



Dear Dad:

Richard N. Mason

Sci. Jr.

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DEAR DAD: When I left home last spring, I made some pretty bitter remarks about our home town being backward and about you being “too old-fashioned for me.” Well, I feel a little differently now, and if you’ll accept, I want to apologize.

As I look back on it now, I know that it was because I enjoyed shocking people that I called myself a communist and a radical. No, my ideas then *weren’t* the result of study and real thinking.

Anyway, when I left I was quite confident that things elsewhere would be different. I’ll tell you what happened to change my thinking: it was my experience in a Young Communist League.

My opportunity came when I stopped to watch a W.P.A. artist working on a library mural. I started a conversation with him, and from that short chat came an invitation to visit a neighborhood branch of the Y.C.L.

My impressions, on entering a small stuffy apartment in the residential section of town where some twenty young people filled the chairs and overflowed on the floor, were of surprise and disappointment—surprise at seeing just ordinary people, surprise that such a diverse group could have much in common; disappointment at finding little of the secrecy and air of intrigue which I had expected. It was merely a laughing group of student

cranks, mild socialists, house maids, and store clerks. The leaders of the group were Communist Party members but, except for two Spanish civil war veterans, they were the only ones affiliated.

AFTER several meetings it was plain that each new program was only repetition of those previous. We would discuss recent books of political nature, discuss racial discrimination, plan membership drives, elect committees to attend city forums to heckle. Groups were organized to put on propaganda plays, but none were actually produced.

Many well intentioned ideas were suggested, but everyone fizzled. Perhaps the leaders were too ambitious; then again, the most devout persons in the group during meetings were usually the laziest when it came to actual work. Most, however, were honest people seeking a better world, but they lacked definite leadership.

I must be fair: never in any of the meetings was there any implication of treason. The C.P. members were intelligent; they realized that any such suggestion would have been entirely out of place and would have decimated membership.

I paid dues of ten cents a month. The money was pooled to be spent on the group's occasional social affairs, which turned out to be dull.

Although our leaders disavowed the League's slightest connection with the Communist Party, its state secretary was about frequently, and books of lurid Russian propaganda were almost forced into our hands. The Y.C.L. was directly controlled by Earl Browder from New York.

To the public the Y.C.L. claimed to be merely a club sponsoring free speech and thought and providing a method for passing leisure time. To a thinking young person of no financial means it appeared to be an opportunity to find companionship and intellectual entertainment. But the core of the apple differed from its bright skin.

PERHAPS the leader was a bit tactless in his zeal, or perhaps I was a bit slow to accept *his* and the *official views* of the Y.C.L., but I was angered to the extent of being suspicious. By this new watchfulness I gained knowledge and facts I had been overlooking.

I left the organization because, for every book, each new piece of legislation, every discussed theory, an *official* Y.C.L. viewpoint was advanced. We were to agree eye to eye with that attitude, or be doing the Y.C.L. an injustice by causing internal disruption. It was subtle training for subservient obedience: Nothing but the same "intellectual regimentation" often reviled in Communist speeches.

Disgusted, I quit attending the meetings, but from them I had taken some valuable gifts. First, I learned a new conception of liberty. Liberty to me now is more than just a word; it is a way of living at personal ease without straining those personalities around us. Secondly, I have gained a sharpened discrimination between theory and practicality, between truth and fiction, between right and wrong.

I haven't by any means decided that our present government is all it should be or could be, but I do believe provincial "horse sense," as you call it, with its tolerance and determination, comes closer to the true solution than does this noisy radicalism with its visionary, theoretical, fast moving plan.

In the future, when I give myself and my vote to any plan, I will remember that we have some democracy left, and I will make every effort to guard it and keep it. Only recently have I realized that it is much easier to lose democracy than to gain it.

And so, I have you to thank, you and all the other fathers who are wiser than young men, for giving me a way, a way towards truth.

I apologize, and remain,
Your respectful son.

R. N. M.

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A Memory of the Pitara Tree

Robert Browne Wallace

Sci. Sr.

The olive brow and raven hair
That I just saw fleetingly
Has caused me to look backward