

SPEAK YOUR PIECE

Takes Exception To Foster's Terms

BRONX, N. Y.

Editor, Daily Worker:

I want to take a very sharp exception to the article by Comrade Foster in the Worker (Aug. 26) both as to manner and content.

A few examples on his style of "debate":

1. "In their eagerness to find real or imaginary mistakes. . . ."

"As things now stand, little attention is paid to anything but our mistakes, many of which, as stated, are more imaginary than real. . . ."

"Another powerful element in causing our party's losses, blithely ignored by nearly every writer in the discussion. . . ." (All emphasis above are my own—G. P.)

The implications in these three typical phases impugn the motives of anyone who disagrees with Foster. Once before, he characterized dissenters as "weak-kneed." As one who among others quit jobs, lived unavailably for years and who now seeks to evaluate our history as honestly as I can—I strongly resent the slurring tactic employed by Comrade Foster.

Further: "it is a demonstrable fact that our Party (despite errors, etc.—G.P.) . . . has followed a basically correct general political line . . ." and again: "those who are now so anxious to . . . reorganize (the party's forces—G.P.) upon a neo-Browder line. . . ."

If Foster's position is so demonstrable, I'd suggest he start demonstrating and stop declaiming and defaming those who disagree with him as Browderites. The time is long past when he can, as he did, compose over 3,000 pages in five volumes and receive nary a word of criticism.

In the body of his comments, Foster sketchily develops two points as follows:

1. "Attack by the government upon our Party has been directly responsible for the bulk of its losses, and this same factor was also indirectly the cause of most of the remainder of these losses."

2. "The relatively easy economic conditions of American workers during recent years . . . has undoubtedly done more to restrict the growth of all the left forces in the United States over

the years than any other element."

If you accept premise 1, you might as well stop discussing things now since there was, according to Foster, precious little that anyone could do to change matters. But if this is one of Foster's "demonstrable" facts, it does not correspond with history of the "many comrades" who are writing in. The victory of the left forces in Russia in 1917 developed under the conditions of the sharpest attack by the Russian government.

If memory served me, the Brazilian Party expanded its influence while illegal. Surely, as a leading participant in the struggles of the '30s, Comrade Foster does not think that the death of Joe York, the beatings of Reuther and Frankenstein, the Memorial Day Steel Massacre and so on were encouraged from the government for the growth of the left.

Contrary to Foster's "demonstrable facts," it is the basis upon which the left develops its relations with the masses in spite of governmental attitudes which determines its ultimate position.

Foster describes "tendencies within the Party to shrink back" from governmental onslaughts. Instead of his choice of words, I would say the leadership did not organize the tactic of retreat when it was necessary and when the people realized it. And thus a gulf developed between us and them. But, according to Foster's argumentation, if you found a way to live and fight another day, you are one of those "weaker ones" who was "weeded out from our Party forces and its allies."

To state, then, as he does, that objective conditions alone are the causes of membership decline serves only to deny any role or responsibility to leadership. I had always been taught that leaders have to find ways to overcome obstacles. This is what I was told during Fund Drives, for example. Does it not apply equally to other problems before us?

A second major point of Foster is the current slogan of a rival political party: "You never had it so good." But if his thesis on this is valid then we must become advocates of economic catastrophe since, according to Foster, this is the basis of left growth. But such a line places us in opposition to masses who fight against a repeat of the '30s. Indeed, they have so far waged a successful struggle. Although Comrade Foster may consider

the idea "absurd," I believe we will have to discover how to cement our ties with the workers in such a real situation or degenerate into a sect which sits and waits for ripe apples to fall from the tree.

It seems to me that after 10 years of an expanding economy we ought to take a "new look" at the idea which seems to grip some of our leaders that the depression of the '30s will repeat and we should be ready when the workers come to us. The Communist Party wasn't the only student of that depression. The bourgeoisie has learned some lessons and the Eisenhower GOP is a little different from the Republican Party of Hoover.

There's also an 18 million member trade union movement which came into being in the '30s. There's the vast experience of the masses in finding ways to distort the crisis even if they can't avoid it. I believe our line on political economy is a relic of the '30s and Foster's apparent nostalgia seems to be an indication of this.

