
Socialists Open Convention in Detroit Today: Delegates Gather at 10 This Morning to Deal with Vital Problems of Party — NEC on Scene: Rumors of Splits: Withdrawal of Bohemian Federation Thought Likely if “21 Points” are Rejected, as is Expected

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DETROIT, Mich., June 24 (1921).— Plans for the National Convention of the Socialist Party that meets here at the Northwestern High School tomorrow at 10 am are practically complete.

National Executive Secretary Otto Branstetter has been here for 2 or 3 days gathering up loose ends.

At a late hour tonight, members of the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party had nearly reached completion of their report which will be submitted to the convention.

The committee was in session all day at the high school, preparing the order of business for the gathering; temporary rules, and its report on conditions in the party and changes in world politics and economics since last year's convention.

The committee members present were George E. Roewer, Jr., of Boston; Edmund T. Melms of Milwaukee; William M. Brandt of St. Louis, and William H. Henry of Indianapolis. Branstetter also attended. Those absent were Bertha H. Mailly and James Oneal of New York and Irwin St. John Tucker of Chicago.

Delegates to the convention began to arrive today and were taken in hand by local Socialists. These include Morris Hillquit, Algernon Lee, Samuel Orr, and Charles Solomon of New York; Cameron H King of California, and Victor Berger of Wisconsin.

The roster of delegates, incomplete as yet, is reported by the NEC as follows:

California — Cameron King, San Francisco.

Connecticut — Martin F. Plunket, Wallingford.

District of Columbia — J.W. Richman, Washington.

Illinois — J. Louis Engdahl, Chicago; William F. Kruse, Chicago; W.F. Wenschoff, Mt. Olive.

Indiana — John C. Lewis, Elwood.

Iowa — Fred Fuechter, Davenport.

Kansas — Ross Magill, Garnett.

Kentucky — W.A. Sandefur, Robards.

Maryland — S.M. Neistadt, Baltimore.

Massachusetts — Harry Fieldman, Springfield; Henry Puranen, Fitchburg; George E. Roewer, Boston.

Michigan — Lazarus S. Davidow, Detroit.

Missouri — G.A. Hoehn, St. Louis.

New Hampshire — George Cheatham, Manchester.

New Jersey — Milo C. Jones, Newark.

New York — H.D. Wilcox, Elmira; Charles W. Noonan, Schenectady; Samuel Orr, Bronx; Charles Solomon, Brooklyn; Morris Hillquit, New York; Algernon Lee, New York.

Northwest District — Otto Newman, Portland, Ore.

Ohio — John G. Willert, Cleveland; Jacob Ojala, Ashtabula.

Pennsylvania — Jane W. Taft, Pittsburgh; Joseph E. Cohen, Philadelphia; Birch Wilson, Reading.

Rhode Island — Peter Marcus, Providence.

Southern District — H.F. Flanagan, Atlanta.

Utah — O.A. Kennedy, Ogden.

West Virginia — S.J. Gordon, Charleston.

Wisconsin — Daniel W. Hoan, Milwaukee; Victor L. Berger, Milwaukee; Willam Coleman, Milwaukee; C.A. Boorman, Wisconsin Rapids.

Wyoming — A. Carlson, Story.

Karol Kolarik of the Czecho-Slovak (Bohemian) Federation is here, prepared to speak for his group and demanding that the party accept the 21 conditions of affiliation laid down by the Communist International.

It is regarded certain that with the decision of the convention not to apply for such affiliation he will bolt with the members of his organization.

Chicago Branches Out Now.

As a matter of fact, the Bohemian branches in Chicago, where the principal strength of the federation is located, have already bolted, because the county convention instructed delegates to vote against the Communist International. The delegates from the Bohemian branches bolted the convention, and presumably the Cook County organization, which is their prelude to bolting the party. It is doubtful if more than 200 or 300 members will follow Kolarik, the Bohemians being divided on the question.

