
Official Minutes of the General Committee of the Socialist Party of St. Louis, August 11, 1919

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St. Louis, Mo., August 11, 1919.

Adjourned meeting of the General Committee called to order at 8:15 pm. Chairman [George] Tourville, not being present, Comrade Long was elected chairman for the evening.

The following were seated on credentials: F. Van Mill of the North Branch of the 27th Ward and Leopold Krygel of the Schemian Branch.

The Special Committee,¹ elected at our last meeting to hear the charges as preferred by the Secretary [William M. Brandt] against two of our branches and a number of our members then mad the following report:

To the General Committee, Local St. Louis, Socialist Party:

Report of the findings and recommendations of the Special Committee of five to the Special meeting of the General Committee on charges as preferred by Comrade W.M. Brandt, Secretary.

Your Committee respectively submits as follows:—

That on the 6th day of August, 1919, it met at 940 Chouteau.

Your Committee read the charges to the Comrades against whom such charges were brought, whereupon Comrade William

¹ The meeting named a five member investigating committee consisting of John S'Renco, John Munck, Charles Seifert, Adolph Koch, and Sigmund S'Renco.

M. Brandt made a statement of the nature and causes of the charges and introduced the oral testimony, corroborating some of his charges and also written evidence marked by him, documents #1 to #19, both inclusive. The Committee further heard the statements made by some of the comrades under charges and receive written evidence and letters in corroboration of same.

The meeting then adjourned.

Your Committee further states that it again convened on Sunday, August 10, 1919, between 9:30 am and 12:00 pm, at the residence of Comrade John S'Renco, 5700 Page Blvd., and on Monday, August 11, 1919, 6 o'clock pm, at the offices of Comrade Sigmund S'Renco, Suite 310, 13 Times Building. At these two meetings the committee carefully analyzed the documents supporting and denying the charges and also discussed the statements made by each side to the controversy.

Your Committee finds as follows:

That the 8th-and-9th Ward Branches and the Jewish Branch have not repudiated any action or actions of the General Committee by endorsing the left wing movement, for the reason that the General Committee has never passed any resolution prohibiting any member or branch to endorse the left or the right wing movements in our Party; but to the contrary, assumed a neutral attitude leaving it to each member or branch individually to exercise his or its own judgement in this controversy until the Convention of August 30 will hear both sides and render a judgement upon the merits. That according to that decision our official press is to refrain from participating until the convention in the discussion of merits or demerits of either side, while according to the evidence our official organ *St. Louis Labor* did on various occasions assume a hostile and offensive attitude against the so-called Left Wingers.

That it is neither a crime, nor a breach of party discipline to have a desire that the Convention of the Party called in due form adopt one or another tactics, or program, or to propagate same between our members.

That there was no evidence that either of the accused branches are in sympathy with the Communist Group which seceded from the Party, or that they expressed a desire at this time to secede or expressed approval of the secessionists, which would hardly be a breach of party discipline, as we may approve things which we do not necessarily have to propagate or support.

Our members should not be expected to vote on a referendum without first having had opportunity of becoming acquainted

with the evidence as was presented to the National Executive Committee.

At the National Convention on August 30, 1919, at which all the states will be represented, the special committee will make its report, submitting the mass of evidence examined.

We advise our party members not to act on any proposed referendum in this controversy, and to await the action of the special National Convention.

Let us eliminate the entire "Wing" business — left and right — and put our shoulders to the wheel in order that we may lead our movement to victory and success.

Doc. #13. From Edid [sic.?] submitted by Com. W.M. Brandt, statement adopted by General Committee on June 23, 1919.

It is the right of any comrade or group of comrades to dissent from and endeavor to change the policy of the party. If in the ordinary propagation of the various views, one or the other side is predominant, no criticism can be offered. The supremacy of one or the other of the varying elements under these conditions is logical and perfectly justifiable.

Doc. #19. Submitted by Com. Brandt. From [Socialist Party] "Press Service" sheet entitled "McSparrow and the Explosive Bomb," by Adolph Germer of July 21, 1919.

See also Doc. #1, submitted by Com. Lacher, *St. Louis Labor*, August 2, 1919, page 1, and also "From Frying Pan into Melting Pot" in *St. Louis Labor* of August 2, 1919.

Your Committee further states in reference to Charge #2:

That E. Lacher not only claims but is a member of 8th-and-9th Ward Branches.

That revolutionary discipline and tactics generally followed by Socialists in capitalist countries do not throw any bad reflections upon Com. Moser for using an alias under justifiable conditions.

That Com. Joseph Stutz, Steve Witkay, E. Lacher, George Moser, Joseph Norvell, *did not* in violation of the rules of our party organization distribute a slanderous and vilifying literature against our Party in the New Club Hall Public Mass Meeting held on Sunday, July 20, 1919. That as a matter of fact the above named comrades did distribute the [*Revolutionary Age*] issue of July 5, 1919, which chiefly contains the description of the Left Wing Convention, its Manifesto, and program. That said literature was not distributed at the meeting proper, at the hallway and sidewalks adjacent thereto. That said literature did contain rather unpleasant remarks addressed against the right wingers and a caricature of the same character, but that this would have no ref-

erence to our membership whatsoever, for the reason that Local St. Louis, SP and its membership never expressed itself as favoring Right Wingers. That the Executive Committee never passed any resolution prohibiting the distribution of any brand of literature.

