

SPEAK YOUR PIECE

William Mandel To Teach Course

Editor, Daily Worker:

The other day, a national officer of the Communist Party asked me what I was going to teach in my course on "The Soviet Union Today" at the Jefferson School. He seemed a little worried. I'd like to reply in print, partly because it is my business to try to attract students to the School in general, and my own course in particular, which starts Tuesday, Oct. 2.

My answer is to invite him, in all seriousness, and any of his colleagues, to register for and attend the course. I think that he would agree that if the 15 hours as spent, spread over 10 weeks, can help him to avoid making future mistakes in this area of the kind that the Draft Resolution admits to, the time will have been well worth it.

To indicate that he, and any other students, will not be wasting their time, may I submit the draft I wrote, a year before the 20th Congress, of a rejoinder to discussion of an article of mine in Monthly Review. I did not submit it in this form because friends convinced me it could only destroy all contacts with Communists and pro-Communists. I believe that, within its limitations of length, it stands up in the light of subsequent events:

"For many years, on the premise of the unity of theory and practice in the Soviet Union, I accepted developments there at face value. But then it became obvious that, contrary to theory, the Cult of the Individual (as it is now officially denounced in the USSR) had replaced democratic procedures to the point that no Party Congress was held for 13 years, to 1952.

"This one-man leadership made it possible for another single individual, Beria (if we are to believe the new theory of one-man culpability) to frame a world-renowned popularizer of Soviet achievements (Anna Louise Strong), a whole panel of Jewish physicians, and an entire Communist Party (Yugoslavia's),

and to block needed agricultural reforms.

"Obviously, this could only have happened thanks to the lack of political vigilance of the man whose word was law (see a Politburo meeting grinning like yes-men as Stalin lays down the line in Moscow's 'The Fall of Berlin').

"Finally, this lack of collective leadership made it possible to impose the Stalin Plan for the Transformation of Nature (now recognized there as unscientific) at tremendous financial cost and with bad effect upon the peasants' confidence in government economic planning.

"All this, and much else, made necessary a re-evaluation of many things in the Soviet Union.

"The new Soviet leaders have been making this re-evaluation right out loud, and one of its finest aspects is the reemphasis on democracy. This may be seen in the blistering Writers' Congress (remember the prestige writers enjoy in the USSR), the raging public polemic over whether Lysenko is actually sponsoring fraudulent evidence of species transformation (as American scientists charged years ago) and in restoration to the collective farms of their initial right to plan their own output.

"Most important, it may be seen in the determined, continuing and serious effort to restore discussion and group leadership at all levels in the Communist Party, particularly clear and heartening to readers of the Russian inner-Party press.

"The earlier situation had its objective roots in the cold war, which demanded unity at all costs, and in the earlier long-term 'Great Conspiracy' against Soviet Russia, as well as in certain Russian historical traditions. This does not make it good, nor do the Soviet leaders claim that it was. But the Communist press outside the Soviet Union (or as much of it as I have been able to follow) usually continues to be redder than the rose. It ignores its own philosophical premise that socialism can only advance through the resolution of

contradictions. It refuses to examine the objective bases of these contradictions. Thus, as I wrote in 'Common Sense,' it leaves 'their readers helpless to deal with the self-serving interpretations of the cold war press.'"

—WILLIAM MANDEL

A "Flair" for Mass Work

NEWARK, N. J.

Editor, Daily Worker:

After reading scores and scores of letters and articles, I have finally taken courage and decided to write some opinions re: the present, past and future road our CP.

These are the opinions of a rank amateur, who has spent many years in the YCL and Party, who never was able to make the grade of "Party leader" due to a basic shortcoming (quote) of insufficient political understanding. However, despite this serious shortcoming was able (and still is) to play a leading role in important community organizations, and through the years made some small contributions to our movement in a secondary leadership role.

These modest successes were attributed to the fact that "she is a natural mass worker and has a flair for mass work."

In my simple way I have pondered over this "gift" of mine and tried to analyze it. Even the slowest mind can draw some conclusions if they try hard enough. I proved no exception. I asked myself, "Does a natural flair for mass work also carry with it the ability to move people forward on Negro rights. Rouse people to struggle on local issues? Cause people to accept a known Communist as their leader and friend and even come to their aid when the pressure and publicity round them was so widespread that nobody could have missed it? Doesn't this "flair" also have to have with it a perspective and some basic understanding?"

How is "political understanding" and leadership capabilities determined? Is it by the number of chapters, pages and para-

graphs of Marx, Engels and Lenin that an individual can quote verbatim? Or is this understanding tested in how one moves the people around them along a progressive path?

I know Party leaders who have been "leading" since my early days in the movement. Try as I might, I can't recall a single incident, in the case of some of them, when they broke away from their narrow sectarian circle. Until this is changed we cannot hope for much better in the future.

Neither can we hope for much better in the future if we fail to recognize and admit that despite the fact that our "line" in the past period was in the main correct it was weighed down with so much bureaucracy, hysteria and incompetence that it was doomed to death before it saw the light of day. It is time we called a spade, a spade and stopped rationalizing.

For instance, Comrade Foster in defending our line in the past, cites the "wealth" of American literature that has been published by the left in the recent period. One example that he gives is the book the "Education of John Reed." He does not say that actually this book is the work of John Reed with a preface by the author. He does not point out that we have no John Reeds today.—B. B.

Problem of Representation

NEW JERSEY.

Editor, Daily Worker:

The date of the National Convention of the Communist Party has been set. It is now necessary to give attention to the question not only of policies but also to such questions as: How the basis of representation to the convention will be such as to get delegates who will be most representative of the membership, and how the conclusions arrived at will most closely approximate the will of the membership.

In the present discussion, especially at meetings of a more

general nature than club meetings, one thing sticks out like a sore thumb. At least it does to me and the other shop comrades although our state leaders were utterly unaware of it until I brought it to their attention. That is the small amount of shop comrades who feel that they can personally participate in these meetings without jeopardy.

We therefore have a situation where by default those who can make the most valuable contributions to the discussion by physically participating, through no fault of their own, are being left out in the cold.

When we project this situation to the conventions that are to take place, we can foresee a situation where most of these comrades will feel that they cannot accept being delegates.

Therefore a situation will evolve where a large portion of comrades who because they are personally not isolated and thus can make extremely valuable contributions in overcoming our isolation will be unable to attend the convention and speak and vote on the questions relating to policies, methods of work etc.

While due to present day circumstances this difficulty cannot be entirely overcome, we can guarantee that the decisions arrived at the conventions will truly represent the will of the majority of the membership.

It is my opinion that this can best be done at the conventions by submitting all resolutions and decisions arrived at a referendum vote by the membership.

Referendums are not unknown in the Communist movement. This used to be a common practice in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The Trotskyite question was resolved by a referendum vote of the membership of the CPSU. That it is an American tradition and practice goes without saying. Therefore I feel that the convention should adopt this proposal and thus go a long way in the direction of the expansion of democracy in our Party.

—George Samson.