
Minnesota Group Seated But Denied Vote by Convention:

Socialist Emergency Gathering in Chicago Sustains Action of National Executive Committee — Telegrams of Greetings Sent to Debs, Mrs. O'Hare, and Hillquit:

Big Vote Cast Favors Referendums B and D: Evidences of Widespread Frauds in Balloting are Charged in Investigation of Practices of Suspended Sections of Party — Bloc Voting Said to Be Prevalent.

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CHICAGO, Aug. 31 [1919].— The National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party today won its first big victory at the Emergency Convention when it was voted to sustain the action of the committee on contested seats. The endorsement took the form of the decision to seat the Minnesota delegation with a voice, but without a vote.

This, in effect, puts the stamp of approval by the convention on the action of the National Executive Committee in expelling the 7 foreign language federations from the Socialist Party.†

Prolonged and animated debate preceded the final vote taken late tonight. It was moved that the contestants be seated as finally agreed upon. William Kruse moved that the matter be left pending until the report of the committee had been made. He was overruled, and then appealed, losing out in the resulting voting.

Late tonight the convention voted to send telegrams of greetings to Eugene Victor Debs and Mrs. Kate Richards O'Hare. Another was sent to Morris Hillquit, expressing sympathy at his illness and express-

ing hope for his speedy recovery and active reentry into the Socialist activities.

Still another telegram was sent congratulating *The Call*.

The expected Left Wing bolt came at the beginning of the first session today, which started at 2 o'clock. It was a very mild affair. Joseph M. Coldwell "pulled" it, and some 8 or 9 delegates followed him out when he announced, "I now withdraw from this convention, and call upon all Left Wingers to do likewise." He explained later that he and his followers were merely retiring temporarily for a conference.

Coldwell Makes False Start.

Someone with a stentorian voice began calling from the visitors' section, "All Left Wingers to the caucus room!" much in the style of the Mohammedan call to prayer. Temporary Chairman Stedman relieved the crier of further trouble by announcing to the delegates that Left Wingers were going into caucus. Not one of the 20-odd delegates who are known to sympa-

†- In actuality, the 7 federations in question — Russian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Polish, Ukrainian, South Slavic, and Hungarian — were *suspended* rather than expelled by the NEC at its May 1919 session in Chicago.

thize with the Left Wingers, however, left the hall.

Coldwell's action resembled that of a runner who gets away before the starter's pistol sounds. It was known there would be a bolt, but it was expected that it would occur on some vital question. As a matter of fact, Coldwell rushed out on a perfectly trivial excuse.

The committee on contested seats had been working all last evening and far into the night and all this morning.

Planned "Bolt" Doesn't Strike.

Judge [Jacob] Panken, chairman, announced that the committee was not ready to report, and a motion was made to hear in the interim the report of the committee investigating the referendum on which the Left Wing claims the election of a new National Executive Committee.

The report was merely to be read. There was to be no action on it. If it were not presented, then the convention would have had to recess. The motion carried almost unanimously, and then Coldwell rose to object. He was ruled out of order, whereupon he staged the "bolt" which did not strike.†

Algernon Lee was elected chairman of the day by 76 to 18 for William Kruse, who is a Left Winger, but did not go out with Coldwell.‡ This indicated the strength of the Left Wingers in the convention, but on the election for vice chairman Mayor Daniel Hoan of Milwaukee received only 56 votes against 38 for J. Louis Engdahl. Engdahl is a clean-cut Left Winger by conviction, but is working for harmony and will not countenance a split.§

†- Coldwell was protesting the convention moving to conduct its business — receiving a report of primary importance to the gathering — before its membership was even duly constituted. This was no "perfectly trivial excuse," as Michelson intimates, but rather a matter of extreme importance and fundamental principle. That the Regular faction chose to venture along this path, which stood in stark contrast to all party precedents and the ordinary norms of parliamentary procedure, only accentuated their arrogance and disdain for democratic practice.

‡- While the 4-to-1 margin of victory was impressive, the reader should bear in mind that only 94 votes were cast by seated delegates in a convention which was to have been composed of 200, according to the formula provided by its call.

§- Louis Engdahl was one of the best-known and most influential journalists in the Socialist Party during the second half of the 1910s. Engdahl was the former editor of the SPA's official organ *The American Socialist* until it was shut down by the Wilson administration and thereafter of the de facto official organ, *The Eye Opener*, until that publication was moved to Milwaukee for budgetary reasons. Dan Hoan, the mayor of Milwaukee, was the prototypical Socialist politician, smooth and polished. Clearly, Engdahl had popular appeal which extended beyond rigid factional lines. Engdahl eventually left the SPA in 1921 and was a founding member of the Workers Party of America. He was thereafter the managing editor of the official organ of the WPA, *The Worker*, which became *The Daily Worker* when it went daily on Jan. 13, 1924. Engdahl died of pneumonia in Moscow on Nov. 21, 1932, where he served as a member of the Presidium of International Red Aid (MOPR). He was buried near the Kremlin wall.

