

# Vital Issues Before Radicals Discussed at Five AFSE Panels

By Herman Chauka

Since the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, the issue of socialism and democracy has increasingly occupied the attention of the entire radical movement. This was readily apparent at the panel on this subject at the conference of the American Forum — For Socialist Education. (See story, page 1.)

Participants in the panel were David Dellinger of Liberation magazine, Farrell Dobbs of the Socialist Workers Party, John L. Lewine, an educator, Steve Nelson of the Communist Party and Dr. Frederick Schuman, historian and writer on Soviet affairs. The moderator was Russell Johnson of the American Friends Service Committee. Also scheduled to participate were Murray Kempton, the columnist, and Herbert Aptheker of the Communist Party. Kempton was not present because of illness in his family. Aptheker's absence was not explained.

## SELF-REFORM THEORY

Both Nelson and Schuman, who described himself as a "non-socialist," expressed the view that the Soviet regime is engaged in a process of democratic self-reform.

Dellinger held that dictatorial rule in the Soviet Union flowed from efforts to "impose a system on people." It is wrong, he argued, "to engage in revolutionary violence to bring about a non-violent society."

Lewine contended it is necessary to replace what he sees as "communism" in the Soviet Union with "socialism" as represented by the various parties of the Second International and the Asian Socialist Conference.

Insisting that socialism and democracy are inseparable, Dobbs said the Soviet Union could not yet be considered a socialist society. The abolition of capitalist property relations and the substitution of nationalized, planned economy, is completely progressive. It is the duty of American socialists, he declared, to convince the American workers that it is in their class interests to defend the right of the Soviet workers to have made such social changes. At the same time, he continued, they should also support the struggle of the Soviet workers to wrest political control from the privileged bureaucracy. He cited the Hungarian revolution as a movement in that direction.

In reply to a direct question from Dobbs as to where he stood on this issue, Nelson said he thinks the present Soviet officialdom wants to break with Stalinism but that the process of self-reform was "arrested" by the Hungarian revolution. He said he supports the present regime "because it's going in a socialist direction." But, he added, "I don't follow them blindly like I used to. . . . Now I criticize them when I think they are wrong."

At the panel on political action, the discussion revolved almost

completely around the issue of independent political action as counterposed to the "coalition" theory of supporting labor-endorsed capitalist candidates.

The "coalition" theory was advanced by Albert Blumberg, of the Communist Party, who argued that rejection of such a course isolated radicals from the labor movement.

James Aronson, editor of the National Guardian, who participated in the discussion while also acting as moderator, reiterated the stand of his paper in favor of a third party "that does not exclude the socialist solution." Tyrell Wilson, a veteran member of the Socialist Party, said the key problem is for organized labor to form its own party. "We can influence such a party toward socialism," he said.

Joyce Cowley of the Socialist Workers Party said that when Blumberg spoke of labor being in the Democratic party he was apparently confusing the labor officialdom with the movement itself. It is impossible to expect a movement toward socialism, she said, until there is independent political action by the working class.

Milton Zaslow of the Socialist Unity Committee said he favors a third party similar to the now-defunct Progressive Party. He said he objected to both the CP and the SWP who "both were glad to see the Progressive Party go." The CP, he said, favored its liquidation because it considered it "sectarian," while the SWP opposed it as a third capitalist party.

Blumberg said his party had not yet discussed the 1958 elections but that in his view there could be united action behind "some socialist candidates" and that such action would not be in conflict with a "coalition" policy. By this he apparently meant that he favors support to the Democratic party candidate for Governor, with some socialist candidates running for lesser offices.

Blumberg also told the meeting that he had proposed to the Communist Party a policy of joint action on immediate issues "by all socialist tendencies, on the basis of non-exclusion."

## HITS 'GIMMICK' UNIONISM

At the trade-union panel, Russ Nixon, an official of the United Electrical Workers (Ind.) called for an end to collaboration with the employers and the rebirth of political freedom within the unions. He also hit the substitution of "fancy plans and speeches" for real economic gains. "Phony gimmicks like five-year contracts and the so-called SUB smack of collaborations," he declared.

Jules Geller, of the magazine American Socialist, said the main task of socialists at this time is to build a "revitalized socialist movement" rather than elaborating economic bargaining demands.

Fred Fine of the Communist Party, said "The question for socialists is: has the maximum



A. J. MUSTE, Secretary of the American Forum — For Socialist Education. In concluding its conference Dec. 6, he declared: "We have a function to fulfill. This meeting today has been an illustration of it. . . . In providing that nobody, no tendency is to be excluded from the discussion. . . . as, for example, the Eastland Subcommittee were to determine who may or may not participate in respectable political discussion in these United States."

benefit for the people been realized within even the existing system." He contended there is a need for a "coalition of all anti-monopoly elements" to secure this minimum.

Stephen Grattan, a member of the New York Typographical Union, denounced "the debacle at Atlantic City where a large part of the Federation was arbitrarily thrown out." That point was reached, he said, because the labor movement has lost "the socialist conscience in the unions guarding the interests of the members."

Tom Kerry of the SWP said the unions must be transformed into instruments of struggle for the interests of the workers instead of supporters of "free enterprise and the State Department." This, he said, requires "support to rank-and-file movements against the present misleaders of the unions."

Sam Pollock, a Cleveland union official, said it was no longer possible to solve the problems posed by automation and atomic energy by pure and simple trade unionism. "The unions must adopt a socialist program and fuse with the radical movement to do that," he declared. He also said that in splitting the union movement, the AFL-CIO leaders had "become captives of the McClellan committee." Sid Lenz, moderator of the panel, stated his disagreement on this point.

The youth panel addressed itself primarily to current problems of American youth, how young socialists can effectively participate in today's struggles

and how to achieve a regroupment of socialist youth.

Michael Harrington, national chairman of the Young Socialist League which is now seeking affiliation with the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation, spoke on the need to build a broad socialist youth movement.

David McReynolds of the SP-SDF, said he was not willing to be in the same organization or participate in united activities "with Communists and Trotskyists."

The managing editor of the Young Socialist, Tim Wohlforth, stressed the need for a broad, independent socialist youth movement and declared he was in favor of united activity on specific issues by young socialists of all viewpoints.

Earl Durham of the Communist Party discussed the current crisis of U.S. education. Nina Landau, a University of Wisconsin student, described her recent trip to the USSR and China and emphasized the importance of freedom to travel. Tony Ramirez, of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, spoke of the problem of influencing "the apathetic many."

## CULTURE PANEL

At the panel on culture, Eve Merriam, a poet, said the development of science could help make the artist "a whole human being." provided artists were able to work together in "a collective garden." Novelist Harvey Swados saw both the U.S. and the USSR competing in the production of material things without any regard by either for promoting cultural values. Robert Wright, of Union Theological Seminary, said that automation and atomic energy offered little promise "in our existing society."

Dr. Otto Nathan, the economist, declared it was idle to discuss the impact of automation and atomic energy on culture in isolation from the basic problem of capitalism and socialism. The artist has managed to create under capitalism and other previous class societies, but there can be no real flowering of culture until there is socialism, he said. "And I am as sure we will finally reach socialism as I am that the sun will rise tomorrow."

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