

Report On Readers Conference

The following is a very brief summary of the meeting:

The opening report outlined the development of the PL movement and the magazine from its first issue in January, 1962 until the present, in brief, indicating some of the changes - the expansions in scope - which have taken place. The report proposed that the sole criterion for criticizing the magazine should be: Does the magazine achieve its purpose and what could make it achieve its purpose better? The purpose, according to the report with which there was general agreement, is to bring to the people of the U.S. - and especially the working people, news of events which the commercial press hides or distorts, and an analysis of this news which will lead to a growing understanding of the need for a Revolutionary Socialist Party of Labor. In particular, this job must concentrate on the role of the state as tool and tool-maker of the big monopolies, and especially the vicious and demagogic role of the Kennedy administration. The report proposed that the magazine continue to concentrate on domestic rather than foreign news, and serve as a megaphone for the PL movement's program.

In brief, to reach the U.S. working class with our program, and to mobilize the working class around that program.

The criticism made fell generally into two categories - style and content: In terms of style, just briefly to mention a few: The general feeling was the magazine has been improving steadily, and the criticisms were made to help continue in that direction. 1. Develop the newsstand approach in layout; 2. Cut out cliches; 3. Better proof-reading; 4. Use more subheads in long stories; 5. Tighten up on jumping stories - make the jump clear, or the end clear; 6. Cartoons should relate to the articles if possible; 7. Inserted clippings, etc., should be clearly separated from other material; 8. The front-page index should always appear, and appear more prominently if possible.

A couple of specific content proposals which were made were: 1. A regular PL edition in Spanish, or a supplement; 2. A regular feature on What Socialism Means to the United States of America.

But the basic criticisms raised were: 1. There is a real need for more analysis in the articles. We should be more clear on what we can take for granted (i. e., the boss is bad, the government's corrupt) and spend more time on explaining REASONS and WHAT CAN BE DONE. 2. In relation to What Can Be Done, the magazine is ge-

erally not politicalized enough. There is a lack of political solutions proposed to the extent that some readers have actually received the impression that PL was an economist magazine. 3. Most important, the magazine is not being used as an organizing tool, and is not reflecting our organizational work (or perhaps it is reflecting our organizational work). The magazine must not be viewed as an end in itself - for if it is, then we don't need a political movement. And if we don't need a political movement, we really don't need a magazine. Only if it is used PUBLICLY by every club on the streets, in the centers, in demonstrations, - and only if clubs fill the magazine with news and analysis of what's happening in their respective areas - will it be a truly valuable magazine.

The following proposals were adopted:

1. Every club shall elect a representative to a permanent editorial board which will increase club participation in the magazine and plan out issues well in advance. The editorial board shall review the suggestions made at this conference and work to apply as many of them as possible. Those clubs out of New York should assign an editorial representative to be in touch with the board and send in that person's name and address at once.

2. Every club shall discuss at its next meeting the public role of the magazine, PL, in its work.

3. Every club should prepare an article for PL on its area conditions, activity, and issues facing the people and what the club intends to do about them.