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# Communist Party Convention: Day 1 — Sept. 1, 1919.

by James O. Peyronnin

Document in DoJ/BoI Investigative Files, NARA M-1085, reel 931, file 313846.

*Report Made by:* James O. Peyronnin  
*Place Where Made:* Chicago, Ill.  
*Date When Made:* Sept. 9, 1919.  
*Period for Which Made:* Sept. 1, 1919.

*Title of Case and Offense Charged  
or Nature of Matter Under Investigation:*

**In re: First Convention  
“Communist Party of America,”  
Chicago, Illinois.**

*Statement of Operations, Evidence Collected, Names and  
Addresses of Persons Interviewed, Places Visited, Etc.:*

## ***At Chicago.***

Following is a detailed report of the (opening day) First Convention of the “Communist Party of America” held at Smolny Institute, No. 1221 Blue Island Avenue, Chicago, Ill. Besides Employee Agents Kahn and [M.F.] Burger of this Bureau Office were on duty at the Convention the entire day and this report is formulated with their assistance.

Reference is respectfully made to “Bulletin” issued several weeks ago by the National Organization Committee for a Communist Party, composed of **Dennis E. Batt, D. Elbaum, O.C. Johnson, John Kera-cher, S. Kopnagel, J. Stilson, and Alexander Stoklit-sky**, entitled “Call for a National Convention” for the purpose of organizing a Communist Party in America, copies of which circular have been submitted to the Bureau at Washington, DC.

At 11:30 pm Detective Sergeants McDonough and Egan of the Chicago Police Department, in charge

of the Anarchist squad, and on duty at the conven- tion, ordered the removal of the red paper decorations, which covered the 250 and odd electric gloves, and which decorations hung in strips to sides of the hall, and 3 large banners which hung from the walls with inscriptions “Welcome Delegates to the First Conven- tion of the Communist Party of America,” “Long Live the Third International,” “Long Live the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.” These banners, in size approximately 4 feet by 14 feet, were all of red cloth with black print. A person said to be L.M. Montgomery, an attorney at law of Chicago, was arrested on a disorderly charge by the police for causing the Committee of the Conven- tion to refrain from moving the decorations. It was observed that no American flags were at all displayed in the hall. Seven women in the gathering wore red shirt waists. “The Internationale” was sung in Russian and was followed by great applause.

The gathering cheered loudly at the appearance of Dennis E. Batt. Employee was seated in front of the Chairman’s platform, known as the press stand, and **Batt**, who opened the convention, read his prearranged speech from a typewritten copy, and this speech in its entirety is incorporated in Special Employee Loula’s report for September 1, 1919...

By Batt: The first business to come before this Convention will be the election of a temporary chair- man.

Louis C. Fraina of Local Greater NY was elected as temporary chairman.

Fraina offered several excuses for the delay in the opening of the Convention, and after a few prelimi- nary remarks bearing entirely on the “Dictatorship of the Proletariat,” called for the election of temporary secretaries.

J.K. Danta of Michigan and Max Cohen of New York were elected to the offices.

A Credentials Committee was voted for, and the following 7 delegates were elected for this committee from a nomination of 18 delegates:

Elbaum, Stilson, Olkin, Kopnagel, Lunin, For-singer, and Baltrusaitis were elected for the Credentials Committee, J.V. Stilson of Cook County, Illinois, as chairman of that committee.

Jones of Philadelphia; Ruthenberg of Cleveland; Leslie of New York state (Buffalo); Zucker of Kings County, NY; Hiltzik of Greater NY; Johnson, Detroit, Mich.; and Georgian of Minnesota were elected for the Committee on Rules of Procedure and Order of Business.

A Committee of 19 known as the Emergency Committee was next elected.

Chairman Stilson of the Credentials Committee reported the names of delegates who would have full vote, and a complete list in detail of the delegates present at the Convention will be quoted in full either at the end of this report or in a report for a subsequent day of the Convention.

Temp. Chairman Fraina read several letters and telegrams from locals and branches in New York state, which extended greetings to "The Communist Party of America," viz: "Long Live the Third International," "Long Live the Communist Party of America."

A telegram from the Young People's Socialist League, New York City, was read as follows:

Our heart and soul are with the Communist Party of America; pledge our financial and moral support for a good cause.

Symbols of the "Red Flag" in size approximately 1-1/2 feet by 2-1/2 feet made up of large red roses were brought into the hall and placed on the chairman's platform; great applause followed.

