

Speak Your Piece

Overall Effect Of Gates' Speech

BOSTON.

Editor, Daily Worker:

A letter writer has criticized the John Gates Boston speech for a lack of proletarian internationalism. The writer made a section of the speech reported in the Daily the base for his criticism and in so doing lost sight of the over-all impact and effect of the speech.

The present writer heard the debate and did not agree with every phrase or shading of Gates' remarks. But is that so important? Speeches should be judged by over-all tendencies and main effects.

As far as I am concerned, the over-all effect of Gates' speech was to place the blame for present war tensions just where it belongs—on Dulles, Wall Street, U. S. capitalism. The over-all effect was to win a more sympathetic consideration for the socialist countries and the Soviet Union in particular.

The greatest applause of the evening was won by Gates when he called for a live-and-let live policy of peaceful co-existence and an end to the arms race and H-bomb tests. Above everything else it was a fighting speech for peace. Now, all of this certainly does not add up to any abandonment of proletarian internationalism.

Gates, it is true, called upon American Marxists to think independently, to help the American people find their own road to socialism; he took a position of critical support for the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. In this way he brought to about a thousand non-Communist Bostonians the decision of the last national convention of our party, and the audience listened and was moved. If Gates had been blindly defensive about the Soviet Union and exclusively self-congratulatory about our own party in the old dogmatic way, I doubt that he would have caught the ears of the audience at all. As a Communist I found the speech and its reception particularly invigorating after so many years of isolation and re-buff.

I am thankful to the Ford Hall Forum for giving the floor to an American Communist in a stimulating debate and to Gates for an effective speech. Let us hope that the meeting showed two things of merit: the atmosphere of free speech is improving, and the American Communists are learning how to speak to the people.

Why don't you print the speech? Let others decide for themselves.

A BOSTONIAN.

12-3-57.

Seeks Explanation From John Gates

NEW YORK.

Editor, Daily Worker:

In the Daily Worker Nov. 26, John Gates is reported as saying before a rally in Boston that Communists "no longer insist that we are God's chosen people and that only we can lead America to socialism."

Last spring Gates was report-

ed as making the same, or a like remark in a speech at Columbia University.

As editor of the Daily Worker, Gates should, it seems to me, explain precisely what he means by the statement.

I can only interpret it as meaning that he no longer regards the Communist Party as the vanguard of the working class.

Happy with certain improvements recently in the Daily Worker, I feel nevertheless that there are many necessary changes still to be made in the paper, and I am disturbed by the above repeated statement by the man who as editor must play a decisive role in developing our paper into the essential working class journal it should be.

I am sure Gates will respond to my request by a considered and detailed explanation of what he means by this bewildering and repeated assertion.

CONSTANT READER.

Gates Explains Basis for Statement

The statement referred to by Constant Reader, which was, of course, part of a much larger context, was based squarely on the decisions of the 16th national convention of the Communist Party.

Our newly-adopted Party Constitution says squarely:

"In the struggle for socialism the Communist Party seeks no narrow partisan monopoly."

Our main convention resolution said:

"In the past we tended to assume that all that was worthwhile in other socialist currents and groupings would inevitably flow into our own organization. This assumption was always incorrect and should be replaced by serious and painstaking efforts to assist in the development of the broadest possible unity of all socialist-minded elements."

The resolution said, further:

"A Marxist party which seeks to gain confidence of its class cannot do so by arrogantly assuming that it is already THE LEADER of the workers. The possession of advanced theory and the ability to project advanced ideas in the current struggles can and should lead to the ever greater identification of such a Marxist party with the class, and the enhancement of its leadership role. But this is not an automatic process.

"In the past we have mechanically assumed the position of the leader of the working class without regard to our real position of strength and influence. This attitude hindered the very aim of providing Marxist guidance to the working class. As a result, the very term 'vanguard role' assumed connotations of unrealism and arrogance with which we seek to break. Listening and learning from the workers, particularly in their everyday struggles at the level at which they are being waged, we strive to earn the esteem of the working class as a foundation for effective leadership."

And, finally, the resolution on Social Democracy adopted by the convention said:

"We must not take the position that we have all the answers and have nothing to learn. This includes all questions, theoretical, political and organizational."

If my response has been lengthy, I must apologize, but I felt that Constant Reader's request for "a considered and detailed explanation" of what I meant required going into the 16th convention decisions.

JOHN GATES.

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