
National Council and NEC: An Open Letter to A. Wagenknecht in Cleveland from Louis S. Fraina in New York, August 13, 1919.

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Dear Comrade Wagenknecht:

The National Council of the Left Wing Section, Socialist Party, has decided to sever relations with the new NEC and the Emergency Convention of the Socialist Party. In accordance with this decision and my own convictions, I tender my resignation from the NEC.

At its sessions, the new NEC decided in favor of an American Communist Party. The realization of this decision now makes mandatory the acceptance of the Communist Party Convention of September 1 as the only real force that assures the actual formation of the Communist Party, which the NEC declared in favor of.

The NEC, however, in spite of its declaration, is not assuring the organization of the Communist Party.

In order to make the logical deduction of its declaration, *the new NEC should have held an Emergency Convention of its own*, as the organ of the Socialist Party, *to organize a Communist Party*. This was not done; and it was not done because certain members of the new NEC, such as [Ludwig] Katterfeld and [Fred] Harwood, are much more interested in the unity of the old party than they are in the construction of a Communist Party.

What was in my mind at the NEC meeting, and what was the basis of the decision to carry the fight to the Emergency Convention of the Socialist Party, was that the new NEC would assume complete control of the Convention. *This implied*

actually holding a Socialist Party convention other than the convention of the old NEC. This, again, implied holding our Emergency Convention in a hall other than that secured by the old NEC, without own roster of delegates, and our own organization separate from that of the old NEC. But your decision, as Temporary Secretary of the new NEC, to old “our” convention in the same hall as [SPA Executive Secretary] Germer’s breaks the plan completely. *Any Left Wing delegates who now go to the Emergency Convention are going to the convention of Germer & Co.*, packed by the moderates in order to secure control for counterrevolutionary socialism.

The original plan for the fight within the party was right; but owing to the defection of the Federation elements and owing — let us admit it — to our own hesitation, this plan was completely spoiled. To adhere to it now, under new conditions, is to cooperate with the Center elements and to act against the Communist Party.

As I see it now, the revolutionary course that the new NEC should have followed was, after its declaration in favor of a Communist Party, either to call for a Communist Party Convention or immediately resign and leave the fulfillment of this declaration to the only body capable of realizing it — the National Council of the Left Wing Section, Socialist Party. Either of these acts [would] have made the issue clear as a Communist issue; it would have challenged the party; it would have split the old party immediately. But the split ap-

parently was not desired by Katterfeld and Harwood. They want to maintain the unity of the party and throw out the old administration — to “throw out the crooks,” as Harwood phrases. Our struggle, however, is not a struggle against the administration or the “crooks,” but a struggle to separate the revolutionary elements from the moderate elements, and construct a Communist Party. It is necessary to split the old party in order to realize a Communist Party in fact as well as in name. The new NEC in order actually to realize the Communist Party it resolved in favor of, must recognize this necessity for a split and rally the revolutionary masses in the Socialist Party for the Communist Convention.

I did not realize, at the NEC sessions, that our acts in constructing a new organization of the NEC was not in accord with the project of the Communist Party. I now realize the vital necessity of the new NEC ceasing to function after the declaration for a Communist Party; and I act accordingly by tendering my resignation.

What can be accomplished by going to the convention of Germer & Co.? The state of Ohio has been expelled, and you are now no longer a member of the Socialist Party. You will not be ad-

mitted to the Emergency Convention, which is a Germer convention; how, then, can you call it to order as “decided” by the new NEC?

I still maintain my position at the National Left Wing Conference. I still maintain that there was real value in the declaration for a Communist party by the new NEC. But I now maintain that the logical action necessary to realize our purposes is to concentrate all our Left Wing forces for the Communist Party Convention of September 1.

It was simply a flourish for the new NEC to “reinstate” the expelled and suspended comrades, who refuse to go back to the old party and are solid for a Communist Party.

The decision of the National Council in issuing a joint call for a Communist Party Convention is, in my opinion, in complete accord with the purposes of the National Left Wing Conference. Our mandate was to work for the realization of the Communist Party; and the new decision of the National Council is necessary in order to actually realize the Communist Party which the Conference desired.

Louis C. Fraina.

August 13.

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