

Well-Attended Brooklyn Meet Hears Gates, Dobbs, Muste

By Harry Ring

BROOKLYN, May 5—Three hundred and fifty people turned out at the Brighton Community Center tonight for a discussion of "The Road to Socialism in America." On the platform were John Gates, editor of the Daily Worker, Farrell Dobbs, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party and A. J. Muste of Liberation magazine. Composed largely of supporters of the CP and SWP, the audience displayed interest and enthusiasm for the frank but fraternal exchange of views on the subject of the evening.

Opening the discussion, Dobbs declared that the source of the ever-present war danger lies in the insoluble crisis of world capitalism which is being pushed back by the powerful colonial revolution and by swiftly rising productive power of the Soviet bloc. The war danger, he said, comes primarily from American Big Business which is spearheading the world counter-revolutionary offensive. While the increasing power of the anti-capitalist world has compelled imperialism to slow down its war timetable, U.S. capitalism remains basically hostile to peaceful co-existence with the anti-capitalist world, Dobbs said.

CLASS-STRUGGLE POLICY

Events have demonstrated, he continued, that Wall Street can be checkmated only by a worldwide class struggle against it. That is why, he said, it is necessary to defend the colonial freedom fighters and the workers' states against imperialism. He also called for solidarity with the budding political revolution in the Soviet sphere. This struggle to re-establish workers' democracy based on Soviet property forms, he said, aids the world revolution against capitalism.

Turning to the domestic scene, Dobbs hit at the Communist Party leadership's concept of building a "people's anti-monopoly coalition" based on political collaboration with capitalists. Such a "coalition," he pointed out, has been in effect since the 1930's in the form of the labor movement's support for the Democratic Party. The record shows, Dobbs said that the labor-Democratic coalition has served only to weaken labor politically and to strengthen the hand of reaction.

The central need today, Dobbs said, is to help forge a left wing in the mass movement advocating a class-struggle program. Such a left wing, he said, must push for the formation of a labor party based on the unions in alliance with the Negro people and the working farmers.

Since a labor party will not be formed immediately, it is especially important, Dobbs argued, for the socialist movement to run its own electoral tickets. Here in New York, he said, the SWP is running Joyce Cowley for mayor and will use the campaign to spread the socialist answer to war, to explain the need for a labor party and to help lay the basis for building a left wing in the mass movement. Such a course, Dobbs concluded, is the most effective way to combat imperialist war and to create the forces that will spearhead the struggle for a socialist America.

Presenting the viewpoint of the Communist Party, John Gates said that today's main task is to build a "people's anti-monopoly coalition" based on a new political alignment. He could not predict, he said, whether such a realignment would be achieved by driving the reactionaries out of the Democratic party or if it would emerge as a new coalition party in opposition to both the old parties.

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On foreign policy, he said the central objective must be the fight for "peaceful co-existence." The growing strength of the socialist world and the weakening of the capitalist world, he contended, makes a new era of co-existence practical and realizable, even though it is being ushered in slowly and painfully.

Gates concluded by expressing his gratification at the successful meeting and declared it a demonstration "that we can work and act together while we discuss those things on which we disagree."

A. J. Muste devoted himself primarily to the continuing need for common frank thinking and discussion by all radical tendencies. Such a discussion is necessary, he said, because "None of us today can see clearly in the concrete sense the road to socialism." Such advice, he added, "is not counsel of despair, but of hope. If we bring all, or approximately all, of the movement into a serious, continuous discussion, we will have accomplished a political act of enormous significance."

The summaries were the most noteworthy features of the evening, as Gates and Dobbs came answered one another's arguments in a spirit of earnest debate.

Contending that Dobbs was incorrect in characterizing the anti-monopoly coalition policy as "anti-class struggle," Gates declared that a struggle "of all the people would be even more productive than just that of the workers alone."

Taking issue with the need for

socialist tickets, Gates said, "Dobbs said there is no immediate perspective for a labor party. I agree. But if the workers aren't even ready for a labor party, then how can you propose a socialist ticket which is even narrower?" Instead, he continued, "we should work with labor on the basis of its present level of thinking. To run against the Republicans and Democrats would only isolate us." He relegated the running of socialist candidates to an occasional contest for secondary offices.

Winding up the discussion, Dobbs agreed the workers must weld a coalition with other class forces, but explained that such a coalition is doomed to failure unless it is led by the workers and based on an anti-capitalist program.

Replying to Gates' objections to running a socialist candidate for mayor, Dobbs asked, "What do you propose as an alternative—to support Wagner?" An appreciative murmur ran through the audience as Dobbs continued, "He certainly is a very peculiar 'friend of labor.'"

Support to the Democrats, Dobbs went on, only delays the process of building a labor party, but a socialist ticket will help build one. Over radio and TV, socialists will be able to explain to those seeking a basic change how to go about getting it.

In concluding, Dobbs urged united action on behalf of Morton Sobell and called on the audience to turn out for the boat ride May 26 sponsored by the Sobell Committee.

All three speakers joined in urging the audience to participate in the May 17 Prayer Pilgrimage to Washington.

Introductory


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