At this time Employee observed approximately 150 persons seated in the reservations for the delegates and approximately 300 persons seated in the visitors' reservations.

Red ribbons attached to each symbol of the "Red Flag," referred to above, bore the following inscriptions:

Greeting to the First Communist Party Convention from District Committee of the Jewish Communist Branches.

Greeting to the First Communist Convention from Douglas Park Communist Branch.

Motion was made and carried to adjourn at 4:30 pm to reconvene at 5:30 pm.

During the recess Detective Sergeants McDonough and Egan of the Police Department, previously referred to, ordered the chairman of the Convention to remove the symbols of the "Red Flag." The delegates in charge were somewhat reluctant to remove these symbols and on being advised by both McDonough and Egan that the Convention would not continue if these "Red Flags" were not removed, they acted promptly and took the symbols away to an anteroom.

Louis Fraina, Temp. Chairman, as the symbols of the "Red Flag" were being taken out of the hall, shouted to the gathering, "We do not depend upon symbols but on the masses for support and action!"

The Convention reconvened at 5:30 pm with Louis Fraina still acting as Temp. Chairman. Chairman J.V. Stilson of the Credentials Committee consumed approximately 1 hour and a half reading off the names of delegates [who] had to be verified, and those who have a full vote in the convention.

Following are the names of the "Delegates" of the Communist Party Convention, as read by Stilson:

#### **California.**

##### *Los Angeles:*

M.J. Golos. Membership — 240.

##### *San Francisco:*

K. Kleingal. Membership — 84.

#### **Connecticut.**

H.J. Costrell,

J.A. Gambos,

D. Bulyk,

P. Cooks,

H. Law,

A.V. Bartulis. Membership — 2,000.

#### **Illinois.**

##### *Cook County:*

A. Stoklitsky,

S.A. Kopnagel,

G. Shklar,

D. W. Spiro,

Joseph Kowalski,

I.E. Ferguson,

H.M. Wicks,  
J.V. Stilson,  
George Selakovich,  
E. Bolcheunas. Membership — 6,000.

*Cook Co. German Branch:*  
Frederick Bulwan. Membership — 1,100.

*Local Evanston:*  
F.G. Harrison. Membership — 22.

*Chicago Heights:*  
J.R. Minewich. Membership — 110.

*Moline:*  
S. Janulis. Membership — 86

*Rockford:*  
Harry Anderson. Membership — 278  
E.B. Hewlett. Membership — 77.

### **Indiana.**

*Gary:*  
N. Nagorowe. Membership — 57.  
Steve Benkowich. Membership — 400.

*Clinton:*  
John Kurpeikis. Membership — 130.

*Wabash:*  
D.C. Whiteneck. Membership — 9.

*Fort Wayne:*  
John Schodel. Membership — 9.

*Whiting:*  
Michael Bolic. Membership — 47.

*Indiana Harbor:*  
Alex Gromaduck. Membership — 260.

### **Kansas.**

*Kansas City:*  
Osadohy. Membership — 103.

### **Maryland.**

*Baltimore:*  
D. Zimmerman. Membership — 400.

### **Massachusetts.**

*State Delegates:*  
Marion E. Sproule,  
P.P. Cosgrove,  
Frank Mack,  
Samuel Bramhall,  
John J. Ballam,  
Chester Bixby,  
Charles Jansen. Membership — 3,569.

*17 Language Branches of Massachusetts:*  
G. Galley,  
T. Titorchuk. Membership — 900.

*Lettish Branches of Local Boston:*  
Thomas Shisky,  
John Schwartz. Membership — 900.

### **Michigan.**

*State Delegates:*  
F.O. Foss,  
George Eastman,  
J.K. Danta,  
Carlton Talbott,  
M.V. Breitmeyer,  
D.E. Earley,  
O.C. Johnson,  
A. Renner,  
William Krispenz,  
A. Goblin,  
August Herman  
Daniel Elbaum,  
John Keracher,  
Frank Jocionis. Membership — 7,000.

*Jewish Branch No. 3, Local Detroit:*  
A. Biegelman. Membership — 200.

### **Minnesota.**

*State Delegates:*  
Joseph Ungar,  
N. Holm,  
Charles Dirba,  
Clara Strong Brooms. Membership — 3,000.

*Local Minneapolis, Russian & Ukrainian Branches:*  
Alex Georgian. Membership — 300.

*Local St. Paul:*  
Andrew Koroluk. Membership — 240.

