
Party Repudiates Berne Parley, Calls for New Conclave:

**Convention Goes on Record As Favoring Eugene Debs
For Presidential Candidate in 1920 and Ends Its Sessions.**

**New Gathering Next Year to Pick Standard Bearers:
National Executive Officials Instructed to Appoint Committee of 7
to Draw Up Statement of Principles and Working Platform
and Report Back Next February.**

by Herman Michelson

Staff Correspondent of *The Call*.

Published in the *New York Call*, v. 12, no. 249 (Sept. 6, 1919), pp. 1-2.

CHICAGO, Sept. 5 [1919].— Declaring itself unanimously in favor of Eugene Victor Debs as the Socialist Party's candidate for President in 1920, the National Emergency Convention of the Socialist Party ended its sessions.

Another convention is to be held next year for the purpose of nominating Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates.

Among the last acts of the convention was the instruction to the National Executive Committee to appoint a committee of 7 to draw up a statement of principles and a working platform for the party.

This committee is to complete its action and report on February 29, 1920.

The convention today took the lead in the reconstruction of the Socialist International. The majority report of the Resolutions Committee, adopted by a vote of 56 to 26, repudiated the Berne Conference and called for the convocation of an International Socialist Congress.

The minority report, signed by J. Louis Engdahl and William Kruse, would have unqualifiedly endorsed the Moscow International. Both reports will go out on a referendum.

The view of the convention, expressed by Abraham Beckerman, was:

“The Berne Conference is international, but it is not Socialist. The Moscow Conference is Socialist, but it is not international.”

Party's Stand Defined.

Here is the majority resolution, defining the stand of American Socialists in the world situation:

The Second International is no more. We repudiate the Berne Conference as retrograde and failing to act in the interests of the working class. It is the duty of the Socialist Party of the United States actively to participate in the speediest possible convocation of an International Socialist Congress and to make every effort to reconstitute the functioning of the International.

In the reconstructed Socialist International only such organizations and parties should be given representation which declare their strict adherence by word and deed to the principle of the class struggle.

To such an international must be invited the Communist parties of Russia and Germany and those Socialist parties in all countries which subscribe to the principle of the class struggle. No party which participates in a movement coalition with parties of the bourgeoisie shall be invited.

In such a Congress our party should urge the reconstruction of the worldwide organization of the Socialist proletariat upon closer and firmer lines than have prevailed in the past to the end that the revolutionary proletarian forces of the world may at every critical moment be effectively mobilized for simultaneous and harmonious action.

The provisional National Executive Committee, which is to function until the next national convention in 1920, or until a permanent committee is elected, consists of James Oneal of New York; William H. Henry, Indiana State Secretary; Edmund T. Melms, county organizer for Milwaukee; George E. Roewer, Jr., Massachusetts; William Brandt, Missouri, city organizer for St. Louis; Oliver C. Wilson, Illinois State Secretary; and John Hagel, Oklahoma, business manager of the *Oklahoma Leader*.

William H. Henry is regarded as the probable choice of the National Executive Committee for National Executive Secretary of the Party.†

Many Resolutions Passed.

The convention got through with a great deal of work today. Besides passing on the revisions of the constitution, it passed numerous resolutions.

A proclamation to the membership adopted by the convention details the controversy over the seating of delegates and predicts a greater party will arise from the internal conflict.

“Our manifesto is a ringing declaration of Socialist principles. We have taken an advanced stand in keeping with the new era of imperialism born at Versailles. It is an inspiring call to action. It is an

answer to all the charges that the party has forgotten or repudiated its working class character,” says the proclamation.

Constitution Changed.

The constitution has been vitally changed by the revisions. The National Executive Committee will hereafter be elected by national conventions. A National Committee on Appeals has been created to hear all cases of suspended or revoked charters and all appeals from acts of the National Executive Committee.

The National Executive Committee may appeal from this committee’s decisions, but only to the next convention. The Committee on Appeals is provided for in article 6, hitherto devoted to woman’s propaganda, now entirely eliminated.

Details are set forth for the handling of recall referendums which give the members of the National Executive Committee in question the right to defend themselves in statements of 1,000 words.

The affairs of the party are to be administered by the National Executive Committee, the Committee on Appeals, and the national conventions. Conventions shall be held annually, the new constitution will provide. Of course, all these changes go before the membership in referendums.

†- Otto Branstetter of Oklahoma was ultimately chosen to head the party by the provisional NEC. William Henry of Indiana did eventually become Executive Secretary of the Socialist Party in 1926, serving in that capacity until his resignation in May 1929.

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport.

Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2007. • Non-commercial reproduction permitted.