

# Dear Editor

## LETTERS FROM READERS

### Urges Second Look At Pragmatism

CHICAGO, Ill.

Dear Editor:

The question of pragmatism hasn't been churned up yet, so here goes: Marxists welcomed Harry K. Wells' pioneering book which, for the first time, correctly characterized this trend in philosophy as a weapon against the people in the hands of monopoly capital. The welcome was even joyful in view of the shameful efforts, recorded in the pages of *Science & Society* over many years, to conciliate with pragmatism and view it as a progressive trend.

Wells, however, considers that the development of pragmatism has consisted only in an increasingly subtle attack on science and materialism. This leads him into a sectarian trap. Writing in the bourgeois-democratic U.S.A. in 1954, Dr. Wells takes exactly the same tactical line as Lenin took in "Materialism and Emperio-criticism," written in Russia on the eve of the Revolution. The only alternative he offers the American public at the end of his book is an academic statement of dialectical materialism as formulated by Stalin in the U.S.S.R.

He ignores Whitman who wrote in "Song of Myself"—  
I accept Reality and dare not  
question it,  
Materialism first and last im-  
buing.

Or Thoreau (in "Civil Dis-  
obedience")—

The rule of expediency does

not apply to those cases in which a people . . . must do justice, cost what it may. . . . Action from principle, the perception and the performance of right . . . changes things and relations; it is essentially revolutionary.

Concessions by the ruling class under pressure have a two-fold character. On one hand they may temporarily stem the popular tide. On the other, they help determine the form of the next great advance. Doesn't the historical course of pragmatism involve a series of concessions to a popular trend toward materialism? Should we not, in a sense welcome these tendencies of reactionary philosophy to retreat and degenerate?

Under the wing of pragmatism are today gathered the most diverse philosophical and political trends, from right to left-liberal. Can we, outside of an

ivory tower, lump these together? Must a struggle for principle and theory in our work bring us into sharp collision with all non-Marxists?

—H. K.

### Says We Do Poorly By the Women

Dear Editor:

Elizabeth Lawson's article on housewives was fine and informative, as far as it went. If it was intended to show a "new look" at women, to end the neglect of woman's work in the pages of the DW, you'll have to do much better.

For years we working women have felt neglected and ignored by our press and progressive organizations. Certainly, the DW has done poorly by us. The column or "page" addressed to women, consisting of a recipe and household-hint section with a few rare articles on economic problems thrown in, is an insult to every woman reader, I'm sure. Not to speak of the fact that the recipes aren't much good and the household hints can be obtained from any branch library for the asking. Where is the coverage of women's organizations? Where are the news of the international woman's movement? Where is the serious discussion of the complex problems of women in the professions and unions, in business, in community and farm organizations? Where are the women columnists you see

(Continued on Page 14)



# Dear Editor

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(Continued from Page 3)

developing, the women heroines you are featuring, the interviews with outstanding women from the rank and file, who can tell the rest of us how they did it?

An occasional Woman's Day feature article does not take the place of regular constant emphasis.

What's the trouble with your columnists who—with the exception of Rodney and North—seem never to have heard of the existence of a woman question and the need for giving separate attention to the problems of women?

Where on your cultural page is there any criticism of the reactionary ideology about women which swamps the movies, TV and literature?

Progressive women are active in a thousand communities, leading in PTA's, youth, activity, churches and fraternal organizations. Let's hear from them, let's give them a chance in the paper to share their vast organizational experience with the rest of us. There is nothing low and unimportant about woman's work. Capitalism spares no money or effort to influence the women. Why should the progressive movement continue to ignore and neglect them?

The demands for child care centers and community-sponsored household services, for equal pay and maternity benefits will remain sterile and formalistic unless they are expressed by people who actually work in the field, unless they become part of and are tested in mass work. The community is the "shop" of the 40 million housewives in this country. Community work should be considered in that light in the Worker to help the people who are actually doing it.

Right now, for example, a discussion of what the double shift school session in NYC has done to mothers as a group may prove to be a potent vehicle for airing general problems. Questions of school and community can lead to heightened political activity. What connection can be made between routine PTA work and the question of city elections? How can united front action from below be stimulated by the struggle around a school issue? Such questions as well as those concerning women's working conditions and problems should be discussed seriously and thoroughly in the Worker.—H. L.

### Some Women Like to Cook

ST. LOUIS.

