

DAY TO DAY REPORT OF SOCIALIST CONVENTION

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with an indictment of the National Executive Committee, the Militants, and all those associated with them, as "communists" and "insurrectionists"—a term which he uttered with all the horror and hatred of a prosecutor demanding a verdict against a revolutionist in the dock. In spite of the unbelievably dull presentation of his speech, it nevertheless sought to bring forward some of the political differences at bottom of the fight, and in general it might be remarked that the representatives of the Old Guard were less inclined than were their opponents to rest their case on purely organizational points and legalistic detail. However ludicrously exaggerated were Oneal's and Waldman's efforts to label the S.P. leadership "communist", their speeches were aimed at emphasizing the fact that their intransigence was based primarily upon differences in principle and policy rather than on obscure squabbles of persons and posts. The Militants did indeed make at least one distinctive effort to emulate the Old Guard in this respect when the New York State Committee of the Left Wing circulated a statement summarizing the issues in the conflict. The character of the statement, however, failed to set the tone for their speeches in the convention, which is saying a good deal in criticism of their position, especially when it is borne in mind that the statement itself was far from meeting the obvious requirements of the situation.

The high point reached by the Old Guard was undoubtedly marked by the one-hour speech of Louis Waldman. Skillfully constructed, polished, effectively though at times too melodramatically delivered, aggressive through and through, it was designed to rally every available delegate around the banner of the Right wing for the purpose of getting the best possible send-off for his new party. His castigation of the Militants reeked of the reactionary social democrat's hatred of everything progressive and revolutionary in the labor movement. Nor did he remain silent about the principal ally of the Militants—Hoan and his Wisconsin delegation—although his boldness here was based primarily upon the fact that, after a meeting with the Hoan delegation, it had become clear that it would not support the demands of the Old Guard. To the Militants' criticism of his flirtations with LaGuardia and Roosevelt, Waldman therefore challengingly replied with what Norman Thomas called a "tu quoque"—that is, "so are you."

You condemn Waldman, he said, but you praise Hoan for doing no less in Wisconsin with the LaFollette than Waldman is supposed to have done in New York with LaGuardia. Why the discrimination between Hoan and Waldman? Because you have Hoan's vote! This rather provocative comparison, which aroused considerable interest, and not only among the press, did not succeed in drawing elaborate replies from the Militants who took the floor subsequently.

In the morning session following the midnight meeting which was taken up mainly by the speech of Waldman and Thomas' reply, a number of briefer presentations were made by spokesmen of the contending factions. For the most part they followed the lead given by the two principal speakers, although some of the rank and file Militants, like John Fisher of Illinois, distinguished themselves by the truly aggressive and uncompromising demand they made for a clean break with the Old Guard, not merely organizationally but above all politically. However, it had become clear at this point that virtually every delegate had already decided his course, and that the vote was predetermined.

Old Guard Overwhelmed

Four proposals were before the convention on the New York contest. The first proposal, made by Oneal for the Old Guard, to seat its New York delegation as a whole, was voted down on a weighted ballot: 4,397 in favor and 9,322 against, with some 1,200 not voting. These 4,397 thus represented the maximum outright support which the Old Guard could count on in the convention.

The Reading delegation proposed a compromise motion to seat 22 members of each of the New York contestants. Obviously designed to take a "neutral" position in the dispute and to continue the existence side by side in one party of the Right and Left wings, this met with scornful rejection by the consistent elements of both sides. The motion lost by a vote of 3,537 in favor and 11,097 against.

In the name of the Wisconsin delegation, Mayor Hoan proposed a second compromise in a motion to seat 32 of the "Thomas delegation" and 12 of the Old Guard delegation, on condition that all delegates seated should agree to abide by convention decisions and to recognize the reorganized State organization. Repeated demands from the floor addressed to the Right wing for the purpose of obtaining a categorical Yes or No with re-

spect to the conditions, failed of success. The Right wing was—and properly so—adamant in its demand for all or nothing. The Hoan motion was thereupon defeated by a vote of 4,393 in favor and 10,201 against, with some scattering abstentions. It was the last effort to arrange for the peaceful cohabitation of the conflicting currents. And the defeat of even so "conciliatory" a proposal is sufficient evidence of the depth of the division which the utmost in parliamentary maneuvering was unable to bridge.

