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Forty Thousand Expelled by Seven

The following is the first of several articles describing the Party crisis, and the autocratic actions of the Right Wing members of the National Executive Committee at its recent historic meeting in Chicago. It is written and issued by Comrades L. E. Katterfeld and Alfred Wagenknecht, members of the National Executive Committee, and Louis C. Fraina.

VIOLETING every principle of fair play and square dealing and disregarding every constitutional provision to the contrary, the National Executive Committee, at its session in Chicago, May 24 to 30th, expelled the state organization of the Socialist Party in Michigan, constituting nearly 6,000 members, without a trial; suspended the Russian, Lithuanian, Polish, Lettish, Hungarian, Ukrainian and South Slavic Federations of the Party, constituting more than 30,000 members and—worst of all, and let it be said to their everlasting shame—are autocratically holding up the national referendums for the election of a new National Executive Committee, International Delegates, International Secretary, and upon the question of the Emergency National Convention.

Never before in the history of the Socialist Party have Party officials dared so outrageously to violate Party principles. A wilful group of seven members out of a total National Executive Committee membership of fifteen, ten of whom attended the meeting, usurped power which the constitution does not grant them, and which the Socialist Party membership never intended any servants of the Party to have. This wilful group of seven did not, however, act as servants of the Party—but as dictators and tyrants to defeat the expressed will of the membership and to perpetuate themselves in office.

This is the crisis. In these frantic efforts of the official bureaucracy of the Socialist Party to maintain itself in power, we see the final attempt of bourgeois reformism to crush revolutionary Socialism in the United States. This crisis affects the integrity and future of the Socialist Party; if our Party is wholeheartedly and unequivocally to stand for a Socialism which will not compromise, which will not fail in times of test, then every Party member must rebuke this unscrupulous action, and must take a stand in support of the nearly 40,000 comrades arbitrarily deprived of Party membership for their fidelity to the principles of true International Socialism.

The objects of the autocratic seven are as plain as daylight. Like a tidal wave, the demand for the tactics and principles of the kind of Socialism which stands true to the working class at all times, has swept the Party. The thousands of comrades who were sincerely attempting to convince Party members that a more revolutionary kind of Socialism was necessary, were known as the "Left Wing". This Left Wing in our party understood clearly that the Scheidemann brand of Socialism means the

Call for a National Conference of the Left Wing

Call for a National Conference of the Left Wing of the American Socialist Party, issued by Local Boston, (Louis C. Fraina, Secretary); Local Cleveland, (C. E. Ruthenberg, Secretary); and the Left Wing Section of the Socialist Party of New York City, (Maximilian Cohen, Secretary).

The international situation and the crisis in the American Socialist Party; the sabotage the party bureaucracy has practised on the emergency national convention; the N. E. C. aligning our party with the social-patriots at Berne, with the Congress of the Great Betrayal; the necessity of reconstructing our policy in accord with revolutionary events,—all this, and more, makes it necessary that the revolutionary forces in the Socialist Party get together for counsel and action.

This call is therefore issued, for the holding of a National Conference of the Left Wing of the American Socialist Party, to discuss:

1.—The crisis in the party, and action thereon; the conquest of the party for the party, for revolutionary Socialism.

2.—The New International; ways and means to prevent the party aligning itself with the "International" of the social-patriots, of the Ebert-Scheidemann gangsters, and the wavering centre; affiliation with the Bolshevik-Spartan Communist International alone.

3.—The formulation of a declaration of principles and purposes of a national scope of the Left Wing of the American Socialist Party.

4.—Forming some sort of a national council or bureau of the Left Wing for propaganda, securing of information and spreading information.

5.—To express and draw together the revolutionary forces in the party; to consider other means of furthering the cause of revolutionary Socialism.

This call is issued to locals of the Socialist Party, branches and Left Wing groups within the party. The test of admission, provisionally, will be acceptance of the Manifesto of the Left Wing of the Socialist Party of Greater New York.

Left Wing locals are invited to send delegates officially. Where a local officially refuses to participate, branches or minority groups in the party accepting the principles of the Left Wing should send delegates.

Representation—one delegate for every 500 members. No local or group should send more than four delegates. Locals or minority groups with less than 500 members are entitled to one delegate.

The conference will be held starting Saturday, June 21, in New York City. Each delegate will be taxed \$25 for a central fund, out of which will be paid the expenses of all delegates.

Left Wing Locals and Branches, act! Send communications to Maximilian Cohen, 43 West 29th St., New York City.

betrayal and defeat of the working class, and that only the Socialism of Liebknecht and Lenin had within it the potentialities of success and victory. It was to "rescue" the party from this Left Wing faction, to clean out or it all who stood bravely against pure and simple reformism, that the seven National Executive Committee dictators threw 40,000 members out of the Party.

Through caucuses held outside of regular sessions, the following methods of action were adopted by the autocratic Seven.

1. Not yet knowing how the referendum for the election of a new National Executive Committee would result, they decided to revoke the charter of the Socialist Party of Michigan, sensing that the members in Michigan would vote overwhelmingly against members of the Wilful Seven running for re-election in the Michigan district.

