
Socialists Must Clean House or Begin Anew

[editorial in *The New Appeal*, May 18, 1918]

Unsigned editorial in *The New Appeal* [Girard, KS], no. 1,172 (May 18, 1918), pg. 1.
Editor of *The New Appeal* was Louis Kopelin and Managing Editor was Emanuel Haldeman-Julius.

The Kaiser, Von Hertling, Hindenburg, and Ludendorff could not have devised a more cunning and hypocritical excuse to avert an expression of a majority than Hillquit, Berger, Stedman, and Germer, the bosses of the Socialist Party, have just announced to prevent the rank and file of the American Socialists from repudiating the un-American and anti-internationalist platform adopted by the party convention last year [St. Louis: April 7-14, 1917]. Asserting that the espionage and sedition laws prohibit any discussion of the war, the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party, controlled by the above named men, has decided arbitrarily to suspend the Socialist Party constitution and refuse to submit to the membership any referendum aiming to put the party in favor of the war and to repudiate the disgraceful disloyalty of the present leaders. Instead, these wily gentlemen suggest that the patriotic and loyal Socialists should submit their views to the machine-controlled conference to be held next August. This conference is to be composed of the National Executive Committee, State Secretaries, and other functionaries of the party's official family.

The immediate cause of this amazing action of the Executive Committee was the proposed referendum of the 9th Ward Branch of the Chicago Socialist Local, which very conservatively and mildly provided for an endorsement of the pro-

war program of the Inter-Allied Socialists recently adopted at London. Thus the wreckers of the Socialist Party and the besmirchers of the name of Socialism persist in keeping the Socialist Party from taking its rightful place in the worldwide struggle against autocracy and militarism. Thus is the pro-German St. Louis platform continued as the official pronouncement of an organization claiming to be the Socialist Party of America. Thus is a party dedicated to democracy made by its stupid, if not traitorous leaders, the unhappy tool of the Prussian military masters, for they above all will rejoice.

At the August conference, we are safe in saying, a hypocritical and dodging platform will be adopted which will be all things to all men. To the pro-Germans there will be left the sweet satisfaction that the St. Louis platform never was officially repudiated. To the loyal Socialists the August conference will hand phrases of seeming loyalty with an endorsement of the peace terms of President Wilson and the Inter-Allied Socialist Conference. But in no case will the conference, controlled as it will undoubtedly be, wholeheartedly support the determination of President Wilson and the Inter-Allied Socialists to prosecute the war until these just terms are completely agreed to by Germany.

The New Appeal, as the leading organ of the Socialists of America, publicly calls attention to

this situation and demands that the party either purge itself of its disloyal platform and leaders or prepare itself for a new political alignment that will serve both our country and the cause and not the disloyalists and Central Powers. We know that the great majority of the party would have adopted the proposed Chicago referendum had it not been for this trick of the Hillquits and Bergers. We know that the most of the supporters of the cause of Socialism in America love their country and believe thoroughly in the ideals for which this country is waging war against the Kaiser and cohorts.

Every drop of Americanism in our blood and every throb of internationalism in our hearts call and inspire us, the free and independent American Socialists, to rally to the support of our country and the Western European democracies in their life and death struggle against the most ruthless and powerful military despotism in human history. Our political liberties will be lost and our hopes of industrial freedom will vanish if autocratic Germany triumphs in the world war. Some American Socialists have realized this from the beginning. Others became convinced by the facts and logic presented by President Wilson in his numerous speeches last winter. Very, very few Socialists who are not pro-Germans at heart can now be confused about the great issues involved in this war.

The time was at hand for the adoption of a manly and frank statement admitting the party's error and a ringing declaration favoring the war. A referendum by the membership would have been the proper and democratic way. But no! The party bosses willed it otherwise. "What is the con-

stitution between disloyalists?" to paraphrase a famous utterance. Free speech, they urge. Do they want permanently the free speech enjoyed in Germany? Militarism, they intimate. Do they want the Prussian compulsory military service permanently in this country? The victors in this war will decide these questions and it is our opinion that we will have free speech and no permanent military service if America wins and permanent military service and no free speech if Germany wins. As to peace negotiations, no arguments are necessary after the dose administered to the well meaning but fanatical Bolsheviki by Hindenburg and Ludendorff.

While the party bosses control the machinery of the Socialist Party, The New Appeal controls the publicity channels through which the rank and file is reached. And we submit that the group of determined men who misrepresent the fair name of our cause will not get away with their infamous game. The rumblings of discontent from American Socialists are plainly heard. The movement to put the Socialists right before their fellow citizens and comrades abroad cannot be sidetracked. This movement will find expression. We predict a political realignment, one that will not cater to the disloyal vote in New York and Wisconsin but to the principle of fair play and justice of man to man and nation to nation. The loyal American Socialists who have not yet resigned from the party membership, we feel certain, will not permit themselves to go down with the wreck wrought by the Hillquits and Bergers. They will either clean house or begin anew.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing Corvallis, OR, 2008. • Non-commercial reproduction permitted.