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REPORT

THE CHICAGO CONVENTION

Minutes of the Proceedings.

Chicago, July 7—On Saturday evening, the 1st instant, the delegates to the Eighth National Convention of the Socialist Labor Party were tendered a reception by Section Chicago at Uhlich's Hall. The programme consisted of several vocal and musical selections and speeches by the delegates.

{First Day}

On the 2nd instant the convention was called to order by H. Kuhn, the National Secretary, at Rochester Hall at 10 a.m. Temporary Officers: Chairman, E. Brueckman; secretaries Sanderson and Zimmerman, Committee on Credentials Pattberg, Adams, Heink, reported 36 Delegates and 6 by proxy, representing: Boston, Patrick O'Neill; Adams and Greylock, Scharmann; Buffalo, Albert Schmidt and Chas. Blum; Sections of Connecticut, Paul Zimmerman; College Point, Rudolf Ueber; New York, A. Jonas, H. Glyn, Brueckman; Williamsburg, Pattberg; Kings County, Franz Seubert and Fiebiger; New Jersey Sections, Josef Keim; Newark, W.S. Zimmath; Philadelphia, Maurice Duramay; Pittsburg, Hy. Frank; Alleghany, Chas. Saam; Eire, Geo. Arkenan; Wilmington, Gus Reinicke; Toledo, Chas. Smith; Cleveland, Chas. Ibsen; Indianapolis, Phil. Rappaport; St. Louis, John Sach and Alb. Sanderson; San Francisco, Jas. Andrew; Los Angeles, M. Rieder; Sheboygan, John Riedel; Milwaukee, John Moser; Detroit, Chas. Erb; Chicago, A. Bisno, A. Reinsch, F. Bickman, John Glambeck, Jul. Vahlteich; Providence, Ernst Theinert. The following were proxy delegates: P. Knickoehm, Taunton; Newbedford, Utica and Pittsfield, P. Sissman; Troy, F. Kalbitz; Holyoke, Barris {Boris} Reinstein, Jewish Section Buffalo; contests were decided by Seating second delegate of Kings County and granting second delegate of Boston, delegate of new

Section Chicago and delegates of Jewish and Polish Sections Buffalo the privilege of the floor.

Convention organized by electing Sanderson and Zimmerman permanent Secretaries and Riedel and Brueckmann chairman and vice chairman for the day.

After recess, the reports of the National Executive Committee, Labor News Co., THE PEOPLE and Labor Lyceum were read and received.

The following committees were appointed: Committee on Resolution, Rappaport, Vahlteich and Glyn; Committee on Platform and Constitution, Jonas, Erb and Seubert, Committee on press and News, Pattberg, Ibsen and Sanderson; Committee on Organization, Schmidt, Bisno, Duramay and Knickrehn. The meeting was then adjourned to the 3d instant, at 9 a.m.

{Second Day}

On the 3d, Chas. Erb of Detroit was made chairman and Henry Frank of Pittsburgh, vice chairman.

A Credential was presented by Section Englewood and the delegate, E. Richter seated.

The Committee on Resolutions presented the following upon the action of Gov. Altgeld:

“Whereas, Gov. Altgeld has pardoned Schwab, Neebe and Fielden, who were as Anarchists confined in the penitentiary; and

“Whereas, he has stated, his motives for doing so; therefore be it

“RESOLVED, That we, the delegates of the Socialist Labor Party, take this opportunity to express our admiration for Gov. Altgeld of Illinois, because of his frank and courageous statement of the reasons for which he exercised his prerogative in said case. We have, during the past years so often declared our strong opposition to Anarchistic logic and principles, and have done so in such vigorous and unmistakable terms, that we deem a repetition unnecessary; nevertheless, we have not failed to see in the trial and the conviction of the Anarchists, not the justice which is meted out to the meanest criminal, but the result of that class hatred and class justice, which at all times has been most cruel. There is nothing new to the student of history in the fact that when classes are arrayed against each other the ordinary forms of criminal procedure are

resorted to in order to cover up persecution; that in such cases opinions and the expressions of opinions, and not the actual perpetration of crime is punished, and that malice and hatred are clothed in the garb of 'Justice.' Contemporaries who are blinded by prejudice and class feeling are unable to see this, and may, unconsciously, act in the honest belief of being just. But if shortly afterward a man in the official capacity of Governor lays bare the injustice committed under the strong feeling of that time, and has the courage to encounter strong prejudices he deserves commendation and admiration."

