

# John Gates Urges New Kind of Party

The world has entered into a new period of history and a new kind of Party is called for, says John Gates, Daily Worker editor, in a discussion article scheduled for publication in the November issue of Political Affairs.

"We have entered," Gates writes, "into a protracted period of peaceful competition during which the struggle in our country will be of an evolutionary character and lead to an eventual revolutionary transformation. The path towards the triumph of socialism here is one of peaceful and constitutional struggle. We need a party geared to that kind of situation and struggle. We need a fully democratic party, a party that is legal and is solidly based on American reality and will be recognized and accepted by American workers as their own."

"Obviously we have been prevented from becoming a democratic and legal working party by the repression of the government and employers, and our struggle for legality cannot be divorced from the general struggle for democratic rights. Nevertheless I think that a substantial part of our present status is self-imposed and in our power to change."

Gates takes issue with Foster's contentions in an article which appeared in the October issue of Political Affairs. Gates writes:

"Comrade Foster writes in his article that 'we must Americanize our Party.' Stop and consider a while what that means. It is really a profoundly revealing statement. Comrade Foster complains that the draft resolution is too sweeping in its self-criticism, but in this statement he has made the most damning indictment of our Party that could possibly be made."

"Way back in the 1880's Engels used to entreat the German Marxists who had migrated to America to Americanize themselves, to learn the language and customs, become part of the mainstream of the labor movement, and to apply Marxism to America creatively and not dogmatically. But for us now, after 38 years of existence as an American party, made up of Americans most of whom were born here and have no problem of languages or customs, to have to admit that we must still Americanize ourselves, reveals our situation better than anything I could possibly say. Certainly we cannot blame our failure to be American enough on reaction."

"Comrade Foster has hit upon, involuntarily perhaps, what I believe to be the heart of our problem. This tragic situation cannot be cured by a few patches here and there as we have been doing for many years. It can only be solved by drastic and basic changes which I think the draft resolution begins to do."

"The first change that is necessary is our approach to Marxist-Leninist theory. I voted with the majority of the National Committee to recommend to the convention that we delete the phrase 'Marxism - Leninism' from the preamble to our Party constitution. I think this is necessary because the government has successfully made use of this phrase to distort what we American Communists really believe and stand for, to isolate us from the American people, and to virtually legalize us."

"Instead of tying ourselves to a phrase which can go easily be distorted and misused against us, we need to spell out in our own language the theories we

base ourselves on and our true program and policy. Does this mean throwing out and abandoning all the work of Marx, Engels and Lenin? Of course not. But if anyone asks me whether I base myself on the principles of Marx and Lenin, I want to be able to answer which of those principles I believe in and which I do not."

"Theory is the generalization of experience, and since experience is always changing, theory must change with it."

"Science is a living and not a dead thing. Science that fails to develop loses touch with reality and ceases to become a correct guide to action. . . ."

"The idea that the doctrines of Marx and Lenin are unchangeable creates an atmosphere that suppresses the thought and debate which are essential for the development of science and correct policies. Those who object to the phrase in the resolution that we only base ourselves on Marxist - Leninist principles 'as we interpret them' make a serious mistake on two grounds in my opinion. First, if we do not interpret them in the light of present reality and our own understanding, they interpret themselves and become dogma, and second, if we do not interpret them it means we become dependent on the interpretation of others."

"The issue consequently is not the abandonment of Marxist-Leninist theory, but the need for a critical reevaluation and further development of it. The issue is to determine what remains valid, such as the materialist conception of history, surplus value, the class struggle, the leading role of the working class in the struggle for socialism, imperialism as capitalism in its monopoly, dying stage, the national and colonial question, for example, and what is no longer valid such as the law of inevitable violent proletarian revolution, the inevitability of war, or needs to be modified like the theory of the state, etc."

Concerning the American path to socialism, Gates writes:

"We Americans must guarantee that American socialism will be a fully democratic socialism. I am confident we will be able to achieve that, partly as a result of the pioneering efforts and enormous sacrifices of the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries, partly because we will be on guard against repeating the mistakes of the Soviet Union if we master all the lessons of it, and especially because of our own more favorable circumstances and historical traditions."

Gates says that in his opinion "the name of the Party ought to be changed." This can help dramatize, Gates says, "to the American people that our Party is making profound and genuine changes."

Strongly opposing any tendencies toward dissolving the Party, Gates argues that the CP will be able to act as a stronger force for socialism "if we change our party form to one of a political action association."

Gates concludes with an appeal for an "atmosphere of respect for and consideration of each other's views on their merits," in the current discussion, without name-calling or emotionalism.