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# Report to the National Executive Committee, Socialist Party of America.

[August 27, 1919]

by Adolph Germer

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August 27, 1919. insidious propaganda.

To the National Executive Committee.

**Massachusetts.**

Dear Comrades:—

I have confined this report chiefly to a statement dealing with membership and to several recommendations which in my opinion should be treated in your report to the Special National Convention. You have been informed on the more important developments from time to time and for that reason I refrain from a repetition in dealing in detail with those matters.

**Michigan.**

Pursuant to your instructions to reorganize Michigan, I sent a general letter to all locals and branches, appealing to them to reaffiliate with the party. This was supplemented with a trip through the state by Comrade Otto Branstetter. To date, 17 branches with an aggregate of approximately 600 members have become reaffiliated.

On August 17th a convention was held in Grand Rapids and a state organization formed. At this convention, 6 delegates, the quota allowed Michigan, were elected to the coming National Convention. A motion was unanimously passed approving the expulsion of Michigan and the suspension of the seven language federations.

The greatest enthusiasm prevailed and the comrades pledged themselves to go back home and work with redoubled energy to rebuild the movement in that state, which had been destroyed through years of

After your May meeting, you voted to revoke the charter of Massachusetts and recognize that group which adheres to the National Constitution and Platform. In a letter from State Secretary Comrade Bearak regarding the present condition of the organization in that state, he says, "I have already issued eight charters to Jewish branches, six to American branches, and one to an Italian branch, and we are expecting more applications every day." Comrade Bearak informs me that the Finnish comrades at their state meeting on July 4th voted to come into the organization.

**Minnesota.**

As reported to you in my communication of August 22nd, I attended a meeting of the State Executive Committee in Minneapolis, which resulted in the removal of Charles Dirba as State Secretary. I have sent a letter to all locals and branches in Minnesota and to the Translator-Secretaries, informing them of the situation and I have asked them to recognize Comrade S. Friedman as State Secretary until a change is made in the legal and orderly way.

**Ohio.**

According to your vote on Comrade Krafft's motion, the charter of Ohio was revoked. A letter has been sent to every local and branch in the state, informing them of your action and asking those locals

and branches that accept the Socialist Party Platform and Constitution to make application for reaffiliation. An application for charter was sent with each letter but the time has been too short to get any response.

Before the letter notifying the Ohio locals of the revocation of the Ohio state charter was sent out, I sent a letter to the Ohio locals and branches informing them that their State Secretary has been sabotaging every undertaking of the National Office. I advised them that he has refused to remit to this office the money for special convention stamps and that no dues stamps have been purchased since the 27th of June [1919]. We have letters from several locals and individual comrades in Ohio expressing emphatically their opposition to the autocratic methods with which the State Secretary acts and assuring us of their loyalty to the Socialist Party.

Local Ashtabula Harbor circularized all locals and branches in the state, informing them of the destructive work the State Office is doing. All locals and branches are asked to advise them whether they are "loyal to the party, its constitution, and our comrades in jail." They explain that the reason they ask for this information is that in the event that the party is captured by the "Left Wing," they will know on whom to depend to reorganized the state.

### **Membership.**

Appended hereto is a statement of the average membership by years since 1903, up to and including 1918.

I am also giving you the dues stamp sales, which is the basis on which the membership is computed, month by month from January of this year up to and including July.

The June and July figures cannot be taken as a legitimate showing, due to the internal controversy. I feel confident that I am stating the situation correctly when I say that there are thousands of comrades who are as loyal as ever to the socialist philosophy but have been driven to total disgust as a result of the "Wingism" injected into the party. These comrades are awaiting the action of the coming Special National Convention and if we adopt the proper platform and program and if the ranks are cleared of the propagandists that cause disgust and discouragement, these comrades will

quickly come back to the party and take up anew their activity.

