

# An Evaluation of the "Daily Worker"

By SUB-COMMITTEE OF NATIONAL COMMITTEE, CPUSA

*At a meeting of the National Committee of the Communist Party, held April 27-28, a report evaluating the Daily Worker and The Worker was made by a sub-committee appointed for that purpose. This Report, after extensive discussion, was accepted by the National Committee, by a vote of 46-6. Its content was then sent, in typed form, to various districts in the country for further discussion and for information. At the latest National Committee meeting, at the end of July, the publication of this Report was urged. It is printed below, in somewhat condensed form, as a matter that we know will interest our readers—Ed.*

THE STUDY of the Committee is based on 40 issues of the *Daily Worker* (February 11th to April 5th) and 10 issues of *The Worker* (February 3rd to April 7th). The yardstick used in this examination is, first, how the paper carries out the total line of the Convention—and not merely this or that aspect that one or another comrade may wish to emphasize. Second, on the basis of the character of the paper, what it strives to achieve, the kind of paper it is. Third, the issues that were of paramount concern to the masses during the period under review.

On the character of the paper, there is not always full clarity. Some think the *Daily Worker* should be a sort of daily political magazine devoted to discussions, and not a newspaper. Some emphasize that it should be non-partisan, with no opinions. A great deal of emphasis is placed by some—and we believe correctly—on the idea that it should be a crusading paper, crusading on issues. Also there have been many complaints of inadequate dealing with the question of socialism.

We believe the *Daily Worker* is, and should be, a newspaper. It is a non-Party paper, but not a non-partisan paper. It is a Marxist paper, not a liberal paper, working class in character but working class in the broadest sense; in this sense it is also a people's paper; a newspaper which, while it cannot compete in all coverage with other large newspapers, can be second to none in coverage of the struggles of the people generally, and especially in the labor movement, the Negro people's movement, the struggle of the colonial people, developments in the international labor movement and the socialist lands. It should be a crusading paper, fighting on issues, reflecting struggle, giving the greatest attention to the struggles of the most exploited and oppressed sections of the American people, the Negro and Puerto Rican people in such areas as New York, for example, where they are such a substantial number.

*The paper should also deal with questions in depth, strive to impart political education to its readers, give*

ing fundamental answers to questions, helping to introduce the reader to theory in a natural way, and carrying on a constant education and advocacy of socialism on the basis of the concrete experience of the American working people.

With regard to the issues that were specifically examined, there were three foremost national issues during this period: the Mid-East crisis, the civil rights struggle, the racketeering investigation. In addition, of great importance were: the H-bomb tests, a question which in recent weeks has come to the fore as a major issue, the budget, taxes, inflation and automation. Here in New York, where the *Daily Worker* has its main base as distinguished from *The Worker*, whose circulation is about evenly divided between New York and the rest of the country, central issues were those connected with the session of the Legislature: rent control, changes in the Social Insurance Law, the Baker-Metcalf anti-discrimination bill, and the effort of the GOP Legislature to weaken SCAD. Within the city there were the developments on the Campus around the issue of free speech for Communists in connection with Academic Freedom Week; and finally how the Party Convention itself, which took place within this period, was treated.

Whatever weaknesses are to be found in the paper—and these we shall deal with as we go along—it is important to emphasize at the outset that the *Daily Worker* and *The Worker* reacted to the main events quickly and on the whole correctly and effectively. This is not unimportant, for as is well known, there were times when the press was deficient in this respect. And especially is this important against the background of the last year when our movement was so

absorbed in internal discussions. Let us now pass over to some of these specific issues.

## ON THE MIDEAST CRISIS

Here the *Daily* correctly centered on the struggle for peace and called for united action by the major powers—and in the first place by the USA and the USSR. There were many articles and editorials exposing the policy of U.S. imperialism in general and the oil interests specifically.

The *Daily* showed great sensitivity to the feelings of the Jewish people, though, at least in the beginning, not the same awareness of the need to keep in mind the feelings and sentiments of the Negro people.

