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# Convention Voids Referendum C by Unanimous Vote: Delegated Decide to Choose Temporary National Executive Committee as Soon as Party's Constitution is Rewritten by Convention: New Balloting Will Be Instituted for Officials: California Delegation Fails in Its Attempt to Bolt Gathering — Seated Envoys Who Participated in “Communist Convention” Will be Permanently Excluded Today

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CHICAGO, Sept. 1 [1919].— In clearing the decks today for the beginning of constructive action tomorrow, the National Emergency Convention of the Socialist Party here:

1. Unanimously declared the balloting on Referendum C, by which Alfred Wagenknecht calls himself National Executive Secretary and the election of a new National Executive Committee is claimed, null and void.

2. Unanimously decided that, as soon as the convention rewrites the constitution of the party, it will elect a temporary National Executive Committee and institute a referendum for the election of a permanent committee.

3. Listened to a melodramatic appeal from James H. Dolsen, spokesman for the California delegation, which had been seated in the morning over the recommendation of the Contest Committee, to bolt the “packed” convention, got up and cheered him ironically as he left the hall, and instantly turned back to its business.

4. Decided that at 10 o'clock tomorrow morning, when the convention meets again, all seated del-

egates who had been participating in the “convention” on the floor below [of the Communist Labor Party] be permanently excluded.

5. Saw the charge that the Socialist Party was being run under police protection, at its own desire, thoroughly discredited by the fact that at the “Communist” Party's convention 25 policemen were present, who tore down red banners and arrested one delegate who protested.

### Committee Report Carries.

Of course, it was the report of the committee which investigated Referendum C which had the most weight in causing the convention to invalidate it unanimously. Additional discussion brought out more facts.

State Secretaries from as far apart as Kansas and Massachusetts told of branches voting twice the number of their members; of voting *en bloc* in which ballots were marked and signed by the same person throughout; of refusal to allow the investigating committee to see the actual ballots; of ballots being destroyed on the plea there was not room to store them;

and other procedure claimed to be highly irregular.

When the unanimous roar of approval invalidated the referendum, the convention launched into an ovation, presumably for itself and its own good judgment in ordering a new deal.

### **Line of Action Decided.**

Algernon Lee had moved the action. His motion also included the election of a temporary NEC and a referendum to elect a permanent one. As both carried unanimously, despite heated controversy, Lee tonight is in the position of having been able, at the two most vital moments thus far, to unite the convention upon a definite line of action.

The California delegation's attempt to cause a "bolt" was an even sadder failure than that of Coldwell yesterday. Coldwell at least got his 8 or 9 delegates, who had previously come to the decision to walk out. Dolsen didn't get a convert.

The sergeant at arms, James C. Sheahan, had been instructed to notify the Californians that the convention, overruling the report of the committee on contests, had decided to seat them.

They did not put in an appearance until late in the afternoon, however, and then only Dolsen and Irene Smith came. They were granted the courtesy of the floor by unanimous consent, and Dolsen launched into his statement which was signed by the entire delegation.

### **Refuse to Take Seats.**

"We will not take our seats," he declared, "unless all duly elected delegates are seated, until the packed delegates from several reorganized states be reduced, nor until the convention ceases to act under the guardianship of the Chicago Police Department."

Then he proceeded to ask all the delegates to join the unseated delegates and the suspended language federations (the "Communists") in the formation of what he called a "real revolutionary Socialist Party" on one floor below, calmly overlooking the fact that the convention on the floor below was also acting under the "guardianship" of the police, and that he could just as well address the same statement to them.

The report of the outgoing Executive Secretary

[Adolph Germer], whose resignation was announced by Seymour Stedman of Chicago, was read by James Oneal of New York. A great part of it is devoted to the internal attacks on the party.

### **Falsehood Barrage Denounced.**

"Those members of the National Executive Committee," the report read, "who favored the Left Wing participated in the election of delegates to Berne and in all our efforts to get in communication abroad. Yet a barrage of falsehoods and slanders has been hurled at the party by this faction, and the minds of the members have been poisoned with suspicion.

"They have denounced the party and its officials as an organization of Scheidemanns and Noskes, asserting that if the party were entrusted with public power it would murder our own comrades with machine guns and hand grenades.

"In no single instance has this faction attempted to buttress these attacks with any official declarations of the party. Our declarations can not be reconciled with the actions of those in Germany who have betrayed the working class of Germany and the Socialists of the world. Our party press has never given any encouragement to the Noskes and the Scheidemanns and the National Executive Committee has not urged any support of renegade Socialists in any country.

### **"Seeds of Distrust Sown."**

"Yet because of the isolation of our members and the absorption of the party in the work of defending our party members in court, these slanders and the seeds of distrust and suspicion were sown in our ranks.

