
The Socialist Convention.

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Eugene Victor Debs, in prison garb in Atlanta, was the inspiration, the keynote of the Socialist Party convention held in New York City, May 9-16, 1920. On Thursday afternoon [May 13], when Debs was nominated standard-bearer of the party of the 1920 campaign, the convention reached its high water mark of enthusiasm.

The naming of Debs was the most striking event of the convention. It was not, however, the only important feature of the week.

To many of nearly equal interest, and containing more of the element of surprise, was the nomination of the Vice Presidential candidate. James H. Maurer, President of the Pennsylvania Federation of Labor, had been slated by many for that position. The veteran labor leader was asked to serve by Right Wing and Left Wing, but felt that his duties in Pennsylvania compelled his withdrawal from the race. Many delegates also went to the convention pledged to the candidacy of Kate Richards O'Hare, now serving a 5 year sentence as a political prisoner in Jefferson City jail. The delegates remained loyal in spirit to Kate O'Hare, but one after another came to the conclusion that if Debs were in jail, one of the candidates should be free to speak for the party and for his imprisoned running mate.

With Maurer and O'Hare out of the running, the candidacy of Seymour Stedman of Chicago was urged, particularly after his masterful oration at the Madison Square Garden meeting of Sunday the 9th. His personality, his years of service in socialist ranks, were dwelt upon. Stedman had begun his career as a newsboy in the streets of the great western city. He had studied law, had been admitted to the bar, and in the early '90s had thrown himself into the socialist movement, becoming a close friend of Eugene V. Debs

during the railway strike of 1894. Later he had helped to found the Socialist Party, together with Debs, Hillquit, and Harriman, had served with distinction as Socialist legislator in the Illinois legislature, and, during the war, had been the chief legal defender of Socialists indicted under the Espionage Law. Here and in the Albany trial, his skill and eloquence, his wide knowledge of history and economics, and his legal training enhanced his already high reputation as an advocate of labor.

His name was placed in nomination by Lena Morrow Lewis of California. She described him as a "barefoot newspaper boy, as a loyal and faithful servant of the working class," as a lawyer whose keen insight had "baffled opponents and commanded the respect of the bench and bar," and as a speaker who was able "to give the Socialist message in terms understood by the working class."

R.H. Howe of Illinois, Algernon Lee of New York, and Oscar Ameringer of Wisconsin seconded the nomination, Ameringer making his usual whimsical address and declaring that generally he didn't favor lawyers, but that he felt that "no one but a lawyer can run on the Socialist ticket at this time, criticize the 'new freedom,' and get away with it."

When the vote was called for Stedman received 106 to 26 for Kate O'Hare. Amid much enthusiasm the nomination was thereupon made unanimous.

Significant Features.

The convention was noted not only for its nominations. It was marked by a desire to rid the socialist movement of mere phrase-mongering, to express socialist theory and tactics in term that the average American could readily understand, to deal realistically with

the concrete political and economic situation today, and to avoid narrow sectarianism. On the other hand, it refused time and again to compromise on essential principles of socialism and to be driven to a retreat because of outside misrepresentation and persecution. One feature which most impressed observers — particularly those who had attended the Emergency Conventions of 1917 and 1919 — was the spirit of comradeship and good will, despite most divergent opinions, which characterized its every session. Finally the delegates possessed to the full that most necessary ingredient of a successful movement, a saving sense of humor — a sense that never failed to come to the rescue in critical stages of the convention proceedings.

To what extent the fine granite clubhouse of the Finnish Socialists, immaculately clean from top to bottom, with its great meeting hall, satisfying cafeteria, and other needed comforts, and situated in one of the choice parts of the city, was responsible for this good will and humor it is impossible to say.† But the fact is that these qualities were there and there in abundance.

Another encouraging feature to the socialist was the presence at the convention of fraternal delegates

representing numerous advanced labor organizations. A distinct disappointment, on the other hand, was the small percentage of women delegates — scarcely a baker's dozen. California was the one state in which the women in the delegation were in the majority, and this in the pioneer woman suffrage party in the United States.

Poll of Delegates.