The early discussions on this question, the letter of Comrade Jackson and the article of Comrade Strong, had a positive influence in overcoming a certain on-sidedness of emphasis and lack of fundamental approach—the realization of the full significance of the struggles of the people in the colonial countries, the meaning of Bandung, and the relationship of this to the whole world struggle for peace, democracy, independence and social progress.

A number of weaknesses continued to prevail. Among these, we would center attention on the following:

Sometimes allowing tactical considerations—particularly as regards the Jewish people—to blur the main line. In this connection, it is also necessary to state that the Jewish masses here must be told the truth as regards the main forces and issues, the role of the Israeli Government, etc. The tactical line is for the purpose of facilitating the bringing of the correct line to the Jewish people, and not for capitulating to national feelings, etc.

## ON THE STRUGGLE AGAINST RACKETEERING

The papers reacted quickly and on the whole correctly, avoiding both main dangers: failure to identify ourselves with the workers' sentiments against racketeering for fear that we might appear to support the Senate Committee; and failure to expose the real aims of the investigators. The articles by George Morris; the editorials; reprints of views of national and local leaders, and of Bridges and the ILWU, were all helpful. The paper gave the correct line on how to fight racketeering and the racketeers, showing that the employers, the investigators, the racketeers were, despite their present falling out, one and the same camp, and that an aroused rank-and-file developing to the maximum trade union democracy, is essential to a consistent and effective fight against the racketeers in the interests of labor and the nation.

Perhaps it is necessary to give emphasis to the central objective of the investigation.

It is part of the whole well-planned and well-organized offensive by Big Business, expressed in Congress by the alliance of the Southern Dixiecrats and the GOP. It is primarily directed against the trade union movement and is designed to stop dead the organization of the unorganized, particularly in the South. It seeks to divert attention from the planned drive for a shorter workday without reduction in pay and from the congressional investigation into monopoly profits. It is also aimed at the civil rights bill, passage of which requires the alliance of labor, the Negro people, white collar and professional groups.

By discrediting the labor movement, the forces behind this rackets investigation hope to mount an offensive against the developing independent political action of labor and its allies. In this way they hope to block welfare legislation now and influence in a reactionary direction the outcome of the 1958 and 1960 elections.

This must be hammered home again and again. It must be made clear that the Teamsters Union was chosen because it was considered a weak link where reaction could move in without too much opposition; after which it was intended to go after what was really wanted.

A criticism can be made that it did not utilize this situation to get page after page of letters from rank and file workers on this matter in the form of workers' correspondence, interviews with workers, etc.

## ON CIVIL RIGHTS

There is no question but that the paper did give a good deal of attention to the struggle in the South, to civil rights legislation before Congress, and to many local struggles, and in the last week or so, to the Pilgrimage. It was surprising to find in this connection that the *Sunday Worker*, which so outstandingly improved in many fields during this period, was in some aspects deficient in this respect. There was only one editorial on this question out of a total of 25, with 2 columns and 17 major stories in the entire 10-week period, as against 30 labor and 28 in the field of foreign affairs.

The paper reflected a number of local struggles on local issues, but insufficient attention to how the Negro people live—the discrimination in the dif-

ferent spheres, economic, social, cultural, housing problems. In this connection, perhaps it would not be amiss to state that not only on this question, but in general, it is difficult for the paper to sustain the aspect of being a crusading paper on issues where such struggles are not developed. Here it must be stated that very often the correct policy of working among the masses in the broad mass organizations, and not isolating Communists and the Left forces in Left organizations, is too often interpreted as meaning that there should be no initiative from the Left in helping to develop struggles. It should also be stated in this regard that much greater emphasis must be given by the paper to reflecting the changed population composition in the City of New York (where the *Daily* has its main base), for example in connection with the struggles of the Negro and Puerto Rican people.

