

SPEAK YOUR PIECE

Comments on Foster's Article

SEATTLE

Editor, Daily Worker:

I have read Foster's piece in the Aug. 26 Worker and, although I am not now a Communist Party member, I would like to comment on it.

My first observation is that this article is largely in the Stalin tradition: logical and hard-hitting and with the customary built-in verdict of "guilty," in case one does not agree.

From the point of view that only the Communist Party can lead the American people to socialism, those who believe in socialism are not left much of a choice.

But I for one don't accept the dogma of the indispensability of the C. P. I believe a mass party of socialism will be formed that does not need the guidance of a separate Communist Party, or any other party, and which in many ways will be quite different from the Communist Party we have known.

However, if the present trend in Communist circles (as reflected by the Daily Worker) proceeds to the point where creativity conquers over dogma in official policy and personnel, I have no doubt but that the best traditions and most of the membership of the Communist Party will become part of the flesh and spirit of the new and broader party of socialism to be.

There can be no doubt but that the last few years prosperity had fed capitalistic illusions among the masses. Under such conditions the rise of socialist consciousness in broad sections of the working class was simply not in the cards.

It must also be admitted that under the adverse political climate that has prevailed in recent years a number of formerly active people have tended to become ordinary stay-at-homes.

But the following quote from Foster's article I can, nevertheless, not go along with, as it does not square with my own experience among fellow left-wingers:

"... c) the most damaging thing to us in the government's attack, however, was the intense ideological campaign waged by the capitalist forces to establish the double-lie that the USSR was a war threat to the world and the U. S. government was

fighting in defense of world peace. . . ."

The left-wingers whom I have been associated with were not taken in by imperialism's propaganda in regards to either its foreign or domestic policy. Nor did we for a minute lose faith in socialism—in spite of disappointments and disgusting decisions and attitudes on the part of the Party leadership, or even the shocking revelations about Stalin's reign.

That our government's policy of terror had a lot to do with the pressure tending to isolate Communists and other left-wingers cannot be disputed. But the Communists' dogmatic positions, etc. and the many gross mistakes, such as shoeing its trade union members off into holes in the ground, helped form public opinion.

Yet I think we can say with Foster that "... it is a demonstrable fact that our party, in its central and decisive struggle against the danger of war and fascism, and despite such errors as it did make, has followed a basically correct general line."

But I can't see how the search for a new organizational form for a socialist labor movement to fit the new era of co-existence and peaceful transitions to socialism throughout the world foreshadows a reversion to Browder's class-collaboration policies which he predicated upon his brave new world of "progressive American capitalism."—G. G. R.

CP Needed Here More Than Ever

Editor, Daily Worker:

As a worker, I feel that we need the Communist Party of our country in these very crucial days more than ever before. I am not a party member and I have drawn this conclusion after attending many discussions that the working people need the Communist Party to lead them through the struggles ahead to achieve victory.

I feel in my heart that it would be a tragic day for America if the Communist Party would disband, as some confused people on the left have suggested. The Communist Party is the only party who have a clear program on Civil Rights, Negro Rights, and above all, a fight to repeal the Smith Act, and free the persecuted leaders who are in jail. To my mind,

it would be a wonderful thing if all party members held discussions to air their differences, and above all, unite to take action on the very important issues mentioned above. This way a solid strong party would emerge in our country. This would thwart the attempts of open and covert enemies of the Socialist Movement to take advantage of the present difficulties.

Enclosed \$5 contribution for the Daily Worker, in the name of a great fighter for the working class, Ella Marshak.

—A FRIEND OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY.

Says Nasser Is An Anti-Semite

Bronx, N.Y.

Editor, Daily Worker:

A letter printed 9-20 says, "Nasser no more resembles Hitler than Eastland the lowly Nazarine."

Well, it seems to me, Nasser does resemble Hitler. He hates Jews. That's a great big resemblance in my book. And I don't doubt for a second that an anti-Semite is bad for the world and can never be a friend of oppressed peoples anywhere, black or white.

I'm sure that no Jewish pilot would be allowed to work on the Suez. —M. L.

