
Socialists of City Will Fight War Measures

[event of March 4, 1917]

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In the event of a war declaration, New York City Socialists will use every endeavor to hasten the return of peace, to oppose the war and the war policies of the government, oppose censorship of the press and the mails, the restriction of the rights of free speech and free assemblage and organization, and to fight the enactment of oppressive sedition and espionage laws. Every possible aid will be given to the workers in any concerted mass action against suspension or curtailment of their rights to organize strikes, and against the tyranny of conscription and martial law.

These decisions were arrived at yesterday afternoon [March 4, 1917] by a general membership meeting of Socialists restricted to those residing in Manhattan, held in Lenox Casino, 116th St. and Lenox Avenue, and the conclusions were reached after protracted discussions on the floor and in committee stretching over 3 weeks.

Yesterday's meeting was called by the executive body of Local New York, Socialist Party, to effect a united front in the event of a sudden declaration of war.

Vote 101 to 79.

The report of the Resolutions Committee was adopted by a vote of 101 to 79, a minority report signed by Leon Trotsky and Louis C. Fraina failing of adoption by 22 votes.

Dr. Simon Berlin, vice chairman of yesterday's meeting, took up the cudgels against the minority report, saying that he did not consider that a group of persons had the right to lay down a program for others that might involve sacrifice of life or liberty. While

exempt from service himself, he said, he shrank at the suggestion of prescribing any action that would lead others to martyrdom.

Items of Minority Report.

The minority report pledged the organization "to resist all efforts at recruiting, by means of mass meetings, street demonstrations and aggressive educational propaganda, and by any other means in accordance with Socialist principles and tactics." It advocated strikes against mobilization of industry during war time.

Others to participate in the discussion on this measure were Morris Hillquit, Santeri Nuorteva, Louis Waldman, Nicholas Aleinikoff, Jacob Panken, and Louis C. Fraina.

The recent manifesto of the National Executive Committee was endorsed and a stand taken toward non-Socialist peace societies.

The full text of the resolution as finally adopted, setting forth the plan of action in the event of the declaration of hostilities, follows:

In conformity with the principles of International Socialism, as expressed in the resolutions of the Copenhagen [Jan. 17-18, 1915] and Basle [Nov. 24-25, 1912] Congresses, in the platform of the Socialist Party of America, and in the recent declaration of our State Executive Committee and the National Executive Committee, we, members of Local New York, in general party meeting assembled, hereby assert our uncompromising opposition to war and militarism in all forms.

Relentless opposition to war and militarism is and must always remain a cardinal feature of the Socialist

propaganda, because the Socialist opposition to war is not only based on ethical and humanitarian sentiment, but is deeply rooted in the struggle of the workers for the emancipation of their class. Modern wars are caused by capitalist interests and incited by capitalist agencies. They bring wealth and power to the ruling classes, and suffering, death, and demoralization to the workers. Wars serve to breed a spirit of narrow and reactionary nationalism, to obscure the struggles of the workers, to loosen the bond of solidarity between them and their brothers in other countries, and to weaken their movement.

In the present age of acute rivalry between the imperialistic capitalists of the leading countries, the so-called duty of national defense serves to delude the laboring masses and to sacrifice them for capitalist profits. In the present crisis, the alleged invasion of "American rights" is not an invasion of the rights of the American people as a whole, but only an infringement of certain capitalist interests which in themselves are hostile to the interests of the working class.

For these reasons the Socialists, as the representatives of the working class interests, have the special duty of conducting a vigorous and independent campaign against war and militarism on distinct working class lines, regardless of the general anti-war campaign, in which they may find themselves supported by non-Socialist elements.

Course of Conduct.

Local New York, therefore, pledges itself to the following course of conduct:

1. Before the Outbreak of War.— To exert every possible effort to prevent war; to oppose militarism in its various forms, such as increased armament on land or sea, compulsory military training or service, and militaristic teaching in the schools; to combat the imperialistic policies of our own capitalist class, the chief and immediate source of militarism in this country and the standing menace of war between this and other nations; to expose and counteract the pernicious and criminal incitement to war emanating from capitalist interests and a subsidized press; and to make continuous propaganda in favor of universal disarmament and peaceful adjustment of disputes among nations.

2. If War Should Come Despite Our Efforts.—

To hasten the return of peace, oppose the war and the war policies of the government, minimize the evils which war inflicts upon the workers, preserve the working class movement, oppose censorship of press and mails, restrictions of the rights of free speech, assemblage, and organization and the enactment of oppressive sedition and espionage laws; support the workers in every concerted mass action against extortionate food prices and other sufferings of war, against any suspension or curtailment of their right to organize or strike, and against the tyranny of conscription and martial law, and take advantage of all such manifestations of revolt for the education of the workers in the principles of enlightened class consciousness and international working class solidarity.

Program of Immediate Action.

We further recommend the following concrete program of immediate action:

1. That the party press in the city make the propaganda against war and militarism along the lines above indicated the most prominent feature in the news columns and editorial pages during the continuance of the present crisis and during the time of war, if war is declared. We urge upon all comrades the special duty of supporting the party press financially, so as to make it a most effective weapon in the Socialist propaganda against war, and of using every effort to increase the circulation of our papers.

2. That every organized subdivision of Local New York arrange anti-war meetings and demonstrations within its territory on as large a scale and at as frequent intervals as possible.

3. That Local New York enlist the cooperation of organized labor in the city in such propaganda against war and militarism.

4. That the National Executive Committee be asked to initiate an effort to get millions of signatures throughout the nation to a memorial of protest against the proposed conscription and censorship laws.

5. We urge all district branches and the party at large to make special efforts to increase the membership; and we call upon all comrades to concentrate their work and efforts wholly within the party, so that we may present to the enemies of the working class a powerful, unified, and harmonious organization at this most critical period in the history of our movement.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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