

SPEAK YOUR PIECE

PEACEFUL TRANSITION

BUFFALO, N. Y.

Editor, Daily Worker:

The question Francis Sheehy (May 21) poses for discussion precludes discussion altogether. It is posed for debate in such a way that only an open and shut answer is possible. Naturally any social system must limit civil liberties "to the extent required to defend" itself. The real question—and at this stage it should be discussed not debated, giving an opportunity for a variety of views—is: To what extent, if any, should a Socialist society in America limit our traditional American civil liberties? It's impossible to answer this in 300 words, but here's a beginning of my thinking.

If socialism should come to America with a civil war—and we shall certainly do everything to prevent such an occurrence—naturally civil liberties would be sharply curtailed. Martial law would be in force, and the exercise of civil liberties would be "a clear and present danger" to the regime.

But socialism may come peacefully by winning a parliamentary majority. Suppose we win by a 55 percent vote, shall we permit the 45 percent to talk and organize against us? I say yes. If we clamped down on civil liberties, it would disturb many people, as it would only be by the use of those same civil liberties that we won. We might then lose the next election, and our enemies would have on hand our own restrictive laws to use against us. If we can win 55 percent peacefully and with full civil liberties, we can in time win 75 percent and more.

Should a new regime, however, with say a 55 percent majority have special safeguards? This is a different question, and to this I would answer yes. These should consist, among others, in large appropriations to publish, broadcast, teach and dramatize the advantages of Socialism. Strictly enforced laws against racism, an immediate reduction in armament expenditures, and the abolition of all income taxes under \$3,500 would be rather powerful arguments against anything the capitalists might still have to say.

Civil liberties have proved their value. If they had not been suppressed in the U.S.S.R. beyond the necessary time after the civil war and intervention, the Russians might have avoided many of the errors now revealed.

—FOR LIBERTY and SOCIALISM.

SUGGESTION TO LEADERS

Editor, Daily Worker:

Recently several letters have been printed in Speak Your Piece dealing with our leadership's lack of close ties with the mass of people. Perhaps this can be attributed to the fact that the top functionaries don't belong to Party clubs and never appear as invited guests at club meetings. Isn't it possible for all the leaders to attend at least one scheduled club meeting during the coming discussion of Party convention. Both the leadership and the rank and file would profit by such an exchange of ideas and experiences.

—BILL.

DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM

Editor, Daily Worker:

In the recent period some of the national leaders of the Communist Party have referred to our struggle against Browder as the elimination of the cult of the individual. By implication they say that many of the features which limited inner party democracy during the Browder period were eliminated with the expulsion of Browder. This does

not jibe with the facts.

Following the publication of the Dulcos article, there was a period of discussion somewhat similar to the present one although far more limited. One would have thought that following that discussion there should have been a blossoming of inner party democracy. However the opposite took place.

More and more there was a clipping away and a distortion of the basically correct principle of democratic centralism. More and more the feature of centralism became dominant and the democratic feature was reduced to insignificance.

In a letter of 300 words to which the editors of the Daily have limited the unknown Party member it is difficult to go into great detail on the above generalization. However I wish to list a few of what I consider the worst features of bureaucracy which developed in the past years.

1. A concept which by implication was steadily drilled into the Party membership by leaders on all levels was that an individual leader or leadership body above you was infallible. The very forms that were used to give leadership indicated this. If a leader from a higher body attended a meeting of a lower body and made the report, he would also summarize the discussion. No matter what opinions were expressed during the course of the discussion, his summary was it. Seldom were votes taken.

2. Any criticism from below of a leader or a leadership body was frowned on. Criticism of a leader or leadership body was made synonymous with criticism of the Party as such. Criticism many times was answered with the question "Don't you have any confidence in the Party leadership?"

3. Letters to the Daily Worker which in any way disagreed with whatever happened to be the current policy were not printed.

Therefore to limit the present struggle here in the U.S., and also in the Soviet Union and for that matter in every country only against the cult of the individual is in my opinion to miss the boat. It is impossible for me to accept the idea that Stalin without the support of the majority of the Party leaders in the Soviet Union committed the wrongs which are charged against him. This was no more possible than it was possible for Browder to introduce Browderism in the U. S. without the support of our Party leaders.

Therefore the nub of the problem is a constant struggle against a wrong concept of the role of leadership and against those forms and methods of leadership which tend in the direction of the infallibility of leaders and leadership bodies. Unless this is done we are simply laying the groundwork for new and far greater errors.

GEORGE SAMSON

WANTS THEM PUBLISHED

Editor, Daily Worker:

I expect to have my brief letters to the Daily Worker (including this one) published. Otherwise I shall share my usual yearly \$50 to \$100 contribution to the Daily Worker with other worthy left causes.

—FOR A FREE MARXIST PRESS.

Daily Worker

Published daily except Saturday and Sunday by the Publishers New Press, Inc., 25 E. 12th St., New York 2, N. Y. Telephone ALgonquin 4-7864.

Reentered as second class matter Oct. 22, 1947, at the post office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

	3 mos.	6 mos.	1 year
Daily Worker only	\$4.00	\$7.00	\$12.00
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