

Defend Workers' Education

By WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

THE COINCIDENCE of the "finding" of the Subversive Activities Control Board Chairman against the Jefferson School and the opening of its winter term puts the question of this educational-institution high on the agenda of the working class and progressive movements.



The attack on the Jefferson School by the Attorney General and the SACB is one of the most dangerous assaults against the liberties of the American people. The issue involved, as the School has constantly pointed out in the course of its defense, is "Man's Right to Knowledge and the Free Use Thereof"—a slogan demagogically seized hold of by Columbia University at the very moment it was being trampled on by the administration of President Eisenhower.

By engineering this move to close down the Jefferson School, Attorney General Brownell is trying to put a padlock on the minds of the American people. Borrowing from the book of Goebbels and Tojo, he is seeking to license the right to disseminate ideas—that is, the right to think.

From the first Smith Act attack on the Party by the Truman administration, we have been warning of the inescapable logic of anti-Communism. Now with the Court of Appeals upholding by a 2 to 1 decision the SACB order to "register" the Communist Party, we see the pattern unfolding further. Yesterday the Attorney General asked to "register" the Communist Party. Today he wants to "register" pro-Communist ideas. Actually he wants to outlaw pro-peace ideas, pro-labor, pro-New Deal ideas—any ideas not to the liking of the administration in power.

THE TIME for calling to a halt this progression of fascist moves is long overdue. The lat-

est outrage directed against the Jefferson School should make the issue clearer for many in the labor and progressive movements, as well as for all people interested in the preservation of Constitutional liberty. Even the New York Times, in its handling of the Jefferson School story last week, reflected the concern over the issues of academic freedom and the right of free speech inherent in the case. There are genuine possibilities for broad support for the Jefferson School fight, and the advanced labor and progressive movement should give it serious attention.

A disturbing thing, however, is the inadequate support which the Jefferson School has gotten from working class organizations not only in its defense but in the maintenance of the institution in this difficult period. The reason for this weakness goes deeper than the present attack, and must be dealt with in a fundamental way.

The labor movement of our country has long been characterized by an almost complete lack of conscious theory. Taking their lead from the "practical-minded" bourgeoisie, our labor leaders have swallowed hook, line and sinker the pragmatic philosophy of "Nothing Succeeds Like Success" and "Whatever Works Is Right." In effect, this anti-theoretical approach has opened the door for bourgeois ideology to move into the ranks of the working class consciousness.

This is one of the reasons why our labor movement has been seriously hampered in the development of independent policies and programs. In large part, it accounts for the fact that ours is practically the only major industrial country without a labor party, not to speak of the absence of a socialist orientation in the organized labor movement.

THE SOLUTION of this problem is one of the major tasks confronting the advanced workers in the U.S. The opening up of new opportunities and new perspectives in the period

ahead, as outlined in the Party Program, only heightens the necessity for doing a job on the theoretical front. The fact is that unless there is a steady development of working class consciousness and understanding, there cannot be built a solid front for jobs, peace, equal rights and democracy.

Unfortunately, the theoretical weakness of the working class as a whole has to a considerable extent spilled over into the advanced workers and the Communist movement. Theory is all too often accorded only second class citizenship among us.

Questions of study, or literature, of theoretical production, are not given the serious attention they deserve. The disease of narrow practicalism dogs us and impedes our growth. Day-to-day political work, when it is divorced from Marxist-Leninist study and analysis, can degenerate into thoughtless busyness, into a merry-go-round of hectic but sterile activity.

THE Jefferson School of Social Science has for many years been in the forefront of the fight for working class theory. Our movement today would be immeasurably weaker if not for the thousands of leaders and active workers who have learned the principles of Marxism-Leninism at this School. The valiant fight the School has conducted during the past few years in defiance of the witchhunting persecution to which it has been subjected is a great tribute to it and to its many faithful students. In a deeper sense, the continuing existence of the School is a tribute to the indestructible vitality of the ideas it teaches—the ideas of scientific socialism.

In the period ahead, the need for the Jefferson School and the rich body of working class science and culture that constitute its course of study is more pressing than ever. I can think of no better advice for the workers of the metropolitan area—particularly the young workers than to study at the Jefferson School.