### **The Left Wing.**

On July 26th and 27th [1919], a committee consisting of C.E. Ruthenberg, Alfred Wagenknecht, L.E. Katterfeld, Fred Harwood, and Louis E. Fraina came to the National Headquarters and represented themselves as a "Sub-Committee of the new National Executive Committee." They asked that I turn the affairs of this office over to them. This I naturally and justly refused to do. They submitted their request in writing, to which I made a written reply. This committee then returned to the Bradley Hotel, where the alleged new National Executive Committee was meeting, and there, among other acts, the following motions were passed:

Motion by Harwood that we call upon the membership to make generous purchases of the Special National Convention assessment stamps and that Local and Branch Secretaries send the money from the sale of these stamps to their respective State Secretaries at once; that all State Secretaries be requested to retain such money in their state treasuries, same to be brought to the National Convention by the state delegation. Carried.

Motion by Harwood that this committee suggests that the State Secretaries refrain from purchasing any more dues stamps from the former National Secretary, but that in case dues stamps are needed, that such regular party dues stamps be bought from the temporary National Secretary. Carried.

Motion by Fraina that the temporary National Executive Secretary be instructed to arrange for convention headquarters in Chicago, where delegates coming to the National Convention may report. Carried.

Motion by Katterfeld that the temporary National Executive Secretary establish temporary National Headquarters wherever most convenient. Carried.

I am quoting these motions to show the obstructive and destructive purpose that these members have in mind. You will observe that they first sabotaged the National Convention fund. Then they sabotaged the sale of our dues stamps, which is the only source of revenue the National Office has. They are also sabotaging our Defense Fund under the hypocritical claim that no one is doing anything for Comrade Debs and others and they must set themselves up as "liberators."

In addition to this, a hall and two committee rooms were rented in the same building in which our convention is held. This is evidently done to carry out the instructions that the Ohio State Convention gave to the Ohio delegates to the National Convention. These instructions read as follows:

*Be it resolved*, that, in view of these events, the Socialist Party of Ohio instruct its delegates to the Emergency National Convention refuse to seat the delegates from the expelled and suspended sections of the party and the Right Wing party officials, with the possible help of the agents of the police power of the capitalist state, control the Emergency National Convention, that the delegates from Ohio shall withdraw from the convention and affiliate with the convention called for September 1 to organize a new party, and should the Emergency National Convention be delayed, then the Ohio delegates shall participate in the convention called September 1 for the organization of a new party, and be it further

*Resolved*, that in the event of the organization of a new party under the circumstances stated above, then the State Office shall function in harmony with the new organization and affiliate with it. Should the Socialist Party of Ohio be expelled from the Socialist Party of the United States, then the State Office shall immediately begin purchasing dues stamps from the National Committee of the Left Wing.

The hall and one committee room were rented for three days (September 1st, 2nd, and 3rd [1919]). They have rented another room for two weeks. The reasons for renting a hall and rooms in the same building in which the National Convention is held, of course, are obvious and need no comment.

### **Constitution.**

I feel that several recommendations should be made in your report to the convention, providing for decided changes in the National Constitution. First, the size and method of National Executive Committee should be changed. As it happened, during the past year a number of members of the National Executive Committee were unable to attend the meetings and in consequence, the expense of the NEC meetings were proportionately reduced. Had every member of the committee attended the meetings, I doubt whether the decisions of the committee would have changed in the least, yet it would have cost the party about one-third more for each meeting. In my judgment, you should recommend that the National Executive Committee be reduced in number, say nine members,

one from each of the five districts and four to be elected at large, with reference to their proximity to the National Headquarters. This would enable the National Secretary to more easily communicate with a number of the National Executive Committee members and get the benefit of their judgment and advice.

With respect to the method of election, our recent experience has convinced us that the present method has not proved satisfactory. I am converted to the opinion that both the National Executive Committee and the Secretary should be elected by the convention where the representatives of the various states meet and are enabled to better judge the fitness and qualification of the party officials.

### **Conventions.**

I also believe that our National Convention should be held more frequently. The long periods between conventions make it impossible to satisfactorily and successfully deal with the conflicting opinions that arise in our party from time to time.