The defeat of the Hoan motion, however, gave the Wisconsin delegation the basis for its final vote. "We have done our all; nothing remains but to seat the Militants"—this was the spirit in which they cast their final ballot on the motion of the Credentials Committee to seat the Militant delegation as a whole. The frenzied cheers of the convention when Wisconsin's favorable vote was cast on the motion was eloquent of the thoroughly ambiguous position which the Hoan delegation had taken throughout the fight in the last two years. The motion of the Credentials Committee was carried by a vote of 9,449 in favor and 4,809 against, with a few abstentions.

It had been expected by many that this vote would be the signal for a walkout on the part of the entire Right wing. The Right wing had, however, decided upon another strategy. Waldman's defeated group withdrew, and proceeded forthwith to set up "The Social Democratic Federation" and to issue statements to the press denouncing the Militants and all their works. The politically allied delegations from other states, on the other hand, remained in the Convention—though henceforth playing a comparatively minor role—apparently aiming to carry through the split in a more leisurely manner at home, hoping thereby to achieve the maximum of disruption in the Socialist Party proper.

Meanwhile, the Convention proceeded to complete its organization. The Committees were elected with solid Militant majorities, and Hoopes of Pennsylvania was fittingly rewarded by being selected as Chairman of Monday's sessions. These were devoted for the most part to the nomination of Thomas as Presidential candidate, of Nelson (of Wisconsin) as Vice-Presidential candidate, and to the various speeches and demonstrations in connection with the nominating, acceptance, etc. Since a considerable part of Tuesday's sessions (the Convention adjourning Tuesday night) were given over to the elections to the National Committee, discussion and action on the Platform, Committee reports, and various political resolutions, had to be sandwiched in here and there as the occasion permitted. The results were confusing on the surface, but nevertheless of the utmost significance in the tendencies which, explicitly or implicitly, emerged.

Organization Questions

In a confused and distorted, but very real, way, the Convention was facing some of the problems involved in the step to the left marked by the rejection of the New York Old Guard. For example, the report of the Organization and Campaign Committee contained a provision "That a Western States Organization Committee be set up having as its chairman a member of the N.E.C." This met at once with a bitter and slashing attack from the Right. Graham of Montana and the demagogic McKay of Washington led a reactionary onslaught against "dictation" and "the meddling of college boys from New York." Both were frank in stating that they would not abide by any such arrangement, that such a Committee would not be recognized in their states. McKay reached a climax in his demand: "You leave us alone and we will leave you alone." The proposal was then watered down to provide for a committee elected by the western states, rather than appointed by the N.E.C.; and was passed over the continuing opposition of the Right.

Trade Union Policy

The same result followed the presentation of the report on "Trade Union Policy." Section (7) of this report provided: "The National Executive Committee is instructed by this convention to set up a permanent National Labor Committee. Each local organization shall elect a Local Labor Committee whose duty it will be to coordinate the action of Socialists within the Trade Union in order to carry out the policy of the party. . . ." This section was assailed from the Right; a Wisconsin delegate moved to strike it out; Graham, McKay and others supported the motion to strike out on the grounds that the policy of the Section meant the building of Communist "cells" in the unions, that it would isolate the Socialists from the unions, that the business of the Socialists was to follow and not to try to lead or "interfere with" the trade unions, that it meant party "dictatorship"—and in general gave all the reactionary arguments common to their camp. The defense of

Statement of Minnesota S. P. on Farmer Labor Party Question

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ever given a majority candidate, on the express promise not to use the police in industrial disputes. Despite the treachery of Latimer, the Farmer-Labor party has refused to expel this man from its ranks or even to discipline him in any manner.

