By SAM TAYLOR

The reaction to the banning of John Gates-Thomas-Wolfe from speaking at the New York City Colleges indicated the depth of political animosity against the group since the high-tide mark of McCarthyism. One point of interest is that while Gates was prevented from speaking before the Marxist Discussion Club at Queens College, Stalinist or Stalinist-oriented organizations have subsequently played little or no role in the ensuing protests.

This time instead of a few unvocal protests, there was virtually a scrum among anti-Stalinist groups at a number of different colleges to prevent meetings with John Gates. The New York Civil Liberties Union jumped into the middle of the situation and sponsored a meeting at a New York hotel which had to be cancelled at the last minute because of the pressure of veteran and Catholic organizations in getting the hotel to cancel the reservation.

At Columbia University meetings were sponsored by SLID and the Debs Society on successive days, and about 1200 students attended. There were two meetings, both of which probably constituted the largest turnout at any college meeting in recent years. The attendance at these meetings represents a conscious effort to disrupt the democratic and arbitrary rules of the city college administrations. Both meetings were prepared to take consistent civil libertarian positions would be ready to go on with justifications for the ban which were offered up. If, secondly, you do not act, that meant since the conclusion that the Communist Party was so weak and ineffective, it was ridiculous to ban Gates from speaking.

PUSHING GATE

At the end of the day, the questioning of Gates was sharp and sometimes hostile. A number of questions were raised, but the main claim that Communists have changed or that, Gates, has changed his positions in the democratic positions. These questions took him further—but only with varying success. The response to and at the end of the day, to the right of the Gates faction in the CP. No matter what we must many hold on what is happening in the CP, in practice there is the recognition that there is a difference between the Gates and Foster groups. Few have any illusion that Gates or his faction has suddenly blossomed out as democrat, but there is the awareness that they have any real understanding of the situation. Which Gates-Thomas-Wolfe had taken the first steps in this direction.

Gates’ faction has tried to use these meetings to prove that his approach—a more independent and democratic posture—is the way for the CP to break out of its present isolation. At one time or another during these two days almost every staff member of the Daily Worker was up at Columbia. They even did the Jimmy Higgins work of selling the paper. In the past there would have been LYNCHING for this.

Gates repeatedly argued at the meetings that Communists have a legitimate place in America’s political life as one of the progressive and democratic groups. And in the CP he would undoubtedly argue that his way is the way to do it. The type and type of most of the questioning added an important proviso: You have to break with your support your social, economic, and political system, Stalinism, which you defend as “socialistically revolutionary” and revolutionary and political, that you will preserve democratic rights and continue to fight for power in the future as long as you defend a system which denies all democratic rights in the present.

FIREWORKS AT COLUMBIA

The day before, two meetings with the John Dewey Society (SLID) of Columbia drew about 750 in a debate on the Communist Party. Speaking with John Gates were Norman Thomas, Socialist Party leader, and his supporters. It is an indication of the Revolution and political and administrative policies of the workers, who failed to raise a single reference to the academic freedom issue.

Norman Thomas made the initial presentation. Before proceeding to a series of questions to Gates, Thomas praised the banning of Gates, stated that he was a non-fighter with the Smith Act, which Gates was sent to jail, and that he recognized that there is progress in the CP, or rather that this group is moving in the direction of a more general political participation. But the question is: Thomas’ questions and Gates’ answers given in rebuttal or in response to provoking from students.

YSL FUND DRIVE

By MAX MARTIN

The Young Socialist League’s 1957 Fund Drive opens on April 1, with the League aiming this year to raise $145,000 during the three-month drive period ending June 30. Financial drives for YSL units and groups are as follows:

- At Large and National Office 1 $150
- Berkeley 300
- Chicago 300
- Dayton 100
- Detroit 100
- New York 750
- Pittsburgh 100
- TOTAL $1,450

Although a few contributions have already been received, the difficult opening of the drive, it is too early to report them. The first two months of a three-month final drive will appear in an early issue of Challenge.

