School have not thrust ourselves into the important public debates constantly under way in many fields, but have tended to remain within the narrow and comfortable borders of our little academic world. Thus have we neglected a major function of Marxist educators, and at the same time deprived ourselves of experiences which could help to enrich and vitalize our classroom instruction. The teachers at our School must enter and come to play a public role in the big ideological battles of our day.

Fifth, the supervision of our educational program during recent years has been allowed to become largely routine. Overwhelmed by the increasingly difficult problem of keeping this embattled institution alive, our tiny administrative staff has got into a rut in its approach to program planning, and has given very little guidance to teachers in their classroom work. Among the necessary correctives for this weakness is the drawing of a substantial corps of our teachers into the process of program development and supervision. Concrete steps to this end are now under way.

This analysis of our main weaknesses must be appraised in the light of the great positive contributions the Jefferson School has made to scores of thousands of progressives during the past twelve years, and which it continues to make today. We are confident that the fresh ideological winds now blowing in Marxist circles will do much to enhance the effectiveness of our School, and make possible the winning of hundreds of additional students—both old and new. Our faculty and administrative staff are determined, through classroom instruction and in the broader arena of scholarship and public debate, to develop the Jefferson School into an ever more vital center of creative American Marxism.

HOWARD SELSAM
DAVID GOLDWAY
DONEY A. WILKERSON

Reader Hits Workers Line on Elections

Dear Editor:
I am writing to express a long-suffering protest against The Worker's wrong approach to the coming national elections.

This policy consists in the main of constantly telling the workers that the Republicans are the party of Wall Street and that at all costs they must be driven from office and replaced with Democrats.

The most disturbing manifestation of this policy is our continuous "exposure" of the Republicans as the Cadillac cabinet and our never-ending criticism of their policies, while at the same time back-handedly

intimating that the Democrats are not a Cadillac cabinet, seldom criticizing them and then only grudgingly.

I feel that our paper is disarming the workers and is doing nothing to teach them the facts.

We tell the workers to put the pressure on the Democrats to get them to commit themselves favorably on current issues. But we still intimate that the workers should vote for the Democrats no matter what their position on issues, because at all costs the Cadillac cabinet must be ousted.

Now if we believe that our program influences the workers to any degree and that they in turn influence the actions of the Democratic candidates, then we had better start changing our policy because the Democratic candidates in the main are:

1. Supporting the same reactionary programs and policies as the Republicans, and
2. On the most important questions such as peace, discrimination and co-existence, they are much more rabidly reactionary than the Republicans.

In regard to your efforts to expose the Republicans as the party of Wall Street, the majority of the workers know this, and as a matter of fact the Republicans don't deny it but in many cases freely admit it.

The most important thing that the workers don't know is that the Democrats also are the party of big business and are Wall Street agents.

This belief of the workers that the Democrats are a party of the common people is the biggest obstacle to the formation of a genuine people's party in this country.

When we in any way, shape, or manner lead the workers to believe that the Republicans are the party of big business and the Democrats are not, we become a part of the sucker game.

A correct Marxist policy towards the elections as I see it is that the workers should demand that the candidates adopt and carry out a progressive program.

If by election time they haven't done this and the workers are faced with no choice but to vote for a reactionary Republican or a reactionary Democrat, then I say they should not vote at all, but should boycott the polls in protest against the Big Business-controlled two-party system.

It is my opinion that we would have a much healthier country politically if 25 percent of the workers boycotted the elections than if Stevenson with his present program, or Truman, were elected.

