
The Emergency Convention: Unsigned Editorial of the *Milwaukee Leader*, April 16, 1917 †

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The *Milwaukee Leader* recognizes only two schools of Socialism — the historical school and the hysterical school. And only two classes of Socialists — the Revolutionary Socialists and the Resolutionary Socialists.

It is needless to state that the remarkable proclamation adopted by the Emergency Convention of the Socialist Party [St. Louis: April 7-14, 1917] did not and could not please all delegates. At this time when the world seems to be out of gear, it is only natural that the jingoism and the militaristic spirit of the advocates of war should breed among Socialists an intense opposition to all war. This pacifist fervor manifested itself through all the proceedings of the convention — as a matter of fact it became rather militant at times.

The convention to no small degree was dominated by the Impossibleist element of the party. This is the occasion when some fanaticism for Socialism and for the brotherhood of man is very useful and very necessary for the progress of humanity. But though the “hysterical” school was represented in the convention as never before — and though “resolutionary Socialists of the new national patriotic stripe also had their say — the result was good. It is rather surprising and highly creditable to the leadership of the party that this convention could put forth that cool and scientific Marxian declaration which was issued in St. Louis.

The proclamation was adopted by an overwhelming vote. There is no doubt that it will be endorsed by the referendum of the party.

To achieve this result, of course, the delegates and especially some of the members of the committee which drafted the resolution, had to give in on minor matters.

And why not?

This is not the moment for real Socialists to look for the little differences that separate us and to accentuate these differences until we would create a split in our movement. This is the time for Socialists to look for the great principles that unite us. We are facing a world crisis and we must face it together.

And it was this thought that made it possible for men holding such different views in our movement as Morris Hillquit and Victor Berger on one side, and Maynard Shipley and Frank Midney on the other — to honestly agree upon a declaration and a program for the guidance of the Socialist Party.

And to accomplish this no one had to sacrifice a principle because on the question of principle all were united.

Victor Berger has often been called a Nationalist. He is a Nationalist so far as he believes in the existence of nations and that every nation, therefore, must have a right to defend its existence. But Victor Berger also is and always was an Internationalist. He always contended that Inter-

†- Probably not written by editor Victor Berger himself, based upon style and reference to Berger in the third person.

nationalism could not exist without Nationalism as a basis.

As to the much quoted articles on national service in the *Milwaukee Leader* and the *Social-Democratic Herald* — these articles proposed a training that would make the public school system the center of preparedness and the American working class invincible in war and in peace. It is unnecessary to repeat here that Victor Berger has never defended or preached any other war than the great war for the emancipation of the human race.

That war, however, is not the question before the American people today. And one may fully agree with the *Milwaukee Leader* articles on that question or disagree with them — and still be a good Socialist.

We hope that the time will never come when all will have to believe alike on questions of tactics. On the great issues that try men's souls, nevertheless, we must stand together or our great movement will fail.

The Emergency Convention had to decide whether the American Socialist Party was to lead the world for the emancipation of the proletariat — or whether our party was to be drowned in the swamp of patriotic nationalism — or whether our movement was to lose itself in the desert of narrow sectarianism.

We have chosen the middle road — undoubtedly the right road.

The proclamation issued by the St. Louis Convention may someday rank with the Declaration of Independence in its importance for the working class.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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