I think Comrade Foster is absolutely correct in speaking out even though I disagree with what he says. I think the others are a thousand percent wrong in not speaking out no matter what views they hold. I, for one, will certainly take this into account if I am a delegate to the convention and have to vote for a leadership.

—G. P.

Foster's Article Praised

CHICAGO.

Editor, Daily Worker:

If the Communist Party, as our leaders have the obsession, was so wrong in its practically every strategy and tactic, and thus supposedly so ineffectual and without mass influence, it's mighty funny how only the Communist Party and alleged Communists have been persecuted so savagely these many years.

If the critics of our analyses and policies were so right at each point all the time, and their own activities thus presumably so much more effectually anti-imperialist, it's mighty funny how the imperialists never seemed to realize it.

Foster's article of 8-26-56, exposing the wild flight from objectivity of our many liquidationist leaders, is the only piece of consistent sense to have appeared from a Communist Party leader in a long time.

—W. R.

Finds Mistakes Not Explained

Editor, Daily Worker:

William Z. Foster's article last Sunday claims that everything was right in our past after all, that the policies were correct. Oh, we made a few minor mistakes but basically it was correct. The mistakes were more "imaginary than real" to quote him.

Then Foster adroitly turns the discussion into one of why so many members were lost. Foster's answer is that government attacks and the "big lie" caused it. But tell me, did the government and the "big lie" force the leadership to be bureaucratic? Did it force the National Committee to hand down iron-clad decisions which no one dared to question?

Did it force you to see a depression breaking loose every other day. Hoover saw prosperity "around the corner." You saw depressions around the corner and in the face of every objective fact to the contrary.

Did the government or the "big lie" force you NOT to recognize the fact that the war danger was considerably checkmated when the Soviet Union had exploded its atomic bomb and therefor different strategy was required by the Left? If it was too much to expect this of you, then there was no doubt of it after the Soviet hydrogen bomb explosion. Look back at your writings and you'll see what I mean.

Sure the government attack was one of the causes of the drop in C.P. membership. But just as much was the stifling atmosphere in the Party. About the former we had no control but about the latter we had it in our power to eradicate and prevent it from coming about in the first place.

In actuality you've been repeating the old formulations that had a validity in the Soviet Union and in the 30's but require new re-thinking and boldness now.

—G. S.

A Question Of Emphasis

Hillsboro, N. H.

Editor, Daily Worker:

It is good to see one member of the National Committee, Bill Foster, entering the discussion as an individual.

He criticizes sharply other contributors, of which I am one, who did not cite objective con-

ditions that faced U. S. Communists during the cold war. I did not do so because I do not believe that objective conditions justified Stalin's excesses, or errors of the same type in several countries in eastern Europe.

Nor do I believe that objective conditions here justified the errors cited in my article, which should have been entitled, "Left Sectarianism or Cult of the Individual?"

Given a leadership less afflicted by the "cult of the Soviet Union," less bureaucratic and less isolated, then the attacks cited by Foster might well have been turned into their opposite—victories for the Bill of Rights.

Much has been said about letters in the D. W., and discussion article, that forget what was positive in the past. The fact is that those who are critical have contributed as much in the past as anyone. They haven't forgotten a bit of it—they simply want some improvements and that is where they correctly place their emphasis.

Finally, it is incorrect to lump those who criticize past policies and leadership with those who favor dissolution. Proposals in New England for dissolution of the party and the Daily Worker come mainly from sections of leadership who have not yet recognized and corrected their own errors.

HOMER B. CHASE.

Wish I could give the \$10 but just don't have it now. Hope this will be a little help.

—H. B. C.

A Party of a Dreary Future

Editor, Daily Worker:

The GOP will indeed become the party of the future, unless the rank and file of the Left digs down in its jeans and lays the long green on the line for the gasping Daily Worker. But what a dead and dreary future!

Has it come to this? Must we now abandon hope and embrace despair? Are the Eastlands, Jenners, Nixons, Mundts, etc., etc., to be surrendered to and given the green light? . . .

Life has taught me that it is a thousand times better to make financial sacrifice than to pass and then suffer the horrible pangs of spiritual remorse. And that's what'll happen to you brother, if you permit the DW to die.—M.H.