I believe that we should hold a convention every two years — namely the years in which the congressional and presidential elections take place — and I think your report to the convention should contain a recommendation covering this subject.

### **Foreign Language Federations.**

I am sure that our experience in the present controversy has made it clear that the constitution should be more definite with respect to the control that the party exercises over the Foreign Language Federations or the relations of the party to the federations should be changed. I realize that this is a subject that will be extremely difficult of satisfactory adjustment. However, it cannot be denied that the present status of the language federations has a tendency to create a strong spirit of factionalism and as a result, the unity of the party suffers. One of two things should be done, either the language federations should be made autonomous bodies and have a working relation with the Socialist Party, or the federations as such should be abolished and the propaganda and organization work should be conducted by language organizers employed directly by the party and under the control of the party.

If the former course is followed, then the comrades of the language federations could function in the Socialist Party by affiliating with it as individual members, but not otherwise. If the latter course is followed, it will obviate the possibilities of language federations or their executive committees formulating policies, platforms, and programs for the Socialist Party. In saying this, I do not have in mind any particular federation now affiliated with the party, but unless some change is made, we have no guarantee that our sad experience with the suspended language federations will not be repeated.

If neither of these courses are adopted, and if the present methods of affiliation and activity of federations are continued, then a provision should be made more clearly defining the functions and powers of the federations and they should be required to submit to the National Office of the party a translation of all official business dealing with party platforms, programs, and policies.

### **International Relations.**

There is endless confusion and misunderstanding in the International Socialist Movement. One group known as the revived Second International has held several conferences, assuming to speak in the name of international socialism. Another group calling itself the Third International claims to have equal authority. As long as the international movement, like our national movement, is divided into groups and warring factions, international imperialism is absolutely safe. Only a united International Socialist Movement can successfully crush imperialism and put into effect our program and ideas.

Before the United States entered the World War, we sought to convoke an International Socialist and Labor Conference and we communicated with every country affiliated with the old International, making inquiry as to the attitude of the Socialist Parties in the respective countries. We received a number of favorable replies, but our plans did not materialize. This country was finally plunged into the war and though our party was tried and persecuted to the utmost, we remained true to the principles of International Socialism. This, I believe, places us in a logical position to make an effort to bring together into an interna-

tional conference all the Socialist Parties of the world except those that adopted a policy of social patriotism, such as the majority socialists of Germany. This is a subject that should be treated in your report and a recommendation should be made to the National Convention.

### **Finances.**

On account of conditions growing out of the factional strife, the finances of the National Office during the last two months have been anything but encouraging. Our only source of revenue is from dues stamps. Immediately on your action to enforce the National Constitution and Platform, the destructive element began a systematic sabotage of the party funds. It is clear that the "Left Wing" leaders were willing to sacrifice anything and anybody in order to achieve their ambitions.

The following statement shows the amount received for the principle items for the full months from January to July and for the first 25 days of August:

As a result of this financial situation, I have reduced the office force to only sufficient to do the most necessary work.

The following is a statement of our exact financial situation to date:

#### ***CASH STATEMENT***

Defense and Organization Fund	\$ 113.17
National Convention Fund	762.50
National Office (overdrawn)	93.84
Womans Fund	1,419.66
Headquarters Fund	42.35

#### ***ACCOUNTS PAYABLE***

<i>Arbeiter Zeitung</i>	\$ 758.07
Barton Hobart Paper Co.	365.63
Bastian Bros.	221.29
Daniel Hoan (royalty)	120.47
Charles H. Kerr	159.96
Mooney Defense Fund	10.75
Nelson — Eismann — Quist	409.28
Outstanding Credits	471.14
Western Printing Co.	625.08

MONTH	DUES	HEAD- QUARTERS	DEFENSE & ORGANIZATION	CONVENTION ASSESSMENT
January	\$ 5,405.45	\$ 0.00	\$ 7,309.58	\$ 0.00
February	5,177.76	615.00	2,868.07	0.00
March	5,012.00	1,780.65	1,095.09	0.00
April	5,129.60	2,178.52	2,474.24	0.00
May	3,335.65	1,164.99	4,349.37	0.00
June	2,109.40	555.65	837.68	0.00
July	1,973.00	191.51	1,498.61	154.50
August	474.00	194.66	1,765.35	641.00