The convention proper formally opened with the singing of "The Internationale" and "The Marseillaise" on Saturday morning, May 8, at 10:30. The calling of the roll indicated the presence of some 160 delegates from about 30 states, the delegations from New York, Illinois, Wisconsin, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania leading in the order named, and making up the bulk of the convention. Despite the charges of foreign control of the party, a census of the *New York Times* made later in the session indicated that of the 156 delegates listed, but 4 were non-citizens, 3 of these being Finns, while 96 were born in this country, 13 in Germany, 12 in Russia, and a scattering in other countries.‡

†- The location of the convention was the Finnish Socialist Hall, Fifth Avenue and 127th Street, New York City. The building was owned by the Finnish Socialists. This was the first time a national Socialist Convention was held in a hall owned by the party. —*H.L.*

‡- This investigation of the *New York Times* (May 13, 1920), showed the nationalities and occupations of the delegates listed as follows:

<i>Birthplace.</i>		<i>Occupations.</i>	
United States	96	Poland	2
Germany	13	Norway	1
Russia	12	Ireland	1
Finland	8	Holland	1
England	4	Canada	1
Sweden	3	Ukraine	1
Italy	3	Bulgaria	1
Bohemia	3	Scotland	1
Austria	2	Switzerland	1
Hungary	2	Total	156
		Editors and journalists	18
		Skilled workers (toolmakers, etc.)	17
		Laborers	13
		Lawyers	12
		Printers and compositors	12
		Socialist workers (organizers)	11
		Educational workers (teachers, speakers, etc.)	11
		Public officials (judges, aldermen)	7
		Office workers	6
		Bookkeepers	6
		Merchants	5
		Salesmen	5
		Cigarmakers	4
		Machinists and electrical workers	4
		Engineers	4
		Housekeepers	3
		Foremen and managers	3
		Nurses	2
		Butchers and bakers	2

Of the 156 delegates there are 4 who are not citizens of the United States — 2 from Massachusetts, 1 from the state of Washington, and 1 from Wisconsin.

Hillquit's Keynote Speech.

The first order of business was the election of the chairman of the day. This gave to the Left Wingers led by the Illinois delegation an opportunity of estimating their strength. They nominated J. Louis Engdahl as their representative. The Regulars named Morris Hillquit of New York. Hillquit, who appeared for the first time in more than two years at a party gathering, was elected by a vote of 91 to 29 and was given an enthusiastic ovation. He delivered the "keynote speech" on assuming the gavel, in part as follows:

Within the last year the powers of darkness and reaction in the country have united in a concerted attack upon the socialist movement unparalleled in ferociousness and lawlessness.

The obvious object of the provocative onslaught is to crush the spirit and paralyze the struggles of the socialist movement or to goad it into a policy of desperation and lawlessness, thus furnishing its opponents the pretext for wholesale violent reprisals and physical extermination.

The great question before this convention is: Will the socialists of America prove true enough and brave enough to survive the attack and withstand the provocation? We will!

In Europe, where the ruling classes are wiser than ours, one nation after another is surrendering to the overwhelming tide of the socialist movement. The great working class republic of Russia has survived all counterrevolutionary attacks, domestic and foreign, and now, after a continuous and embittered struggle of 30 months, it stands before the world more strongly entrenched, more hopeful and confident than ever.

In Sweden, in Czecho-Slovakia, in Germany, and

Austria socialists largely are in control of the government.

In England, Italy, France, and Scandinavia the socialist workers are fast gaining political power. The most enlightened nations have openly or tacitly recognized that socialism alone has the moral and intellectual resources to rebuild and revivify the shattered world, and in this, as in all other vital currents of modern life, the United States cannot effectively or permanently secluded itself from the rest of the world.

Nor do we, American socialists, depend for our hope of success solely upon the precedent and example of Europe. The conditions in our own country and the record of our own party are the gauge of our ultimate victory here.

We have nothing to retract, nothing to apologize for, in connection with our stand in recent years.

When Congress committed the United States to participation in the world war, ours was the only organized political voice in the country to protest. We declared that the inhuman slaughter in Europe was born in a sanguinary clash of commercial interests and imperialistic ambitions.

We warned our countrymen that the savage contest of arms would bring no peace, no liberty, and no happiness in the world, but that it would result in misery and desolation. Now the whole world is beginning to see the justice of our criticism and the tragic fulfillment of our prediction.

One year and a half after the formal cessation of hostilities, there is no peace in Europe; the victorious Powers are intriguing among themselves about land grabs and national advantage, while Europe is starved and the ghastly wounds inflicted by the war upon the whole system of human civilization remain open and bleeding.

