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# Corridor Convention Chat

by Charles W. Ervin

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ST. LOUIS, April 10 [1917].— Delegates from the Middle West, Western, and Pacific states all tell about the absence not only of enthusiasm for war in their various localities but positive opposition to it. All this irrespective of the particular political belief of the people. Coal miners, farmers, machinists, doctors among the delegates all tell the same story. One delegate told of a poll in his township, where there are 600 registered voters, very few Socialists, and yet 350 men voted against war. The daily paper in the country town a few miles away did not publish the results of the poll and went on printing articles boosting the war game. "A paper-made war is this," said the delegate.

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Arthur LeSeuer wants to keep the Socialist Party the political pioneer corps of America. It is said that he has prepared a resolution that reaffirms the Socialist principle of no compromise, no political trading, providing for expulsion from party membership of all those guilty of aiding or assisting or supporting any political organization other than the Socialist Party. LeSeuer is the attorney of the famous National Nonpartisan League, but is not a member of the league, and continues his activity in the Socialist Party, of which he was formerly a member of the NEC and is still a National Committeeman from the state of North Dakota. LeSeuer claims that the moment the pres-

sure of the Socialist propaganda is removed, inertia and inaction will set in politically in this country. He says the Socialists are not after office, but after having their program put into action. If they can compel any of the other parties, through fear of the far-reaching Socialist program, to adopt part of it, something has been accomplished. But, having had a part of it adopted, the Socialists must keep on insisting upon the adoption of all of it, and keep on preparing the minds of the people through propaganda to be willing to accept it and make their elected officials put it into action. LeSeuer's novel position attracts both attention and criticism. He says, as we have a three-party system, we should get the best we can out of it right now and use it to get everything that we stand for in the future. That the moment we begin as Socialists to flirt with the party which puts part of our program into action, no matter what its motive for doing it, we lose our efficiency as revolutionary pioneers and help the forces of reaction.

## **Able Women as Delegates.**

Some of the ablest women of the Socialist movement are delegates to this convention. Not only for the first time in the history of the movement was a woman elected to preside over the convention Monday [April 9, 1917], in the person of Kate Richards O'Hare, but Comrade O'Hare received the largest vote as a member of the com-

mittee that seems to be looked upon as the all-important one of the body — War and Militarism.

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Anna Maley, one of the real pioneers of the movement, who has spread the living gospel of Socialism from coast to coast, who has taken the bitter with the sweet as a good soldier of the common good, is here as a member of the Minnesota delegation. She is now secretary to the first Socialist mayor of Minneapolis, Thomas Van Lear. Quite a change from being jailed by the hirelings of the mine owners in West Virginia for telling the truth to the toiling slaves who delve in the unshined depths, bringing millions of wealth to the surface for their masters.

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Jane Tait of Pennsylvania, who has served so faithfully and ably in that scene of storm and strife, Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, is a member of the delegation of her state. Comrade Tait says that the commonwealth of Pennsylvania is misnamed. It ought to be the “private wealth.” There are others, Comrade Tait.

### **A Positive Delegate.**

Kate Sadler is a delegate from that storm center in the clash of the classes — Washington. When she has anything to say, she says it so that there is no doubt what she means. You may agree or disagree with her, but you won't do it because you do not understand her position. She has literally combed the state of Washington as a propagandist. Those who have seen her in action say she is as fearless as she is tireless.

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Pennsylvania may not have woman suffrage yet, but the Socialists of that state show what they think about the right of the women to be heard by sending 3 women to a national convention at the most critical time in the history of the party. Allegheny County has 2 women delegates. Jane Tait, Mary Garber, and Maud Ross not only sit with the Pennsylvania delegates, but they give a quiet lesson in thoughtful listening and lack of emotionalism in dealing with the various questions brought before the body. They are of the type who have not only efficiently spread the truths of Socialism in Pennsylvania, but are also responsible for the tremendous growth of the woman suffrage movement shown last year at the polls.

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Margaret Prevey of Ohio loses none of her enthusiasm for the movement as time with its touch slightly silvers her hair. She began in her youthful years, when to be a Socialist was to be shunned, and now in middle age has retained all the vigor and fire of her young womanhood in furthering the interests of the workers of America and the world. Ohio knows and therefore loves Margaret Prevey, who is ever at the forefront of every industrial struggle in her state.