Teaching at Jeff School

Editor, Daily Worker:

G.Y., your correspondent and our erstwhile student at the Jefferson School, raises some interesting questions in his letter of Sept. 24.

His apparent desire to knock down old ikons, discard old dogmas, and develop bold, creative new approaches to the problems of our movement. This intention is highly laudable.

But in actuality, G.Y. enunciates a position that is directed not at that which is wrong in the struggle for socialism, but at the fight for socialism itself.

First, what is his central thesis? It is that we in America who want socialism must abandon Marxism - Leninism, must put the "books on the shelf," and just pull political answers for our country out of our "thinking caps" alone.

His argumentation begins with the assertion that Marxism-Leninism is "a foreign brand of

socialism" (G.Y.'s emphasis) that might have been all right for Russia in 1917, but is not all right for us in the U.S.A. in 1956.

In this argument there is a tiny grain of truth, but there is also a mountain of falsehood. What is true is that the Marxist movement in the U.S. has in the past viewed the development of Marxist theory and practice in the Soviet Union in a rigid, dogmatic way. We erred frequently in carrying over bodily Soviet experiences, tactics and forms of organization to our country, mistaking the Russian form of the unfolding of Marxism-Leninism for its essence.

But to conclude from this error that Marxism is something Russian, good for people over there but not good for us in the U.S., is a monstrous caricature. Marxism is a universal science, elaborating the laws of social movement everywhere and providing a methodology for the solution of all social problems. Nothing in the current discussions can lead to a denial of Marxism. Quite the reverse, Marxism has never been more brilliantly validated than by recent world developments, including the discussions in our own ranks.

What can and must be called into question is the validity of certain Marxist propositions for us in the U.S. at the present time. Everyone is aware of the way in which the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party changed Lenin's proposition concerning the inevitability of war. But it would be illiterate folly to think that Lenin or his teachings have been repudiated by this new theoretical elaboration. Rather, what took place was a further development of the Marxist-Leninist theory of imperialism. Indeed, such extensions of theoretical questions are essential features of Marxist science, which teaches that nothing remains static but is always changing. Our task in the present discussion is to develop just such a dialectical approach to Marxism in our own country.

Which leads to G.Y.'s next point (about which I have a subjective as well as a theoretical interest). He complains that his study of Marxist principles at the Jefferson School made him "the victim of a cruel hoax." He says he "swallowed all this indigestible jargon" which the

School teaches, and found that he was not only unequipped to deal with his shop or union problems, but that his "Marxist baggage" stood in the way, isolating him from his fellow-workers.

First, a note of self-criticism on the part of the Jefferson School is in order. If it is true that our teaching had the effect which G.Y. describes, then it is obvious that we did our job badly in his case. For whatever have been our faults at the School, we have always known that Marxism is neither "jargon" nor "baggage," but a guide, a method, an outlook and a way of life. We have sought to make our students familiar with the vast, rich body of Marxist literature and to instill in them some degree of mastery of the complex tools of the science of Marxism.

To be sure, we shared with the rest of the Marxist movement in our country the error of dogmatism, of left-sectarianism, of failure to give sufficient attention to American problems, traditions and patterns of life. But G.Y. raises a much deeper question. His view is that Marxism itself is no good. And why is this so? Because his crude and inadequate grasp of Marxism—or even our inadequate teaching—was not useful to him in coping with the problems of his shop and union. Not satisfied with this bit of reasoning, he generalizes further: the Party made mistakes—therefore Marxism is not a science.

Has it ever occurred to G.Y. that a science that has proved itself so spectacularly in one-third of the world might be given a little more respect, even when its practitioners in the United States have fumbled badly? It is not Marxism that is at fault; it is simply that we have not been good enough Marxists.

This is the conclusion that we at the Jefferson School are drawing in the present period of discussion. Anyone who examines our current catalog will readily see that the School is taking substantial steps to improve the quality of our program. It is our hope that the Marxism we will be teaching at the School will be on a higher, firmer level, more creative, more provocative, more deeply rooted in American life than ever before.

—DAVID GOLDWAY.