2. A few days later, having found out that despite the expulsion of Michigan the radical candidates for election to the National Executive Committee would win out, the Wilful Seven decided to hold up the entire national referendum upon the election.

3. In another caucus the Wilful Seven came to the conclusion that after all, the coming National Convention would speak its mind against these autocratic acts, and would endorse Left Wing Socialism. And therefore the suspension of 40,000 members in seven foreign federations was decided upon, these seven federations having supported radical Socialism in the Party.

4. Feeling that despite these suspensions the Left Wing might still find itself in the majority at the National Convention—in fact, confessing that it would—they then proceeded to form a corporation, the majority directors of which are Socialists of the same stamp as the Wilful Seven; and in the

hands of these directors is to be placed the entire property of the Socialist Party, including the new headquarters building upon which \$10,000 has been paid. These directors cannot be recalled by the Party members, cannot be removed by the National Executive Committee, and only cease being directors if their Locals expel them from membership in the Party.

When we remember that most of the Wilful Seven, as candidates for re-election to the National Executive Committee and to the office of International Delegates, knew themselves defeated and realized that the official machinery of the party was about to pass into the hands of the Left Wing, the revolutionary element, these efforts to retain control become doubly despicable; for then they are clearly shown to be brazen attempts to defy the will of the Party membership.

But these desperate tactics must not be construed alone as a frantic effort of defeated officials to retain their jobs. This is part and parcel of the controversy upon principles and tactics in the Socialist Party. It is the struggle between the Right Wing and the Left Wing, between moderate petty bourgeois Socialism and revolutionary proletarian Socialism.

The "moderates" on the National Executive Committee show no realization of the problems of the International Revolution. They do not see the need of reconstructing the Party policy in accord with the experience gained by our comrades in Europe, or, at any rate, do not act toward that end.

The crisis is serious. It affects the future of Socialism and the proletariat in America. We are confident that revolutionary Socialism will conquer the Party. It will prevail despite the sabotage of the Wilful Seven. Let no comrade feel disheartened. No one member should quit the Party. In fact, every member should work with might and main to get members and build, build, build. We know the game of the "moderates." They want the Left Wing to desert the Party, leaving the Party machinery and property in the hands of the autocrats. They will be disappointed in this. Every radical Socialist will stick to the end, working night and day for the reinstatement of the nearly 40,000 members the Wilful Seven have severed from the Party.

Insist that the referendum votes upon the election of a new National Executive Committee be counted and made public. Insist that the expulsion of Michigan and the federations shall not prevail. Second the referendum motions to reverse the acts of the Wilful Seven, acts unconstitutional and outrageous. Rally to the Left Wing, comrades, for to the Left Wing belongs the future of Socialism.

The slogan of the "moderates" is—"Split the Party for moderate petty bourgeois Socialism." The slogan of the Left Wing is—"Conquer and unite the Party for revolutionary Socialism, for the Communist International."

N. Y. State Left Wing

New York, May 31st, 1919.

Dear Comrade:

In view of recent happenings in Local, State and National Party affairs, the details of which you have heard by this time, we believe the time is ripe for a sort of tentative state organization of the Left Wing in New York State. The State Executive Committee has begun the same tactics on a state scale which Local New York has been practising on a local scale; that is, the re-organization and expulsion of Left Wing locals. In order that we may counter this blow it would be advisable for all Local Secretaries, or organizers or representatives elected by Left Wing Locals, to participate in such a conference, to meet and draw up a plan of campaign of education and organization so that we may keep our membership intact and capture the Party organization wherever possible. Where that is impossible, due to the sabotage of officer-holders, we may have to take steps to build up Left Wing organizations within the Party.

All this of course is subject to the action taken by the National Left Wing Conference on June 21st.

But we cannot wait until then, working separately and disorganized. WE MUST ACT NOW.

Can you bring this matter up before your Local, or, if the time is too short, come yourself, or send someone in your place, to a state conference of Left Wing Locals, on Sunday afternoon at 2 o'clock, June 8th, at Wellington Hotel, Albany, N. Y.

Trusting you will be present.

Yours fraternally,
MAXIMILIAN COHEN,
Executive Secretary,
Local Greater New York,
Left Wing Section.

Cleveland Protests

In a desperate attempt to prevent the Left Wing of the Socialist Party from capturing the National Executive Committee of the Party the existing Executive Committee, whose term of office expires at the end of June, has arbitrarily expelled the entire Michigan state organization from the Party.

This action expelling 6000 members from the Party was taken without giving the Michigan comrades a hearing or an opportunity to defend themselves.

Local Cuyahoga County promptly initiated an amendment to rescind the action of the committee. Every local which stands for fairness and decency within the party should send their endorsement of the following resolution to the national office:

RESOLUTION

RESOLVED, By the joint meeting of the branches of Local Cuyahoga County, representing an average of 1,821 members in good standing for the year 1918, that we initiate the following motion, to be submitted to referendum of the Party membership in the United States.

RESOLVED, That the action of the National Executive Committee in revoking the charter of the Socialist Party of Michigan be rescinded and annulled.

Signed: C. E. ROYKESBERG,
Chairman.
CARL HACKER,
Secretary.