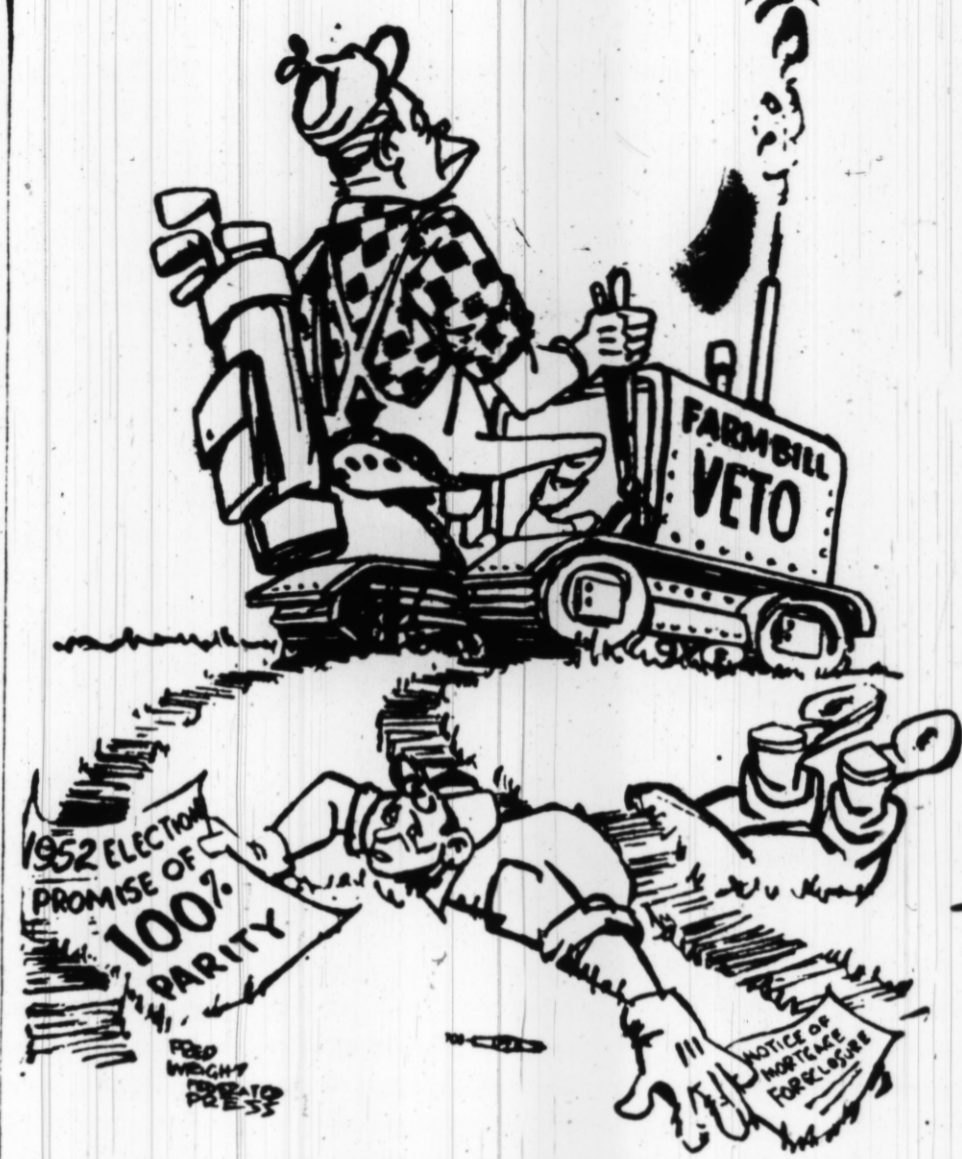
A MACHINIST

Rep. Walter's Un-Americanism

Dear Editor:
It wasn't enough for this un-American Rep. Walter to come here last month and smear North Carolinians because they are devoted to the cause of labor and civil rights but now he is coming back for more fight against democracy all in the name of "anti-communism." He will return to lecture against "communism."

Rep. Walter and his committee ask people here to tell of their church activities in spite of the provision of our Constitution offering freedom of religion. His committee deliberately engaged in anti-Semitic jabs by calling one Jewish witness "by mistake" Mrs. Jones. He asked another witness for the Jewish maiden name of his wife. This was to expose them to physical attack of the White Citizens Council members (N. C. Patriots) who were in the audience at the hearing.

The council for the committee Richard Arens in a recent statement about immigration to our country said he did not want those kind of Europeans left in who might disturb our cultural pattern.



He was defending Rep. Walter's immigration act which is Hitlerite in that only "Anglo-Saxon" elements may come into our country. This too is "American" thought as far as they are concerned.

We do not want the ugly racist poison of Rep. Walter. This kind of poison has kept some of our people in human slavery. It has kept us backward 75 years behind times. (And all this great talk about the wonderful industrial expansion of the South should have occurred in 1865 when the slave owners were crushed and not in 1956!)

We urge the people of Pennsylvania to defeat Rep. Walter and other members of the Un-American Committee. They can vote but the constituents of the Southern members of that committee are Negroes and poor whites who can not even register at the registration boards let alone vote.

God save us from them. Let us put legs to our prayers and abolish this horrible blot on the good name of our republic.

A WHITE NORTH CAROLINIAN.

He Disagrees On Illinois Primary

CHICAGO, Ill.

To the Editor:
I should like to take issue with Carl Hirsch's article on the Illinois primary which appeared in the April 15 Worker. I feel that his conclusions are erroneous and his statement that the results indicate a GOP reversal is misleading and tends to produce a false sense of security and comfort.

A close look at the Illinois primary reveals a number of interesting points. Firstly, while Stevenson undoubtedly, gained both percentage-wise and numerically from his showing in the '52 primary, it must be remembered that in '52 he was not an avowed candidate; his name was not on the ballot and he received only write-in votes (a difficult thing to do with voting machines); consequently, his vote was small.

Secondly, the Democrats had a number of local contests to draw them out to vote in this year's Illinois primary (Paschen vs. Sachs, Bonjean vs. Griffen, Keenan vs. Lane, many contests for the State Assembly, etc.) In consequence, the Republicans had really no reason to turn out. Their voting was purely formalistic. Nevertheless Eisenhower beat Stevenson by 40,000 votes.