The *Daily Worker* was in the very center of the development of the struggle on the New York campuses around Academic Freedom Week and the right of the Communists to be heard. The Editor-in-Chief, Comrade Gates, spoke at many student meetings and brought forward the position of the Party. In some cases members of the Staff sold the *Daily Worker* at and around these meetings.

One of the things to be noted is the almost total failure of the labor movement to react to, and to participate in, this struggle and the failure of the paper to raise the question. This struggle involved the city colleges maintained by the taxpayers, which means the working masses in the first place, and certainly the labor movement should be aroused to play a role in this type of struggle.

The questions of the budget, taxation, inflation—these and related issues do not receive sufficient attention in our press. *The Worker* is somewhat better in this respect than the *Daily Worker*. It appears that this is connected with the organization of the paper and insufficient clarity as to responsibility for national politics, economic questions. The failure to deal adequately with these issues is very serious because it is precisely with these issues that the masses are most concerned. Perhaps this reflects a certain sectarianism, and a certain isolation from the struggles of the masses on these issues. It is through these issues that very often the masses can be mobilized to fight effectively in larger numbers on other issues of a more general character, including the fight for peace.

#### NEED FOR MORE DEPTH

One of the things the Committee observed was that *even where the paper on single issues in the various fields of work deals with them correctly and gives answers to the immediate questions, there is a failure to deal sufficiently with questions more fundamentally, more deeply.*

In this connection also, while the papers correctly give answers to questions of the day, looking back over a period of time, we find that there is insufficient emphasis on the perspective. From time to time there should be a summing up so that the reader will know the relationship, for example, of the current developments in the cold war, the attacks on the colonial people and all this in connection with the general struggle for co-existence. Similarly, relating the current developments in the economic situation

to the perspective as regards the outlook for the economic situation; or in regard to the outcome of an election here and there, the struggle on the legislative front, the whole aspect of the struggle for independent political action, for realignment, and for the strategic line adopted by the Convention for an anti-monopoly coalition.

As has been stated on numerous occasions, there is insufficient agitation for socialism based on the issues of the day and relating them to the principles of socialism. In this connection it is noteworthy that some good beginnings have been made in *The Worker*. It has carried a series of articles by Comrade Sparks, a number of articles on the Convention by Comrade Magil, debates on Socialism, etc.

#### ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

With regard to foreign policy, side by side with an excellent struggle for peaceful coexistence, for banning H-bomb tests, disarmament, etc., a number of weaknesses are to be found in the paper. In the March 19th editorial for example, we find a statement like the following:

The big powers will contribute to a more lasting peace only when they recognize the rights and sovereignty of all countries in the Middle East. And the big powers can help bring about a settlement if they keep their own East-West cold war out of the Middle East.

This is an instance of what often has been called equating the Socialist countries with imperialism. While this is not typical (and we are told was not written by the Foreign Editor), it is nevertheless an error which we believe cannot be attributed to mere accident. It reflects a weakness in dealing with the socialist countries on the one hand and American imperialism on the other. A number of columns also re-

fect a tendency to explain the Eisenhower-Dulles policies by their stupidity rather than as a reflection of the role and the aims of U.S. imperialism, and also constantly tell the readers that despite all recent developments peaceful coexistence is assured. While undoubtedly much of what is being said in these columns is correct and necessary, they are one-sided. They do not concentrate sufficiently, in dealing with the different interests, classes, groups, etc., on the role of the imperialists and upon how the people themselves can advance the struggle for peace.

On one aspect of foreign affairs, specifically the attitude to the Socialist countries, it would appear, both from the number of articles on this question, as well as from their content, that we are dealing here with more than neglect or error or weakness. We believe it reflects an incorrect line, a line which holds that dissociation from the socialist countries and from the Communist movement of the rest of the world is a precondition for building a stronger Marxist movement in the United States. Fast, Steuben and Starobin, to one degree or another, made this a central point in their attack against the Party, in their declarations as to why they left the Party. We can say that at least an echo of this is found in examining the press.

