

SPEAK YOUR PIECE

Contribution

By Chick Mason

Editor, Daily Worker:

I am enclosing \$5 as a contribution to your fund. I hope that you will pass the following memorandum on to all those who may have read my pamphlet.

It now becomes possible for me to make public something which has bothered me for some time. I have felt somewhat guilty for the fact that I had spent \$60 of the amount I would normally contribute to the Daily Worker fund toward the publication of my pamphlet, "Sources of Our Dilemma."

I am proud of the fact that my pamphlet may be of some help in reshaping my party in the honest decent concept we had when we joined it so that we may play an historic role in providing the "left wing" of the progressive movement that is emerging in our country.

Nonetheless my guilt feeling toward the Daily fund persists. Therefore may I ask those of you who have read my pamphlet, whether you agree with it or not, to send at least a dollar to the Daily Worker fund. In this way I may have my cake and eat it.

At so many times, and in so many dark hours, the Daily Worker has lit that little spark in time to help us.

Is not "Speak Your Piece" the wonderful expression of our wonderful membership providing the encouragement that we will once again emerge as a strong, trustworthy friend to all those who wish to save our country from the scourge of depression, fascism and war?

Of course many Americans will preface their own credo, "My country right or wrong" to ours, "My country, make it right." But the expression in your columns by those who come from the shops, the homes, the grass roots of our movement will provide just the serum we need to cure our organization of its ills so that we will win the respect of our fellow Americans whether or not they agree with our credo.

Only little men, in offices perhaps too high, with suspicious minds bred perhaps of their own deficiencies, could fail to hail the free open expression of my fellow members, who have up to now merely paid a buck and occupied a seat.

More power to you—Keep up the good work.

—CHICK MASON.

Jefferson School's New Fall Catalogue

Editor, Daily Worker:

I have just got around to reading the preliminary announcement of the Jefferson School's fall term program, which they sent me several weeks ago for critical comments.

I like, first of all, the fall program's apparent emphasis on the USE of Marxist theoretical principles to illuminate the life and development of our country, rather than their presentation as abstract bodies of subject-matter-to-be-learned, AS SUCH.

Although we are told that "Marxism will continue as the main theoretical content of instruction," one looks in vain for the usual abundance of courses entitled "Marxism and This" or "Marxism and That," or for courses based on such left categories as "Strategy and Tactics" or "The Negro Question." What one does find is a wide range of courses like the featured full year course "American Civilization," "The U. S. Constitution: Origin and Development," "Key Problems Facing American Labor," "The American Political System," and "The Negro and the American Nation."

There are a few courses on

Marxism, per se, such as "Capitalism and Socialism: Introduction to Marxism," "Principles of Marxism," and a full-year Institute on "Fundamentals of Marxism"; but it is evident that, in the main, the school plans to teach the principles of scientific socialism in the context of American society.

Second, I like the school's plans to use broader instructional materials and personnel than heretofore. We are told that, in addition to the usual Marxist writings and teachers, "full use will be made hereafter of helpful works by bourgeois and other non-Marxist scholars; and persons with varying points of view are being invited to teach and lecture in our program. This should help greatly to overcome the narrow 'parochialism' which has characterized much of the school's work, and thus to broaden the intellectual horizons of those of us who enroll in its courses.

Third, I like especially the announced plans to "make the Jefferson School a center of ideological controversy, where free give-and-take on all questions is the rule." With some notable exceptions, teachers and even forum lecturers at the school have tended to discourage fundamental dissent, and thus to stultify independent thinking—just as has been true in our movement as a whole.

It is clear that leaders of the Jefferson School are thinking deeply about the past errors they shared with American Marxists generally, and are trying to apply concretely the lessons we all are learning from the current discussion. I believe that all who examine their new Fall Term catalog, which should be coming out about now, will agree that the school is correctly "re-tooling" to help produce those more effective Marxists so sorely needed by the democratic labor and people's struggles which lie ahead.

REGULAR READER.

Urges an Informed C.P. Membership

NEW JERSEY.