The state Farmer-Labor machine has continued to make unprincipled blocs with corrupt bourgeois politicians against the left and interests of the rank and file. It has stifled democracy within the party. It has at all times supported the most corrupt and reactionary section of the trade union movement against progressive trade unionists.

A national Farmer-Labor party, even if it arose under the best possible variant—that is, based on the economic organizations of the workers and farmers, as in Minnesota—could look and act no differently than does the Minnesota Farmer-Labor party. Our experience with the Farmer-Labor party in Minnesota, makes us certain that it is not the duty of the Socialist Party of America to throw its efforts behind a national Farmer-Labor party. Today and in the near future great sections of workers are awakening to political consciousness. To channelize the masses into a reformist party is a crime against the working class and the farmers of America. Nowhere has it been shown that American workers must go through the school of a reformist party. Such a step would be a backward one. It would retard for many years the development of a revolutionary socialist movement.

Drawing the lessons from our experience with the Farmer-Labor party in Minnesota, we say categorically that it is the immediate duty of the Socialist Party of America to build its own revolutionary

Marxist political party, the only party that can truly represent the American workers and farmers, and cope with modern industrial conditions. Our experience in Minnesota proves that for Socialists to assist in building a Farmer-Labor party only weakens the Socialist Party and misleads and confuses the workers who are seeking the way out of their misery and oppression.

However, should a national Farmer-Labor or labor party arise in America, the revolutionary Socialists must find the path to work with such a party in order to show its supporters the only road that will lead to the satisfaction of their needs, to their emancipation—the organization of a revolutionary Socialist Party, the overthrow of capitalist dictatorship, the smashing of the capitalist state machinery, the expropriation of the expropriators, the establishment of a working class democracy and of a socialist economy.

At all times the revolutionary Socialist Party must hold intact its ranks, must not dissolve its organization, but must turn its energies to the building and strengthening of its own organization. It must patiently explain to the masses the fallacies of a labor party in the period of capitalist decay. A Farmer-Labor party cannot stop to sleep—as was so tragically shown by the failures of the social-democratic parties in Germany and Austria. Nor can reformist parties prevent the outbreak of imperialist war. This was proven in 1914, when betrayals of these parties drowned the workers of Europe in a sea of blood.

Today it is only a revolutionary Socialist Party, working closely

with sister parties in all countries, that can weld together and educate the working class, gain the allegiance of the farmers, lead the onslaught against finance capitalism, overthrow the rule of the proletariat and lead America and the rest of the world to the establishment of a world socialist economy.

We therefore conclude that the Socialist Party cannot be the instrument that initiates or builds the Farmer-Labor party. We must be prepared to face the development of this reformist Farmer-Labor party as a force locally and nationally in a practical manner. The Socialist Party must always be in the position of analyzing the Farmer-Labor party in its true light, educating the workers to its inevitable reformist results, its dangers, and to the fact that only the achievement of Socialism through the leadership of a disciplined, revolutionary Socialist Party can permanently solve the problems of the working class.

We propose the adoption of this statement as the policy of the Socialist Party on the Farmer-Labor Party question. We further propose that this policy immediately be put into action nationally. Since it is impossible to set a blue print for procedure in local instances that merit different tactics because of difference in conditions, we should resolve that no local section of the Socialist Party shall be permitted to negotiate, endorse, or permit any of its membership to enter into relationship with a Farmer-Labor Party without first consulting with the National Executive Committee for permission. In making decisions on all such cases, the N.E.C. shall act in accordance with the policy as herein stated.

the Committee report showed interesting variations. Fisher of Illinois spoke sharply from a clear-cut left position, and made his remarks another attack direct against the Old Guard. David Lasser of New York defended the Committee, but at the same time dissociated himself from any policy of building "cells" or attempting to "interfere with" the mass organizations. A compromise was proposed to change "shall" to "may" in the Section of the report under discussion. Paul Porter spoke for the compromise, and emphasizing how thoroughly he was against any "dictatorship from the top." Through its Chairman, Murray Gross of New York, the Committee accepted the compromise; Gross, however, expressing his personal disapproval of the change. But Glenn Trimble of California, a member of the Committee, rejected the compromise from the left, and forced a vote. The compromise carried. The motion to strike out the entire section was lost—with the Wisconsin delegating voting with one or two exceptions to strike out; and the section as amended was adopted.

