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# International Socialist Delegates

by Louis Fraina †

Unsigned editorial in *The Revolutionary Age* [Boston], v. 1, no. 13 (Jan. 11, 1919), pg. 2.

In answer to the call of Camille Huysmans for an International Socialist Congress to be convened at Lausanne, Switzerland, the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of America announces that it has appointed Algeron Lee, James O Neal, and John M. Work as delegates. The statement published in the *New York Call* goes on to say that on a referendum vote taken over a year ago, when the Stockholm Conference was to be held, Morris Hillquit, Victor Berger, and Algernon Lee were elected to attend that body and intimates that the appointment of the 3 men named as the Lausanne delegates was governed by the vote cast on the former occasion, Hillquit being unable to go to Europe owing to ill health which has held him confined for some months past and Berger being at the present moment standing trial under the Espionage Act.

As a matter of fact the 3 men elected to attend the Stockholm Conference were Hillquit, [George] Kirkpatrick, and Berger. None of the present appointees were elected, nor did any of them even run fourth, that position being taken by Scott Nearing. But even if they had all been elected to attend the Stockholm Conference it is the meanest kind of subterfuge to presume that such an election would give them any claim to attend a Congress called under altogether different circumstances and facing entirely new prob-

lems. In the lapse of time between the attempt to convene the Stockholm Conference and the present day much that vitally affects the Socialist movement of the world has happened, and it is a preposterous supposition that because under one set of circumstances a man is elected he is the choice of the electorate for all time.

The National Executive Committee advances the argument in defense of its action that the time set for the opening of the congress is so short that it has no time to appeal to the membership. This is merely paltering. The National Executive Committee has been approached by various branches and locals of the party to call an Emergency National Convention in order to give the membership an opportunity of expressing their will on all the matters arising out of the present crisis through which the world is passing, and particularly to deal with the convocation of an International Socialist Congress. However, the National Executive Committee has not been able to meet since the armistice was signed. They have put off meeting time and again on various paltry excuses and when the call came for an International Socialist Convention they selected delegates by telegram.

The constitution of the Socialist Party provides for the election of delegates to International Socialist Conventions, it provides several ways in

†- Attributed to Editor Louis Fraina based on style. Fraina was at the time in Essex Co. Jail, Newark, NJ, serving a 30 sentence for remarks made to a meeting of Conscientious Objectors early in the war. Fraina had appealed the case and the decision went against him, forcing him to turn himself in on January 7, 1919. As Fraina was able to write a lengthy front page article for the February 1, 1919 edition from jail, there is no reason to think that he was prevented by his incarceration from completing this editorial as well.

which they may be elected, but it does not provide that the National Executive Committee shall appoint delegates. The appointment of the present men in contrary to the constitution, it is arbitrary and it is illegal. It makes no difference whether the choice is a wise one or not, the action is illegal. The Socialist Party has insisted that the delegates of the United States government to the Peace Conference should be appointed by a referendum vote of the people but in the appointment of Socialist delegates the National Executive Committee ignores the membership of the party.

Algernon Lee, one of the appointees, is the leader of the Socialist group in the New York City Board of Aldermen and his actions and those of his colleagues in that body have not found favor with a considerable section of the membership of the party in New York. On one occasion 27 branches of Local New York voted to censure their actions, 2 advocated the withdrawal of the group from the board of Aldermen, and only 2 or 3 voted to uphold the actions of the Socialist Aldermen. At the present moment there is a movement to withdraw them from the Board. In view of these facts Lee's chances of election as one of the del-

egates to represent the Socialist Party of America in Europe are at least debatable and his appointment is directly contrary to Socialist practices.

But before electing delegates the American Socialist Party has first to decide whether or not it will participate in a conference called by social patriots of the type of Huysmans. According to the press the Bolsheviki have refused to participate in the congress on the grounds that it is called by reactionary Socialists and will not be representative of the revolutionary Socialism that is sweeping triumphantly over Europe. If the revolutionary sections of the Socialist movement repudiate this conference then the membership of the American Socialist Party must also refuse to participate or else align itself with the reactionaries who accepted and condoned the war.

The only way in which American Socialism can arrive at a decision that will reflect the wishes of the membership is through an Emergency National Convention. The National Executive Committee is empowered to call such a convention and the membership of the party should insist that it act without a moment's delay.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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