Editor, Daily Worker:

The prevailing state of mind which I think deserves most immediate attention is that which allows us all to be dues paying, active members of the party while at the same time we maintain a passive or indifferent attitude toward such vital aspects of party life as:

The local structure of the party in our area, the method of arriving at general decisions and adopting a line.

The method of working together with other groups and forces.

Most of the inner operations of the party as of now, are not known to the majority of the rank and file who go along on faith in the infallibility of a few.

We are living in a period of lessened tensions, of increased possibilities, but we can never take advantage of this new era without having a genuinely democratic organization and an informed membership.

Certainly implicit in this request for a more vital and specific knowledge of the kind of party that we have, is the assumption that the membership is willing to shoulder the responsibility that such democratic openness would necessitate.

Among us all there are ideas on how the party might function one iota better in the little area of life which we know intimately. A composite of all these tiny areas, and of all the numerous rank and file insights into each, could be the start of a more genuinely representative method of work.

Also implicit in such a request is the pledge that each of us become, within the limits of his

ability, a specialist in the area of work he has chosen. This is the only way we can give back to the party, the only way we can contribute.

In the past many of us have been specialists on everything and thus specialists on nothing. Let us now be more realistic and suggest for example, that you become as well acquainted as possible with the function, structure and role of your union at one pole of your existence, and that at the other pole you specialize in the community you live in.

There is more to becoming even an amateur authority or specialist on a given subject than meets the eye. As dialecticians we believe in one way or another all phenomena are inter-connected. Thus, whatever the chosen area we pledge ourselves to learn, we are unavoidably committed to undertake a more intensive and creative approach to the American scene.

We must be willing to admit that you cannot read one article here, and one there, and understand the American economy. We must face the fact that bourgeois thinkers, on whatever the subject, spend years and years before they are accepted by the society in which they live as competent.

We must ourselves erect some standards at which to aim, so that we will then be able to have a greater faith in our collective efforts. For example, you who are supposed to become a specialist in the economics of this industry, I think it is foolhardy to believe that this can be achieved in a year or two, or solely utilizing just party sources and materials.

Whatever programmatic steps we envisage, I think, must be put to the acid test of acceptance by our membership. If the habit of voting on procedures has grown rusty from disuse, we must find the lubricant that will get it operating again. . . . We express great faith in the judgment of the workingclass—I think we can have at least as much in our own comrades. . . .

Summing up, I propose that we ask the party in New Jersey to help us understand how it has functioned recently, and what kind of future it anticipates—so that we can be productive members and not errant and innocent lambs in a world where the game is played for keeps with radioactive fists.

Secondly, I propose that each of us through collective discussion choose the area we want to master and devise a five-year plan so to speak to become proficient. That in so doing, we have the courage to make errors, which we know are inevitable, the humility to realize our limitations, and the discipline which produces results.

Finally I would like to observe that it is the party which has helped us all develop what is best in ourselves, and it is the party which has seared into our existence the truth of collective effort.

A. L.

Urges Friendly Controversy

CHICAGO.

Editor, Daily Worker:

The debate on my critical letter in the DW for July 19 impels me to write in again.

The criticism was directed purely at certain weaknesses in an article by William L. Patterson and not at its main conclusions. My intent was to criticize bourgeois "salesmanship" in Communist writing generally. The American workers have had to learn to be careful of advertising literature and they cannot be influenced by articles from us which exaggerate or oversimplify. Such articles, moreover, are inherently sectar-

ian because they draw progressives away from a modest approach to the masses.

My general attack on "salesmanship" and the milder specific criticism of the Patterson article were carefully placed in separate paragraphs, but it fed misunderstanding when I did not explicitly distinguish the two.

Since actual white chauvinism is frequently underhanded, it fed misunderstanding when I cited white writers only for examples of good writing.

My own unclear sharpness as well as the wild swinging replies of my critics lead me to wonder about our style of controversy. We sometimes treat each other as enemies. My own mistakes (due to inexperience at criticism) were handled much too roughly.

Hatred is still necessary in the world, but must be focused on "The Enemy Forgotten," which is monopoly capital. Let us not scatter hatred anywhere or turn it inward against comrades. Let us love the masses and one another. —H.K.

