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# **Peoples' Party Name Dropped at Convention: Will Act Only as the New York State Branch of Social Democratic Federation: All Political and Campaign Functions are Conceded to the American Labor Party [events of March 27-28, 1937]**

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Meeting in state convention last Saturday and Sunday [March 27-28, 1937], with about a hundred delegates present, the Peoples' Party of New York State dropped its name, adopted a statement of purposes as a guide to its members, and henceforth will be known as a state branch of the Social Democratic Federation of America. This was the most important action taken and other decisions were subsidiary to it.

The convention met in the Debs Auditorium of the People's House in New York City [7 East 15th Street], with Robert Hoffman of Buffalo and Algernon Lee of New York City alternating in the chair. "The use of the word 'Party,'" the convention declared, "is commonly understood to imply that the organization using it intends to nominate its own candidates for public office. The American Labor Party has proved its ability to live and function and is pledged to become a fully independent working class party, nominating candidates of its own."

The statement was adopted after several hours of discussing most of its paragraphs.

## **Waldman Speaks.**

Louis Waldman, state chairman, opened the convention with an address reviewing the history of the past year. Returning from a trip

to the Northwest, he declared that some influential members of the Thomas organization in Wisconsin favored withdrawing from it, while in Minneapolis the Trotsky Communists had revived the "Socialist" Party of Thomas and will fight the Farmer-Labor Party with an independent ticket. This, Waldman declared, shows that tolerating any phase of Communism simply brings the disputes in Russia into organizations regardless of the interests of American workers.

President Roosevelt, the speaker said, had done an amazingly courageous thing in attacking the sacred myth of a sanctified Supreme Court, and the plan of court reform is supported by the whole Labor movement. His only criticism of the ALP is that it tends to follow rather than to lead on important measures. For many years we have been devoted to the ideal of organized workers taking up independent political action, and this has been realized in New York State. The defeat of the Child Labor Amendment at Albany was a bipartisan crime; we should make it a tremendous issue, favor a complete Labor ticket, and defeat every member of the Legislature who voted against the amendment.

### **Tribute to Kirkpatrick.**

James Oneal reported on the work of the Eastern States Conference of Social Democrats in Philadelphia last February [Feb. 7, 1937], and arrangements for the national convention in Pittsburgh the last three days of May. On motion of Oneal the delegates paid a rising tribute of respect to the memory of George R. Kirkpatrick, who died in California two weeks ago, and resolutions were ordered sent to his widow and to the relatives of the late Ben Lichtenberg.

Algernon Lee presented the statement for the Resolutions Committee on relations with the ALP after a speech explaining the problems growing out of these relations.

### **Upstate Criticisms.**

Main criticisms came from upstate by Robert Hoffman and Martin Heisler, where conditions and relationships differed from those in New York City. They complained that the upstate had been neglected and the ALP was weak outside of a few cities. Moreover, they declared that certain grave mistakes had been made by the ALP in approval of

several legislative candidates who, in the present Legislature, had even voted against the Child Labor Amendment!

These experiences had discouraged quite a number of workers who want a Labor party and who cannot be induced to work for it unless measures are taken to avoid a repetition of these experiences. They were confident that the ALP can be build upstate, but not unless active workers in upstate localities are given more of a voice in its councils and measures are taken to avoid the unpleasant mistakes which they described in detail.

Abraham Cahan, editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward*, was invited to address the convention. he declared that he was gratified with the course taken by the Social Democrats, and that we had lost nothing by separating from the party of Norman Thomas and its Communist members. He expected perfect harmony with the ALP.

### **Hendin and Waldman Report.**

Louis Hendin reported for the three Social Democrats on the State Committee of the ALP, reviewing its work since its inception and the various problems that confronted it, adding that our three members were in full accord with absolute trade union control of the ALP.

Louis Waldman followed with a detailed explanation of the constitution of the ALP and the meaning of some of its most important provisions in guarding it from Democratic, Republican, Fusion, or Communist control.

### **Some Amendments.**

Hoffman and Heisler offered two amendments to the committee's report. One, which affirmed the necessity of absolute independent political action, was incorporated in a section of the report dealing with the same matter and accepted.

The discussion was invaluable, as it gave New York City delegates an opportunity to better understand the difficulties and problems upstate members faced, while the latter also obtained a better understanding of the ALP constitution, why certain sections were adopted, and the problems that had developed in the city.

A report of the Committee on Women's Work of the SDF was approved. Submitted by Esther Friedman, who heads one of the most

active committees of the SDF, it recommended organization of women's SDF clubs for social, educational, campaign, and strike activities, and helping the ALP to organize its women's clubs.

### **Other Reports.**

The Youth Committee recommended that the State Executive Committee appoint a youth committee of 5 as a permanent committee to "organize, maintain, and supervise the youth organizations" of the SDF, these to consist of two divisions, a children's section and an older group. This was adopted.

Resolutions approving the plan of court reform and pledging the members to defeat the members of the Legislature who voted against the Child Labor Amendment were also adopted.

Morris Berman paid tribute to State Secretary Herbert M. Merrill for his 15 years of loyal and devoted service to the party under the most trying circumstances and announced Merrill's decision to retire soon. The delegates reinforced this tribute by standing and applauding Berman's remarks.

*Edited by Tim Davenport*

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