
Socialists for Constitutional Methods: In Fighting Spirit. National Meeting. The Principles. A Very Active Corporal's Guard on Duty. Socialist Convention Arouses General Interest. Platform Subject of Lively Discussion. Splendid Speeches by Hillquit, Stedman, and Others. Wilson's Administration is Sharply Criticized. Nominations on Thursday. Debs and Maurer Proposed. [events of May 8-12, 1920]

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A little while ago we were told that the Socialist Party of America had committed suicide at St. Louis in April 1917. Today every newspaper in America is giving that identical party front page space, introducing the dope with heavy, rather conspicuous-looking headlines.

It must be a lively corpse, that suicide of 1917!

It is all about the Socialist Party convention that opened in New York last Saturday [May 8, 1920]. All the great speakers of the party are there, and even capitalist papers know and occasionally admit that Socialist speakers are worth listening to. They always find hearers, they always succeed in creating enthusiasm, but when it comes to the voting — that's a horse of another color.

The representatives of Buffalo at the convention are James Battistoni and Irving M. Weiss.

Before the convention started, the capitalist papers told their readers what the convention would do. No Democratic or Republican national convention could expect more newspaper attention. The fact is, the Socialist Party, small as it is, is the party of the future, the party that will dominate our political life when the old capitalist parties will be nothing more but memories, and by no means happy ones.

Just a Corporal's Guard on Duty.

According to the report of the National Commit-

tee, in September of last year [1919] the party membership had sunk to 24,000, and our rulers then tried to make the American people believe this handful of men and women intended to overthrow the government "by force and violence and other unlawful means."

The National Committee also reports that *The Eye-Opener* and *The Bulletin* will be combined in *The Socialist World*, which will be published monthly.

Since the party as such cannot acquire title to real estate, a society has been organized, known as the Socialist Society of the United States of America, and incorporated under the laws of the state of Arkansas, for the purpose of holding title to the headquarters property in Chicago.

The membership of the party at the present time is approximately 40,000, but 40 thousand Socialists must be a terrible force since our modern capitalist society with its huge armies of armed men is afraid of them! According to the latest accounts, the membership of the foreign language federations is as follows: Finnish, 13,546; Jewish, 3,474; Bohemian [Czech], 516; German, 778; Italian, 1,020; Slovak, 775; French, 184; Lithuanian, 216.

The cost of maintaining the National Office with its 6 translator-secretaries is about \$4,000 a month, but since the receipts average only \$2,035 a month, the office is faced with a monthly deficit of \$2,000.

Morris Hillquit's Keynote Speech.

The following fraternal delegates are taking part in the convention: William Hartley, Brotherhood of Painters and Decorators; J.B. Bailin, Workmen's Circle; A.J. Muste, Amalgamated Textile Workers; James P. Warbasse, the Cooperative League of America; Morris Kaufman, International Fur Workers' Union.

National Secretary [Otto] Branstetter opened the convention; 120 delegates answered "present" and 40 were recorded as absent.

Morris Hillquit was elected chairman. He had to make a speech, of course, the keynote speech of the convention, and said in part:

Within the last year all the powers of darkness and reaction in the country have united in a concerted attack upon the Socialist movement unparalleled in ferociousness and lawlessness.

The obvious object of the provocative onslaught is to crush the spirit and paralyze the struggles of the Socialist movement or to goad it into a policy of desperation and lawlessness, thus furnishing its opponents the pretext for wholesale violent reprisals and physical extermination.

The great question before the convention is: Will the Socialists of America prove true enough and brave enough to survive the attack and to withstand the provocation?

We will!

Socialism in Europe.

For while our frightened profiteers are engaged in a stupid campaign to kill our movement by violence, every social force at home and abroad is working irresistibly for the triumph of Socialism.

In Europe, where the ruling classes are wiser than ours, one nation after another is surrendering to the overwhelming tide of the Socialist movement. The great working class republic of Russia (*applause*) has [repelled] all counter-revolutionary attacks, domestic and foreign, and now, after a continuous and embittered struggle of 30 months, it stands before the world more strongly entrenched, more hopeful and confident than ever.

In Sweden, in Czecho-Slovakia, in Germany and Austria, Socialists largely are in control of the government.