E. Woltersdorf Realty Co.	15,000.00
Woman's Work Fund	4,500.00
Standard Emblem	75.25
Standard Engravers	80.47
Western Union Telegram	20.49
Express Company	34.68
A.B. Dick Co.	34.35
<i>Spravedlnost</i>	136.50
Schuett Motor Car Co.	51.05
Miscellaneous	80.13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 23,154.59</b>

### Dues.

We have had very unsatisfactory experiences in the collection of funds for various purposes. Each time a new undertaking was planned, we were obliged to send out an appeal for contributions. Some of the locals and individual comrades always responded, promptly and generously, while others have shirked their part. The result is that the willing comrades eventually became overburdened and are disheartened and discouraged. A more stable system of financing the party and its various activities should be adopted. First of all, on account of the decreased membership resulting from the destructive work carried on by the "Wingers," the source of income must be so that the National Office can materially assist in the rebuilding of the state organizations. In order to equalize the responsibility, I suggest that you recommend to the convention that the dues to the National Office be in-

creased to 15¢ per member per month until such time as the party has one hundred thousand members or more. Then the price of the dues stamps may be automatically reduced to 10¢, the 5¢ going to the local organizations. This will give the office sufficient revenue to not only cover its operating expenses, but will leave a balance with which to undertake and successfully carry on new work.

In the event that annual or bi-annual conventions are decided upon, a more satisfactory way of raising the finances to cover the expenses should be devised. It is my judgment that a special convention fund should be created by levying an assessment of 25¢ per member twice each year, say January and July. Dues for those two months should be 40¢ (until the membership reaches 100,000, then they should be 35¢), 25¢ of which should go into the National Convention Fund. This will not only give us sufficient funds to cover the cost of the convention and leave the party free from debt, but it will leave some money on hand with which to open up congressional and presidential campaigns. As it is, we are obliged to beg money to start the campaign, which in itself is a decided handicap.

### Summary of Recommendations.

- (1) Election of National Executive Committee and Secretary by convention.
- (2) Holding bi-annual conventions.
- (3) Foreign Language Federations.
- (4) International Relations.
- (5) Dues.



Fraternally submitted,

*Adolph Germer,*  
Executive Secretary.

The following table shows the average paid-up membership for each year, beginning with 1903 — the first year for which we have any record †:

1903 .....	15,975
1904 .....	20,763
1905 .....	23,327
1906 .....	26,784
1907 .....	29,270
1908 .....	41,751
1909 .....	41,470
1910 .....	58,011
1911 .....	84,716
1912 .....	118,045
1913 .....	95,957
1914 .....	93,579
1915 .....	79,374
1916 .....	83,284
1917 .....	80,482
1918 .....	74,519 †

†- The 1901 and 1902 dues figures are unknown due in part to the poor record keeping of Executive Secretary Leon Greenbaum. Even had he been meticulous, these numbers would have been a dubious measure of the true size of the Socialist Party, as the largely autonomous state organizations were extremely lax in making timely and complete remittances of per capita moneys owed the National Office. The election of the highly competent William Mailly as Executive Secretary and a crackdown on deadbeat State Secretaries put the SPA on a business-like basis for the first time in 1903.

‡- The 1918 membership figure cited by Germer to the National Executive Committee in this report understated what has come to be accepted as the party's official figure for the year (82,344) by nearly 10%. While there is no evidence that Germer deliberately understated the 1918 figure to exaggerate the rate of growth of the party in 1919, thus helping fuel a sense of abnormality and crisis, his use of this deflated number nevertheless would have had this effect.

*Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.*

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### Membership by States from January to and Including July 1919.