Girolamo Valenti is likewise here, wreathed in smiles and pointing to his excellent work in building up the membership of the Italian Federation, and the vote of confidence in the Socialist Party by which the members decided not to bolt.

The Finnish Federation will not be here, of course, because it bolted after the party refused to take further action on the matter of the International, after its application had been unceremoniously rejected by Moscow. But there will be three or four Finnish delegates, representing large numbers of Finnish members. As a matter of fact, it is estimated that the convention of the Finnish Federation in Waukegan, Ill., last December did not take more than half the members out of the party when the federation voted to withdraw.

The convention will be closely scrutinized by a gallery of representatives of a number of wings and groups that have broken away from the Socialist Party, such as the Proletarians, the various Communist organizations, and others. They are strong in Detroit, and they are watching for any break that they can use in their campaign against the Socialist Party.

Rumors of Splits Aplenty.

The air is full of rumors of splits. Everybody is interested in what William F. Kruse and J. Louis Engdahl are going to do. Engdahl is the leading exponent of unconditional affiliation with the Communist International in the Socialist Party, but he has been sewed

up with instructions to vote against it by his county organization, which bade him by a heavy majority vote against any affiliation. A year ago, when Cook County had 12 delegates, at least half of whom were against affiliation, the county organization passed a resolution drafted and moved by Engdahl, and seconded by Kruse, to vote for affiliation with Moscow without reservations. And, while they spoke against affiliation, they voted for it. And it is expected that Engdahl will speak for affiliation, and vote against it, as instructed.

His speeches are likely to be full of fireworks, too, because of the bitter fight in the Chicago organization preceding the county convention last Saturday [June 18, 1921].

But the Moscow question is not likely to take up more than one-fifth of the time of the convention. It is the guess of a number of delegates already here that the whole matter will be disposed of in a single day and then other matters will take up the rest of the convention's time.

Next to the Communist question the delegates are interested in the proposals to permit "working agreements" with the Farmer-Labor Party and similar organizations. Cameron H. King of California is for it, and some other delegates are on the fence. A pretty debate on the subject is anticipated, and many visitors to the convention feel that such a step will be a "vital step forward" that many Socialists have been talking about lately.

End of Federations Seen.

Otto F. Branstetter, worried nearly sick over the party's finances, still has a smile over the matter of such "fusion" when the matter is broached to him. He is against it, and on that question he stands with members of the faction that he has been bitterly fighting in Chicago, the pro-Moscow elements.

Branstetter's job is to get the convention over with and to get the delegates sent home. And with an empty treasury it is no mean job. But the party has hurdled worse difficulties, and Branstetter is expected to get over this, too.

It is likely that there will be no federations after the convention. When there were a few federations, with a tenth of the party membership, there wasn't any trouble; but when the federations had 55 percent

of the membership there was a lot of trouble. And now nine-tenths of the demands that the party do this or that comes from the federations. The Finnish branches, representing at least half the old federation, seem to be in favor of ending the federations.

Wants Socialism to Get Over.

But Frank Petrich of the Yugoslav Federation — the Serbs and Slovenes and Croats — is bitterly opposed, and is here to make a fight for the preservation of the federation form of organization.

“There are mighty problems to solve,” says one of the New York delegates, “and I am interested in all of them. But there is one question that interests me more than anything else. That is, how to get Socialism to the workers of America. Everything that will lead us to that I am in favor of. But I have only an academic interest in the things that will not help us get to the workers of America.”

There is a lot of feeling around the hotel lobbies where the delegates are gathering that more time will be taken up by purely American problems than in the past few conventions.

“The war is over. The reaction is receding slowly, but it is receding. We need pay no more attention to them as living issues, as in 1917 and 1919. The workers are eagerly waiting for the Socialist message. And the job of the Socialist Party is to get it to them. It has no other job.”

That is the word that comes from the gathering places of the delegates.

The delegates are stopping at the Plaza, the Wolverine, and the Statler Hotels.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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