In England, Italy, France, and Scandinavian countries, the Socialist workers are fast gaining political power. The most enlightened nations have openly or tacitly recognized that Socialism alone has the moral and intellectual resources to rebuild and revivify the shattered world, and in this, as in all other vital currents of modern life, the United States cannot effectively or permanently seclude itself from the rest of the world.

Wilson's New Freedom in Action.

And as time goes on, the passions and prejudices

aroused by the war will die out, its stultifying slogans created during the war will be forgotten, its horrors and ruins alone will stare accusingly at mankind from the blackest page of the world's history.

Then a sobered America will look back with gratitude to the small band of Socialists who saw the danger and sounded the warning, and were persecuted and jailed. This sobering up will be one of the factors that will make the American people turn to Socialism.

Today it is becoming increasingly clear that if the "treaty of peace" is not written all over, the war will have to be fought all over — unless the worldwide triumph of Socialism overtakes both the treaty and the war.

Speaking about the present administration, Hillquit said:

Wilson was elected by the vote of Socialists. But Wilson, the pacifist, drew us into the world's most frightful war.

Wilson, the anti-militarist, imposed conscription upon the country.

Wilson, the democrat, arrogated to himself autocratic powers grossly inconsistent with a republican form of government.

Wilson, the liberal, revived the medieval institutions of the inquisition of speech, thought, and conscience. His administration suppressed or tried to suppress radical publication, raided homes and meeting places of its political opponents, destroyed their property, and assaulted their persons.

Wilson, the apostle of the "new freedom," infested the country with stool pigeons, spies, and agents provocateur, and filled the jails with political prisoners.

Wilson, the champion of labor, restored involuntary servitude in the mines and on the railroads.

Nor was Wilson's fall purely personal. When Woodrow Wilson fell, the entire structure of middle class and capitalist liberalism tumbled with him like a house of cards.

The morbid national psychology which he has helped to create has produced such atavistic political types as Palmer, Burleson, Sweet, and Lusk. It has advanced to places of honor political mountebanks like Ole Hanson, but has put into prison stripes the noblest and truest types of American manhood, persons like Eugene Victor Debs.

Guests at the Convention.

When Hillquit had finished his opening address, the convention interrupted its regular business to make way for a brief speech by Edwin G. Theodore, Labour Prime Minister of Queensland, who sailed a few hours later for England.

William Z. Foster, the leader of the great steel strike, was also given the floor for 10 minutes. Telegrams of encouragement were sent to Eugene V. Debs and Kate Richards O'Hare.

Walter Cook of New York was elected secretary

of the convention.

The Committee on International Relations consists of Hillquit, Lee, Cohen, Berger, Soltis, Engdahl, Hoehn, McLaughlin, and Quick. Being barred from the United States did not prevent Jean Longuet, the French Socialist, from sending, through the columns of *Le Populaire*, fraternal greetings to the convention, advising all factions of the Socialist movement to unite.

Mass Meeting at Madison Square Garden.

Last Sunday afternoon [May 9, 1920] the Socialists of New York opened the Presidential campaign with a huge demonstration in Madison Square Garden, where Morris Hillquit, Seymour Stedman, Victor L. Berger, Oscar Ameringer, and other delegates to the convention made speeches. The enthusiasm of the many thousands assembled there was almost boundless, and the name of Eugene V. Debs was greeted with great ovations.

Hillquit announced that Debs would be the Presidential candidate of the party. He denounced the administration at Washington and both the Democratic and Republican parties as radically revolutionary in contrast to the Socialist Party, the only conservative force in American politics.

"The Democratic administration," he said, "has forcibly overthrown the cornerstone of the republic, the freedom of the press, speech, and assemblage, and has substituted for it the rule of the club and the jail.

"It has converted the Post Office Department into an index expurgatorius. It has remodeled the Department of Labor by substituting a bureau of jailing and injunction for the bureau of mediation and conciliation, and a bureau of deportation for the bureau of immigration. It has abolished the Department of Justice in charge of an Attorney General and has created a Department of Panic and Hysteria in charge of an Alarmist General."

Seymour Stedman emphasized the necessity of an international peace congress elected by the voters of the nations of the world, cessation of the exploitation of Poland as a means to attack Soviet Russia, and the independence of Ireland, India, and Egypt.

