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In Defense
of the
Party

An old-timer speaks out

IN DEFENSE OF THE PARTY

Several weeks ago, a surprising document appeared in the East Bay. It was called a Report Adopted by the East Bay Regional Committee.

Most of its sentences seemed obscure in meaning; they could be interpreted in different ways; they read like double-talk. But amid the double-talk one could find two disturbing proposals that:

1. "We, in the East Bay, reject" the resolution adopted last February by the national committee On Uniting and Strengthening the Party and Its Mass Base. (This "reject" proposal was in the 2nd paragraph from the bottom on Page 2 of the East Bay Report, and again in the 2nd paragraph from the bottom on Page 3.)

2. "We turn our main attention to the development" of a program that by clear implication is intended to oppose the program of the national party. The East

Bay is not to work with the rest of the party on this program; on the contrary, it is intended that "the results of our work will be presented to the whole Party." (You will find this proposal in the last four paragraphs on Page 4 of the Report.)

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The author of the Report has been appearing before various groups asking their approval. During one such appearance, it was pointed out that in four and one-half typewritten pages he said not one word about what he thinks is wrong with the national committee resolution. He was asked to say where and how he differs with it. He replied that he could not pick out any specific phrases or sentences to which he has any objection.

Yet he asks us to reject it.

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The Report said of the Negro people's fight for liberation that "its general tactic is that of passive resistance." (Page 2, 3rd paragraph from the bottom.)

This "passive resistance" theory has been popping up in the party in other places. It was answered impressively in the April issue of Political Affairs in an article by James E. Jackson, a

member of the national committee, who said (Page 32):

The new thing is MASS RESISTANCE to segregation and discrimination, which is the opposite of passive acquiescence or moderation or gradualism... "The story of Montgomery," said the Rev. M. L. King, "is the story of 50,000 Negroes tired of injustice and exploitation who have fashioned themselves into an organized conscious power serving the battering rams of historical necessity... We must be willing to stand up courageously against the evils of segregation wherever we find it. Now, I must confess this means suffering and sacrifice. It might mean going to jail, but if such be the case, we must be willing to fill up the jail houses of the South. It might even mean physical death. But if physical death is the price that some must pay to free our children from a permanent life of psychological death, then nothing could be more honorable."

Doesn't sound much like "passive resistance," does it? Sounds a lot more like FIGHTING resistance. The "passive resistance" theory reminds one of Adlai Stevenson urging "moderation," and of President Eisenhower urging "patience."

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In one place (2nd paragraph from the bottom on Page 3), the Report declared flatly that "we [the party] do not at this point have a program."

That's not true. The party has had a program ever since it started nearly 40 years ago, and the program is a good one. Most recently, we have the program adopted by the 16th national convention in February 1957.

In two other places (1st paragraph on Page 2 and in the middle of Page 4), the Report gave the impression that the party has no program on "(1) the Negro movement; (2) the Trade Union movement; (3) the Peace movement; (4) economic developments."

That's not true, either. All four subjects were dealt with at length in the main political resolution adopted by the convention. Furthermore, in November 1957, the national committee adopted unanimously an excellent report on Negro liberation. This report, titled The South's New Challenge, was published in the December 1957 Political Affairs, and was re-published as a pamphlet. Also, the national committee, in February 1958, adopted unanimously a report on The Economic Situation Today. It was published in the March 1958 Political Affairs. The Northern California party office has re-issued a national committee leaflet called A People's Program for Jobs and Security.

Whether or not the author of the East Bay Report agrees with the party program, it does exist. He should get busy and spread it around, instead of telling us there ain't no such thing.

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Does the party program need changes and additions? Certainly! As times change, programs must change. But it is silly and childish to say "we do not at this point have a program."

Can the East Bay help draw up changes in the national party program? Yes! We can be of great help. But we can do so only by working WITH the party; we cannot do so by working AGAINST the party.

Does the party in the East Bay have the right to draw up its own program to fit local conditions? Of course! We SHOULD draw up our own program. But that program must not be one whose emphasis is opposition to the national party program.

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The East Bay Report scolded the national committee for not "being more reserved and more political" in statements about renegades like John Gates. (Middle of Page 4.) Well, take a look at the following pages for news of what Gates is doing these days.

