
Socialists Reject NY Old Guard; Map Party Drive [events of Dec. 4-8, 1935]

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NEW YORK.— The Socialist Party of New York City was reborn last week to function once more in the spirit of Socialist democracy.

The rebirth was conceived by 48 delegates representing 36 branches of the Socialist Party in every part of the city. It was affirmed by overwhelming votes of the Bronx and Queens County Committees. The Greater New York Federation of the Young People's Socialist League endorsed the action and pledged loyalty. And more than 1,500 party members gathered Sunday night [Dec. 8, 1935] to roar their approval by dedicating themselves once more to the Socialist cause and the Socialist Idea.

State Conference Called.

One of the first actions of the City Central Committee of the revived party was to call a conference of all locals in New York State to meet in Utica, December 28-29 [1935]. The state conference will be attended by an official committee of the Socialist National Executive Committee, consisting of Norman Thomas, Leo Krzycki, National Chairman; Clarence Senior, National Secretary; James Oneal, and Darlington Hoopes of Pennsylvania.

Endorsement of the action of the City Central Committee came from all parts of the state with official acceptance of invitations to the Utica meeting from 5 branches in Westchester County and Local Schenectady. Harold Seigel, traveling in New York State, wired reports that the Utica meeting will be attended by the representatives of a majority of out-state locals.

The National Executive Committee has also set as the date for its next meeting January 4 [1936] in Philadelphia. They will then listen to the report of their official committee on the Utica conference.

Offices Moved.

The offices of the Socialist Party were moved to 21 East 17th Street. The City Central Committee elected Charles Garfinkel, former Socialist Assemblyman in the New York legislature, temporary Chairman and Jack Altman, Business Manager of *The Call*, temporary Secretary. The next meeting of the committee will be held at the new headquarters Thursday evening, December 19 [1935].

The process of rebirth and revival was made necessary by the action of a small, autocratic faction within the party which tried to set aside Socialist principles that it might keep the party small and sectarian to be used in political deals with old line labor politicians of the old parties. Hampered in their move by the resentment of the active membership, who saw in the Socialist Party a weapon for working class action, the faction group in control of the old City Central Committee proposed "reorganization" of the party two weeks ago — a proposal which meant the ousting from Socialist ranks of all left wing and progressive elements.

Branches Give Answer.

The branches gave their answer to the "reorganization" proposal in unequivocal fashion. By an overwhelming majority, the branches passed identical resolutions to resist any attempt to deprive it of its rights. But the declared will of these branches meant nothing to the clique that through dictatorship and gerrymandering had retained control of the City Central Committee. At a committee meeting held Wednesday, December 4 [1935], they delivered an ultimatum: no member of the Socialist Party was allowed to associate himself with *The Call*, The Call Association, or The Call Institute under penalty of discipline.

No sooner was the ultimatum handed to the members of the committee than did Garfinkel ask that the resolution on "reorganization" be reconsidered. He pleaded with the Old Guard for working class democracy within the party — only a united Socialist Party, he declared, could move toward the goal. But the clique refused to listen; they didn't want a united Socialist Party — they wanted only rule or ruin.

By a vote of 48-44, the committee voted to continue the policy of expulsion and by so doing repudiated any claim it had to the name and tradition of the Socialist Party. Thereupon, led by Max Delson, President of The Call Association, the 44 delegates who voted to uphold the spirit of Socialist democracy left the Rand School where the meeting was in session and adjourned to the offices of *The Call*. There, joined by other delegates who arrived late, they reconstituted themselves as the City Central Committee of the Socialist Party of New York City.

Thomas Pledges Support.

They were addressed by Norman Thomas, twice Socialist candidate for President and the recognized national leader of the party. Thomas assured them that they had acted correctly and had saved the name of the Socialist Party from those who would prostitute it. He promised them his entire support.

Promises of support came too from many sections of the country including many locals in upstate New York. The revival of Socialist activity caused tremendous excitement in the organized labor movement in New York City. While trade union leaders came to the offices to personally endorse the new City Central Committee, Socialists within the unions immediately began to lay plans for a real membership drive that once more placed the Socialist Party as the leading factor in the city's labor movement.

“Now that we have rid ourselves of the Cahans and the Waldmans,” one union leader told *The Call*, “we can go forward toward the organization of Socialist branches within the unions that the message of workers’ freedom can be brought to every worker in the city.

Call Party Meeting.

To allow the fullest use of inner-party democracy, a meeting of the party membership was immediately called by the Central Committee. At that meeting, despite the fact that the Old Guard had called a rival meeting, more than 1,500 party members and Yipsels voted, with but one dissenting voice, to acknowledge the leadership of the Central Committee and begin anew the task of Socialist construction.

“The time is past for recrimination and mudslinging,” Garfinkel told the membership. “The Socialist Party does not live in the past; it fights in the present that it may gain the future.”

Garfinkel read an appeal for unity from a centrist group and declared that the committee was in agreement with the spirit that prompted the appeal. He warned, however, that offers of mediation must have with them guarantees of sincerity and not be used as a weapon against the Party. Max Delson, who discussed an offer for mediation that appeared in the *Jewish Daily Forward*, attacked it as spurious since it was based on the same lies and slander with which the Old Guard had tried to split the Party.

Altman in his report outlined organizational plans which included a concrete program for intensive work in the unions and a Socialist-led fight against the LaGuardia sales tax. He predicted that more than a thousand new members would enter the party as a result of the revival.

Other speakers included Haim Kantorovitch, who was greeted by an ovation, Aaron Levenstein, chairman of the Bronx County Socialist Party, August Tyler of the YPSL, Dr. Louis Sadoff, Louis Weil, and Murray Baron. A collection appeal by Baron resulted in the raising of more than \$1,300 in cash and pledges.

A rival meeting at the Rand School was attended by about 650 people.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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