
First Convention of the Communist Party of America, Day 2 — Sept. 2, 1919.

by James O. Peyronnin

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Report Made by: James O. Peyronnin
Place Where Made: Chicago, Ill.
Date When Made: Sept. 9, 1919.
Period for Which Made: Sept. 2, 1919.

*Title of Case and Offense Charged
or Nature of Matter Under Investigation:*

**In Re: First Convention
“Communist Party of America,”
Chicago, Illinois.**

*Statement of Operations, Evidence Collected, Names and
Addresses of Persons Interviewed, Places Visited, Etc.:*

At Chicago.

Following is a detailed report of the 2nd day of the above mentioned convention:

Chairman A. Renner called the Convention to order at 10:30 am. Renner was unanimously elected Chairman for the Day.

Henry M. Tichenor of Local St. Louis, Mo., took the floor and stated as follows: “I have certainly had the steamroller run over me recently — once by the Berger regime in Milwaukee, and once right at this convention. It will be utterly useless for me to work with the element that is in control and therefore I ask the Credentials Committee to kindly return me my credentials. I shall withdraw whether it meets with the wishes of the Convention or not.” His case was referred to the Credentials Committee for appropriate action.

H.M. Wicks of Cook County made motion to bar the *Chicago Tribune* reporter from the hall on account of an article which appeared in the day’s issue of that paper misrepresenting events of the Convention of the previous day. No action was taken as the reporter was not present.

Employee observed that 123 delegates were seated at 11:30 am, and 110 visitors occupied the visitors’ reservations.

A. Forsinger, Lettish [Latvian], after giving a discourse as to the main object of a “Communist Party” Convention, remarked that those groups from New York are here for murder, that is quite plain, you could see that last night when they were trying to get each other’s throats. This latter remark by *Forsinger* was inference to objections on the part of some of the Russian Revolutionary Organization delegates of New York to send a committee to confer with the delegates from the “Communist Labor Party” Convention.

J.V. Stilson, Chairman of the Credentials Committee, appeared before the body and announced that 128 delegates now represented the body and that these delegates represented a membership of 58,000 — so that on the average each delegate is backed by 450 members.

Several telegrams and letters were read — one letter enclosed check for \$13.00, signed by the “First Communist Party of Elizabeth, NY.” All communications read along the same lines, extending greetings, etc. — “Long live the ‘Communist Party of America,’ we are with you to the end.”

Although no important business has yet come up before the Convention, and that, up to this time most of the time has been utilized by the Convention

in electing the various committees, there appeared a great deal of antagonism and party animosity existing between the Michigan and Eastern groups. This has been manifested by sarcastic remarks made by these two factions since the opening of the Convention.

To the surprise of the body, a dozen or more delegates of the Emergency Committee resigned, as well as two secretaries, which caused much laughter. **Dennis Batt** of the Michigan group, and one of the leaders of the "Communist Party," who up to this time has had nothing to say during the Convention with the exception of addressing the body at the inception of the Convention, took the floor and vehemently remarked: "I think myself the Convention will progress better without them — the idea of this petty sabotage is simply ridiculous."

Carlton Talbott and Charles Dirba were unanimously elected secretaries to succeed Fannie Horowitz and Maurice L. Paul, [who] resigned.

Convention adjourned at 12 pm [noon] to reconvene at 3 pm.

Moved, seconded, and carried that the Convention reconsider its former action relative to sending a Committee of 5 to confer with a committee from the "Communist Labor Party" Convention. I.E. Ferguson, N. Hourwich, C.E. Ruthenberg, Daniel Elbaum, A. Stoklitsky were unanimously elected to serve on that committee.

Detective Sergeant McDonough of the Chicago Police Department, referred to in report of September 1, 1919, served a warrant of arrest on **Dennis E. Batt**, for alleged violation of the State Espionage Act. At the time Batt was seated with the group of Michigan delegates, and on being removed from the floor, the en-

tire body of the Convention rose to their feet, and **Rose Pastor Stokes** in her weak-toned voice shouted, "Three cheers for Comrade Batt!" Detective Sergeant Egan, partner of McDonough, cautioned her to keep quiet as well as the other delegates. The commotion immediately subsided.

Secretary read the following letter: From Lithuanian Branch No. 87, East St. Louis, Ill.: "We are unable to send our delegate to your Convention, but we are heartily in favor of a formation of a real Communist Party of America. Enclosed find check for \$15.00 to help defray expense of Convention."

Attached herewith is copy of STATEMENT OF THE COMMUNIST CONVENTION TO THE BOLTING DELEGATES FROM THE SOCIALIST EMERGENCY CONVENTION, marked Exhibit "A," pages 1, 2, and 3, signed by the Committee of the Communist Convention, roster of which committee is already given in this report.

A great deal of time was utilized by the delegates in debating over this statement, after it had been read and taken up before the body seriatim.

The following delegates were elected for the Manifesto and Program Committee, names and number of votes in order: N. Hourwich — 102; Dennis E. Batt — 87; A. Stoklitsky — 84; Max Cohen — 82; Daniel Elbaum — 80; J. Lovestone — 77; Louis Fraina — 75; H.M. Wicks — 39.

The balance of the day was taken up in electing Committees for Constitution; Resolutions; Press and Propaganda; Education; Labor Organization; Young Peoples Communist League; Finance.

Moved and seconded that the body reconvene at 3 pm on Wednesday, September 3, 1919.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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