In defining the party's position in the Presidential

campaign, he stated its planks included "President Wilson's 14 points, which the Socialist Party advanced long before Wilson gave them to the boys to march away with."

"Now he has left those points, but we still hold them sacred," he added.

In appealing for the self-determination of small nationalities, Stedman said:

"Barrels of tears are wept for Belgium. But there isn't a tear left now for Ireland. And how about India and Egypt? They are in the same class."

Victor Berger, speaking of the bomb plots lately "discovered" by agents of the Department of Justice, suspected that some of the bombs "found" were manufactured in Department of Justice laboratories or were myths of bright young newspaper men's minds.

"I oppose any violent revolution," he added. "Revolution by violence begets nothing permanent. If the Russians want their kind of revolution, let them have it, and God bless them, but I want to have a peaceful revolution — the only kind that will last."

He closed with the remark: "Stand by your color — red; there's no question about that."

Platform Discussion Very Lively.

The platform as proposed by the committee headed by Hillquit caused a very spirited discussion. Engdahl, Holland, Kruse, Walter Cook, and Glassberg found fault with the committee's work because "it bore no resemblance to the programs of the Russian, German, French, and Italian Socialists." The convention finally decided to constitute itself a committee of the whole to consider the platform tomorrow morning. It was carried by a vote of 82 to 51.

The platform as proposed by the committee included the following declaration of principles:

The Socialist Party of the United States demands that the country and its wealth be redeemed from the control of private interests and turned over to the people to be administered for the equal benefit of all.

The Socialist Party, when in international control, proposes to reorganize the government in form and substance so as to change it from a tool of repression into an instrument of social and industrial service. The Socialist transformation cannot be successfully accomplished by political victories alone. The reorganization of the industries upon the basis of social operation and cooperative effort will require an intelligent and disciplined working class,

skilled not only in the processes of physical work, but also in the technical problems of management. This indispensable training the workers can best gain as a result of their constant efforts to secure a greater share in the management of industries through their labor unions and cooperatives.

Socialism and Unionism.

The Socialist Party does not interfere in the internal affairs of labor unions but supports them in all their struggles. In order, however, that such struggles might attain the maximum of efficiency and success, the Socialists favor the closest organic cooperation of all unions as one organized working class body. In their great struggle for emancipation the working class of America must present to their masters one solid front, industrially as well as politically.

The Socialist Party seeks to attain its end by orderly and constitutional methods. So long as the ballot box, the right of representation and civil liberties are maintained, violence will not appeal to the people. Violence is not the weapon of Socialism but of the short-sighted representatives of the ruling classes who stupidly believe that social movements and ideals can be destroyed by brutal physical repression. The Socialists depend upon education and organization of the masses.

They Are Still At It.

The platform fight lasted all day Tuesday [May 11, 1920] and was continued on Wednesday [May 12]. Irving M. Weiss took sides with the moderates in speaking against revolutionary phrase-mongering and against the adoption of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” into the platform. “I am not in favor of this dictatorship of the proletariat as it is in Russia today,” Weiss said. “Conditions in America are differ-

ent from those in Russia and — in answer to hisses from the galleries — those who hiss opposition to the dictatorship of the proletariat are ignorant and don’t know what they are doing.”

Engdahl, the leader of the radicals, said to the moderates: “You are afraid of the dictatorship of the proletariat, yet you have the dictatorship of Palmer, Wilson, and Burleson. You can’t fool anybody by phrases, nor can you fool anybody with the decorations of this convention hall, the American flag, the flag of Wall Street, and the dictatorship of Wilson.

“There is only one road to victory. There is only one flag, the red flag of International Socialism. We can do nothing better than ally ourselves with our comrades in Russia, Italy, and everywhere where they believe in International Socialism.”

James Oneal answered: “Let it go throughout the country that you favor a dictatorship of the proletariat and you cease to be a political party. Introduce such a resolution and you must do your work underground, or you will be driven under by Sweet at Albany and the politicians at Washington who exercise such a dictatorship, but that would not excuse us.

“Bourgeois democracy with all its shams and illusions permits in normal times decision by an honest and fair discussion. To espouse the dictatorship program would turn every such democracy into an absolute autocracy.”

Finally, by a vote of 103 to 33 the radical declaration of principles submitted by Engdahl and his friends was rejected.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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