### **Woman Rebukes Convention.**

It was a dramatic rebuke given to the convention by Ida A. Bilooof of Kansas. When the convention grew so stormy as to almost take control of it out of the hands of the chairman, this woman from Kansas arose in her place and, securing silence at once, rebuked the members for their “emotionalism.” She pleaded for the rule of reason, and secured it. Said this quiet, self-contained woman: “Self-control is the first thing to be gained, and until we gain this we won't gain the nation.”

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Jennie A McGene, who is State Secretary of Colorado, is here as a delegate. She is a big force, not only in the party organization of her state, but has done much to help further the cause of woman suffrage in the Western states that have not given the ballot to women. She is of the type that makes one feel sure that Rockefeller, with all his wealth, will not be able to control the affairs of this sadly ridden plutocratic state much longer.

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Mary Raoul Millis represents Georgia at the convention. It is very fitting that a group of workers living in the state that above all others in the Union knows the horror of child labor should send a woman to represent them. Comrade Millis is State Secretary, and this is not a desirable task in a reactionary state such as Georgia. But she accepts her lot with a cheerfulness shown only by those who know the fight itself is worthwhile. She is fighting for the lives of the children, as well as the men and women of her state.

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Elda B. Conly, representing Idaho, was formerly State Secretary. The Socialist movement is a serious business for her. She knows what its triumph would mean to the wage workers. She not only earns her own living as an expert stenographer, but that of a family of 3 children. She is not of the type that is swayed by oratory, no matter how impassioned. It is a startling development that all the women of the convention are less emotional than the men.

### **Kennedy Enjoys Job.**

[John C.] Kennedy of Chicago, one of the Socialist aldermen who has done such fine work, is looking as if he enjoyed his job of jostling the capitalist politicians and forcing their hands in la-

bor legislation in Chicago's council. It would be pretty hard to convince any worker on the windy city's streetcars that Kennedy doesn't know what political power is made for. The Socialist councilman also looks after the State Secretaryship of the Socialist Party of Illinois.

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The Pennsylvania delegation looks strange without the two Maurers — Jim and Charlie. Jim, who is the sold Socialist member of the legislature, as well as President of the State Federation of Labor, had to stay home to look after the interests entrusted to him by the workers. Charlie, who is the editor of the *Reading Labor Advocate*, is under the weather. Harry stump, who just escaped joining Jim in the legislature by a few votes, is here and doing his usual good job.

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The Oklahoma delegation is a striking looking body of men. They look as if they had fought the forces of Nature to squeeze a living from her. Tanned and sturdy, with the air of knowing just where they are going and why they are going, their personality explains the success of the movement in their state.

### **Veteran Socialists Present.**

A few of the old guard who were present at the first Unity Convention out of which emerged the Socialist Party in 1901 at Indianapolis are present at this convention. [Barney] Berlyn, [Victor] Berger, [Morris] Hillquit, and a few others are as active now as they were 16 years ago, and they have seen a good many forward steps since the birth of the party.

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The St. Louis comrades are doing a great job in seeing that the delegates get every convenience that will make their work most efficient. Frank O'Hare, a veteran newspaper man, is in general charge. Frank knows just what is wanted on an occasion of this kind, and sees that the delegates get it.

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Barney Berlyn does not grow less efficient with age. His white head of hair shakes with wrath every time a delegate wastes the time of the convention by saying something that has already been said. Barney has attended every national convention of the party.

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The New York delegation did not seem to have allowed their wreck experience to interfere with their work. [Algernon] Lee, [Usher] Solomon, Hillquit, [Louis] Boudin, [A.] Pauly, [Charles] Noonan, and [Ludwig] Lore are all members of committees.

### **St. Louis Local on Job.**

The cleverness of the St. Louis local in giving the delegates a reception, entertainment, and a dinner in the hotel where the convention is being held was some stunt. After a hard day's work, in place of having to go some distance to partake of the bountiful hospitality of the comrades, it was right on tap in the hotel. And, by the way, the hotel is some hotel. Nothing is left to be desired, sand, in place of taking advantage of the convention to boost rates, the management has given value for every dollar spent by the delegates. Here's to the Planters' Hotel!

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The people of St. Louis don't seem to be all "het up" over the war. Nor do they seem to think we Socialists are any less Americans than those who are non-Socialists, as was shown when the entire convention gathered on the steps of one of the public buildings to have the usual convention photograph taken.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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