
Discussions of Party Referendums: Letter to the *Chicago Edition of the American Socialist*, April 15, 1916.

by Adolph Dreifuss

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Under the heading “As Socialist Readers See It,” somebody in the *Milwaukee Leader* — he forgot to sign his name — got excited about the letter the National Committee of the German Federation had sent out concerning party elections. Did he omit to sign his epistle because he is too closely connected with the other side of the controversy?† A.W. Ricker takes up the same issue in *The American Socialist* [April 15, 1916].

Now let us, without excitement, argue out the matter coolly and logically.

The writer says: “It is perfectly clear that in order to have intelligent referendums, it is necessary to have some discussion of the measures or the men involved.” I agree with him. Now the question is: Who shall take part in such discussions? And to this there can only be one answer: either every member who wishes or nobody!

The anonymous writer in the *Leader* makes it appear as though he did not wish “officials” of any kind try to “deliver” votes. Well, in the first place, a recommendation is not deliverance. In the second place, why does the anonymous writer grant other officials and official bodies a right that he does not want to grant the German speaking committee?

John C. Kennedy, State Secretary, SP of Illinois; G.C. Porter, State Secretary, SP of Nebraska; and other “officials” and Ricker, [J.A.] Rogers, [Ralph] Korngold, and other ex-officials lined up and advocated a “slate” agreed upon beforehand, and our anonymous writer of the *Leader* did not object; he was delighted about

it.

The letter of the German National Committee was a result of, an answer, to letters sent out by the State Committees of the Socialist Party of New Jersey and Pennsylvania and I venture to say that the anonymous writer of the *Leader* knew of those letters, if he did not help framing them up. Why did he not object? Just because he liked these actions that tried to “deliver the votes” the way he wanted them delivered.

The New Jersey letter is dated November 19, 1915, and signed by the State Committee of the Socialist Party of NJ, Milo C. Jones, State Secretary. It contains the usual phrases of praise for Thompson and winds up: “The committee therefore earnestly urges upon the party membership of New Jersey that they unite for the nomination and election of Comrade Thompson as National Secretary.”

The Pennsylvania letter is partly a verbal repetition of the New Jersey Letter and signed by the State Committee of Pennsylvania. It contains this recommendation: “Your State Committee...believes the best interests of the national organization will be served by the election of Carl D. Thompson.”

But the anonymous writer of the *Leader* also knew that George Goebel, member of the Executive committee of the Socialist Party — that is, a high “official” of the party — sent letters to his friends and officials to work hard for Thompson — that is, to “deliver votes” for him.

Furthermore: In the Cook County Delegate Committee (Chicago) a letter was read, dated Decem-

†- Candidate for Executive Secretary Carl Thompson, on the other side of the German Federation’s endorsement, was formerly employed by the *Milwaukee Leader* and retained extensive contacts in Wisconsin.

ber 28, 1915, jointly signed by John C. Kennedy, J.A. Rogers (ex-YPSL director), and Janet F. Korngold. This letter asks all the locals that nominated Thompson to write to 5 locals that did not nominate Thompson and tell them that they should vote for him. To better enable the branches that nominated Thompson to persuade other branches to vote for him, a copy of statements made by several officials and ex-officials of the party with their full present and past “titles,” as for instance: “John C. Kennedy, State Secretary of Illinois — 3 years of close connection with national affairs,” or “J. Stitt Wilson, former member of the NEC and member of the sub-committee that investigated affairs of National Office,” or “Ralph Korngold, former Manager of the Literature Department, Circulation Manager of *The American Socialist* and founder of the Lecture Bureau,” etc., was to accompany the letter.

As it afterwards was said the reading of this letter at the Cook County Delegate Committee killed it; it was carefully prepared and mimeographed, but its authors did not send it out broadcast. Still, that was not known when it was read in the Delegate Committee and thereby became a matter of public interest.

As a result of all these doings, and not before they had come up, the National Committee of the German Language Federation sent out its letter of warning, not to deliver the votes — the German speaking comrades are not sheep whom you can direct any way you please; it is well known that they, as a whole,

are against Thompson’s policy in the movement and would vote against any man of his type and views — but to call attention to the vigor and the way the campaign for Carl D. Thompson was (and apparently still is) managed.

I also wish to protest against the falsehood hypocritically used to produce a state of hostility in the mind of the reader: *neither the “foreign” nor the “German” branches use the “unit rule” in voting on referendums.*

The anonymous writer of the Leader complains that the letter of the German National Committee does not give any reason why Thompson should not be elected and did not deny that he was the best qualified for the position. Did the supporters of Thompson give any reason why Germer should not be elected? But, anyhow, the anonymous writer is mistaken. The German National Committee most vehemently *did deny* that Thompson was the best qualified for the position. The letter made it clear that Germer had the better qualifications: experience in the party, class consciousness, experience in the labor movement, official of the United Mine Workers — a working man, a union man, and a Socialist! Who has better s?

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