

eagerly about literature and politics and the relationship between the two.

While Newton approved of our Marxist study group and had initiated one of his own in Northampton, he insisted that we should be making contact with the revolutionary movement. When he went to New York, he visited the *New Masses* office, and I began to follow his example. The *New Masses*, which had been founded in 1926, was for a time simply a magazine of protest in the manner of the old *Masses*, but before 1931 it had become a narrowly Communist publication, with Mike Gold as editor and Walt Carmon as managing editor. Mike, a veteran Communist but at heart still a Bohemian, I rarely found in the office, but I talked with Walt, who was not too hard on a might-be fellow-traveler. (He did say, when I told him I couldn't accept the labor theory of value, "I guess you'll have to.") In spite of some extracts from John Dos Passos' 1919, an effective editorial or review every now and then by Gold, and a couple of moving short stories by Whittaker Chambers, the *New Masses* did not seem very much of a magazine, but for us it was important as part of the movement.

I met Chambers once or twice, a heavy, enigmatic, owlish young man, to whom I did not take. When, however, I encountered him on Sixth Avenue, a few months later, I of course spoke to him and we walked together to the next corner. There he paused and said portentously, "I'm turning right. You go straight ahead. And the next time you see me don't recognize me. I'm not a safe man to be seen with." Dumbfounded, I went to the *New Masses* office and asked Carmon what was wrong with Chambers. "Oh," he said, "he's got some notion that he's gone underground." It was exactly the right kind of reply to give an innocent like me, and I went on thinking Chambers was nuts until I read *Witness* in 1952.

If the editors of the *New Masses* did not seem to know what to do with leftward-moving intellectuals, V. F. Calverton of the *Modern Quarterly* welcomed them enthusiastically. When, in a