### **Missouri.**

*Local St. Louis:*  
Henry Tichenor. Membership — 100.

### **New Jersey.**

*Local Elizabeth:*  
B. Krasauskas. Membership — 432.

*Local Essex:*  
J. Dudinsky,  
Christ Mandaw. Membership — 781.

*Local Passaic County:*  
John E. Klawin. Membership — 500.

*Local Hudson County:*  
A. Rogozek. Membership — 86.

*3 Branches, Local S. River:*

Semen Semenoff. Membership — 60.

*Local Bayonne, Ukrainian, Russian, Polish, & Lithuanian:*

Alvin Rogozik. Membership — 260.

**New York.***Russian Revolutionary Organization of New York:*

G. Ashkenuzi,  
 A. Bittelman,  
 H. Hiltzik,  
 N. Hourwich,  
 S. Miller,  
 J.J. Kravsevich,  
 [Meyer] Lunin,  
 E. Missin,  
 O. Tyverovsky. Membership — 5,000.

*Local Greater New York:*

Louis C. Fraina,  
 Rose Pastor Stokes,  
 Max Cohen,  
 Joseph B. Brodsky,  
 Carl Brodsky,  
 Fannie Horowitz. Membership — 3,000.

*Local Bronx:*

J. Lovestone,  
 Louis A. Baum,  
 Rubin (*Alternate*). Membership — 2,000.

*Local Kings County:*

Charles Brower,  
 Sam Nessin,  
 P. Sparer. Membership — 1,500.

*Ukrainian Branch of New York:*

Paul H. Ladan. Membership — 403.

*Local Queens County:*

Maurice L. Paul. Membership — 600.

*Local Kings County:*

Edward I. Lindgren,  
 Morris Zucker. Membership — 2,400.

*Local Buffalo:*

Frederick Schuman,  
 George A. Till,  
 William Leslie. [Membership — ???]

*Local Binghamton:*

Arthur Panesik. Membership — 273.

*Local Rochester:*

Charles M. O'Brien,  
 John Komerowski. Membership — 900.

*Local Yonkers, including Rockwell,  
Westchester, and Sullivan Counties:*

Irwin E. Klein. Membership — 500.

**Ohio.***Cleveland:*

C.E. Ruthenberg. Membership — 2,500.

*Cuyahoga County, 12th Ward Branch:*

Bernard Tamarkin. Membership — 95.

*Local Lima, St. Marys, Wapakoneta, New Bremen:*

Scott Wilkins. Membership — 300.

*Local Galion:*

Guy H. Hulse. [Membership — ???]

*Local Cleveland, Lithuanian, Russian,  
Polish, Ukrainian Branches:*

Anthony Patuk,  
 Julius Daubaras. Membership — 766.

**Rhode Island.***Providence:*

Dobienko,  
 Petrov. [Membership — ???]

**Pennsylvania.***Local Coatsville:*

William G. Doll. Membership — 37.

*Local Schuylkil County, Lithuanian Branches:*

E.N. Yeskevich. Membership — 184.

*Local Monessen, Lithuanian and Ukrainian Branches:*

Anthony Bankauskas. Membership — 180.

*Local Philadelphia:*

M.L. Olkin,  
 R. Alexander,  
 K.B. Karosas,  
 D.G. Jones,  
 A.A. Rosenthal,  
 A. Forsinger. Membership — 2,500.

*Local Pittsburgh, Council of Workers' Delegates:*

Johan [Juozas] Baltrusaitis,  
 Timothy Sokol. Membership — 1,000.

*Local Luzerne County:*

P. Sawchuk. Membership — 338.

**Washington.***Local Pleasant Valley:*

P.R. Pratt. Membership — 50.

**Wisconsin.***Local Kenosha:*

L.Z. Rethy. Membership — 300.

*Local Milwaukee:*

Joseph A. Dementis. Membership — 600.

Edward I. Lindgren and Morris Zucker of Local Kings Co., New York vehemently expressed themselves of their opposition to recognize Brower, Nessin, and Sparer as a body from Local Kings Co., Left Wing, NY as delegates with full vote of the floor of the convention, and that unless the credentials of these delegates would be given the consideration as it deserved at the hands of the Credentials Committee, they would withdraw from the Convention. The case on motion made and carried was referred back to the Credentials Committee for such action and disposition as they saw fit.

