

John Gates Presents CP Views at Penn University

PHILADELPHIA — "There is no difference between Socialism as advocated by Norman Thomas and as advocated by the Communist Party," said John Gates, Daily Worker editor, in answer to questions at a meeting of several hundred students at the University of Pennsylvania, Feb. 15.

It was Gates' first public meeting since the Communist Party convention of the week before. He was invited to speak on "Does Communism Have a Future in America?" by the student government club in face of opposition from faculty members. Dr. J. Roffe Wike, professor of political science and a Republican, debated Gates. The meeting gave American radicals an opportunity to judge the political position of the Gates wing of the Communist Party on a number of points. We present salient features for the information of Militant readers.

Calling for a political realignment in America, Gates said that "the differences between the Socialist and Communist parties have narrowed down." He asserted that at one time the differences were between "peaceful and violent" change but that today "it is possible to have a peaceful and constitutional change" to socialism. "We are for the continuation into socialism of our present institutions, of Congress, etc.," he said.

Gates deplored the fact that "Norman Thomas doesn't want unity" and hoped for "a more intimate basis" of collaboration with him. No reference was made to the support given by the Socialist Party and Norman Thomas to the Korean war or to the fusion of the Socialist Party with the Social Democratic Federation based on support to the State Department's foreign policy.

When asked from the floor why the government in Hungary was trying to wipe out the Workers Councils, Gates said he didn't know all the facts; that they were not dissolving all the councils; that the government needs the support of the councils for its own stability.

'BALANCE' ON ANTI-SEMITISM

Another question dealt with the suppression of minority nationalities and groups in the Soviet Union. Gates answered that the Russian revolution "liberated whole peoples from Czarist oppression." He said that "six million Jews were saved by the Soviet Union during World War II,"

and that "four million Jews continue to live in the Soviet Union." He said that this must be weighed in the balance against the fact that "the cultural institutions of the Jews was done away with" and that "20 or 30 of their leaders were done away with." The audience of students which mainly listened respectfully to Gates greeted his balancing of six million saved to 20 or 30 killed with angry derision.

Gates argued that two world wars and hostile encirclement of the Soviet Union were responsible for the crimes that were committed there. He said, "I am doing all I can to persuade them to correct this." He said, "I believe the process of democratization is under way in the Soviet Union, even if they have a long way to go yet."

The convention of the Communist Party was depicted by Gates as having charted an American Road to Socialism. He called for "a big peoples alliance against monopoly." This requires, he said, "a new political alignment, a mass party against the monopolies." This party is to be built, he said, through "the transformation of the Democratic Party, or a new mass party against both the Republicans and Democrats."

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