

Gates to Students: McC Still Virulent

Paying tribute to the city's college students for their support of free speech, John Gates, Daily Worker editor, yesterday warned an overflow meeting of the Eugene V. Debs Society at Columbia University that "McCarthyism is not dead."

Gates, barred from speaking at municipal colleges because of his Smith Act conviction, pointed out that the ban on him was bound up with reactionary attacks on various fronts.

He cited continuing prosecutions under the Smith Act, firings of New York City employes under the state's Security Risk law, discharges of New York teachers under the Feinberg law, attacks on the Catholic church in the South because of its fight against segregation, and efforts to ban the Protestant motion picture, "Martin Luther" from television screens.

Gates spoke before 350 students in the Harkness Theatre of Columbia's Butler Library, together with Michael Harrington, chairman of the Young Socialist League, and Sheldon Ackley, of the N.Y. Civil Liberties Union. The rear and side walls were lined with standees and an overflow crowd could not gain admission.

Harrington was sharply critical of the ban on Gates and of the Smith Act. Declaring that he was

"in the sharpest opposition to Mr. Gates," he said that the Smith Act "evades the very rights which it is supposed to defend."

Barrington continued:

"If the city authorities were wrong in denying Mr. Gates the right to speak, they were doubly wrong in basing that denial upon a dangerous and undemocratic law."

Barrington related the ban on Gates to the cold war at home but insisted that suppression was "a world-wide trends." He attacked the USSR and insisted that the U.S. "still allows me to speak and Mr. Gates to edit the Daily Worker."

Sheldon Ackley, on behalf of the N.Y. Civil Liberties Union, praised the students and emphasized that the youth of today is no longer "the silent generation." He expressed himself in general agreement with the views of Barrington. He argued that the ACLU, while defending the rights of Communists, still bars them from

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officership because of what he described as their "half-hearted support of civil liberties."

Gates picked up Harrington's point on the Daily Worker sharply.

"True," he said, "we have the right to publish the Daily Worker. But the FBI, in reality a secret political police, has been harassing the Daily Worker. The Department of Justice jailed our publisher, Benjamin J. Davis, for five years, and jailed me likewise. They have indicted a number of our correspondents.

"The FBI visits and intimidates Daily Worker subscribers and newsstand dealers who handle the paper. Only the other day, an incident transpired which I have called to the attention of the Attorney General."

As the audience followed with hushed attention, Gates read the text of a telegram to Attorney General Brownell.

Turning to the Communist Party convention, which he had intended to discuss in speeches suppressed at Queens and City College, Gates pointed out that the convention had further developed the Communist position for a peaceful transition to Socialism through the struggles of the peopled within the developing Constitution.

Referring to Harrington's criticism of Socialist countries, he said that those Americans who generally welcome the process of democratization should support a program of:

- 1.—Bringing an end to the cold war.
- 2.—Expanding trade between east and west.
- 3.—Ending H-bomb tests.
- 4.—Withdrawing all foreign troops from all countries.
- 5.—Immediate amnesty for all Smith Act victims.

Gates, on the threshold of his busiest week of public speaking since his prison term under the Smith Act, telegraphed Attorney General Brownell to protest fresh interference with a free press by FBI agents.

Just before the first of his two appearances on the Columbia campus, Gates reported that the FBI had been harassing readers and distributors of the Daily Worker, and "interfering with editors and readers of our newspaper in the performance of their journalistic responsibilities."

"One such case occurred on Friday, March 15," Gates wired Brownell, "when the foreign editor of the paper, Joseph Clark, sought to attend a meeting of readers of the Daily Worker in Brooklyn.

"Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in two cars trailed and molested these readers as well as Mr. Clark.

Gates protested "these violations of our rights as a newspaper" as a "gross violation of the First Amendment to the Constitution." He added:

"An especially despicable aspect of this harassment is that members of the families of Daily Worker editors have been subjected to surveillance, trailing and harassment at their jobs in private industry."

At a Monday evening session of the Student Council of Hunter College, in the Bronx, one of the campuses Gates has been barred from, the group voted to:

"... Affirm its belief that recognized campus groups should be permitted to invite and hear speakers of their own choice, regardless of the speaker's political affiliations or beliefs."

The students said they "do not subscribe to any totalitarian doctrine, including Communism," but objected to the move by the five municipal college presidents to refuse to extend campus courtesies to anyone convicted under the Smith Act.

The move, they said, "is a clear and present infringement upon free speech and academic freedom on our city college campuses."

The Student Council decided to vote on the issue after a private student group, the Hunter College Student Union for Civil Liberties, had circulated petitions protesting the barring of Gates. Within three hours, 480 students had signed the petitions.

Student groups at Queens, Hunter, Brooklyn and City College had appealed to the Board of Higher Education to reverse the ban on Gates. But Monday, at its monthly meeting, by a vote of 12-2 the board "noted with approval" that the presidents of the five city colleges denied "campus courtesies to persons convicted under the Smith Act."

One undergraduate leader, Michael Horowitz, who is secretary of the student government at CCNY's uptown, campus, pointed out that two people in that category, had spoken there within the past two months. They were the Communist leader and former City Councilman, Benjamin J. Davis, and Farrell Dobbs, Socialist Workers Party candidate for President.

There was a period of sharp questions, all but one directed to Gates. One student challenged his right to say that the Communist defended. Gates replied, "You say I can't defend it, but I can and I do," which brought some applause. He said that the fact that the CP had made mistakes did not mean that it had not made many vital contributions.

"We did a great deal for America," he said. "Sure we made mistakes, so did other parties. I wish they were as critical of their mistakes as we are of ours."

He added that this also applied to the Soviet Union, which in spite of bad mistakes had done much good in the world. "One of the reasons we are sitting here peacefully today," he said, "is that Red

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Army tanks, which are only being criticized in connection with Hungary, criticism with which I incidentally agree, these same tanks chewed up the Nazi army and we Americans were very glad to have them on our side, just as they were to have us on their side in the common fight."

The only question not addressed to Gates came to Ackley. It was: "Mr. Ackley, does not the ACLU unfairly discriminate when it bars Communists but accepts Dr. Gallagher?"