

Dec. 8, 1957

Dear Friends:

On December 3rd the REB held a discussion on the relationship of theory to membership growth. Of necessity the whole question of our educations came under scrutiny. With the publication of Marxism and Freedom, we have reached a new stage not alone in our development, but in the relationship between the objective situation and the possible rise of a new Marxist Humanist movement. This makes it imperative for each of us to absorb Marxism in its development over the past 100 years in so organic a way that it indeed becomes part of our very organism. This ~~would~~ signify our mastery of theory that would make it a weapon of analysis which could transform a current event, a shop experience, or, for that matter, a discussion on art forms, into an illuminated vision of the future society inherent in the present one, and yet its complete opposite.

On November 24th I wrote to the NEB, in anticipation of this REB discussion. The pivotal point in that letter was the following truth: With the transformation of Bolshevism into its opposite, Stalinism, theory stopped coming from the masses and therefore perished. The monolithic party, which is the contribution, if such you wish to call it, of Stalinism to "theory" demonstrates as clearly as state capitalism itself this dying off of revolutionary theory. Bourgeois theory, comes from ordering from above, degenerates into directives for the masses to carry out which parallels management ordering workers to work harder, --so much so that there is hardly a difference between the "Collected Works" of a Stalin, a Tito, a Mao Tse Tung, and the administrative laws of the land.

The complete bankruptcy of thought which characterizes present-day civilization is no accident. A new philosophy does not arise either from laws or perfected weapons of destruction, in inner or outer space. It arises, and can arise only, from new impulses from the masses. What we accomplished in just listening and recording in NEWS & LETTERS establishes ~~the~~ the maturity of our age when you know how to hold on to the positive in the negativity of capitalism.

But the time has come ^{when} the movement from practice to theory must finally meet theory itself. As a most fundamental step in that direction, the REB has decided to reorganize our educational. It is not that what we did with editorial sessions was wrong when we did it. Quite the contrary. Intellectuals learned to listen; workers learned to talk freely. But we must now know how to limit the editorial to a once a month, rather than once a week, routine. That puts the responsibility of writing on the membership itself-- no discussions on what to write, but only on what has been written. That also means that for that once a month the business portion, except for the collection of contributions, is skipped.

At all other times business is first on the agenda, but is so organized by the executive, that it can be done within no more than 45 minutes.

The rest of the time, week in and week out, is taken up with ~~reading~~, not just reading, but studying M & F.

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This is to be done in a systematic manner:

(1) Reporters are to prepare themselves well--and present the chapter in discussion for 20 minutes. Each person, who will have read the chapter by himself in any case, will then discuss. Between 40 minutes to an hour can be taken in this.

(2) The Book is to be followed in sequence; no skipping of chapters. The jumping from one section to another haphazardly was adequate when we did not have the book and needed to stress a point here and there. Now, however, it is the flow, the essence, the historic development, and the interweaving of past and present as method is of the essence. The reporter can then supplement with even more current examples. The main thing is to become practiced in the use of theory as weapon of analysis of the problems each one confronts.

(3) All 287 pages of text should be covered, and where possible part of Appendices. The Bibliography should be followed for supplementary reading. Much went into making it that brief and selected; therefore it is important not to work eclectically now, and suddenly begin expanding. Absorption of the book, rather than expansion of what others have written, is the necessity.

(4) The educationals should begin either Dec. 15th or 16th whichever is the night on which the local committee meets. Only for that first meeting, which concerns itself with the Preface by Marcuse and author's introduction, in contrast, does the REB suggest the following reporters: 1) for L.A. Bess, 2) for W.Va. Olga and 3) for Detroit Saul.

(5) After that each person in the local must act at one time or another as the reporter, with choices as to who what a matter between the organizer and what the individual likes to volunteer for. However, the important thing is that we know in advance at least 4 such volunteers. It is proposed that the local committees send out a notice to all sympathizers, announcing these educationals. The titles of course will follow the chapter headings of the book, but the point is that our friends know in advance what is being discussed and chose to come or not to come, but knowing what it is they are missing if they don't come.

(6) Finally this is to be used as a point in all sales of book from now on. They should know if they buy the book they can also become a part of a collective studying it.

After two months or more that it will take us to complete this we will find that not alone our heads have cleared, but the organization of thought that we have achieved has been the source of a new energy to build and found a Humanist movement.

Rae for the REB

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