
Party Demands Capitalists Pay Expense of Conflict

[events of April 12, 1917]

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ST. LOUIS.— One of the real struggles over the majority report on war and militarism came after the preamble had been adopted and the program was under discussion.

Conscription of incomes, brought up by Dan Hogan, Arkansas, since the matter had not been mentioned in the report, started the debate that forced the 4th roll call of the convention since the majority report came up for discussion.

The convention finally went on record, by a vote of 101-1/2 to 69, in favor of conscripting incomes over \$5,000 and putting the financial burden of war on the class that profits from war.

Capitalists Ought to Pay.

The matter of conscripting first came before the convention in a substitute for the majority's program, offered by delegate Cameron King, California. King's substitute contained matter brought before the convention in a statement by Allan L. Benson, and which had been previously offered by delegate [T.W.] Williams, California, but ruled out of order. The King substitute was lost on a roll call vote by 117 to 47.

Delegate Hogan again started the ball rolling on conscription of incomes by offering his motion.

"The capitalists involve us in war and they ought to be compelled to pay for it," he declared.

Delegate A. Wagenknecht, Ohio, was among those who took up the cudgel against the Socialist Party going on record in favor of conscription of incomes.

He pointed out that numerous societies already were in existence promoting interest in the propaganda

of the conscription of incomes, and that prominent among the contributors to these societies were big capitalists.

He declared Socialists would not conscript their lives under any circumstances. He said that advocacy of conscription of incomes would justify conscription of lives.

"Let us not show the capitalists how to carry on war," he said. "The conscription of incomes will only help them to carry on wars more efficiently."

Morris Hillquit, New York, made the closing argument for inserting a declaration for the conscription of incomes in the party war declaration.

No Trade Involved.

"I am heartily in favor of the substitute," he said. "We do not offer to trade conscription of lives for conscription of incomes. We are merely holding out ideas to the people. If you would confiscate all incomes over \$5,000 there would be an end to war in 48 hours. It is childish to say we would be telling the capitalists how to run their wars. They are skinning us to death."

The Hogan substitute carried by a show of hands. This was then followed by a demand for a roll call and the vote showed 101-1/2 to 69.

The entire preamble of the majority report carried after hours of debate with only one change in the form of an addition to the 4th paragraph. The addition was offered by delegate [Kate] O'Hare, Missouri, and declares that: "We particularly warn the workers against the snare and the delusion of so-called defensive warfare."

Addition Fought Over.

This addition was fought on the grounds that the original draft of the majority report already covered this question. Some delegates argued that it wouldn't hurt to have it in the preamble twice and so it was inserted by a vote of 81 to 51. The preamble of the majority report was carried by a vote of 104 to 39. Efforts to insert statements on defensive and offensive warfare, previous to the motion offered by delegate O'Hare were defeated by 111 to 62 and 105 to 63.

One of the substitutes offered for the majority preamble was that by delegate Emil Seidel, Milwaukee. It was defeated. It read as follows:

To the people and workers of the United States:

The United States has now been drawn into the world war. The Socialist Party has done all it could to prevent it. Socialism and all Socialists are and have always been opposed to wars if waged in the interests of the capitalist class. Such wars mean that the working class does the fighting and dying, while the capitalist class makes the profits.

In spite of all our appeals to the workers and our petitions and protests to the government of the United States, we have failed in our struggle to prevent the war. We have failed not for lack of goodwill, but because the working class is not yet sufficiently strong in organization, economic and political power.

If the working class ever wants to be a deciding factor it must be far better organized than it is; it must control the instruments with which it makes its livelihood; it must control the means of transportation and communication and it must be in possession of the political power so that it can make the laws, judge them, and enforce them.

But now we have war and therefore we shall have to suffer the horrors of war. When martial law rules all civil law is suspended and a general has to say what we shall and shall not do. A citizen who disobeys may be shot upon the "say-so" of a martial court. Even in a civil court we have poor chance, for it takes all our money and then leaves the victim helpless.

In face of this danger we shall yet oppose all attacks upon our rights of a free press, free speech, assemblage, organization, and the right to strike. We demand that the people shall have a right to vote on conscription, militaristic teaching and training in public schools, and the appropriation of huge sums of money for war.

We protest against the sending of troops to foreign battlefields; we demand that the government use every effort against a recurrence of such infamies as occurred during the Civil War in supply of arms, the Spanish-American War

in supplies of food, and the more recent Mexican expedition with machine guns.

We demand that the families depending upon the drafted soldiers be cared for.

We demand that the troops be not permitted to be idle but be used in the works of construction such as conservation and development of water powers, construction of a national system of transportation, ware and storage houses, canneries, etc., etc., at current union wages and an 8-hour day.

Two changes were made in the report of the Committee on War and Militarism before its final adoption. The amendments made more emphatic the party opposition to war. The final form of the changed portions of the reports follows:

The Socialist Party of the United States is unalterably opposed to the system of exploitation and class rule which is upheld and strengthened by military power and sham national patriotism. We, therefore, call upon the workers of all countries to refuse support to their governments in their wars. The wars of the contending national groups of capitalists are not the concern of the workers. The only struggle which would justify the workers in taking up arms is the great struggle of the working class of the world to free itself from economic exploitation and political oppression, and we particularly warn the workers against the snare and delusion of so-called defensive warfare. As against the false doctrine of national patriotism we uphold the ideal of international working class solidarity. In support of capitalism we will not willingly give a single life or a single dollar; in support of the struggle of the workers for freedom we pledge our all.

2. Unyielding opposition to all proposed legislation for military or industrial conscription. Should such conscription be forced upon the people we pledge ourselves to continuous efforts for the repeal of such laws and to the support of all mass movements in opposition to conscription. We pledge ourselves to fight with all our strength against any attempt to raise money for the payment of war expenses by taxing the necessities of life or issuing bonds which will put the burden upon future generations. We demand that the capitalist class, which is responsible for the war, pay its cost. Let those who kindle the fire furnish the fuel.

The paragraph demanding "socialization of all agricultural land" was amended to read:

(c) The socialization and democratic management of all land and other natural resources now held out of use for monopolistic or speculative profit.

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