Today it is becoming increasingly clearer that if the "treaty of peace" is not written all over, the war will have to be fought all over — unless the worldwide

Physicians and dentists	2
Waiters and waitresses	2
Agents and brokers	2
Painter	1
Rug manufacturer	1
Farmer	1
Newsdealer	1
State Chairman, World War Veterans	1
Total	156

According to the New York Times list (May 12, 1920), the following states were represented:

New England: Connecticut (4), Massachusetts (12), New Hampshire (2), Rhode Island (1).

Middle Atlantic States: Delaware (1), Maryland (3), New Jersey (7), New York (27), Pennsylvania (14).

West: Arkansas (1), Colorado (1), Illinois (19), Indiana (6), Iowa (2), Kansas (2), Michigan (5), Minnesota (6), Missouri (4), Ohio (8), Oklahoma (5), Utah (1), Wisconsin (18).

Pacific Coast: California (5), Oregon (1), Washington (1).

South: District of Columbia (1), Georgia (1), Kentucky (1), Tennessee (1), Texas (1), West Virginia (1).

There were also fraternal delegates from a number of organizations. —H.L.

triumph of socialism overtakes both the treaty and the war.

If there remain any large sections of workers who put their naive faith in old-party messiahs, Woodrow Wilson must have effectively destroyed their faith. For be it remembered that in 1916, Woodrow Wilson ran as a "radical." He promised practically socialism through the shortcut of the Democratic Party.

One-half of the normal supporters of the Socialist Party ticket cast their votes for him. Woodrow Wilson was elected over Charles E. Hughes by the vote of Socialists. In California alone the defection in the normal Socialist vote determined his victory in the Presidential contest. Mr. Wilson's administration in the last 3 years has furnished the most striking and abhorrent proof of the fallacy of the "good man" theory in politics.

Wilson, the pacifist, drew us into the world's most frightful war.

Wilson, the anti-militarist, imposed conscription upon the country in war, and urged a large standing army and a huge navy in peace.

Wilson, the democrat, arrogated to himself autocratic powers grossly inconsistent with a republican form of government.

Wilson, the liberal, revived the medieval institutions of the inquisition of speech, though, and conscience, His administration suppressed or tried to suppress radical publications, raided houses and meeting places of political opponents, destroyed their property, and assaulted their persons.

Wilson, the apostle of the "new freedom," infested the country with stool pigeons, spies, and agents provocateurs, and filled the jails with political prisoners.

Wilson, the champion of labor, restored involuntary servitude in the mines and on the railroads.

Wilson, the idealist and humanitarian, has inaugurated a reign of intellectual obscurantism, moral terrorism, and political reaction the like of which this country has never known before.

The morbid national psychology which he has helped to create as produced such atavistic political types as Palmer, Burleson, Sweet, and Lusk. It has advanced to places of honor, political mountebanks like Ole Hanson, but has put into prison stripes the noblest and truest types of American manhood, persons like Eugene Victor Debs.

Woodrow Wilson was probably inspired by the best of intentions when he ran for re-election. But he did not express the sentiments, convictions, or interests of the class he represented or the political party to which he owed allegiance.

When the great crisis came and he was forced to choose between the class and the party to whom he belonged and the workers for whom he professed a platonic affection, he rallied to his class and party

interests.

Nor was Wilson's fall purely personal. When Woodrow Wilson fell, the entire structure of middle-class and capitalist liberalism tumbled with him like a house of cards.

Today there is not throughout the length and breadth of the United States a single radical or even progressive political group of any importance outside of the organized socialist movement.

The attempts of some advanced organized workers to form an independent political party of labor on a national scale has so far foundered upon the rock of conservatism and narrowness of the American Federation leadership, and the efforts to create a progressive middle-class party have met with little response.

The only active and organized force in American politics that combats reaction and oppression, that stands for the large masses of the workers, and for a social order of justice and industrial equality is the Socialist Party.

Following the chairman's address and the reading of the report of the Executive Committee — a report which showed a membership of 40,000 dues-paying members — the convention prepared for a long-drawn-out battle over three important documents — the declaration of principles, the party platform, and the report on international relations.

The Fight Over Socialist Principles.

At the September [1919] convention the Executive Committee was authorized to appoint a committee to draft a declaration of principles. The committee appointed, Morris Hillquit, chairman, prepared the draft and presented it to the convention. The Left Wing group, on the other hand, had copied in essence the declaration drafted by Algernon Lee and adopted September last as the preamble to the constitution of the party.