Gates Confesses He's No Marxist

By GEORGE MORRIS

JOHN GATES who recently deserted the ranks of Communism, informed a recent forum of the Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Tex., that he no longer wants to "be classified as a Marxist."

Gates, sharing the platform with Herbert Philbrick, FBI undercover agent and now a Herald-Tribune writer, answered questions from the audience. A transcript of the questions and answers as printed in the Dallas Morning News of April 24 was inserted in the Congressional Record of April 29 by Rep. Bruce Alger of Texas.

The questions and answers, taking more than a page of the Record, provide a more detailed and clearer view of the opinions of John Gates than was available in what Gates wrote or said in the last several years. When holding the title of editor of the Daily Worker Gates almost never (except for three notable instances) put his views in print.

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TO THE VERY day of his desertion and even in some of his public statements in the days that followed, Gates had insisted he was a Marxist, claiming he differed only on the "application" of Marxism. He professed to be opposed to "dogmatism."

"Would you classify yourself as a Marxist?" asked Dr. Douglas Ewing Jackson, associate sociology of religion professor of SMU.

"No, I do not want to be classified as a Marxist. I do believe in some Marxist ideas," was Gates' entire answer.

Thus Gates placed himself on a par with almost anyone from left to right of center, for few there are who would not say they believe in some ideas advanced by the father of modern socialism.

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GATES REPEATED his attacks on the Communists, his view that the Communist Party is "dead" and that the Soviet Union is less democratic than the U.S. Throughout the questioning he used the terms "Communist Party" and "Soviet

Union," interchangeably, as reactionaries do, as though they were one and the same thing.

Asked if he still opposes the Marshall Plan, he replied:

"One of the biggest mistakes the party made was to oppose the plan. Russia should have applied for Marshall Plan aid when it was first started."

Asked if he thought that in the USSR he would be "treated as fairly as you were here" were he charged there with "overthrowing" the government, Gates replied:

"I did not receive a fair trial here. Soviet injustice, though much harsher, does not excuse American injustice."

"Are you disillusioned with socialism?" Dr. J. Claude Evans, SMU chaplain, asked. Gates replied:

"I am not disillusioned with socialism. But I believe some Marxian concepts are outdated. For example, his invalid statement that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. The United States has proven this invalid."

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GATES APPARENTLY swallowed in toto the much-distorted interpretation of the Marxian impoverishment theory and the "people's capitalism" line (refined in a recent book by John Strachey).

Marx never said that living standards cannot rise under capitalism or that workers' nominal or real wages diminish steadily. He stressed that with steadily mounting productivity, and periodic and more frequent crises (such as the current one) the "general tendency" is for workers to get a lesser amount in wages toward meeting the recognized standard of living of a given period.

The measure, thus, is how much closer the worker comes to what has become the living standard, not whether he has passed a level recognized as a "standard" a generation or more back.

Moreover, Marx spoke of the general tendency in a WORLD-WIDE sense. The theory should be measured not alone on the basis of conditions in the U.S., the show window of capitalism,

but on the basis of conditions existing for all the people still under capitalism.

Soviet economists have been strongly combatting the distortions of the Marxist theory of impoverishment, such as those accepted by Gates.

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THE QUESTIONERS tried to get from Gates some idea of the "socialism" he favors, but he came no closer to specifics than to tell them he favored "a democratic socialism which will retain all the great features of our government."

PHILBRICK, who helped send Gates to jail, was brought in to "balance" Gates. His role under questioning was limited, however, to a few remarks to the effect that Gates was still not going far enough and to express some doubt on what Gates' "democratic socialism might be." Two questions put by Philbrick to Gates were answered politely and defensively. Gates pointed to his "many disagreements" with Khrushchev, especially on the policy in Hungary, in reply to Philbrick's needling.

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A WEEK AFTER the Dallas show, the House subcommittee on appropriations released the testimony of J. Edgar Hoover earlier this year, in which the FBI head said that the Daily Worker was not discontinued for lack of funds but because of a struggle between the "pro-Soviet" forces in the Communist Party and a group that claimed to be "independent" of Moscow, and "Americanized". He identified the latter as headed by Gates.

