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# The Socialist Party Convention.

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## Some of Its Accomplishments.

1. Killed a resolution which expressed sympathy for the imprisonment of Jim Larkin and Benjamin Gitlow.

2. Shut off debate and refused to answer questions brought by the Illinois delegation concerning the pussyfooting in the defense at Albany.

3. Refused to seriously consider the idea of unity as expressed by Debs.

4. Dropped the plank which called for expulsion of elected officials who voted for military appropriations.

5. Decided to try to form a New International composed of "all true Socialists of the world," although retaining affiliation with the Third International.

6. Refused to take a stand for the taxation of church property.

7. Inserted a plank providing for the registration of migratory workers in order that they might vote.

8. Election of members of the National Executive Committee by proportional representation killed.

9. Gag rule generously applied against the minority; especially by the lawyers in the delegation from New York.

10. "Its ULTIMATE AIM in politics is to secure a majority in Congress and in every state legislature, to win the principal executive and judicial offices, to become the dominant and controlling political party in the country, in order to accomplish Socialism."

The above results of the Socialist Party Convention recently held at New York City, in Finnish Hall and 5th Ave. and 127th St., establishes the Socialist Party as a Centrist factor among the Socialist parties of the world. Using the radical phrases of former times

and seeking to create enthusiasm through the name of Debs, they nominated him on a platform and declaration of principles which the capitalist press has greeted as Sane and Conservative.

## Lineup in the Convention.

From the challenge by Kruse of Illinois that The Call had announced Hillquit as Chairman of the first day's session before he was elected — by a vote of 91 to Engdahl's 29 — until the close of the convention the proportion of radical votes continued about the same. The vote of 33 to 103 on the majority and minority platforms; the 106 votes for Stedman and the 36 votes for Kate O'Hare for candidate for Vice President, up to the vote of 40 for remaining in the Third International as contrasted with 90 for remaining in it but forming a New International of Centrists, shows that about one-third of the convention was fairly radical.

Kruse, Engdahl, Glassberg, Tucker, Holland, Bircher, and Walter Cook composed the Left Wing; Berger, London, King, Hoehn, Cannon, Solomon, Karlin, and Block the Right Wing, while Panken, Hillquit, Lee, Berlyn, Oneal, Henry, and Saltis composed the Center or more rational Right.

## The Platform and Declaration of Principles.

The Platform and Declaration of Principles was supposed to have been presented to the membership for consideration two months previous to the convention. The statement made on the floor of the convention by delegate Glassberg of New York on May 10th, that copies of the platform were ready for distribution by the preceding Saturday was not answered by the

Majority. In fact they were published in the capitalist press before the delegates had an opportunity to read them elsewhere.

The Minority wanted to have the Platform and Declaration of Principles referred to a committee of 9 to be elected by the convention, as they did not want the ideas of the Majority to be railroaded through the convention before the Minority had an opportunity to consider it as a whole, and to propose a substitute. This motion was defeated by a vote of 58 to 81 and the matter was taken up in the convention acting as a Committee of the Whole.

When the Declaration of Principles was read not a ripple of applause greeted it, which would seem to justify the assertion made by Tucker that "the platform was written by lawyers so that the Department of Justice could not find any Socialism in it, so how could the workers be expected to understand it?" To which the Majority replied that if they would read it over several times they would understand it; which led the Minority to wonder how many times the average worker would have to read it over to understand it.

The Minority Declaration of Principles, while taking a better International and Class Conscious stand, was rather vague and was not as clearly expressed as the less radical stand taken by the Majority.

Kruse created applause when he opposed the insertion in the Declaration of Principles of that phrase from the Declaration of Independence which admits the right of revolution when the people want it, because such a revolutionary phrase had no place in the mild declaration of principles of the SP.

The majority leaders made no attempt to answer the argument made by Glassberg that it was practically impossible to obtain Socialism by "orderly and constitutional method," by electing officials and amending the Constitution of the United States.

Dreyfus of Illinois said that Berger and Hillquit played to the galleries in public meetings in discussing the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia, but oppose them in convention.