In addition to this preamble, however, the group inserted two clauses. Section 8, one of the added clauses, introduced the idea of proletarian dictatorship as follows:

In the final struggle of the workers for political supremacy, in order to facilitate the overthrow of the capitalist system, all power during the transitional period must be in the hands of the workers, in order to insure the success of the revolution.

Section 9 urged that the workers “begin now to train themselves in the problems incident to the control and management of industry,” while Section 10 advocated the change of our class society “into a society controlled by all engaged in some form of useful work, through representative bodies chosen by occupational groups.

The proponents of the last-named program first attempted to secure the election of another committee to draw up a declaration to be submitted to the convention, a move, however, which was defeated by a two-thirds vote.† On Monday [May 10] the Left Wing proposed their program as a basis for discussion. After prolonged debate this proposal was also rejected by a vote of 103 to 33, and the convention began the discussion of socialist principles on the basis of the Hillquit draft.

In opening the debate J. Louis Engdahl contended that the official draft could be adopted by the Nonpartisan League, or if slightly amended to a more radical form, could be accepted by the “so-called Labor Party.” His substitute would include principles of international socialism as well as purely American socialism. “We cannot compete with the Labor Party in phrases,” he asserted, “but we can compete with all in revolutionary working class principles.”

Hillquit replied that he had no objection in principle to the substitute, but felt that it had been given its proper place as a preamble of the party constitution.

“The official draft was written for *outsiders* who ask, ‘What is this socialism? What are your methods?’” contended Hillquit. “It was something to put into the hands of such men. War is over and the period of rebuilding has come, not only for the world but also for the Socialist Party. We must discard phrases and talk sense for a while. I have avoided Marxian terminology, because it means nothing to the ordinary worker. The draft is but 1,800 words. It is not a slogan but a reasoned explanation of a world philosophy strange and new to the majority of the people. Clause 8 of the substitute draft is the only original part of that document that is a thinly veiled advocacy of the ‘dictator-

ship of the proletariat,’ which is not a socialist doctrine, nor is it applicable to present-day America. If the Labor Party would accept the principles framed in the official draft, so much the better. All we have ever worked for is to get our message over to the workers of America.”

William F. Kruse, for the minority draft, specifically criticized the committee’s report on the ground that it made no mention of the Labor Party.

Irwin Tucker defended Section 8 of the Engdahl substitute, stating that the giving of all power to the workers during the transitional period was necessary to safeguard society from counterrevolution. He declared against violence, as violence would merely lead to the spilling of the blood of the workers.

Victor Berger of Wisconsin complained that the Socialists in the past — Wisconsin Socialists excepted — spoke in a language that the people of America did not understand, and that there was never a time in history when the American Socialist Party had such an opportunity as it had today.

“Gompers, Gary, the Steel Trust, all have the proletariat — all control them — except ourselves. The only places where the Socialists have gripped the workers are in Milwaukee and in the East Side of New York.

“I don’t want any dictatorship,” Berger concluded. “I want democracy. If I cannot convince a crowd of the correctness of my principles, I have no right to win out.”

Declaring that for the first time in the history of this country there was a mass drift towards socialism, [J.F.] Soltis of Minnesota, a proponent of the official draft, asked: “Shall we use our great opportunity in this campaign to unload Marxian phrases or to preach socialism in terms of the life of the working class.”

Joseph E. Cohen of Philadelphia dealt briefly with the difference between conditions in this country and in Russia, asserting that the same impulse that led to the revolution in Russia gave in America an impetus to women suffrage and to independent political action on the part of the workers.

[Samuel] Holland of Illinois insisted that the substitute principles spoke in terms of American life, and

†- The Left Wing claimed that the declaration of principles should have been submitted to the party 60 days prior to the convention. Jame Oneal admitted that this would have been the proper procedure, but that the committee was so overwhelmed with the Albany trial and other fights that it was impossible to attend to this matter more speedily. —H.L.

that it was necessary to read over the official draft several times before it was understood thoroughly. "Why are the rank and file of the workers not flocking to the Socialist Party?" he asked. "Because they do now want to have a domination similar to the brand of socialism in charge of the German situation."