Dear Editor:

Thanks to Elizabeth Lawson for opening discussion on the vital topic of women who work at home. Thanks also for making it clear that husbands are not the cause of long hard days at home, and that husbands and wives alike are exploited by capitalism. You have also clarified

Engels' statement "The emancipation of women will only be possible when woman can take part in production on a large social scale. . . ." Some women that I have talked with have not understood that women's role in production can take place only under socialism, and that a working wife under capitalism is doubly burdened.

But there are several important things that you did not discuss in your series. From experience I think it is wrong to generalize that all women work a hundred hours a week. It is true that we all put in a minimum of 60 hours, suburban women many more, but it is also true that many women, especially those in the working class, relax with their husbands for an hour or so in the evening. I think it is incorrect to assume that ALL women consider ALL housework monotonous and tiring. Most of us derive pleasure from some aspects of our work such as cooking, or sewing, or gardening. For example, I enjoy cooking and my hope for the future is that under socialism I can work in a catering establishment to free those women who would rather work elsewhere. I also look forward to the time when I can send my laundry out and not have to bother with hours of ironing.

There is real work to be done right now in our own homes aside from examining the strides made in socialist countries. I think it is necessary to develop housewives into active political beings. And don't tell me that it isn't fair to add to their burdened long hours. Some women I know refuse to study theory "because it doesn't pertain to their interests." They refuse to become members of organizations because "they just can't get out." Some of these reasons may be good but few are real. Could it be possible that housework has dulled their minds over a period of years until they now do not have the initiative and energy to rise above a stack of mending? We must realize that socialism can not solve women's problems until women are conscious of the necessity of working to achieve socialism.

I. H.

### Wants Article On Edvard Grieg

Dear Editor:

Joseph North's article on Goya was fine. I have never given much thought to art or music but of late find myself reading such articles with great enjoyment. That is because in our paper these articles on artists (past and present) are written with a workingclass outlook. Also they are written so that persons like me without a background of formal education can understand them.

A few days ago I chanced upon an article on Edvard Grieg, by Delos Smith, in the May Issue of Woman's Day, the

# How Political Alert to T

(Carl Winter, the writer of this letter, was one of the 11 national Communist leaders convicted in the first Smith Act trial in 1949. He served his five-year prison term in federal prisons in Lewisburg, Pa.; Milan, Michigan; Terre Haute, Ind, and Leavenworth, Kan. He is now chairman of the Communist Party organization of Michigan. The letter published here is written to John Williamson, who was deported under the Walter-McCarran Act to Great Britain after he served a five-year Smith Act sentence at Lewisburg prison. Mr. Williamson is a regular contributor to this paper with a feature, "Letters from London.")

Dear Johnny:

I have just finished reading Gene Dennis' latest book. Actually, it is edited by Peggy, and consists of letters Gene wrote to her and their son while serving his five-year term in Atlanta. Since you and I were together at the Lewisburg Penitentiary for most of the same term, there is many a thought and experience here on which we can compare notes.

Outstanding, of course, is the evidence these letters give of the political prisoner's determination not to permit jail to end his political life—even temporarily. Very much as in our own case, one of Gene's first letters reveals that a censor's ban was imposed upon political comment in the mail he could send or receive. These restrictions were eased with stringent conditions, only after due protest. In fighting form, Gene wrote, "I could

A & P magazine. In its first paragraph it belittles Grieg, apparently because he loved the plain people. I loved Grieg's music when as a child I heard it in elementary school. I still think it beautiful and colorful.

I would like to see an article in The Worker about Grieg by one of our writers. I am sure it would be very different from the one in Woman's Day to which I objected. —F. F.

### Should Popularize Progressive Writers

NORTH DAKOTA.

Dear Editor:

I read the letter in The Worker for May 6, signed by Howard Selsam, David Goldway and Dorey A. Wilkerson from Jefferson School. It's very good in my opinion.

Allow me to say a brief word about their "Third Point."

We are missing something by not doing everything possible within our power to popularize at all times such progressive authors as Tom Paine, Jefferson, Dreiser, Mark Twain, Fast, Abraham Lincoln, Meridel Le Sueur, and many others; and also such scholars as DuBois and Lamont. The big bourgeoisie hate these people and as a matter of policy don't give publicity to the progressive views held by them.

We should go all-out to organize continually dramatic circles among talented children, teenagers, young people between 18 and 30 and even among middle-aged folk, to arrange tours for them over the country, in order to dramatize and popularize progressive America, as exemplified by and through such illuminating writers and scholars. We know for sure that this work will never be done except by progressives, and we Communists especially must aid in this great cause. We talk and espouse Marxism but overlook some very effective means of reaching the minds and the hearts of the American people and delivering an effective blow to big business and all its works.

ALFRED KNUTSON.

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