
Resignations Split Ranks of Communists: Fraina and Ruthenberg Among Those Who Quit — Another Party is Formed.

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(Special to *The Call*.)

CHICAGO, Sept. 2 [1919].— And now the “Communist Labor Party of America.”

This is the latest offspring of the fertile Left Wingers, born yesterday morning and christened at Machinists’ Hall, just outside the doors of the Emergency National Convention of the Socialist Party, whence they had been cruelly cast out by their irate parent.

The Communist Labor Party of America isn’t on speaking terms, as yet, with its twin brother, the Communist Party, now holding forth at Smolny Institute at 1221 Blue Island Avenue [Chicago]. But peacemakers are busy shuttling between the two Communist parties, endeavoring to bring them together. The prospect for <illeg.> is shaky. But one thing is certain — that is, that there will be more splitting in each of the two new parties before there is any more fusion.

The Communist Party, composed of the Michigan crowd, the Russian Federation, and the former Left Wing National Council, nearly split in two when, at a concerted signal, there resigned from the important Emergency Committee of the convention Louis C. Fraina, C.E. Ruthenberg, I.E. Ferguson, Maximilian Cohen, D. Elbaum, and A. Selakovich and, from other offices, former Organizer A. Paul of Queens and Fannie Horowitz.

Issue Brings Resignations.

The issue was over sending a committee of conciliation to the “Lefts” who had meanwhile formed the Communist Labor Party. Afraid of losing their numerical and actual domination of the convention

and of the Communist Party, the Russians had throttled the proposition to increase the English-speaking element. But the scantily veiled threat of the “Lefts” in their midst had a partial effect.

After negotiations in caucus the Russians consented to a committee to confer with the Machinists’ Hall “Lefts.” But they secured control of the committee by electing N.I. Hourwich, Alexander Stoklitsky, and D. Elbaum to offset the other 2 members, I.E. Ferguson and C.E. Ruthenberg.

On one thing the Russians and their opponents agreed. Nobody would be permitted to join the Communist Party Convention without first passing the Credentials Committee, which consists of 7 Russians out of 7 committeemen. Also tacitly, it is agreed that under no circumstances would they admit John Reed, Ludwig Lore, Benjamin Gitlow, A. Wagenknecht, L.E. Katterfeld, L.B. Boudin, and the others who had insisted on disobeying the Russian-Michigan mandate for a Communist Party several weeks ago.

In turn the Reed-Lore-Wagenknecht-Katterfeld congregation vow that only when the Communist Party comes to them on bended knees will they allow them to join the Communist Labor Party.

Soviet Symbol Adopted.

Meanwhile, the latter have adopted the crossed sickle and hammer of Soviet Russia as their own emblem and have subscribed to the call for a general strike of one day on October 8 [1919] for the liberation of political prisoners and the withdrawal of troops from Russia.

At the Communist Party Convention Dennis O. Batt, leader of the Michigan contingent, had just

finished denouncing the resigning Left Wingers as “political tricksters” when from the back of the convention hall stepped Detective *<line missing>* and Detective Laurence McDonough of the Chicago police and arrested Batt for an alleged violation of a state espionage law. The violation is charged to have been committed in a speech 3 days ago. Batt was taken to the police station, where he was released on \$1,000 bail.

128 Delegates Listed.

On the roster of the Communist Party are 128 delegates, claiming a representation of 58,000 members, all drawn from the Socialist Party. The Communist Labor Party claims to be of at least equal strength with the Communist Party, which leaves the Socialist Party not only without a single member, but even owing something like 7,000 members to the other parties, since at no time this year did the Socialist Party have more than 109,000 members.

Of the New York delegation, the Russian “revolutionary organizations” claim to represent 5,000 and the English-speaking delegates of Greater New York claim 6,500. Among the New York delegation are Louis C. Fraina, Maximilian Cohen, Rose Pastor Stokes, Joseph Brodsky, Carl Brodsky, Fannie Horowitz, N.I. Hourwich, and L. Riltzik, who, although of the Jewish [Yiddish-language] Federation, sits and votes with the Russians.†

The sound of creaking timbers in the Communist Labor Party also is heard. The faction headed by

Reed, Lore, Katterfeld, and Wagenknecht, realizing that there is no hope of their admission to the Communist Party, probably will be discarded by what seems the majority of their present fellows when a working relationship will have been established with the crowd at Smolny Institute.

Loud Crash Coming.

A loud crash probably will come in a day or two, when the Manifesto and Program Committee of the Communist Party brings in its report at Smolny Institute and strips bare the fundamental disagreements in principle between the Russians and the Left Wingers, on the one hand, and the Michigan crowd on the other.

But the loudest crash of all in the Communist Party may sound any moment, when the momentary truce patched up yesterday morning over the question of Russian control becomes subjected to the slightest strain. The cleavage runs in so many directions that hardly a question comes up that does not strike the groove of this contention.

Only the unconditional surrender for good and all on the part of the Russians, who predominate, or the most complete self-abnegation of the English-speaking elements can avert the definite split.

Should it come, the Left Wingers of the Communist Party and the majority of the Communist Labor Party will join hands either in burying the hatchet in John Reed & Co. or in forming perhaps still another Communist something-or-other of America.

†- A great number, likely the majority, of the Russian-language Federation were ethnically Jewish rather than ethnically Russian, incidentally. This account seems to erroneously lump all the various language federations into a homogeneous and hegemonic “Russian Federation,” an error often repeated in the scholarly literature of subsequent decades. It is extremely likely that the so-called “Russian Federation” of this account was in reality an alliance of delegates from a number of different language groups — Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, Lithuanian, Latvian, Hungarian, South Slavic. Daniel Elbaum, cited earlier in this story as a Russian, was a member of the Polish Federation, for example.

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport.

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