<i>STATE</i>	<i>JAN.</i>	<i>FEB.</i>	<i>MARCH</i>	<i>APRIL</i>	<i>MAY</i>	<i>JUNE</i>	<i>JULY</i>
Alabama -----	0	0	0	400	0	0	0
Alaska -----	400	0	0	0	300	0	0
Arizona -----	42	0	0	0	300	0	0
Arkansas -----	0	400	0	500	0	0	80
California -----	1,795	2,852	2,626	3,251	2,630	524	2,120
Colorado -----	820	804	680	293	520	280	481
Connecticut -----	1,702	2,683	1,073	2,221	487	791	1,080
Delaware -----	126	76	90	240	105	55	25
District of Columbia -----	150	137	280	160	100	50	360
Florida -----	1	67	1	400	0	20	90
Georgia -----	162	100	62	100	182	0	0
Idaho -----	174	25	148	20	166	20	90
Illinois -----	10,202	12,554	9,977	14,731	3,981	2,299	6,196
Indiana -----	2,067	2,497	2,419	2,078	1,575	1,488	1,331
Iowa -----	1,390	170	858	625	1,078	137	72
Kansas -----	100	2,000	625	615	69	25	1,005
Kentucky -----	240	380	340	131	1,160	0	0
Louisiana -----	35	192	0	38	0	0	100
Maine -----	40	480	196	505	218	50	265
Maryland -----	738	1,068	744	534	233	747	199
Massachusetts -----	6,623	7,108	6,554	7,158	5,367	2,208	1,982
Michigan -----	5,687	3,413	6,115	4,266	3,131	432	498
Minnesota -----	2,882	1,793	850	4,879	2,860	1,395	2,517
Mississippi -----	27	0	0	0	47	0	0
Missouri -----	1,494	2,399	474	1,433	1,588	1,260	1,420
Montana -----	139	430	500	128	74	0	95
Nebraska -----	125	164	468	0	144	0	120
Nevada -----	200	14	0	200	200	0	24
New Hampshire -----	438	786	208	221	207	750	260
New Jersey -----	2,515	2,833	4,511	5,356	1,868	3,230	513
New Mexico -----	150	200	0	100	100	100	0
New York -----	17,066	17,688	14,477	14,004	14,791	7,772	5,994
North Carolina -----	0	0	0	0	0	135	0
North Dakota -----	336	131	0	160	242	20	0
Ohio -----	12,616	11,200	8,714	8,606	7,424	6,433	2,316
Oklahoma -----	1,600	2,200	0	2,700	600	0	600
Oregon -----	2,256	3,204	2,200	1,125	800	963	734
Pennsylvania -----	8,326	7,408	10,241	8,111	5,927	2,367	4,883
Rhode Island -----	745	812	500	158	440	80	215
South Carolina -----	200	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Dakota -----	218	100	0	0	180	160	100
Tennessee -----	220	63	0	120	0	0	0
Texas -----	221	140	175	160	60	140	200
Utah -----	250	182	500	40	50	0	340
Vermont -----	108	0	45	40	220	40	67
Virginia -----	0	100	138	100	200	0	0
Washington -----	2,246	1,187	1,772	2,008	1,280	1,770	470
West Virginia -----	155	116	624	392	40	360	420
Wisconsin -----	13,277	5,265	9,090	9,471	2,227	5,908	1,120
Wyoming -----	352	520	441	0	276	68	41
Members At Large -----	23	24	99	140	27	140	37
Polish Federation -----	2,400	1,000	3,000	1,500	2,800	0	0
Estonian Federation -----	800	0	400	400	400	0	0
South Slavic Federation -----	1,650	3,000	2,300	3,300	0	0	0
Ukrainian Federation -----	2,800	3,700	6,000	200	0	0	0
[Var. Ext.??] -----	1,260	100	800	900	0	0	90
Italian Federation -----	(report not submitted at proper time)				844	0	0
French Federation -----	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,200
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>109,589</b>	<b>103,565</b>	<b>101,315</b>	<b>104,168</b>	<b>67,512</b>	<b>42,217</b>	<b>39,750</b>