Gates, too, alleged in his public statement following his desertion that the Daily Worker was suspended not for lack of funds but to get rid of his group and that the people in control, the leadership of the Communist Party, are "dominated" by Moscow. Both Hoover and Gates want to destroy the Communist Party.

Hoover does, however, clash with Gates' claim that the C.P. is "dead". Hoover wants more millions for stoolpigeon and witch hunt operations.

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Union-Shackling Bill

As we noted, the Report asked members in the East Bay to reject the national committee resolution on uniting the party. Now, the constitution says:

Between National Conventions, the National Committee is the highest authority of the party, representing the Party as a whole, and as such has the authority to make decisions and take actions necessary and incidental to the good and welfare of the entire Party. (Article V, Section 9.)

All decisions of any club, committee or convention are made by a majority vote after thorough discussion, unless otherwise specified in this Constitution, and all members are to abide by such decisions. Every officer and member shall have the right to express a dissenting opinion on any matter of Party policy with respect to which a decision has been made by majority vote of the appropriate Party committee or convention, provided that such dissenting officer or member does not engage in factional or other activity which hinders or impedes the execution of such policy. (Article VI, Section 2.)

In short, the author of the Report has the right to disagree with party policy, and he has the right to say why he

disagrees. However, he must go along with the majority, and he is not supposed to conduct any campaign against party policy.

But that is exactly what he has been doing. The East Bay Report is an attempt to organize a faction opposed to party policy. It proposes a program opposing the party program.

Which is one reason why the Report was written in double-talk, and why it has aroused such distrust, suspicion and opposition.

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What about the national committee resolution On Uniting and Strengthening the Party and Its Mass Base?

The resolution deserves support. It is a correct resolution. Efforts to ignore it should be resisted. Its adoption was necessary to answer certain erroneous theories peddled by John Gates and other renegades from Marxism-Leninism. Of particular importance is the section of the resolution that includes these words:

While vigorously opposing and consistently striving to overcome sectarianism and doctrinairism, we must also relentlessly combat the ideas and positions of revisionism.

Gates and his followers were (and are) trying to revise the party out of existence. They say frankly they want the party to fold up and die, to be replaced (they hope) by what they call a "united party of socialism." The national committee, in answer, said:

The Party is not a temporary organization... THE PARTY IS HERE TO STAY. Without it, the fight for social progress will be limited and the victory of socialism is inconceivable. The mass party of socialism for which we strive must also be a party of this type--a working class vanguard party guided by the science of Marxism-Leninism. It must not be confused with other types of political parties of a united front character, or with an idea of a so-called united socialist party in which adherents of Marxism-Leninism would be only one among a number of other ideological currents.

The author of the East Bay Report was challenged to say if he agrees that the party is here to stay. He ducked, saying only that "the future of the party will be developed by those who provide answers to problems," which is something like telling us that water is wet.

May I suggest that you get the March Political Affairs and read the national

committee resolution for yourself? See if it does not make sense. Then read the East Bay Report--carefully!

Then ask: Why does the Report oppose the resolution? Why does the Report not say what its differences are? Why does the Report ask us to draw up a program opposing the party program?

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Even if the national committee resolution were all wrong, even if the hints and vague slurs of the Report were correct, it would still be unconstitutional and disruptive to campaign, as the Report does, against the national party. The author of the Report has the right to appeal his disagreements to the next national convention. But he does NOT have any right to try to organize an anti-party faction.

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The work of the party has been hindered considerably by such things as the Report. For one thing, we have all been compelled to waste a great deal of time bickering over it.

We didn't do a good job in the Holland Roberts election campaign. We ought to be doing more on the PW drive, which is lagging badly. We all ought to be busy on the fight for peace, the fight to lick the mis-named Right-to-Work initi-

ative, the fight against depression, the fight for Negro liberation.

We should insist that THE WHOLE PARTY concentrate on these constructive issues. We should insist that the disruptive Report be filed in the wastebasket.

We should insist on the most cordial and friendly and comradely cooperation with the national committee and with other party bodies.

We have work to do, and we should not allow any more interruptions.