

DOCUMENTS, 1947 - 1960

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'THE YOUNGEST AND PROUDEST CARDHOLDER IN THE PARTY'

DOCUMENT 1 -

Party Recollections ~~of a Young Communist~~

Unpublished

(Fragments from Lionel Forman, 'Book for Karl', 1953)

D E B A T E

The weapon of speech

mini-parliament

Establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat

One of the things it's hard to be much of a Communist without doing a lot of, is talking to people. To one person at a time, to small groups or to the whole of Market Square or the Grand Parade. And you have not only got to talk, but to convince. To do that, understanding of your case and a calm voice are the best, but sometimes you've got to shout loud, sometimes even haggle. What a weapon speech is to the good Communist. Think of Lenin saying calmly, "We shall now proceed to build a Socialist State"; of Dimitrov shouting defiance at a Nazi court, or the thousands of councillors or shop stewards talking their tongues away to wrest every ounce of benefit for the people from the bosses' tribunals.

Get used to speaking to people, and practice doing it. It's no good reading to them. You must be able to speak without paper. There's a simple way to learn how to do that, which only requires hard work. Write out your first speeches and learn them by heart, word-perfect to every turn of phrase. People will be impressed with your gift of the gab and that will give you confidence and get you more opportunities to speak. After a little while, when you've studied enough to know how communists judge whether an argument is good or bad - whether it helps the people or harms them - you'll see that it's not difficult to get up and put into the simplest and most straight-forward way possible, what you think.

There wouldn't be any story of Ophirton for you if it weren't that I got involved by our English master in the opening meeting of the Forest High School Debating Society. He was too intimidated by the big boys to press-gang any of them, so he told me that I was to speak on the motion - "That the bus curfew should be lifted." The curfew was a wartime measure suspending bus services at ten every night as an economy effort. I don't remember which side I was on, but it was definitely a great success and the English master was very pleased, and told me I should read "The Grammarian's Funeral" by Browning.

My powers were immediately pressed into use on a more serious subject and I was made to move, the next week, "That the Natives cannot benefit from Education." What I said, luckily, I haven't the faintest idea, but a mental picture painted by Master Evans, seconder, with enormous appreciation from the audience, stands out clearly. "If you educate the Natives," he pointed out, "in no time you'll have some big fat Native woman coming and sitting next to you in the bioscope and taking out a greasy packet of fish and chips."

The fame of my powers having spread to the YCL I was asked once more to speak at an inaugural debate - the establishment of our YCL speakers' class. For the opening theme four strangely chosen characters were placed in a sinking ship with only one lifebelt. The sailors in this