The peculiar status of the Wisconsin delegation was again brought

out during the nominations to the N.E.C. Hoan, in accepting nomination, stated that he did so conditionally, since, as he put it, his very considerable duties in his own state might force him to withdraw later on. His election, however, followed in due course.

Conflict on the Platform

It was the discussion and action on the campaign Platform which brought out most fully the conflicting currents present within the Convention. It had been rumored that four platforms were under consideration: one prepared by Harry W. Laidler, one by Gus Tyler, one by Herbert Zam, and a fourth which had been published in the June issue of the Socialist Appeal. The Platform Committee, controlled by the New York Militants, first reported out what was said to be essentially the Laidler platform: a document throughout of standardized social-democratic reformism, with scarcely a breath of revolutionary content. There was no phrase in it which could not have been wholeheartedly accepted by the Old Guard. When it reached the floor, it became at once apparent

that the left wing delegates were prepared to open up a fighting attack on it all down the line. Jack Altman of New York thereupon stepped forward and moved to have the platform referred back to the Committee; and this action was taken.

On Tuesday the Platform made its appearance in a somewhat modified form, with certain sections deleted, and in a few cases sentences from the Appeal Platform—a document of militant class struggle, thoroughly imbued with vigorous revolutionary spirit—substituted for phrases from the original. In substance, however, the Committee Platform was not altered, remaining a consistently reformist statement—a fact attested by the support it received from the Right wing delegations. Laidler, for the Committee, read the Platform paragraph by paragraph, stopping at the end of each to ask for objections; when there were none, the paragraph was adopted; if there were objections, the paragraph was debated.

An interesting division occurred on the very first paragraph: The Platform (in its revised form,

though not in its original) called for a society in which "the industries of the country shall be socially owned. . . ." The Right wing proposed to change "socially" to "publicly." Laidler accepted the proposal; King, of Michigan, a member of the Committee, objected; and, on a vote, King was upheld.

The Road to Power

Left wing delegates from Arkansas and Minnesota, moved certain short but important changes in sentences dealing with the war question. The most important test, however, came on the motion of Whitten of Arkansas to substitute the paragraphs in the Appeal Platform on "The Road to Socialism" for the watery, reformist statement given in paragraph eleven of the Committee Platform. The issue at this point was entirely clear: it was in effect on the altogether decisive question of the road to power and the nature of the Workers' State; with the Committee Platform giving the reformist answer, and the Appeal Platform the revolutionary answer. Delegate Whitten presented his case well, and was applauded with full enthusiasm by the rank and file delegates of the Left. David Lasser at one point interrupted to enquire sarcastically whether Whitten was proposing an amendment or an entirely new Platform—a justified question, which served to point the issue even more clearly.

The division was by a rising vote. Remarkably enough, Whitten's amendment lost only by a vote of 52 in favor, 72 against (with a number of abstentions). His support came chiefly from the delegations of Illinois, Minnesota, Indiana, Colorado, California, with scattered votes elsewhere. There was particular interest in the New York vote, which held a balance of power on the question. Only two delegates from New York were seen to rise in favor of Whitten's motion. Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and the Right wing delegations thus had their way with the Platform.

War Plank Disputed

Approximately the same division occurred on the motion of Delegate Parshall to strike out the pacifist paragraph of the division on immediate demands dealing with "Militarism and War," and to substitute the simple double slogan of the Appeal Platform ("Not a penny, not a man, to the military aims of the government; unconditional opposition to any war engaged in by the American government.") Here, amusingly enough, after voting Parshall down, the Convention moved to add the Appeal statement.