*"In the name of the Socialist Party and its officials and members who have been maliciously libeled by this dastardly propaganda, we brand those responsible for it as guilty of atrocious conduct unbecoming Socialists. The Socialist Party is not and never will be committed to any support of the betrayers of Socialism in Germany or elsewhere.*

"In view of these facts, the National Executive Committee believes that it does not exaggerate when it charges that those who have engaged in this gross distortion of truth are unworthy of the confidence of Socialists. We do not believe that in the whole inter-

national movement there has ever been such vicious and venomous and uncalled for attacks as these indulged in by the so-called Left Wing.”

### **Worst Uphill work Over.**

The worst uphill work of the convention is over. The fights on contested seats, etc., have consumed 3 days. In the next 3 days the party must adopt its platform and announce its principles, rewrite its constitution, renew its National Executive personnel, and get down to the practical problems as the political expression of the working class.

There is a spirit now in the convention that presages complete success in all this work.

The convention has received a resolution from the Socialist Party of Mexico, urging it to work against the worldwide propaganda for American intervention in Mexico. A fraternal delegate to the next convention of the Mexican Socialists probably will be elected.

The resolution which was printed in *The Call* several days ago was accepted and referred to the Committee on Resolutions for action, when that committee is organized.

Most of the morning session was devoted to the conclusion of the contested seats committee's report.

### **Win Contested Seats.**

Eight delegates whose seats had been contested were seated last night. This morning the convention in one case reversed the recommendation of the committee and seated the California delegation and, in the case of Fred Harwood of New Jersey, who was unseated last night, reconsidered the action and sent it back to the committee.

The issue is more or less clear cut on the seating of contested delegates. Where it has been shown that the delegates were elected by the membership of their state and without the participation of the suspended language federations, they have been seated.

The unseated delegates are those who, in the view of the committee and the convention, were not willing to abide by the majority decision of the convention if seated, and had affiliated themselves with the so-called “Communist Party.”

### **Carney Most Outspoken.**

Probably the most outspoken of these is Jack Carney of Duluth, Minn., who told the committee on contested seats: “Your convention can go to hell.”

In Harwood's case it was urgently presented by the rest of the New Jersey delegation that Harwood was not a Left Winger and that he had been working against a split in the party.

The charge against him was that he had voted at the meeting of the self-styled new National Executive Committee in Cleveland to divert money arising from the sale of convention stamps away from the National Office.

Victor L. Berger was bitter in his denunciation of Harwood. He said he had voted against seating William Bross Lloyd, “millionaire Communist” of Chicago, a personal friend, and accused Harwood of “stabbing the party in the back.”

### **Harwood Enters Denial.**

“It's a lie!” shouted Harwood from the visitors' section, and order was restored with difficulty.

Mayor Hoan of Milwaukee had been elected chairman of the day and Oliver C. Wilson of Illinois, vice chairman. The convention went into Committee of the Whole on Harwood's case, but a motion to refer back to the original committee was carried.

### **Lajpat Rai to Speak.**

A telegram from Lajpat Rai, Hindu nationalist offering to address the convention on the situation in India was accepted, and he probably will speak tomorrow.

After 2 days of discussion, the convention had not reached on unanimous decision last night.

Then S. John Block arose to propose that the convention send a telegram to Eugene Victor Debs, four times the party's choice for President and now imprisoned by the government at Atlanta for his stand during the war. Block read the telegram:

### **Greetings Sent Debs.**

“The Socialist Party of the United States, in national convention assembled in Chicago, August 31,

1919, sends to you, our beloved comrade, Eugene Victor Debs, our warmest greetings as well as our ardent appreciation of the heroic part you are playing in the great struggle of the working class for emancipation. We pledge ourselves to you to do everything within our power to insure your speedy release.”

Chairman Lee called for a rising vote. Everybody in the hall, including the visitors’ section and half the press table, was on its feet instantly. Half the policemen stationed in the hall, who had been seated, also arose. Lee congratulated the bluecoats.

“We know you have to act under orders most of the time,” he said. “But we are glad to see that when you think, you think like men.”

#### **Telegram Sent Kate O’Hare.**

A similar telegram to Kate Richards O’Hare, incarcerated at the Missouri State Penitentiary, was read and passed by another unanimous vote.

Then Block read a telegram to Morris Hillquit, who has been ill for over a year at Saranac Lake, NY. The telegram expressed the regrets of the convention

at Hillquit’s illness and its sense of loss at his enforced absence.

Now, Hillquit has quite a few enemies among the delegates. There are those who, conceding his brilliancy, call him an autocrat. Others have personal animosities. Some opposition at least was more than half expected.

#### **No Opposition Voiced.**

*There was note. The convention rose as one and sank all personal feelings in the tribute to Hillquit, probably the biggest single figure in the movement with the exception of Debs.*

There was a human, tolerant touch in the action. The convention can stand plenty more of the same kind.

A telegram of congratulation to *The Call* on its acquisition of a home and plant of its own was also read and unanimously passed.

Block was instructed to prepare a statement to all political prisoners in the jails of the country.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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