Thirdly, Stevenson's strength, or rather Eisenhower's weakness, was supposedly among the farmers. Yet Stevenson took Cook County by 100,000 votes so that the Eisenhower edge came from downstate. In November of 1952 Stevenson got 40 percent of the downstate vote. This time he drew only 31 percent. Where is the farm revolt? Fourthly, Stevenson beat Eisenhower 7 to 1 in Chicago's Negro

wards in November '52. This time his lead was 4 to 1. Finally, Stevenson campaigned vigorously, as Hirsch states. There was no campaigning for Eisenhower.

These facts and figures clearly indicate that Hirsch's conclusions are untenable.

(Signed) "SPARTANS"

Comments On Herve' Book

Dear Editor:
That fine concluding sentence in Howard Fast's review of Graham Green's "The Quiet American," brought several afterthoughts to mind. . . . I am referring to Fast's statement that ". . . no injustice, however small, truly advances the cause of mankind in its march toward a time when full justice will prevail."

It seems strange that such a statement should be revolutionary in our ranks. For many years we have said that our enemies lied in saying our philosophy was one that made the end justify the means. Yet, as happened in so many instances of other lies, all too many of us consciously or unconsciously accepted the enemy distortion of our philosophy as the correct one, and defended this distortion. Thus, our defense or rationalizations of infringements on civil liberties in the Soviet Union, on to the most painful gyrations of defending the police against the doctors, the doctors against the police, etc.

This point of accepting enemy distortions of our philosophy as the basis for much of our thought is strongly made in the recent book by Pierre Herve, former French Communist leader, in his recent book, "La Revolution et les Fetiches." I understand that Herve was expelled from the French CP for having printed this book.

Having just read it, I am convinced that instead of being expelled, Herve should have been elevated to a position of honor and esteem for this contribution, which strikes me as one of the soundest pieces of creative Marxism I have read since Lenin's Materialism and Empiricriticism. I hope that as a result of discussions in France following the XXth Congress, the French comrades will see fit to readmit Herve.

In any case, I feel his book has tremendous significance for us in this country. I hope it will be translated and published here. In fact, I am writing the author to learn if any steps have been taken toward this end (if no one else does it, I intend to undertake that task myself). It should be studied by every American who wants to understand the nature of the philosophy that has become the guiding light for the millions the world over who are marching down the path to socialism.

HANK.

Reading Paper A 'Jumpy' Task

Dear Editor:
While I have always found it annoying to find articles continued in another part of the paper this last issue is the worst of offenders.

All three articles on page one were continued, as well as all three on page three, and all three on page four. Of three articles on page five two were continued, both on page seven, and one on page eight. . . .

Do you expect new readers to be patient with this? The week paper (if tears so easily) cannot even hold up under the abuse.

For a woman who works all week, goes to school, does her chores on weekends and wants to relax with the Worker, this condition is very discouraging. . . . I hope you will take this criticism under consideration. I want all good to come to the paper.

A READER.

Race Prejudice In Indiana

SOUTH BEND, Ind.

Dear Editor:
Our struggle for integration has brought to light another example of racial prejudice and discrimination.

The Co-op program in our high schools affords high school senior students, majoring in clerical courses, an opportunity to receive practical experience by working a few hours every week in the office of factories, banks, department stores, and various other local businesses.

A list of interested students, along with their school record is submitted to management, who in turn selects those they are willing to employ. In almost every instance the selections are based upon the color of the student's skin.

Equal opportunities in education, business, and housing are still to be achieved in the North; therefore now is the time for those who believe in equal rights to unite in militant action in support of civil rights legislation—and stamp out segregation and discrimination in this city.

A. W. R.

Southern

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Southerners come out again we won't be left with only two Senators to fight our battles.

We've got to stop worrying about the press in the South and worry about the different press, radio, etc., in the North that are explaining away, excusing and apologizing for lawlessness in the South.

Those of us in the North have just as much of a stake in those civil rights bills as the people in the South. We've got to concentrate on our Congressmen and Senators. . . .

We have to insist that both of the political parties in their conventions—Democratic and Republican conventions—that instead of going around in the South like little lackey dogs, trying to curry favor with the South that both of these parties have got to put solid civil rights planks in each of the platforms. We as people who believe in civil rights regardless of our race or color, must say that as of now both parties are on their own.

We have gotten nothing out of Congress in regard to civil rights up until this day—nothing. We have taken that as long as we intend to take it. Both parties are going to be measured solely by what they do between now and the end of Congress, plus the platforms that they adopt in their conventions. So far as we are concerned, there is no kind of candidate alive today of either party that's going strong enough to explain away what they do not do in Congress and in the convention between now and November.