The motion of Ernest Erber of Illinois to amend the final paragraph by substituting the corresponding paragraphs of the Appeal platform—unfortunately defended weakly by Erber because of the shortness of time allotted to him—was voted down by a voice vote. A number of additional paragraphs on "Socialized Medicine," "The Commonwealth Plan," etc., were thrown into the pot. When the Platform was then adopted as a whole, a considerable group of left-wing delegates rose to their feet demanding that their names be inserted in the records as opposed.

Two more vigorous struggles re-

mained for the crowded closing minutes of the final session: on the Farmer-Labor Party resolution and the United Front. In between, a number of significant motions and resolutions dealing with the Y.P.S.L., the war question, "armed insurrection," changes in the Constitution and the Declaration of Principles, were passed without discussion, and will not be taken up here, since they failed to reveal clearly the demarcations and tendencies in the Convention itself.

The Farmer-Labor Party

The Committee report on the Farmer-Labor Party was ambiguous in the extreme, and of a kind to provide no resistance to the maneuvers of the Stalinists on this question. It favors a Farmer-Labor Party, but declares that one is not possible in 1936; it states that Socialists must work vigorously for it in the unions, and spends most of its space discussing the form that a "genuine" Farmer-Labor Party should take. It was attacked sharply both from the right and from the left. The left opponents distinguished their opposition clearly from that of the Right pointing out the extremely reactionary character of the opposition from the right; and at the same time criticizing vigorously the confused and basically reformist character of the Committee resolution.

At the same time that it attacked the Committee resolution, the left wing took positive action when Pemble of Minnesota, as a minority member of the Committee, introduced as a substitute a shortened form of the Resolution on the Problem of a Farmer-Labor Party passed at the pre-convention Conference of the Socialist Party of Minnesota (this is reprinted elsewhere in this issue—Ed.). Pemble defended the uncompromising revolutionary perspective of the Minnesota resolution. The Minnesota resolution was lost on a voice vote; and the majority resolution carried by a vote of 109 in favor, 64 against.

United Front Resolution

The Convention ended with a short but bitter debate on the United Front resolution. The majority report, far from clear in form, included clauses providing for United Fronts with the Communist Party. (At an earlier session a proposal from the C.P. for a united election ticket and a standing joint committee on united front actions had been tabled without a dissenting voice.) A minority resolution against any United Front involving the C.P., introduced by the Right wing, was lost 67-89. The Left wing was anxious to force the issue (it is significant that on this issue alone during the last sessions did the New York Militants stand with the left wingers who had fought the central questions with respect to the platform). Darlington Hoopes openly threatened to split if the question were voted on. After hasty caucusing, Thomas took the floor for the Militants and proposed to carry the matter to a referendum, to be held after the November elections. The Convention thus closed, as it had begun, on the thin edge of a split, but this second time more profound and far-reaching in its implications.

Belgian People's Front Mirrors France's Future

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the Belgian National Union and the French People's Front is that the Stalinists are excluded from it—as yet. The Belgian Communist Party has been so insignificant a force that hitherto there has been no occasion to take its participation or approval seriously. That is why Repard blithely refers to the Catholics and Liberals in Belgium as "reactionary parties." These parties of the Belgian Center are of course in no way to be distinguished from the French Radicals, except in this: that the Belgian Socialists have long pursued the policy of participating with them in coalition governments, even with Socialist premiers, a policy only recently accredited in France.

The Belgian Labor Party lost support not because the leadership refused to add the Stalinists to the present coalition. This would have simply meant adding a tiny social-patriotic (and inexperienced) competitive organization to a very old and going concern.

The developments in Belgium are the consequences of the course pursued by the P.O.B. in the sphere of "People's Front" policies and the actual experience that the Belgian masses have already had with the governments established through the coalition of the Socialists, the Catholics and the Liberals. The Belgian workers have already had their Socialist premier, true, his name is not Blum but Vandervelde.