### **Discussion of Unity.**

When the Unity question came up the Minority wanted the Socialist Party to recognize the due

stamps of those in the two Communist parties in order to entitle any comrades wishing to leave these parties and accepting the platform of the SP to regular membership in the party. The convention voted to only allow them in as new members. No attempt was made to modify the Socialist platform as a basis for unity with Communists as Debs wished. In fact, some of the extreme Right wanted a platform that would appeal to the Labor Party and Non-Partisan League, and denounced the minority platform as one which sought to placate the Communists.

During the discussion Block of New York accused a leader of the Communists of being a spy but refused to mention the name of the person accused when challenged by Holland of Illinois to do so.

### **The Third International.**

When Engdahl of Illinois read from the report of the NEC telling of their efforts to assist in forming a new International, Oneal and Hillquit could not refute this fact. Engdahl also pointed out that those in Europe who were heading this movement for a new International had just recently left the Second International, but had not responded strongly enough to their rank and file membership to join the Third International.

Meyer London caused hisses, groans, and laughter by his advocacy of a League of Nations and of our taking part in it in order to reform it. The Majority report was passed, little discussion being allowed for the Minority report of Engdahl and Quick to be heard. Berger, with his motion to withdraw from the Third International because of the Red Terror in Russia and because the Bolsheviki believed in violence, presented one of the most inconsistent spectacles of the convention, it being well known that Berger is in favor of "defensive" wars, and favored war with Mexico a few years ago.

When asked by Tucker what the Socialists would do if after depending upon politics to gain Socialism, they would be denied control. Panken of New York, with a great splurge of oratory, said that they would resort to war. Thus Berger, who claims to abhor the Bolsheviki because they believe in violence, upholds political Socialism which admittedly leads to violence. The Minority pointed out that because they depended

practically alone upon the ballot was the reason why the Socialists of Finland had to sacrifice 70,000 lives, and then were defeated.

### **Military Appropriations.**

Block supported a motion allowing Socialists to vote for military appropriations where the State required an appropriation for the upkeep of a State Militia (although working for repeal of this law), until Solomon of New York, after stating that he would vote for it under any condition and with waving arms declaring himself a 100% American, pointed out that the original motion did not specifically prohibit such voting. The motion by Block was found to be unnecessary and was dropped. This new clause was put in place of the plank formerly in the platform which provided for the expulsion of elected officials who voted for military appropriations.

### **Pussyfooting at Albany.**

When confronted with six specific charges accusing the defense of the five Socialist Assemblymen in Albany of compromising the Socialist International position and of minimizing the class struggle, Hillquit only attempted to answer one of the charges, covering the remainder with a flow of oratory and sentiment. Hillquit admitted that one of the Assemblymen started to make a patriotic defense, and that they had to squelch him. He pointed out several instances where they could have compromised, inferring that they were not as bad as they might have been. Kruse was only

allowed a short time to explain how the charges came to be made when Meyer London was recognized. He did not answer any specific charges, but sought to becloud the issue by more oratory. At the end of his speech he made a motion, which was recognized, contrary to parliamentary law, by Davidow of Michigan, who as vice chairman had with Sharts of Ohio as chairman been shutting off discussion frequently.

Davidow repeatedly refused to recognize Glassberg, who had the exact pages of the proceedings of the trial at hand, proving the assertions made by the delegate from Illinois, but instead recognized a motion to table the resolution and expunge it from the record. *The Call* did not mention the appearance of this question at the convention.

### **Larkin and Gitlow.**

The resolution condemning the conviction of Larkin and Gitlow was a very mild one and was of the kind usually passed by the Committee of 48 and other Liberal organizations. The "lawyer delegation" from New York City were its chief opponents. The Call also did not mention that this matter was brought up at the convention.

The walls and platform were decorated in an unusually large number of American flags and bunting; the red banner of Socialism nowhere in evidence, which brings to mind the assertion of Tucker on the floor of the convention that "by decorating our convention with the flag of Wall Street we cannot hide our Socialism."

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