

leaders needed a theory to leave the bridges wide open behind them, and they invented the theory of class collaboration. It is the intransigent loyalty of the Communist Party to the working class, in fair weather and foul, that finally alienates such people; this is the taproot of all their gushing words, theories, and criticisms. In the bourgeois world, even the liberal one today, it is still an unpopular thing to be completely and logically Communist, in thought and action. For the aspiring writer, or college teacher, it simply doesn't pay; and why should it? So instead of recognizing this hard reality, and accommodating oneself as best one can, the aspirants dilute working-class theory and slander Communist workers. Thus, they believe, they have made a niche for themselves in a transition period, made the best of the two worlds, reconciled Communism with a respectable career.

Loyalty to a cause comes only out of a deeply felt and deeply reasoned conviction of the truth of that cause. If one believes in communism, one must also accept the only instrument history has taught us can bring it—the Communist Party—the two cannot be separated. And if one chooses the Communist Party as one's instrument for organizing a better world, one must loyally accept its decisions—otherwise the party dissolves into chaotic particles. Surely this is the mechanics of all history today—changes and revolutions are not brought about any longer by strong individuals, but by strong parties. The New York intellectuals of the type I have been describing can

not be consistently loyal to any party, and I the Trotskyite-Socialists whom they have joined *en masse* all the joy they can pluck from this new army of vain generals.

On and off, I have been an editor of the *NEW MASSES* for almost fifteen years. It has always been a free-lance paper, without "gold from Moscow," or "orders from Union Square." But we always tried to keep it in the line of the Communist Party, because the party was right more often than any other guides that I, for one, could find. It was the Communist Party that first organized the northern workers in Gastonia and other places; that first foretold the great depression;



Fragments

Lithograph by Jose Clemente Orozco

that first organized the unemployed; that first projected full Negro emancipation on the American political scene. It is the Communist Party that first alarmed Americans to the immediate danger of armed, military fascism here, that raised the slogan which Norman Thomas even now denies—fascism versus democracy.

This doesn't mean other parties and groups have not fought the reaction in my time; no, this would be wrong to say. But in my time, the Communist Party seems always to have furnished the lead; it has been the heroic pioneer; it has blazed the trails, taken all the dirt and slander and persecution, and gone on.

And the Communist Party is the workers' party that first preached the United Front. It was slandered as usual for it, but it has proved in France and Spain that it is the historic means by which alone we can defeat fascism. And who are the people that don't believe in the United Front, who sabotage it

everywhere, create added dissensions, invent poisonous lies to hurt this United Front? The same intellectuals I have described—I've seen them myself busy at their rabid plotting in France and America. This is their contribution to the people's struggle against fascism: on the barricades they gleefully shoot us in the back, and explain it on theoretical grounds.

Why should I make Sidney Hook my political guide rather than Earl Browder or Stalin? I really believe these men have seen more of revolution than the campus of New York University. Why should I exchange the joint experience of a world party of veteran working-class revolutionists for the intuitive wisdom of an Anita Brenner or James Farrell? In my own experience, checking by the documents, I have found the Communist Party's theories sounder at every grave moment when I had to decide for myself than all of Mr Krutch's sad essays or the subjective floundering of a Norman Thomas.

Time and again we have had groups of migratory intellectuals cluster around the *NEW MASSES*, and then leave for places that pay them regular cash. Always I found them worrying about the Communist line; it was too direct, it was too "dogmatic"; their earnest and endless plea was invariably for dilution of the truth.

If I were a young intellectual today, troubled by the confusions these people bring into the war of the two worlds, I would go back over the files of all the liberal magazines and Trotsky-ish journals and make a check-back with the *NEW MASSES*. I am sure we will have nothing to be ashamed of, and that viewed retrospectively, truth will be most often found on our side, because truth is the necessary tool of the hard-working Communist Parties of the world, its guide in life-and-death decisions such as don't have to be made by the migratories.

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Old Habit and New Love

Daybreak has its own desire, noon its peculiar longing, and dusk a tired demand—all for paths that lead to the rusty levers of smoky and familiar landscape.

An itch eats at softening callouses, sweaty hands won't stay dry, and the body's limbs are eager, chafing to revitalize the sleeping speed of chilled flywheels.

There is an ache for marriage, for the sight of halves grown whole, for cactus land to blend with dingy dream, for the welding of iron and bleeding palms.

It is for fusion of number and nerve we strain, of cobweb and waterfall, of worker and lonely machine, of old habit and new love.

Electric anger rises to smelt trolley-track to pliability of artist's brush, daring to quicken the whirs of crankshafts till they drone, ring as meaningful as music.

O Creators: Poets, Makers of Melody! Some first-shift dawn shall find us on equal ground, holding in our hands the world's tools, drafting the hope-prints of our vision on canvases of green earth!

RICHARD WRIGHT.