We find tendencies in the Party that different comrades emphasize different sections of the Resolution adopted by the 16th National Convention. It is necessary, therefore, to emphasize the struggle for the Resolution as a whole. In connection with the section on the Communist Party—independent party of American workers, where the formerly incorrect attitudes and relations to other parties and socialist countries are dealt with, it said:

The Soviet Union, People's China and the People's Democracies of Eastern Europe are socialist countries. The system of capitalist exploitation has been abolished in these countries and, together with it, the cause of poverty, fascism, war, national oppression and race discrimination. From the beginning the Communist Party has greeted and supported the efforts of the working people of these countries to build a new life for themselves on socialist foundations.

Big Business tries to vilify these countries, to slander and defame them, to incite hostility against them. In the interest of the American people the Communist Party is concerned with nailing these lies and exposing these slanders.

The attitude of the Communist Party to these countries reflects its devotion to the great principle of working class internationalism which has deep roots in our country's history. The tradition of international solidarity is a proud one. The Communist Party continues it and considers it a badge of honor.

At the same time the Communist Party recognizes that over the years it held certain wrong and oversimplified concepts of what its relations should be to other Marxist parties. The Party tended to accept uncritically many views of Marxists of other countries. Not all these views were correct; some did not correspond to American conditions.

The Party also viewed uncritically developments in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. It mistakenly thought that any public criticism of the views or policies of the Marxist parties of these countries would weaken the bonds of international working class solidarity or bring comfort to the enemies of peace and socialism.

It is true that there are some who have a tendency to try to forget everything we have learned since the XXth Congress and to revert back to old thinking and old methods. This we must struggle against. But it is precisely because of the necessity to wage this fight effectively that we must, as the Resolution correctly states, also fight against the Right danger and revisionist tendencies, the distortion of our international viewpoint.

As the statistical analysis shows, with the exception of one article in *The*

*Worker*, dealing with an exchange of letters between the workers in Gorki, USSR and the workers in Greenwich in Great Britain, on Hungary and Egypt, there hasn't been a single major article on Hungary during the entire period under examination, although such material is available which our readers would like to have and has been printed in other periodicals, including the *New World Review* and the *People's World*. It is asserted that the Party has said nothing new on the question of the Open Letter of last November. But a reading of that letter will show that even within its limitations, much could have been done to give a deeper understanding of the events, the role of U.S. imperialism and the consolidation of the government rebuilding.

and the tackling of the problems of

In general, it should be said that in connection with this field of work—foreign affairs—it is necessary in one form or another to create guarantees that the line of the Party will be accurately reflected. It is necessary to draw in many collaborators, experts, many of whom are available, to guarantee that the paper will once more reflect the developments in the international movement, socialist countries, etc.

## ON "SPEAK YOUR PIECE"

The statistical analysis of "Speak Your Piece" during this period shows 103 letters were printed in the *Daily Worker*. Fifty-three of these are what could be called of a general nature, not directly connected with the internal situation in the Party. Interestingly enough a relatively large number dealt with national politics, such questions as the budget, inflation, etc. It is also clear from the small number of letters

in the general category dealing with labor and the Negro people, that much improvement can be developed on this score. Of the other 50 letters printed, of what is called "a controversial nature," there is no evidence that these were used to favor one side or another in the disputes. But this is not what we wish to deal with at this moment. What we wish to say most of all is the fact that these letters disclose a great deal of thinking, experience, both theoretical and practical, on the part of the writers, a great deal of talent in our organization, and that it is necessary to continue "Speak Your Piece," making it a permanent feature, even making it more representative. For it is one of the channels through which not only can there be an exchange of experiences among the comrades, but the Party leadership on all levels can learn a great deal from the thinking going on in the organization and among people around our organization. Many questions of a strictly inner-Party nature, of course, in the future, will be found in the Party bulletin once it is published, as decided upon by the Convention. And even greater emphasis, therefore, will be given in "Speak Your Piece" to general questions of mass work, mass policy, reflecting the thinking of the workers, the Negro people, etc., without in the least doing anything to weaken the forum aspect of freedom of speech. At the same time, we feel that some question dealt with require comment. We do not mean answering each letter. No. That would tend to stifle freedom of speech. But taking up questions over a period of time, analyzing them, drawing conclusion, so that many things are not left hanging in the air; this, we believe would even strengthen the value of "Speak Your Peace."