P.S. All I can afford—\$2—is enclosed.

A Stoic Program

Editor, Daily Worker:

Political agitation and propaganda, within our life-time and right underneath our nose, has become one of the most complicated and highly developed of all the known arts practiced by man, and woman. And, like all of the arts, it is most effective when it appears to be the least agitational and propagandish, when it is, in fact, quite disarmingly truthful in its simplicity.

What we practiced almost 30 years ago, the crude, elementary, knock-em-down-and-drag-em-out variety of agitation and propaganda, has now been taken over by the GOP, lock, stock and barrel. They utilized it to the full in the Cow Palace at San Francisco, and Lord Hoover himself gave it his blessing.

Nor were there any cops there to beat the frenzied demonstrators over the head, as there were in Washington at the turn of the thirties, when we demonstrated before the White House and the then Great White Father, Hoover again, answered our supplications by drawing down the blinds and shutting us from view.

No, we should not begrudge the GOP for its highjinks in the Cow Palace. It took them 20 long and lean years to learn it. And it's only characteristic of them that after they should learn a thing or two it already has become old fashioned, to the point of being obsolete.

Let them gorge themselves at the trough. The mark of Cain has already been fixed on Nixon. Leave this Caesar to his Brutus. Why should we dirty our hands on him. We have other fish to fry.

Mostly we must set our sights on getting our own Leftist house in order. Out with the rubbish, material as well as mental. Nothing less than a Spartan cleanliness and simplicity will do.

Learn to live again with a bed, a chair and a table. Throw the TV out of the window, or, better still, give it to a GOP'er as a present. More than you he will need it in the days to come, to retain his faith.

Put the jalopy up for sale. Free yourself from the obsession of keeping up with the Joneses. Who needs a jalopy in Manhattan anyway?

Learn to walk again and with it the art of talking to strangers. Mix, observe, listen, hearken unto the voice of your master. The time you spent looking at the inanities of TV and breathing monoxide on the road can now be gainfully employed in

association with many others of similar disinclinations.

In a word, to begin with, we must individually find the way back, individually set ourselves in order, if we are ever to hope to achieve collective effort again in a more modern and a still more effective way. Passing the word from above no longer serves the purpose. That's precisely what the decrepit GOP is doing today.

—M. H.

Objective Factors

BRONX, N.Y.

Editor, Daily Worker:

I agree with Bill Foster when he states that in our discussion we have minimized the effects of the government attacks and the economic prosperity as factors in the decline of party membership. But I disagree with him when he says that these are the major reasons for our decline.

Could the government attack on our party directly or indirectly have caused us to walk around as if we had the answer to everything? Could the government attacks have caused us to see an economic crisis every time we looked around a corner, or to make foreign policy questions the primary basis for cooperation with sections of the American people? I find this hard to swallow.

Secondly, our losses, let us remember, don't only date back to the post-W.W. II period. We suffered a decline in membership and prestige during the 1939-40 period when we pulled flip-flops with "The Yanks Are Not Coming" slogan, by branding Roosevelt a "warmonger," etc. A sizable bulk of the former Left is composed of people who departed from the movement during that era.

Lastly, the economic factor. True, this has been a terrific deterrent to socialist activity in the U. S. But I somehow feel this could have been surmounted to an extent. We can't only accept the fact of internal prosperity. There is the international situation to consider also. With the increased strength and prestige of the Soviet Union after W.W. II curiosity and interest about Communists and socialism spread like wildfire all over the world. This had its effect in the U. S. by the Communist Party attaining its highest peak. But it could not hold on to its gains.

In addition there were two major recession periods during the past 10 years, the 1945-46 recession and the 1949-50 period during which the American Left could have strengthened and solidified itself among the American people and have raised permanent solution to their problems. But by that time already we were far down the road to conceit, sectarianism and bureaucracy. Plus, to the American people we were more like a Russian Communist Party than an American one.

In conclusion, let me state, I agree with Foster that the government's attacks and economic prosperity in the U. S. must be part of a historical evaluation of temporary socialist decline. But that they should get top billing is something I can't go along with.

—NAT

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