

How Gates Views Socialism Today

(John Gates, former Daily Worker editor who resigned from the Communist Party Jan. 10, wrote six articles for the New York Post Jan. 20-25 entitled, "Why I Quit the Communist Party." The following report on these articles prepared by Harry Ring is presented for the information of our readers. Ed.)

"I did not quit the Communist Party in order to enlist in the cold war. The ideals which originally attracted me to communism seem to me the ones that give meaning to life, and they are worth trying to realize. I left the Communist Party because it no longer affords a way to further these ideals." This statement by John Gates in the New York Post illustrates his present political viewpoint. What he has to say in the Post series is essentially what he had been saying for the past two years as a member of the Communist Party.

INDICTS CAPITALISM

Outlining where he stands now, Gates presents an extensive indictment of capitalism as an outmoded social system. "Our society," he writes, "feels a crisis in every realm—in its moral outlook, its economic affairs, its politics . . . The fallacy and irrationality of capitalist society still lies, as I see it, in that production depends on the profit of the few rather than the use and welfare of all of us. In this fabulous new era of atomic energy, automation, and the conquest of space, production for the private profit of the few becomes incompatible with the needs of society as a whole. "Socialism," says Gates, "seems to me the necessary and inevitable way of resolving what is wrong with this society, while preserving what is best within it."

Until a majority of the American people are convinced of the need for socialism, he continues, "the immediate need is for popular regulation, for control and for curbs upon Big Business. So long as the interests of Big Business dominate both political parties, such controls will not be enacted. A new political advance is needed to bring the representatives of the working people, Negro and white, the farmers, the liberal middle class into Congress itself."

On the world situation, Gates writes: "The time is now to outlaw war as an instrument of national policy and to make



Left to right, JOHN GATES, recently resigned leader of Communist Party, who had the Daily Worker pulled out from under him and put out of existence by EUGENE DENNIS and WM. Z. FOSTER.

Parting of the Ways

competitive coexistence the basis of settling all outstanding differences between the U.S. and the Soviet Union."

FOR POLITICAL FREEDOM IN THE SOVIET BLOC

Gates points to the manner of the USSR's giant industrial-scientific advance as "the most important fact about the Soviet Union." At the same time, he states, "it is far from making a corresponding political advance. The Soviet people have far to go in acquiring control over the selection of their leaders and their policies. They need freedom of discussion, and a mechanism for choosing between alternative leaders and policies."

On the general issue of socialist democracy he writes, "To fulfill its promise, a Socialist society demands political democracy on a level higher than anything which exists in the most advanced capitalist countries."

Of the American Communist Party, Gates says that it "has become irrelevant, and it is not my objective to spend time trying to get members of the party to leave it. That is a decision for each individual to make or not." At the same time he denies the charge that the party is a foreign conspiracy, urges defense of its civil liberties and calls for freedom for Smith Act victims Gil Green, Henry Winston and Irving Potash.

Reviewing the party's history,

Gates sees three positive accomplishments: the mass work of the 1930's, the support to Loyalist Spain and the support to the U.S. government in World War II.

MASS EXODUS

Discussing the catastrophic decline of the CP over the past 13 years, he sets its 1945 membership at 75,000 and says that 7,000 may be an optimistic estimate of its present size. He doubts that there are more than a few hundred Negroes remaining in the party and says its present age level is "well in the 50's." He estimates an exodus of 10,000 members during the past two years. This mass defection was by those who considered it impossible to thwart the Fosterite drive for a return to the pre-20th Congress line.

BACKGROUND OF CRISIS

While the Communist Party crisis erupted as a result of the Khrushchev revelations, Gates sees the crisis as having " . . . long, twisted roots. Though related to Soviet events, the whole story has to be taken back to 1945, and probably even further back than that, to 1919."

Concretely, Gates says, the division began to manifest itself in the party leadership during the period that he and the other Foley Square defendants were in prison. He reports that during that time his wife, Lillian Gates, who had been a leader of the New York organi-

zation, had written to him about a bitter struggle between the New York leadership and the Foster leadership in the national office.