Belief in Man

An American literary pioneer sees that as the guiding genius of our twenty-five-year history

By Sherwood Anderson

IS IT that long—twenty-five years? How old we grow! Can it be twenty-five years ago that, out in Chicago, we began to hear of plans, the magazine to be started, names of men we respected, looked up to as leaders, to be editors? Floyd Dell, who had gone to New York, may have written a letter to a friend and it was passed about. Floyd had been something of a literary father to me. It was at his house I first saw “literary” men. I must already have been scribbling away for five or six years. He wrote me presently, asking me to send some of my Winesburg tales and, Lord knows, I was glad to send them. I was having a rough time trying to get them published. There was a prison warden up at Sing Sing who had dared to treat prisoners as human beings. The politicians were after him and, to get him, were whispering about that he was a homo. Floyd wanted a story of mine, called “Hands.”

Later I went to New York on a visit, had breakfast one morning with Jack Reed, and later, one winter night, walked with him for hours. What living talk! How human he was, how alive to others! I met and talked with Art Young, that big laughing man, had drinks with him and others of the old *Masses* crowd, and how strongly they remain yet in my mind as part, a very pregnant, vital part of something we all felt going on, just at that time.

It may have been a time rather like the present. There was a stirring, something felt, as one might say, coming up from below—as though the farms of our big fat Middle West wanted to speak, as though the growing factories of the towns wanted to speak. I wonder even if there is too much inclination to romanticize all this. We felt, I’m sure, that in living there had been enough of the dominance of New England. There was, for the me, a lot of emphasis on sex. It was perhaps inevitable. Most of us got, for a time, the name of being “sex-obsessed.” It was, I’m sure, only an effort to get sex back into a healthy place in our effort to express American life.

And it was a stirring period. The World War brought it sharply to an end. Something did happen. A new grimness came into faces seen on streets and, oh Lord, the hypocrisy!

WHEN the old *Masses* got under way, the Provincetown crowd was getting a start on McDougal Street and, out in Chicago, Margaret Anderson was starting her *Little Review*. Someone took me to see her. “She is going to start a magazine. She will publish stuff



they’re afraid of,” I was told. Life is full of these delicious moments. When I first saw Margaret Anderson she had a job editing a Protestant-church magazine. There was something highbrow getting under way too. *The Dial*, with Gilbert Seldes as managing editor, got going. Edgar Lee Masters was writing *Spoon River Anthology*, Carl Sandburg his *Chicago Poems*. Down at Springfield, Ill., Vachel Lindsay was making his half-mad, often beautiful cry to the gods. For a time the thing was all over the shop. Minor poets went to an Iowa town to read their verses. Seven or eight hundred people came. For a time books of verses sold like popular novels.

Without a doubt there was, until the World War came to deaden it, make it sick, something in the very air you breathed. Let’s call it, “belief in life.” O.K. Well, it seems to me that the impulse that led to the beginning of the *Masses* was a part of it. It was a strong, good, alive part of it. At the time it touched all parts of the country, reaching down even to New Orleans, where a little group of men and women had also started a magazine. They called it the *Double Dealer*.

What I remember of it all now is a kind of new boldness. Such a lot of things being said that everyone wanted said. Looking back to

that time, it seems to me that perhaps the whole thing was best expressed, a kind of laughing boldness best expressed, in the person of Jack Reed. It may be that this whole effort to remember clearly the mood of a past time is just nerfs.

Anyway, there it was, as it stays in my mind, as though to say, “why all the fuss, fakiness, bunk—this believing in what we Americans have been taught to believe in—success, fame, some one individual among us crawling up, always over the shoulders of others? . . .”

Why not fun in life?

Why not fun even in being a bit serious about life?

This, as I find myself trying to remember it, for the time in the very air. It may have been, at last, the beginning of realization that all of the talk our popular magazines had been so full of so long was just bunk, that because a man had managed to become, say, a millionaire, he was important. We had been getting that dope almost with our mother’s milk. .

Succeed. Be something big.

It had meant, ninety-nine times out hundred, getting a lot of money—no matter how you got it—having a big house, a lot of servants—going Park Avenue on your feet. The *Masses* cutting across it, laughing at giving it the “what t’ell?”

When it happened, when it began, I was an advertising writer and, oh, the bunk I had swallowed. It had just happened that advertising writing was the way I had found, at least in a small way, to beat the game. You get some money to live on without putting on much of self, hope to have a bit of life left. God knows I never put out much. My general impression is still that most business men are saps.

The real thrill was to find these others, men apparently caring a little, making the idea back of what you call “comradeship” have some meaning.

AND THIS, it seems to me, expressed in many ways, when the *Masses* was getting started, the *Masses* doing it with a kind of grand boldness, with a flourish.

And then the World War sapping it, draining it off into a kind of universal ugliness. It is a little hard to express all I have felt about it, but this I can say; that the *Masses*—old or new—will always retain for me some flavor of it.

Of what?

I think, just belief of man in man. If you are going anywhere that must be at the bottom of what you are trying to do.