Summing up for the majority, James Oneal declared that it was too early to know conclusively the arguments for and against proletarian dictatorship, that by next year a serious literature would have been published on this subject. The time and conditions that favored the Russian revolution must be studied and compared with those in this country before making any attempt to adopt Russian methods here.

"I do stand for the upheaval in Russia," he continued, "but that doesn't mean that we should adopt the same policies. Are we scientific socialists or dogmatic emotionalists?"

"Two can play at the game of dictatorship. If you tell your enemy that, when in power, you are going to disfranchise him, he will decide that he is now in power, and will do what he can to keep it. You will cease to be a political party and will be driven underground."

"Bourgeois democracy, with all its shams and illusions, permits in normal times civilized methods of debate, and so long as we can use political power it is a shame for us to employ other means."

After the adoption of the official draft as a basis for discussion, debate waxed hot over specific portions of the declaration. Benjamin Glassberg of New York asked why Socialists should declare that they seek to attain their goal "by orderly and constitutional methods," when the United States Supreme Court pronounces child labor laws unconstitutional and when Socialists elected to office are expelled, as in Albany. "You are attempting to tie the hands of the workers, to put chains around them," he urged.

Charles Solomon replied that, even granting the inevitability of civil war, civil war was not the objective of the Socialist Party. "We will do our best," he concluded, "to bring about the cooperative republic with a minimum of industrial disorder."

"It is true that they fired Victor Berger from Congress," asserted Oscar Ameringer, in answer to Glassberg. "They kicked him out and we reelected him by a plurality of 5,000. They kicked him out again,

and we reelected him by a majority of 5,000 against a combination of both Republican and Democratic Parties. If they fire him out again, and again, we will elect him Governor of Wisconsin, and in a few years will capture the first state in the union for the Socialist Party. We are now in a majority in Milwaukee County. A Socialist is sheriff. Do you want us to start a dictatorship of the proletariat?"

Interference with Labor Unions.

The proposed elimination of the statement that the "Socialist Party does not interfere in the internal affairs of labor unions" caused another burst of oratory. Delegate [John G.] Willert [of Ohio] contended that labor organizations knew best how to organize themselves; that the way to win the unions was to stand with them in economic struggles, and that an attack on Gompers gave him but one more weapon which he might use to prejudice the rank and file.

Barney Berlyn of Illinois, the oldest delegate of the convention, recalled the harm done to the socialist movement by the organization of the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance by the SLP in the '90s. He predicted that the recent succession of "gatling guns on paper, known as injunctions," hurled against the unions would make trade unionists increasingly radical.

Jasper McLevy of Connecticut accused some of the leaders of so-called revolutionary unions of trying to destroy the Socialist Party in Bridgeport, and predicted that intelligent socialist propaganda inside of the trade unions would develop a spirit among trade unionists that would soon force the Socialist Party to ever more radical positions.

[George] Bauer of New Jersey told of increasing radicalism among the trade unionists he approached. "We are running away from the working class," he concluded, "when we repudiate the AF of L."

The section was kept in the declaration. The convention again went on record in favor of industrial unionism.

The Hillquit draft with slight modifications was thereupon adopted by a nearly three-fourths vote. The minority then proceeded to obtain signatures for a referendum vote on the two drafts.

The Platform.

The contest over the platform was of shorter duration. No sooner had the special committee presented its draft than Irwin Tucker moved that a substitute of the Illinois group be used as a basis of discussion. The insurgent group, however, though supported by a number who felt that the majority platform lacked “ring” and conciseness, were again defeated, this time by a vote of 80 to 60. The committee draft thereupon went through with few amendments.

The chief contest centered around the question of occupational representation. The Left Wing group desired to place the party on record again in favor of representation according to occupation as contrasted with representation according to territorial units. In urging a compromise resolution, Hillquit contended that people had common functions to perform by reason of their neighborhood relationship — educational, health, and other functions — as well as by reason of their interests as producers. A resolution was thereupon passed, which favored occupational as well as territorial representation, and also representation based upon service. The clauses relating to loans to foreign governments and the nationalization of banks led to repeated tilts, but were finally passed as proposed. R.H. Howe opposed the socialization of banks, on the ground that the government would have to take over the liabilities of banks as well as their assets. He also urged that the savings in the post office banks should be employed in loans to public bodies, and should not be deposited in private banks for private profits.

The Moscow International.