It was during this same period in 1953, he adds, that Joseph Starobin and Joseph Clark became critical of the party line and Starobin withdrew after his proposals for a change of line were rejected. Both Clark and Starobin saw the party stand as "ultra-leftist."

Gates continues: "These moods were everywhere. The California Communists had been in such conflicts with Foster's aides that they conducted their Smith Act defense on their own. Most of the party's trade unionists had their own bitter beefs. More and more they had lost confidence in 'the center,' as we called the national leadership."

Gates describes the doubts he, himself, was developing about party policy while in prison and relates them to the post-Stalin developments in the Soviet Union. Recalling discussions he had in prison with Eugene Dennis and Robert Thompson, he writes: "Things were happening abroad which coincided with our behind-the-bars appraisals of the Party's work at home. Stalin had died, within a few days the Jewish doctors plot was revealed as a hoax. Lavrenti Beria, the Soviet Police Chief, was executed, turning out—so it was said—to have been an imperialist spy

from way back. Working people in East Berlin demonstrated against the government of which they were supposedly the backbone.

"Soviet newspapers were warning about the 'cult of the individual.' What did this phrase mean if not a retroactive criticism of Stalin himself? Dennis could not see that. If Beria were a rat, how did this jibe with Stalin's intimate reliance upon him. To Dennis the question was 'impermissible'."

At the same time, Gates saw the easing of war tensions as placing a big question mark over the party's analysis. "For the virtual inevitability of war was a key idea in our ranks; if it could be receding so fast, maybe our Party had misjudged this crucial matter. Maybe this pessimistic view of the danger of war and our estimate of impending domestic fascism—the premise on which several co-leaders had gone into the 'underground' and taken much of the Party with them—had to be re-examined."

POLAND, HUNGARY

While there was heated discussion over these issues on his return from prison, Gates says the big division in the party leadership actually came in 1956 with the Polish and Hungarian events. "I remember rising to speak. I said Khrushchev almost created catastrophe by trying to unseat Gomulka in Poland, that Gomulka had saved socialism in Poland . . . This

Soviet intervention in Hungary. I found myself saying, is a crime, a crime it will take years to overcome. I cried out: 'For the first time in all my years in the Party, I feel ashamed of the name, Communist!' My colleagues sat with frozen faces. None of us would ever be the same again, nor could we for long continue to live in the same movement."

Where does Gates go from here? He says he doesn't know. He does not "want to go from one sectarianism to another. The answer to the present splinters on the Left is not to form another."

WANTS DISCUSSION

He looks to the development of a new radical movement "that will be acceptable to substantial sections of the labor movement, of the Negro people. Its Americanism will be unchallengeable. It will act within our Constitutional framework. It will not go down the dead-end street of sterile anti-Sovietism . . . Neither will it be unduly influenced by Socialist movements abroad."

"As for my personal political plans," Gates says, "I do not profess to have all the answers. After being so certain, and dogmatic, on most of what I did for a quarter of a century, I am not inclined to make hasty decisions. I want to talk with people—those who know me and those who don't. I want to do some listening, some reflecting, some studying."

Political Action Debated At San Francisco Forum

By Leigh Ray

SAN FRANCISCO, Jan. 25 — Vincent Hallinan, Progressive Party candidate for President in the 1952 elections, called for the building of a party of socialism

to give the young people some hope to march on to the future. He was speaking at a meeting of the Independent Socialist Forum held here last night on the topic of "The Independent Voter in the '58 Election."

The speakers, besides Vincent Hallinan, were Philip Burton, Democratic Assemblyman from the 20th District, and Richard Lynden, Secretary-Treasurer of Local 6, International Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union.

There is no essential difference between the Democratic

quiescence of the labor movement and said that he could not see a mass turn to socialism or toward a labor or third party at this time. "American politics are on dead center," he said.

If the depression deepens and the present California drive for the "smash-the-union" bill meets any success; if the candidates of the Democrat and Republican parties do not take satisfactory positions on these problems facing the labor movement, then new leaders