Protest Against Police Guard.

The matter of the presence of police at the convention came up again and was thoroughly thrashed out. A letter from the Machinists' Union, owners of the hall, was read by the chairman, protesting against the police being there. The convention was informed by the chairman that at 10 o'clock yesterday morning the Bureau of Immigration of the United States Department of Labor had requested the Police Department of Chicago to detail 10 policemen and a stenographer to the convention and had also asked the Department of Justice to provide a stenographer.

Former Assemblyman Abraham I. Shiplacoff of New York moved that the convention go on record as being opposed to the presence of the police. This started a rapid fire of discussion, pro and con.

"If the police want to come here, they are welcome," declared James B. Sheahan of Albany. "We are open and above board, and have nothing to fear. Unless we go into executive session this convention is open and everybody has a right to be here."

Berger in Favor of Police.

Congressman Victor L. Berger of Milwaukee, one of the dominating figures of the convention, defended the presence of the police from another angle.

"If they had not been here yesterday morning, we would not be here now," he said. "The two-fisted Reed and the other two-fisted Left Wingers would be here."

The whole matter was laid on the table finally, the convention holding that it would be superfluous

for it to record the fact that it had not summoned the police. And, as James O'Neal of New York pointed out, particularly for the benefit of the Left Wingers, the convention of the "Communist Party," which opens tomorrow, and which those Left Wingers who leave the Socialist Party convention finally are expected to try and join, will likely also be graced by the presence of the bluecoats and government stenographers, whether the Communists like it or not.

The report of the committee investigating the referendum was read by Otto Branstetter, who, with William M. Brandt, Louis A. Arnold, and Henry Askeli, comprised it. It was unanimous, but did not make any recommendations.

Kate O'Hare is Chosen.

The report states that on the face of the returns, referendums B and D were carried by large majorities, and a National Executive Committee consisting of Louis Fraina of New York, Charles E. Ruthenberg of Cleveland, Seymour Stedman of Chicago, Patrick S. Nagle of Oklahoma, and L.E. Katterfeld of Cleveland, was elected.† The returns also showed on their face that John Reed and Louis Fraina had been elected as the party's International Delegates and Kate Richards O'Hare its International Secretary.‡

Serious frauds in balloting are charged in the report. It is stated that those ballots which the committee could obtain from State Secretaries had in a great many cases been marked by one person, in one kind of ink, and signed by the members in different ways. Bloc voting was evident,§ and from its detailed examination the committee arrived at this summary of its findings:

†- The 1919 SPA election was actually to have elected a total of 15 members to a new National Executive Committee — 3 members from each of 5 geographic districts. The party constitution provided that this new group was to take office effective July 1, 1919.

‡- Kate O'Hare, a racist anti-militarist who was never an adherent of the Left Wing Section, was promoted by the organized Left Wing as its candidate for International Secretary as a means of shoving mud in the face of the incumbent it loathed, the erudite attorney Morris Hillquit. O'Hare had previously served as International Secretary of the SPA from 1912-14. Ironically, in 1919 O'Hare was imprisoned in Missouri for her anti-war activity and Hillquit was forced to suspend political activity due to an attack of tuberculosis, meaning neither could have effectively served as the party's International Secretary.

§- Bloc voting was not constitutionally prohibited in the Socialist Party of America. In fact, in a splendid irony, Executive Secretary Adolph Germer had been elected to his post in 1916 thanks to the organized might and bloc voting of the party's language federations, edging out Rev. Carl D. Thompson. Germer was the more left wing of the two candidates in that particular race.

1. In certain branches of the Russian, Ukrainian, Hungarian, and Lithuanian Federations the members signed their names to ballots previously marked by the secretary or some other person.

2. In certain Russian branches the ballots given to the members were marked to indicate how they should vote and the members voted as indicated.

3. In certain Russian branches the secretary or canvassing committee fraudulently reported a full vote for the Left Wing slate when votes had been cast for other candidates.

4. A large number of branches in all the suspended federations cast an absolutely uniform vote, generally for the same candidates, the so-called Left Wing slate.

5. A large number of branches in the suspended federations cast more votes than their average membership for the preceding 4 months.

In view of the fraud and irregularities discovered in the suspended branches from whom we received ballots, it is reasonable to suppose that such fraudulent or irregular practices existed to even a greater extent in those branches which refused to furnish individual ballots as requested by the National Executive Committee.

Referendum B put the question of holding a National Emergency Convention up to the membership. Referendum D asked the membership to decide whether the party should record itself as being opposed to entering any other international Socialist alignment than that of the 3rd International, which held its first conference at Moscow early in March [1919].

Will Stand by Soviet.

Its adoption means that the Socialist Party will not take part in any international conference from which the Bolsheviki of Russia and the Spartacans of Germany are excluded or in which they refuse to participate.

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