The resolution was adopted, and it was decided to print Gov. Altgeld's Statement, subjoining the resolution, as a pamphlet for agitation.

The Committee on Platform reported the proposition from N.W. Section of Chicago to change the party's name to "Social Democratic party"; rejected.

Proposition that the proxy system be abolished, favored by Committee and adopted after a lengthy debate, with the amendment that several sections in one State may send a delegate collectively.

Proposition to reduce dues to Nat'l Ex. to 5 cents reported adversely by Committee; after a long debate, in which most speakers opposed it, it was rejected.

Proposition to print platform in as many languages as possible and especially in Danish adopted.

It was decided that the Nat'l Conventions shall be held every presidential year, but if 5 Sections in 3 different States demand it, a vote shall be taken as to holding a Convention at other times also.

Proposition that all Sections belonging to State Organizations must belong to the Nat'l Organization, laid over.

Propositions that all expenses of delegates to Conventions shall be paid by the party at large was not favored; and an amendment was offered providing that one delegate must represent at least 50 members; both the proposition and amendment were lost.

Proposition from Section Newark as to dropping paragraph 2a from the platform was disposed of after a lengthy debate by deciding to retain it, with the addition that government shall have no right to discharge its employees for political reasons.

The Committee on Organization reported, upon the question of consolidating the Socialist Labor Party, whose headquarters have been at Brooklyn, with the outstanding

independent Sections and those organizations that keep their headquarters at Cincinnati, by offering the following resolution

“Whereas no difference of opinion does and should divide us, we should, for the purpose of strengthening the agitation, remove the only obstacle to a perfect union, to wit, the location of the National Executive Committee; that with this end in view, the Nat’l Ex. Committee be removed from Brooklyn and vicinity; and that, to further promote a unification, copies of the proceedings of this Convention be transmitted to the Cincinnati and Independent Sections. We further recommend that in the event of a unification, the property of all these elements be taken charge of by the Party.” Mrs. Reinstein and P. Knickrehm of Buffalo spoke lengthily in favor of adoption; Jonas, Brueckmann, Seubert, Zimmermann, Glyn and Pattberg against it. Resolution lost by 7 votes for and 25 against; some delegates not voting.

{Third Day}

At the session of July 4, Chas. Erb of Detroit was placed in the chair and P. Fiebiger, of Brooklyn, was made Vice Chairman.

It was resolved to send a congratulatory cable message to Germany upon the opening of the Reichstag.

The report of the Committee on platform and Constitution was again taken up. A proposition to strike out the clause in the platform demanding the abolition of the presidency was reported adversely by the Committee, but the Convention voted to drop the clause in question.

The Committee recommended to drop the clause in the Buffalo Constitution giving other labor or trade organizations the right to organize as branches of the party; this was carried.

The propositions from San Francisco to substitute proportional representation for minority representation was recommended by Committee and adopted.

The Committee proposed that the clause in the Chicago platform, giving one single Section the right to call for a General vote, be re-adopted, but the Convention decided that two other Sections must support such proposition.

The Committee recommended that the preamble of the platform be retained; carried.

It was resolved to elect a committee of three members living in one city to put in shape, ready for publication, the work of this Convention. Jonas, Glyn and Seubert were elected on this committee.

Proposition of Section New Haven to demand the abolition of the veto power of Executive officers, National, State and Municipal, in our platform was carried.

Simon Barond of Brooklyn on behalf of the Cigar Makers Union requested the aid of the party in the boycott against the scab firm Ottenburg and Bro., New York. This was referred to a committee with instructions to draft suitable resolutions.

The resolutions of Section New York on Trusts and on the People's party adopted.

The Committee on Organization offered the following resolution:

“Resolved, that the Socialist Labor Party, in National Convention assembled, forgetting all past differences extends to all disaffected and independent Sections a cordial and fraternal invitation to rejoin the party to the end that by presenting a united front to the tyranny of capitalism with the standard of independent political action of labor in the van, we may continue our advance upon the ramparts of plutocracy and hasten the day when the Co-operative Commonwealth shall proudly rise on the ruins of past injustice.”

The resolution was adopted, and it was decided that it, together with a copy of the proceedings of the convention, shall be sent to all outstanding Sections.

{Fourth Day}

At the session of July 5, A. Jonas was in the chair and. C. Seram was vice-chairman.

The following despatch from Berlin was received and read amid great cheering:

“The Social Democratic members of the Reichstag thank you for your congratulations and wish you success in your Convention.

BEBEL, MEISTER, SINGER.”