Belgium the Mirror for France

The experience of these coalition governments was mirrored in Austria, where Socialists entered into coalition governments with Clericals, and pursued the self-same social-patriotic, strikebreaking and capitulating policies. It is disgust and disillusion with such policies that underlies the losses of Vandervelde and Co.

It ought to be noted that Belgium is in a somewhat advanced stage as regards its economic developments as well. In Belgium the devaluation of the currency which is pending in France has al-

ready taken place. The masses of the workers and of the petty bourgeoisie have already felt the effects of devaluation, and have added this to their already extensive experience with a "National Union" (or a People's Front) government which can put through only the policy of finance capital. This has provided an added impulse to drive the middle classes into the arms of clerical Fascism.

Stalinists Gain Despite Themselves

As for the Communist gains, these were scored not because of the policies they pursue but despite them. The Belgian workers, moving to the left, sensing and seeking a revolutionary solution to the crisis, turn towards the C.P. in precisely the same way that the German workers swung away from the social democracy towards the C.P. up to the very day that Hitler assumed power.

What we observe in Belgium today, was observed in its time in Austria and in Germany. The initial stages of the same process are also observable in France. In France, we have the self-same disintegration of the parties of the Center (the Radicals), and the growth of the right and the left wings. Once France will have had its experience with the governments in which Socialists participate, or also participate in . . . then the French Fascists will likewise begin scoring their spectacular gains. In this latter respect Belgium today mirrors the future of the French People's Front.

Criticism Boomerang for D. W.

The Daily Worker, in the person of Repard condemns the Belgian Socialists for joining a government "on a program of salvaging capitalist profits." This is A B C for every revolutionist. But in the case of Repard, this is not revolutionary criticism but Stalinist hypoc-

ry. If the Belgians are to be damned for supporting Belgian capitalists, why is Blum to be supported by the French Stalinists? For Blum came out openly in his speech at the Salle Wagram with the statement that he was accepting the premiership not on the basis of a Socialist program, but on the basis of a People's Front program, which, said Blum, is a program of capitalism. Or is there perhaps a program of capitalism which does not salvage capitalist profits?

Every criticism that Repard levels at the Belgian "National Union" applies with equal force to the People's Front; even Repard's criticism of the Belgians for their dumping the de Man Plan. This Plan was proposed by the P.O.B. leadership in the very first days of the leftward move of the masses after the German debacle. It proposed to "immediately" institute socialism by buying out the capitalists, nationalizing all key industries, etc. It served its purpose of sidetracking the masses from revolutionary struggle.

Repard is quite outspoken in his condemnation of the Belgian Plan, and we would like to know when he will tell us a little something about Jouhaux's Plan, a modest edition of de Man's Plan, which was likewise proposed and similarly dumped in France. And, again, what has happened to the economic demands of the People's Front program, and its own "New Deal"? When are the Laval emergency decrees to be abolished? When are the rich going to be "soaked"? What about the 2-year military service in France?

Once the demagogy of the People's Front will have been bared to the masses in France by the actions of the People's Front Government, then it will be clearly seen that the People's Front is not

an obstacle but an aid to Fascism; that it is merely an extended version of the coalition governments in Austria, Belgium, etc.

Growth of Revolutionary Vanguard

A section of the Belgian vanguard has learned well the lessons of the experience in Germany and Austria. It is this section—Action Socialiste Revolutionnaire—that has been expelled from the P.O.B. for having refused to accept dumbly the self-same policies of capitulation that brought about the debacle in Berlin and Vienna. What has hitherto rendered the working class impotent in the face of its mortal enemy has been the absence of an organized revolutionary vanguard. The most hopeful sign of the developments in Belgium lies in the steps toward such a vanguard. The future of Belgium depends upon whether the vanguard is able to fuse itself with the masses of workers before the social-patriots of the Second and the Third Internationals have so demoralized the masses, and have surrendered such important positions as would enable the Fascists to launch a general offensive, and slide into power, in still another country.

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