From many viewpoints the most important debate of the convention occurred over the report on international relations, which treated primarily of the relation of the party to the Third or Moscow International. At the September 1919 convention, the delegates had favored the majority report. This report condemned the Second International as “retrograde and failing to act in the interests of the working class,” and urged “the speediest possible convocation of an international socialist congress” and the reconstitution of the socialist international among those elements adhering “by word and deed to the principle of the

class struggle.” It failed, however, to affiliate the party with Moscow.

The minority report of Engdahl, defeated at convention, advocated that the Socialist Party support the Third International, “not so much because it supports the ‘Moscow’ program and methods, but because: (a) ‘Moscow’ is doing something which is really challenging world imperialism; (b) ‘Moscow’ is threatened by the combined capitalist forces of the world simply because it is proletarian; (c) under these circumstances, whatever we may have to say to ‘Moscow’ afterwards, it is the duty of socialists to stand by it now because its fall will mean the fall of socialist republics in Europe, and also the disappearance of socialist hopes for many years to come.”

The majority and minority reports were submitted to a membership in a referendum vote, the minority winning out by 3,475 to 1,444, but a small percentage of the membership having expressed their sentiment one way or the other.

At the May [1920] convention three reports were submitted — a minority report of Victor L. Berger, urging that the Socialist Party withdraw from the Third International; a minority report signed by J. Louis Engdahl and William F. Quick [of Wisconsin] declaring merely “The Socialist Party of the United States of America reaffirms its affiliation with the Third International,” and the majority report, signed by 6 out of the 9 members of the committee reaffirming the party’s affiliation with Moscow, insisting the while that “no formula such as ‘the dictatorship of the proletariat in the form of soviets’ or any other special formula for the attainment of the socialist commonwealth be imposed or exacted as condition of affiliation with the Third International,” and that the Socialist Party of the United States “participate in the movements looking to the union of all true socialist forces in the world into one International, and initiate and further such movements whenever the opportunity is presented.”

Victor Berger, whose resolution obtained but a handful of votes, contended in support of his report that the Moscow International was not an International at all, but only a “nucleus” for an International. He asserted that a wide gulf existed between communists and socialists. “Socialism,” he declared, “will always be opposed to the complete elimination of democracy — to the disfranchisement of all non-com-

munist elements — to the dictatorship of the Communist Party. A genuine International must contain the Socialist Parties of England, Germany, France, Holland, Belgium, and the Scandinavian countries, and we should join them. Of course, I do not have in view the social patriots, but the parties that stood steadfastly during the war and ever since for the old established principles of our movement.” Though listened to sympathetically after the first outburst from the galleries, and applauded for voicing there a distinctly unpopular side, Berger gained few adherents to his point of view.

The second minority report was introduced by Engdahl. Engdahl believed that affiliation should be reaffirmed without reservations. The Socialist Party should go on no fishing expeditions to form new Internationals while a members of the Third International. While the French Socialists, the British ILP, and the German Independent Socialists had not as yet joined the Third International, there was a tremendous pressure from within urging that action.

The speaker declared that he did not think that the question of proletarian dictatorship entered into the matter. Nor were the leaders of the Third International anti-political. “The Italian Socialist Party now affiliated has sent 160 representatives to Parliament and only the other day,” he declared, “the party swept the Nitti government out of power. It may be said that we should not affiliate with the Third International because it is dominated by Russia. But it was really started at Zimmerwald [Sept. 1915] and Kienthal [Aug. 1917], and only after a couple of years was it controlled by the Russians.”

Morris Hillquit, in presenting the report of the committee, analyzed the status of the Second and Third Internationals. The Second International is composed of social patriots. It is disrupted. The Third International presents but a nucleus.

Hillquit said that the German Independents, the French Socialists, and the British Independent Labour Party, bent on forming a genuine International, and non-members of the Third International, were similar in character to the Socialist Party of America. A clear line, he felt, should be drawn between the relation of the party to the Moscow International and to Russia. The republic of Russia, no matter how it styles itself, is the government of the working class of Russia, striv-

ing to abolish every remnant of capitalism, hunted, persecuted, attacked by every imperial power, and we must uphold it. But “this does not mean that we must accept every dogma sent from Soviet Russia as a papal decree, nor that we adopt the specific institutions and forms into which this struggle is molded by special historical conditions.”

