

Report of the National Left Wing Conference

Immediate Organization of Communist Party

MacALPINE: I move to suspend the regular order of business and go to the discussion of the advisability of forming a Communist Party.

Larkin: In putting the motion, I suggest that you have Comrade Ruthenberg and Comrade Hourwich draft a brief resolution. We want the advisability of starting a Communist Party here and now, or waiting until the 30th August, settled.

Hourwich and Ruthenberg, thereupon drew up the following resolution.

"Be it resolved that this National Conference representing the Left Wing within the Socialist Party hereby sever all relations with the Socialist Party, and that we begin immediately the organization of the Communist Party."

The Chairman: We will vote on Comrade MacAlpine's motion to suspend the rules.

(The motion was made to suspend the rules and this was unanimously carried.)

Ruthenberg: Comrades, you understand of course, that in moving this resolution, I did so by instruction of the body, and not because of any sympathy with what the resolution proposes. I believe personally that the proposition contained in that resolution would be the best way in the world to hamper the Left Wing movement in the organization of a virile Communist Party in the future. We have thus far endeavored to carry on our fight within the Socialist Party. We have won the fight within the Socialist Party, and now some comrades come here and ask us to scuttle the ship and run away when we have won a victory. We only need to press that victory in order to take hold of the existing order. (Applause.) By this conference going on record to organize a Communist Party, we are taken away from the position which we now hold before the membership of the Socialist Party. We carried on a fight through the machinery of the party organization. We have won in a referendum. And now the other side adopts extra constitutional means to rob us of our victory, and we are in a position before the membership as the injured party in the struggle. If we now step out of the organization—and remember there is in the heart of most members of the organization some feeling of loyalty to the organization, some feeling that this party under the name of the Socialist Party which they have sacrificed for, for so many years, is something they don't want to easily let go of, and if we take this step and ask them to go outside the organization, we are not going to carry with us as many members of that party—those who even are in sympathy with our purpose and our manifesto and program—than if we continue to fight through the two short months that still lie before the National Convention. And I submit to you that at that National Convention will be the appropriate time for us to proceed—not at the end, but at the very beginning of that convention.

What situation will we find? Some of us here say that the reactionaries will control that convention. How? They will control, then step out and organize your Communist Party. But if we go there with delegates from the several expelled organizations, if we go there with the delegates of all the organizations inside of the party, and the secretary calls that

Owing to the fact that it is impossible to get out the complete stenographic report of the proceedings of the National Left Wing Conference, June 21-25, in booklet form in the short time at our disposal, it has been decided to run extracts from the report dealing with the matters now under dispute. It is proposed to give such extracts as will state the position of both sides and will throw all possible clarity on the issues involved.

convention to order, who is going to be in control on the floor of that convention? Who is going to elect the chairman? Who is going to be in the majority? Why, the members of the Left Wing. And if they adopt some scheme, some parliamentary action to eliminate these outcast delegations, then we, the majority will simply start right there on the floor of that convention and proceed to organize the Communist Party. (Great applause.)

Zucker: Comrade Ruthenberg states that we have carried the fight within the Socialist Party until now, and that we shall proceed to carry on the fight in the same manner as in the past, until August 30th, in spite of the fact that the majority of the organization committee has reported that in their opinion the N. E. C. is going to expel nearly seventy-five per cent of the membership of the Socialist Party, in order to continue their control of the organization. Comrade Ruthenberg still labors under the delusion that because we have the majority of the votes, therefore the control of the machinery of the Socialist Party follows inevitably. Comrades, let us not make the great mistake of imagining that because we have the votes, therefore the machinery comes our way. We have been shown the fallacy of the Right Wingers who claim that when we shall have captured fifty-one per cent of the votes on election day, we will then get control of the State. We tell them that is an absurdity. In order to control the State, you must destroy the capitalist state. And so it is here. In the referendum of the membership we had at least 75 per cent of the membership voting our way. But a group of seven individuals have defeated the will of more than half the membership of the Socialist Party—have expelled them from the Socialist Party—and what is more, they are determined to expel the other half. At a meeting of the N. E. C., they elected a Board of Trustees that took over the control of the property of the Socialist Party, which means that they—the Left Wing, if it shall by some miracle, capture the Socialist Party, there will no doubt be a legal fight as to whether the present N. E. C. is the legal Socialist Party. Comrades, I say it is absurd. It is criminal for the Left Wing to bring its case before the tribunals to decide the justice and legality of our act. Comrades, the Left Wing has not only been spat in the face in Chicago—they have been kicked down stairs, and now it is proposed that the Left Wing shall come crawling back to plead for justice and for mercy and for constitutionality. Comrades, more than half of the delegates present are now out of the Socialist Party. We have been expelled from the Socialist Party, and it is impossible for me as an individual as well as for other comrades to have their opinions voiced at the meeting of the National Convention. Another thing, let us not commit the

fatal error of waiting until August 30th before we shall organize our party. The machine in the Socialist Party is wise. They have always adopted the policy, whenever the revolutionary movement of the Socialist Party becomes powerful, of seeming to adopt the program of the revolutionists, and once this is adopted the machine will remain in control. Comrades, I want you to think back to the historic fight of 1912 between Hillquit and Hayward, when six months later Hayward was kicked out of the Socialist Party. I want you to remember how in 1917 in St. Louis, when the rank and file of the party demanded a revolutionary program, the reactionaries in the Socialist Party adopted a revolutionary program—the **St. Louis Program**. . . . No sooner was it adopted, than it became a mere scrap of paper, and the machine supported the war. They voted for liberty bonds. Their congressmen voted for appropriations, and the rank and file were ignored. Comrades, they are going to adopt a similar St. Louis program on August 30th. They are going to adopt the principles of the Left Wing, and then come before the members of the Socialist Party and say, "Comrades, why split? We have always been with the Left Wingers in principle." I will read from an official organ of the Socialist Party. It says, "It is true, comrades, that the new conditions require a change in policies. I am sure that I am speaking for the majority of the committee in stating that we intend to make such changes. But you of the Left Wing cannot wait. You adopt your manifesto and tell us to swallow it or smash the party." And that is what they will do on August 30th. They will seemingly adopt our program and principles, and they will say, "we expelled the Left Wing not because we are against the principles, but because they wanted to shove it down our throats," and then, comrades, they will play the same trick that they did in 1910 and 1912 and every other fight, where the revolutionary rank and file tried to assert its power and gain control of the party machinery. Comrades, now it the time for action. If we wait for August 30th—the historic moment to organize the party is lost. Now, the rank and file in the Socialist Party is with us. They feel that we have been unfairly dealt with by the machine, and, comrades, we know that a great many of those within the Left Wing are not Left Wingers because of conviction. The great mass within the Left Wing are there because of sentiment, because we have been wrongly dealt with. Comrades, let us have the courage to start not with the great mass, although I say without the masses no revolution can succeed. We want the masses, but we want them on our program, and on our principles. Let us have the courage to start with a small number, if possible, but let us start as real revolutionists, and ask the rank and file to join with us on all principles to organize the Communist Party. (Great applause.)

MacAlpine: Comrade Chairman and Comrades: It is all very well to talk about the name "Communist." Any person who is a delegate to this convention can get on this floor and make an emotional appeal on the name "Communist." We all know that the name "Communist" is covered with the blood of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. We all know that this name has been adopted in