A proposition from Section Milwaukee to create an assistance fund by a 10¢. per capita tax to support victimized members, is amended that it be made 5¢. per month; but both original and amendment were lost.

Motion to limit time of speakers to 5 minutes and 10 minutes when making report adopted,

Proposition of Section New York that all Sections belonging to state organizations

must belong to national body was adopted.

A proposition by Section Williamsburgh to create an agitation for sending out English and German speakers, was reported favorably by the Committee with the recommendation that two assessments of 25¢ each be levied every year to raise such fund. This was carried after a long debate.

A proposition of American Section St. Louis, that the work of organization be taken up without delay in all States was carried.

The following resolution was offered and carried;

“WHEREAS, We recognize the necessity to carry on the War with capitalism simultaneously on the political and economic fields; therefore be it

“RESOLVED, that we recommend to all Socialists to join the organizations of the trade to which they may respectively belong.”

Another resolution adopted was:

“WHEREAS, The attention of the Convention has been called to the fight of the International Cigar Makers’ Union against the firm of Ottenburg and Bros, in New York; therefore, be it

“RESOLVED, that we recommend to the members of our party to support the Cigar Makers in this fight.”

The Ex. Committee was instructed to take in hand the International Bureau of Correspondence, as proposed by Williamsburg.

It was resolved that, wherever there are three Sections in any one State, they shall form a State organization and report every three months to the Ex. Committee.

A proposition of Philadelphia to have its indebtedness cancelled was disposed of by deciding that one hundred dollars shall be stricken therefrom; and the National Ex. Committee was instructed to devote attention to the campaigns In Pennsylvania.

A motion to make the Chicago Constitution the basis for the work of the Committee to print proceedings of the Convention was adopted.

The printing of Gov. Altgeld’s decision was referred to the Natl. Ex. Com.

A proposition of Section Taunton that majority, not plurality, shall elect, was adopted.

In the afternoon, O. Neebe visited the Convention; and after a few appropriate words by Delegate Rappaport the delegates rose in their seats and saluted the visitor

with loud applause.

A report from the “Swiatlo” newspaper for support to the extent of \$100 was declined with regret, but the Sections were urged to give it active support.

After a very full debate it was resolved to establish in some place, centrally located, an office to furnish good plate matter to labor papers. To this end a fund is to be raised, and the whole matter was left in the hands of the Nat’l Ex. Com.

A proposition to purchase all Socialist newspapers was lost.

A proposition to suspend the support of the “Vorwärts” out of the party funds was amended by Delegate Schmidt of Buffalo to the effect that the paper be consolidated with the weekly edition of the “Volkszeitung.” After a long debate shared in by O’Neill, Pattberg, Jonas, Morrer, against, and Rappaport, Andrew, Riedel, and Erb in favor of the motion, it was lost.

A recommendation of the Committee that the “Vorwärts” be discontinued was lost by a large majority.

A motion to send to all labor papers advertising cuts of the party organs, was carried.

A proposition of Rockville to assume full ownership of THE PEOPLE was lost.

A motion to substitute in the place of the Directory of Sections in the party organs other matter was referred to the Ex. Com. with the recommendation that it be done when the means permit it.

A proposition of Buffalo to print the Declaration of Independence with comments was carried.

Delegate Fiebiger called attention to the fact that many sections were in arrears with their contribution to THE PEOPLE, and he greater promptness in payments.

It was decided to create a special fund so as to provide the LABOR NEWS COMPANY with a working capital.

Delegate Seubert maked [sic] a strong appeal on behalf of Comrade James Withers, urging the delegates to impress upon their Sections the necessity of raising a fund to aid him.

Delegate Patrick O’Neill moved that the proceedings of the Convention and the report of the National Secretary be published in pamphlet form; carried.

Delegate Zimmermann reported that A. Gogler of Waterbury, Ct., had absconded

with party funds and requested the delegates to have an eye upon him; he to 26 years and pock-marked.

A resolution, forbidding the Sections from entering into any compromise with other parties, and which by a clerical oversight had been left out of the Chicago Constitution of 1889, was ordered to be inserted.

Upon the question of the seat of the National Executive Committee, New York, St. Louis and Brooklyn were nominated. Owing to an error in the counting of the first ballot, a second was ordered which resulted in 17 votes for New York, 17 for St. Louis, and 2 for Brooklyn. There being a tie a third vote was taken: New York 18, St. Louis 18. There being still a tie, it was decided to refer the matter to a general vote.

Boston was chosen for the seat of the Committee on Grievances.

The Convention then adjourned SINE DIE.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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