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# SP Reports Show Sharp Decline in Party Membership

[events of April 21-23, 1938]

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CHICAGO.— When the depleted ranks of the Socialist Party met in Racine, Wis.,<sup>1</sup> three weeks ago with about 150 delegates in attendance, they were told in executive session that the party membership hovered around 3,000 the first three months of this year,<sup>2</sup> that finances were in a deplorable condition, and the party paper was a drag on the organization and had no business manager for four months.

Another discouragement was that sales of convention stamps to pay expenses of delegates netted only \$233, hardly enough to pay convention incidentals.

National Secretary Roy Burt's report indicated what has happened since 1936. It was replete with stories of internal conflicts, revocations of state charters, and reorganization of states and locals with consequent loss of members. The charters of Oklahoma, California, Minnesota, Indiana, and Ohio had been revoked mainly because of the activities of Communists within the party, while due to indifference, inactivity, and decline the states of Arkansas, Arizona, Montana, Washington, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming were declared unorganized.

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<sup>1</sup> The convention actually met in the neighboring city of Kenosha, WI.

<sup>2</sup> Party documents reveal an official average paid membership for 1937 of 5,748, the year of a major split with the party's Trotskyist left wing, making this estimate of 3,000 for the first quarter of 1938 entirely possible.

One surprise of the convention was the adoption of a long resolution on war, fascism, and international problems which is practically a new Declaration of Principles. Its author is Devere Allen, who also drafted the new declaration of 1934 which split the party.

The new document omits the statements in the former declaration that brought about the split. It says nothing about “bogus democracy” and nothing about the seizure of power by a minority of Socialists in a period of “chaos and confusion.”

Norman Thomas and Mayor [Dan] Hoan of Milwaukee were defeated by a narrow vote on a Labor Party resolution. They opposed the majority which favored affiliation with state labor parties only where the latter concede Socialists the “right to run Socialist candidates against any capitalist candidates” endorsed by labor parties.

*Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport*

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