Your Committee in reference to Charge #3 states:

That Comrade Proske did not participate in any act alleged to be committed by the other comrades, there being absolutely no evidence to support same and the committee requested to drop the charges against him, and that Com. Brandt apologize for mistakenly including his name, which request Com. Brandt complied with.

That neither of the comrades therein referred to organized a dual party organization or have taken part in same, or did so in one which seceded from the organization. That the announcement of the organization of the Left Wingers was published in the first possible issue of *The Melting Pot*, which issues are published once a month, while the Executive Committee meets oftener than once a month, so that the so-called exposition could not physically take place at a later date than the publication of same in *The Melting Pot*. That the work of the left wing comrades was in no way underground, or secret. That the attitude of our Local in this controversy as stated and adopted on the General Committee meeting June 23, 1919, does not preclude our members from carrying on of *organized propaganda* for a more radical or conservative program to be adopted by our party.

See: Executive Committee Minutes of July 9 and 23.

See: Statement adopted June 23, 1919.

See: *Revolutionary Age* issue of July 5, 1919.

See: Letter of Comrade Germer, referred to above.

Wherefore, your Committee recommends:

(1) That all the three charges are not sustained and same be dismissed.

(2) That until the Convention of August 30, 1919, is over, the membership of the SP of St. Louis strictly adheres to the statement of the Gen. Com., wherein a position of neutrality was adopted and that the members therefore refrain from any slurs, slanderous or libelous expressions, by word or mouth or in the press, so that we preserve the unity of the party and the feeling of comradeship.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved and signed: **John A. Meuck**, Chairman.
Sigmund S'Renco, Secretary.
Charles A. Seifert, Member.
Adolph Koch, Member.
John W. S'Renco, Member.

A motion was made and seconded that the report be received and filed.

Secretary Brand then offered the following substitute for the committee's report:

I move that the report be received and filed and those charges be suspended, and that the Executive Committee shall immediately reorganize the suspended branches, reinstating to membership, with all former rights restored, all of those comrades who do not belong to or endorse any so-called Left Wing or similar Dual Organization and who pledge themselves to abide by the decisions, Platform, and Constitution of the Socialist Party until same may be changed by the Convention and Referendum vote of the Party membership.

Motion made and seconded the substitute be adopted.

Discussion was then held and taken in by a number of comrades. At the conclusion of the discussion a roll call vote was taken and the substitute was defeated by a vote of 26 to 24.

The vote was then taken on the original motion: that the report be received and filed. This motion was defeated by a rising vote of 26 to 21.

Motion was then made and seconded that the report be received and concurred in. This motion was adopted by a rising vote of 23 to 18.

Comrade Braun then made a motion, which was seconded, that we now adjourn. Motion carried, the adjournment being at 11:30 pm.

Delegates Present.

August 4. Ward 1 — Shepard, Kosman, and Wieger; 2 — Mueck, Bachman, and Unger; 3-18 — Boettcher and Onken; 6-7 — Skoven; 8-9 — Kraek, Stutz, Hulmann, and Witkay; 10 — Pfister and Brandt; 11 — Hoehn, Dorn, Schaerpf, and Boelling; 12 East — Proske; 12 West — Hefele; 13 North — Schmidt and Pauls; 14 — Gerdes and Wagner; 15-16 — Duerkop and Hellwig; 19-20 — Hendler and Tourville; 22 — Stienstra; 23 — Grimm and S'Renco; 24 — Rauss, Braun, and Messmer; 26 — Seifert; 27 South — Ungerer; 27 North — Koch; Bohemian — Jetensky; Jewish — S'Renco and Norvell; Gravois German — Hadwich, Mink, and Hellberg; German Women — Hillmer; YPSL [Circle] #1 — Cornell; YPSL [Circle] #2 — Brown, Savonovsky, and Levy; Longwood — Ebner.

August 11. Ward 1 — Shepard, Kosman, and Wieger; 2 — Mueck, and Bachman; 3-18 — Onken; 6-7 — Skoven; 8-9 — Kraek, Stutz, Hulmann, and Witkay; 10 — Pfister, Telthorst, and Brandt; 11 — Hoehn, Dorn, Boelling, and Schaerpf; 12 East — Proske; 12 West — Hefele; 13 North — Schmidt; 14 — Gerdes and Wagner; 15-16 — Duerkop and Hellwig; 19-20 — Hendler; 21 — Nye; 23 — Grimm and S'Renco; 24 — Patterson, Rauss, Braun, and Messmer; 26 — Seifert; 27 South — Long and Ungerer; 27 North — Koch and Van Mill; Bohemian — Jetensky and Krygel; Jewish — Norvell; Gravois German — Hadwich, Mink, and Dittrich; German Women — Hillmer; YPSL [Circle] #1 — Eckhoff and Cornell; YPSL [Circle] #2 — Savonovsky; Longwood — Ebner; Jennings — Gutjahr; Maplewood — Meier.

W.M. Brandt, Secretary.

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Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport

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