The prospects for this Fund Drive are quite good. Last year’s YSL drive scored an outstanding success, oversubscribing the national quota by 18 per cent. But the new scene in the socialist movement and the new possibilities are opening up are in the mind of the YSL. There is good reason to believe that we can do even more and, perhaps even better than last year. Along with the new possibilities for the YSL, the interest goes on to perhaps the rather more intense forms of old.

This year’s drive is recognized by many as an increased financial support from all of our members and sympathizers. The goal of the various branches are based on a realistic estimates of what is possible to achieve. The objective is not a matter of hope that our goal shall be reached.

Through the help of those of you who believe in our work, we will be able to carry out our program. It is the wish of the YSL that you will support us.

Thomas: “Has the CP Manual of 1935, written by J. Peters, been dropped or revised? I have almost forgotten what this CP Manual is!”

REVOLUTION: J. Peter’s Manual was dropped in 1936. The recent convention changed the concept toward democratizing the CP. For example, the right of dissent is now guaranteed. This may not seem revolutionary to others, but in the CP it is.”

THOMAS: “Does any faction of the CP still insist that the Soviet Union is the only fatherland of workers all over the world. GATES: The CP says that American workers have no allegiance to any other country; however, this does not mean internationalism.”

Q. AND A.

THOMAS: The American Veterans Committee and the Workers Defense League are preparing a petition calling for withdrawal of US troops from Hungary. Would Gates sign it? GATES: I will sign any petition for the mutual and simultaneous withdrawal of all US troops in the world. I was opposed to Russian intervention and it should have been done. The solution should have been left to the Hungarian people. However, there were forces which was that the situation in Hungary too far toward violence and terror.

THOMAS: “Do you accept Moscow’s latest claim that now and always it will give no guarantee for all European annexations?”

KING: The Soviet Union is always ready for mutual trades. However, in the 1920s the Soviet Union did not have a clear position; but it is for now. In respect to the Marshall Plan, the Soviet Union refuses to sign. And the U.S.S.R. was really glad that it did not participate. But the Soviet Union should be more flexible.

THOMAS: “In your faction of the party that considerably, are the aims of any sort of dictatorship; (b) a multiparty system; and (c) support of the Bill of Rights, if you should achieve power?”

GATES: After quitting from the recent CP convention about the matter of personal freedom once CP comes to power: a multiparty system, however, in the interest of political development. In U.S. you have this development, in Russia you do not. I do not believe that the best way to get advances in the political development. Differences of opinion in the Soviet Union should be expressed, and I believe that various means will be found for their expression.

THOMAS: Have all factions of your party repudiated the Black Belt theory for Negro self-determination? I ask this question because I have been attacked in the CP press as a supporter of lynching law because I rejected this theory.

GATES: (No answer.)

THOMAS: “Are your proposals for united fronts or joint action still based on your 1935 conception that ‘if Socialists agree to act with us so much the better, even though we may be sure that at some time they will betray the workers?’” (Peter’s Manual.)

GATES: (No answer.)

THOMAS’ speech was interesting because he constantly made a distinction between the Gates faction and the CP as a whole, stated that he believes people for the party for all because of changes that have taken place. But when the differences, he believes in the conversion since it came only after Stalin died and after the German revolutions.

On this point of what is happening in the CP, Thomas openly took issue with those who speak as if nothing has happened and that the recent CP convention acted on orders from Moscow as it had back in 1946 when Browder was right. Thomas ended his speech with an affiliation of the relationship of socialism and democracy: there is no “impartial” or “harsh” socialism in Russia, but state capitalism. Socialism is not another name for collectivization. Without democracy there can be, under collectivization, the destruction of the dictatorship.

Gates’ speech was an outline of how the CP has changed its more democratic, less monolithic, and independent in making its own decisions. We are changing," he said, "and America should change its attitude toward us.

With one eye on the fight inside the CP, he presented a defense of the CP and the "U.S. road to socialism." The CP has a future because it stands for "socialism"—which he then defined as merely "the cooperative ownership of property under the leadership of the workers in all it was ever well written the statement that J. Edgar Hoover issued on the completely."