Mrs. Roosevelt Defeats Her Own Aims

MRS. ROOSEVELT has replied to the notorious Rep. Rankin of Mississippi. In her column (April 5) she points out that while Rankin tries to attack the CIO-PAC as "communist," "there are many organizations overwhelmingly democratic in feeling and in action but within which there are some Communist members. This is the case where CIO-PAC is concerned."

Having retorted to Rankin that the progressive political movement of the CIO is not "communist," Mrs. Roosevelt declares: "I happen to think that in the United States people who belong to the Communist Party should not be officials or leaders in any group which does not avow itself to be a Communist-controlled organization."

Mrs. Roosevelt's effort to deprive the Rankin reactionaries of a handle with which to beat progressive movements is self-defeating, we believe. The Rankins of America will not cease screaming "communist" at any of the democratic, progressive activities of any group of Americans just because there will be no Communist Party members in its ranks or leadership.

EVEN VILER ATTACKS

If the progressive organizations of the country followed the implications of Mrs. Roosevelt's reasoning, let us assume, and made it illegal for Communists to be elected to office in trade unions or civic organizations would that halt Rankin's attacks on these groups? For doing Rankin's work within their own ranks, they would be rewarded with even viler attacks and calumnies at the hands of the democracy-haters. President Roosevelt, himself was savagely denounced as "communist" for his social reforms. Roosevelt called the Dies Committee a "Sordid procedure."

There is a vital principle at stake here.

If an American who believes in Communism is to be deprived of his right to be a leader in an organization devoted to progressive causes, then no American with progressive ideas will be safe in the exercise of his democratic liberties. To deprive one group of Americans of their political liberties is to open the way to deprive all citizens of these rights. For, then, it only remains for the tories and Hooverites to charge "Communism" against any democratic group they disagree with. And in the eyes of Hooverites all individuals and groups other than their own are "communists." This would put an end to all progressive organizations in the United States.

RIGHTS FOR COMMUNISTS

On what grounds is it assumed that American Communists ought not have the same rights to hold office in progressive organizations not "avowedly communist-controlled."

Only on the grounds that Communists somehow have peculiar aims in contradiction to the aims of progressive organizations, and are in those organizations for ulterior motives.

But to accept this is to accept a theory engendered by the Rankins and Hooverites to stifle social advance.

The Communists have no aims in conflict with those of the people's movements. They represent "the present and the future" of the people's movements, criticizing the illusions and weaknesses of these movements as is the Communists' right from the viewpoint of Socialist science. The Communists' views must be subjected to democratic acceptance or rejection by the organizations to which they belong. It is this which the Rankins call "communist control."

The views of the Communists do indeed go further than the views of their fellow-Americans in progressive organizations. But their views must fail or succeed only as they are able to persuade their colleagues of their correctness.

To penalize the Communists for their more advanced views on social questions by prohibiting their presence in progressive movements is to set a limit beyond which the thinking of Americans cannot go without political penalties. But once limits are set to the advance of social thinking, social thinking itself becomes impossible. Where does the limit stop? At obliterating all progressive ideas as "leading to communist ideas."

The Rankins and Hoovers can be successfully resisted in the fight for democracy if their assumption that communism is a crime is completely rejected. If Communist Americans have equal political rights with all.

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