The speaker then read excerpts from an appeal of the Executive Committee of the Third International, which welcomed anarcho-syndicalist groups to the International, declaring that the unifying program of those who joined was the “dictatorship of the proletariat on the basis of the soviet.” He felt that if this document were the last word on the subject the party in this country could not remain within this group.

I believe, however, that cooler heads in the Communist International would probably repudiate that position if it came to a vote. As a concrete proposition the statement regarding proletarian dictatorship is meaningless and misleading, and, so far as conditions here are concerned, anti-socialist and anti-revolutionary.

The term “dictatorship of the proletariat” was first used by Karl Marx in 1875 in his criticism of the Gotha program. He declared at that time that there would be a transitional period between the capitalist and socialist societies in which the state could be nothing else than a dictatorship of the proletariat. He stated that the party did not at that time have to occupy itself with this transitional stage.

Marx did nothing to elaborate on this statement. The rule of which he spoke might have been any kind of transitory rule, parliamentary or otherwise. Marx used the term “dictator” in a somewhat wrong sense. Sometime later when Engels came to discuss this phrase, he declared that it was only necessary to look at the Paris Commune and there one would find a proletarian dictatorship. But the Paris Commune was a body elected on the basis of universal suffrage, which did not exclude any class from voting, and which contained socialists of all stripes.

With all kindness toward Russia, there is there today neither a dictatorship nor a proletarian rule. A dictatorship is an irresponsible rule and the government of Russia is a perfectly responsible government. Lenin and Trotsky are not dictators. Russia is now a somewhat limited democracy, excluding from its ranks non-producing classes. Nor is it the rule of the proletariat, a rule of industrial workers not possessed of instruments of production. The Russian peasants are in the overwhelming majority. If it were a proletarian dictatorship there is

no reason why in the United States we should adopt this shibboleth.

Dictatorship of the proletariat, as used in recent literature, implies the disarming, the disfranchisement, the outlawing of the bourgeoisie. In a country of parliamentary traditions, I do not know that this is necessary. If we say that we want to take advantage of the ballot box, but when we become victorious that we will disfranchise and outlaw you, our opponents will say, but today we are victorious, and we will disfranchise you and outlaw you. This will resolve the battle into a physical fight.

We must take our stand on one side or on the other. We can't stand on both sides. If we stand for dictatorship, we must take our medicine. The question then becomes one of armed revolt and the acquisition of power that way. Marxian socialism never stood for that method. We cannot join the International if that is made a condition.

The Third International represents the best spirit in the movement. But we should insist that it be not an International merely of Eastern and Asiatic socialism. It should permit the right of self-determination in the matter of policies so long as no vital principle is violated. A true International can never be brought about so long as the Independent Socialists of Germany, the Socialists of France, and the British Independent Labour Party stand outside.

After a vigorous debate in which Engdahl declared that his motion did not necessarily carry with it the idea of proletarian dictatorship, and Hillquit asked why, if that were so, did he object to the insertion of the reservation, the vote was taken, and the Hillquit report won by a vote of 90 to 40. Here again the minority announced that it would demand a referendum vote on these two reports. Hillquit was then elected International Secretary by a vote of 55 to 22 over Alexander Trachtenberg; and Algernon Lee of New York, James Oneal of New York, and Joseph E. Cohen of Pennsylvania, international delegates. A mission of three members to carry fraternal greetings to Russia was provided for, and the international delegates were instructed to begin negotiations for the creation of a Socialist Pan-American Congress.

Party Resolutions.

After discussion of these three most vital questions — the declaration of principles, the party platform, and the question of affiliation to the Third International — the delegates rushed through many reso-

lutions and report in rapid succession. Special propaganda was proposed among women, and at least one organizer, a colored woman working especially among colored women, was to be placed in the field, as well as two or more colored men. A national lyceum course was recommended. Moving pictures as a means of education were to be studied. The National Executive Committee was authorized to organize a publishing society. Occupational groups supplementary to territorial groups and council were urged within the party.

