
Casino Crowd Cheers Hillquit, Not Slobodin: Jewish Socialist League Has Stormy Session When It Invades Harlem District [event of Oct. 5, 1917]

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A mass meeting of the Jewish Socialist League of America at the New Star Casino, 107th Street and Park Avenue, broke up in disorder last night [Oct. 5, 1917] after the audience had given vent to resentment at attacks on Socialist municipal candidates and the national party.

The league, which claims to be more truly representative of Socialism than the Socialist Party, is an offshoot of the American Alliance for Labor and Democracy. Its purpose is to convert the Jewish people to support of the war.

The speakers in this cause last night were Jacob Chaiken, chairman; Henry L. Slobodin, deposed from the state chairmanship of the party; Herman Simpson, and Dr. N. Syrkin. Lucian Sanial and others scheduled to appear were not present.

Riot Threatened.

Several times the meeting threatened to end hurriedly. At least three-quarters of the audience apparently were not in sympathy with the views of the speakers, and their good nature was taxed by statements like the following from Slobodin:

“The reason we have organized the league is because the Socialist Party has constituted itself the little Germany of the United States.”

Twice in the course of the evening half the audience left, gathering in the rear of the hall as a protest against the bitter attacks by men professing to be Socialists on Morris Hillquit and Victor Berger. Each

time, however, the audience filtered back, resolved to demonstrate their support of the Socialist Party and its leaders.

In opening the meeting, Chaiken denied that any attacks would be made on Socialist leaders, as was forecast in articles in the evening papers. He said that the meeting would discuss Socialist philosophy, and then introduced Slobodin, who quickly nullified every premise made by the chairman.

Just where the audience stood was made clear early during Slobodin's speech. Attacking the Socialist Party, he turned on its leaders and mentioned the names of Hillquit and Berger. The house came down with a roar of applause. It was several minutes before he could make himself heard. This scene was repeated often, every mention of the party, of Hillquit or other leaders bringing applause.

Slobodin asserted that Berger and Hillquit have been consistently pro-German, and brought the same accusation against the People's Council. He said that Hillquit was properly the candidate of the council, and not of the party. The audience replied to this with the "short and ugly word."

At one point in his speech he called his interrupters "yellow dogs," and told them to leave the hall if they didn't like what he was saying. His challenge, to his dismay, was accepted. Later the crowd filtered back.

Slobodin grandiosely admitted that he did not think that Hillquit or Berger had taken "German money," but that, nevertheless, they were working for the kaiser. He defended the suppression of the *Milwaukee Leader* by the authorities, but admitted that he thought the suppression of *The Masses* was unjust.

Simpson spoke briefly, being eventually forced to retire. Dr. Syrkin followed him. The disorder continuing, the chairman told the audience that he would not fall into "the trap" and call a policeman, so that the labor press could say the organization relied on the police for help. But the proprietor of the hall thought differently, and summoned Officer Rinn, 39th Precinct, who found himself helpless. The meeting was abandoned after Chainek had thrown the water from a class on a table into the faces of those nearest him.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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