## COMMUNIST PARTY CONVENTION

The investigation covered only the period immediately following the convention and not the preconvention period.

On this, the following can be said: First, that aside from a certain tentativeness during the Convention itself—especially in the main headlines—where one feels that there was sometimes more consideration given to what the *Times* and the *Post* would say than for consideration to accuracy and the need to unify our own ranks, the stories, articles, and the publication of actual material adopted were on the whole representative and factual.

But our main criticism is directed against the fact that there has, but for the two articles in *The Worker*, been no follow-up, no popularization and application of the many documents, policies and their relation to the problems and tasks confronting our Party, the workers, the Negro people, the nation. This criticism can be levelled not merely against the editors of the paper, but against all leading comrades and Party committees. This is the first time this was neglected to such an extent. It is not too late and such a series of articles should be undertaken by the Center, in the states, as well as by the paper itself. Our convention and its decisions need to be popularized, made clear to our own members and to the many thousands of friends and sympathizers. Through the press, as well as through leaflets and pamphlets, many tens of thousands have to be made aware of our policies. This is obviously one of our tasks in realizing the decisions.

## RELATIONS WITH THE PARTY

*The Daily Worker* and *The Worker*

are not official organs of the Communist Party. But they bear a special relation to it. They are not Party papers, but neither are they non-partisan papers. They are Marxist workingclass papers, they are Communist newspapers in the broadest sense of the term. These papers, founded originally through the efforts of the Communist Party, are today independent enterprises with their own officers, etc. But as far as their very existence is concerned, they must have the fullest support of the Communist movement.

But this is not the only thing that needs to be said—though that is most important and must be the foundation on which all else stands—as far as the character and aims of the *Daily* and *The Worker* are concerned.

First of all, it is a most serious weakness that the papers have not created for themselves, independently, a base of support which includes Communists and other Left and Marxist forces, as well as among militant workers and Negro people generally; that they are not surrounded by a corps of people helping to plan and support the paper and many activities and affairs which could and should be organized around the paper in support of it. The example of the *Freiheit* is a very positive one from which much can be learned.

In this respect let us now consider the political line of the paper in relation to the Communist Party. Whatever goes into the paper is, of course, by decision of its own editorial board. There is no question but that the paper is generally reflective of the political approach of the party in general and on all theoretical questions as well as concrete aspects of immediate program. The paper has always aimed to fulfill this role and whatever

weaknesses existed in this respect were mainly in execution.

How is the main line of the Party reflected in the paper? Through the editorial board of the paper, through discussions with the comrades working on the paper. Whatever changes or improvements may be necessary to broaden the circle of correspondents, columnists, collaborators, to strengthen the staff of any of its departments can be achieved through discussions with, and recommendations to the comrades on the papers.

## CONCLUSION

We have tried to give an objective report. It is perhaps over-critical. This is because we wish to center on weaknesses and overcome them.

Certainly the paper has many strong points; even as it is, it's an excellent paper—the best there is!

We must remember that the paper comes out regularly. Comrades must write and try to give answers quickly. At the same time those on the paper bear a great responsibility and have a great opportunity to serve. Only the best is good enough. Each must grow, develop, learn, improve his work theoretically, politically, technically.

We are going through a difficult period in the Party. We all must learn. We have many changes to make. The paper, too, should try to change people, their ideas. Only as a last resort should there be changes of personnel. We must do nothing to create new difficulties or increase factionalism. Changes take time. We must convince.

The paper needs united support. It will take a strong pull on the part of every one to save the press. All of us must pull in the same direction.