More than a score of resolutions were passed. Socialists were urged to assist the cooperative movement "as a means whereby workers may control the distribution of the necessities of life." The legislatures of Connecticut, Delaware, and Louisiana were appealed to to grant suffrage to women. Militarism was condemned. Adequate provision was demanded for the registration of votes cast by migratory voters, and expressions of sympathy were sent to those struggling for democracy in Ireland, India, and Hungary. The refusal of the State Department to admit Jean Longuet of France was denounced as part of a program "to prevent intercourse with the labor and socialist forces of all countries." The Plumb Plan was approved in its essential outlines. Justice was demanded for post office employees. Anti-syndicalist legislation was attacked as an effort to suppress legitimate labor activities. The educational work of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society was commended and socialists were urged to give whatever cooperation they could to the socialist dailies, to the Federated Press, and to *The Socialist Review*. The custom of inviting fraternal delegates to the convention — many of them had presented meaty reports to the gathering — was commended.

Federations and YPSL.

The convention endorsed a report on the important question of the relation of the language federations to the party, which urged the establishment of a "closer relationship between the party and the federations," and a stronger party control over the activities of the federations, but which gave to the federations about the same status as they formerly held.

The relation between the party and the young people organized in the "YPSL" — The Young People's Socialist League — caused many moments of heated

discussion, the convention finally deciding to make this group, which had been torn asunder by the party split, an integral part of the party again. The constitution was also amended without opposition, providing that all delegates to international, national, and other conventions and all executive officers must be citizens of the United States. Membership in the party was open to all residents of the United States of 21 years or over.

A short, animated discussion arose over the resolution condemning prohibition. The resolution was tabled.

One woman, Bertha Mailly, Executive Secretary of the Rand School, was elected to the new National Executive Committee of 7 members. James Oneal of New York, E.T. Melms of Wisconsin, Edward Henry of Indiana, W.M. Brandt of Missouri, J. Hagel of Oklahoma, and George E. Roewer, Jr. of Massachusetts — all on the former National Executive — were reelected to that committee after the convention expressed its appreciation of their work.

Socialist Unity.

Before adjournment one further resolution brought forth sharp differences of opinion — the resolution on socialist unity. The resolution brought before the convention declared (1) “That any individual, branch, local, or state or language federation that left the party last fall because of tactical differences and now desires to reenter on the Socialist Party platform and constitution be welcomed to return; (2) that where the Socialist Party locals and other groups of the labor movement exist side by side in the same locality, we propose the creation of joint campaign committees for the management of a working class electoral campaign upon the basis of our platform; (3) that after the campaign is over, steps be taken to confer with representatives of other factions of the movement with a view to establishing possible basis for organizational unity; (4) that a national advisory council of all working class organizations for the purpose of combating the reactionary forces be formed so that wherever possible there be voluntary united action by all political and economic organizations who take their stand on the basis of the class struggle.”

To the foregoing provisions little objection was

raised. Section 1, however, added “that dues stamps or other evidences of membership in the groups formed by the split in the party be recognized as evidence of good standing during the time involved.”

Delegate [John] Block of New York moved the elimination of this clause. If this declaration went through, he contended, every utterance of the elements who left the party would be attributed to Socialists. “We would be held responsible for them. I believe that we should welcome back all good socialists and that many who left are good socialists, but we should not be creating further trouble for ourselves.”

William Kruse, defending the clause, said that if we eliminated it, we would be but giving lip service to the idea of unity. “If Gene Debs can recognize these comrades as good comrades, we can.” [Thomas] Feeley of California and [Walter] Cook of New York thought the clause poor tactics and it was stricken out.

Assemblyman [Benjamin] Orr objected to Clause 3 on the ground that unity conferences were futile. Kruse again maintained that the delegates should favor this section out of consideration for Debs if for no other reason. “We must go to the left and we must go to the right to find whether cooperation is possible on the basis of Socialist principles and platform,” he concluded. The remainder of the report passed as read. During the final hours of the convention a motion favoring cooperation with “other political groups” whose views are “in accord with” those contained in the Socialist Party platform — a proposal for cooperation with the Labor Party — was tabled without discussion.

The Finale.

On Friday night [June 16] the curtain was drawn on the Socialist Party convention in New York, the most significant and important gathering — if we may judge from the flood of newspaper publicity received — in the history of the movement in this country. The next appearance of the delegates was in the grounds of the White House, Washington, pleading for amnesty for their standard-bearer and for other war prisoners now serving in the prisons of this country. And interview with [Joseph] Tumulty, a few words with Attorney General Palmer and other officials, a mass meeting in Washington — a small echo of the gather-

ing of the Sunday before in Madison Square Garden, New York — and the delegates scattered each to his section to prepare for what promises to be the greatest Presidential campaign ever waged by the forces of industrial democracy in the United States.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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