By Temp. Chairman [Fraina]: Nominations are now in order for a permanent Chairman of the Day. I Ferguson of Chicago and A. Renner of Detroit, Mich., were the only nominees who accepted, and Renner was elected by a vote as follows: Renner 67, Ferguson 37.

John J. Ballam of Mass. elected Vice Chairman; G. Galley of Mass.; Maurice L. Paul of Clinton, NY; Fannie Horowitz, NY; and K.B. Karosas of Philadelphia were elected as Permanent Secretaries, to work in pairs alternately.

Rules of order and procedure, mimeographed, were submitted to each delegate, as follows:

1. Robert's Rules of Order shall govern the proceedings of the Convention, except that the previous question shall be adopted by majority vote.

2. Debate shall be limited to 5 minutes for each speaker securing the floor.

3. A Chairman and Vice Chairman shall be elected at the beginning of each day's session and a Secretary and 3 assistants for the period of the Convention. The Chairman of the previous day shall call the Convention to order and preside until his successor is elected.

4. The Committees of the Convention shall consist of 5 members each, except as otherwise specified.

1. Manifesto and Program (9 members);
2. Constitution and Organization (7 members);
3. Resolutions (7 members);
4. Press and Propaganda;
5. Education;
6. Labor Organizations;
7. Young People's Communist League;
8. Finance.

5. No delegate shall be a member of more than one committee, provided that membership on the

Credentials Committee, Rules Committee, and Emergency Committee shall not exclude delegates from other committees.

6. Reporters for Committees shall have 15 minutes for argument in addition to the time required for their report; the reporters for minorities of Committees shall have the same privilege.

7. The Order of Business of the Convention shall be as follows:

1. Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman;
2. Report of Credentials Committee and seating of uncontested delegates.
3. Election of permanent officers.
4. Action on contested delegates.
5. Communications.
6. Adoption of Rules.
7. Election of Committees.
8. Report of Committees in the following order:
  - (1) Manifesto and Program;
  - (2) Constitution and Organization;
  - (3) Resolutions;
  - (4) Press and Propaganda;
  - (5) Education;
  - (6) Labor Organizations;
  - (7) Young People's Communist League;
  - (8) Finance.
9. Unfinished business.
10. New business.

Further it was decided: To hold sessions daily, from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm and from 3:00 pm to 8:00 pm. Fifty delegates to constitute a quorum.

*Committee on Rules and Procedure,*  
(Leslie, Zucker, Johnson, Jones, Georgian,  
Hiltzik, and Ruthenberg.)

Chairman Renner took the chair at 8:00 pm.

I. Ferguson, of Cook Co., Illinois, made motion for the body to elect a Committee of 5 to confer with the Committee of 5 of the Left Wing now in session on the 1st floor of the building, 130 South Ashland Ave. Ferguson insisted that the courtesy be extended to these delegates from the "Left Wing" that bolted from the "Emergency Convention," and favor them with whatever reply is deemed advisable to their communication. The communication referred to by Ferguson was not read in its entirety by the Secretary of the Convention, and which read in substance — to have a committee from the "Communist Party" confer with their committee (Communist Labor Party)

with a view of devising ways and means to consider the question of unity on a basis of equality.

N. Hourwich, delegate of Russian Revolutionary Organization, NY, stated: that I am opposed to the motion of Ferguson, being the most dangerous move of the Communist Party; further, that motion be amended to refer the question to the Credentials Committee for such action as that body may deem necessary.

H. Hiltzik, delegate from NY, Russian Revolutionary Organization, supported the motion as amended by Hourwich, and expressed himself with much vehemence at entertaining any communications from the “Communist Labor Party” to unite; they got a good licking and now we do not want them. This is a convention to establish a “Communist Party” and it would be dangerous to recognize them.

A delegate said to be Krispenz from Michigan group strongly supported Ferguson’s motion, and pointed his fist at the New York delegates remarked that there are more faithful Communists seated in with these other fellows than there are seated in this hall. I want to say right now that by refusing to confer with these delegates from the “Left Wing” that bolted from the Emergency Convention is not Bolshevik principles.

Henry M. Tichenor of Local St. Louis delivered an elegant address favoring the conference with the delegates previously mentioned.

Irene M. Smith, a delegate not yet seated, arose and cried: “What has that foreign element got to say? They just want to run—.” Just then she was ordered to be seated by the Chairman [Renner], and interfered with by the delegates at her table.

The question was referred to the Credentials Committee for appropriate action.

Convention adjourned until 10:00 am, September 2, 1919.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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