

---

# **Resolution of Expulsion Lost in Convention: Incident Considered Closed — Socialist Party Delegates Vote for Strong Central Organization**

**by William M. Feigenbaum**

Published in the *New York Call*, vol. 14, no. 180 (June 29, 1921), pp. 1-2.

DETROIT, June 28 [1921].— Today's session of the 9th Convention of the Socialist Party in Auto Workers' Hall took a stand, on a number of successive votes, that the national party organization is paramount, and that the interest of the Socialist movement requires a strong central organization, rather than a number of local organizations, some strong, others weak.

Steps were taken to inaugurate a national lecture circuit, to study the question of a national party press, and many other things disposed of. That, and the clearing up of a large part of the agenda, constitute the work of morning and afternoon sessions, sessions that were characterized by hard work on the part of all the delegates, and an earnest desire to cooperate. In opening the session, Chairman [Algeron] Lee of yesterday's sessions apologized for his action in calling [William] Kruse to order. The incident seems to have cleared the air, and there was no more attributing motives and calling of names.

Cameron King was elected chairman and [John C.] Lewis vice-chairman. Immediately upon assembling, the convention went into executive session, Branstetter giving the facts of the party's financial situation. Upon assembling openly, [Morris] Hillquit moved that the party raise a fund of \$10,000 in 30 days for the immediate needs of the party.

"There has been too much laxity," he said. "There should be a strong executive, and attention paid to its actions. All motions of the committee should be printed in the party press as a matter of course, not only if the editor wants to see it in print. We need a well-balanced organization, and we need a strong national organization."

[Victor] Berger seconded Hillquit's ideas on a strong organization, although he wanted to raise \$40,000 in a hurry. "Although we are not as strong as we were in 1908 in members," he said, "we have grown enormously in votes and in influence. We are an influential organization, and we need a good, strong organization."

Kruse, as State Secretary of Illinois, promised the fullest cooperation in any work the national organization undertook. The convention decided to place a secretary at work at once in the National Office to raise a national fund of \$20,000. George Roewer's amendment being carried to raise Hillquit's motion for \$10,000.

### **Expulsion Resolution Lost.**

The expulsion resolution was voted down with only two affirmative votes, [H.F.] Flanagan of Georgia, probably in error, and Lewis voting yes, while Kruse and Engdahl refrained from voting. The rest of the delegates gladly voted no, and the incident is considered entirely closed. The convention took up the various agenda propositions dealing with finances, out of their turn, in order to discuss and vote upon them with Branstetter's report on finances in their minds. Agenda, page 6, Motion No. 1 carried by 22 to 15, after an interesting discussion by the various State Secretaries on the condition of the party organization.

"The man who doesn't want to pay dues," said [Fred] Feuchter of Iowa, "is the man who says they're too high. He would not pay dues, no matter how low they were." Passing Motion No. 1 disposed of all others.

On page 7, column 1, last motion lost. One just before carried.

Page 5, propaganda and organization, daily newspapers. The motion was carried without discussion, a committee of 9 being elected. Those elected to report back next year were Victor L. Berger, Oscar Ameringer, J. Louis Engdahl, Ida Crouch Hazlett, James Oneal, Charles W. Ervin, William M. Feigenbaum, Joe Rhoden of Atlanta, and George H. Goebel. The committee was chosen to represent all

phases of Socialist journalism and will be expected to make a careful study of the problem.

There was a dramatic scene just before adjournment for lunch. It was reported that a number of hotels had strikes on their hands, the cooks and waitresses going out yesterday. [William] Coleman of Wisconsin and Copen were elected a committee to see the business agent of the union for a list of the unfair houses. As a result, Charles Wright of the Cooks' Union appeared and reported that 5 hotels had unfair restaurants. The convention, without motion, but by unanimous action, observed the report, and declared no delegate should patronize the place.

### **Maurer Speaks.**

James H. Maurer, president of the Pennsylvania Federation of Labor, addressed the delegates after the afternoon session. Maurer is here to appear before the convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, now in session here.

### **Chance to Count Noses.**

He was given an ovation when he appeared on the platform, and frequently applauded during his remarks.

"We have just gone through an awful period," he said, "a period that gave us a chance to count noses.

"There used to be a lot of spellbinders at the conventions. They are not here anymore. They were tried, and a lot of them were found wanting. The experience was a good thing. It taught us who was with us and who was against us."

Warming up to the crowd of old friends before him, Maurer said:

"We have been through an awful time, and it is a wonder that there is anything left of the party, now that they have hammered it so hard. It is a tribute to what we stand for."

### **Makes Plea for Tolerance.**

Maurer made a plea for tolerance in the party.

"Little intolerances make much of our troubles," he said. "We magnify the things that divide us. It doesn't matter much if we believe

in sabotage or the dictatorship. It does matter how you stand when the crisis comes.

“The way some people talk, you’d think that the revolution is just around the corner and only Victor Berger and Jim Maurer are keeping it back. I’m not afraid of the revolution. When it comes, I’ll be there. But when I think of some of the revolutionaries I’ve met, who say they are the great leaders, I don’t want to have them lead me.

“Where were they when there was work to be done after the armistice was signed? There they were, calling us names, busting things up. The rank and file may have been all right, but that element was inspired by the government to break us up, make no mistake about that. You can believe anything you want, you can differ all you want, but don’t let your differences make you forget to fight the capitalist enemy. If you’re fighting clean, I’m with you no matter what your label is.”

### **Committee Warmly Greeted.**

A remarkable welcome was given a committee from the convention which carried greetings of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People at the Second Baptist Church.

Morris Berman was chairman of the Socialist committee, the other members being Ida Crouch Hazlett and Lillith Martin. Berman was warmly introduced by Robert W. Bagnall of Detroit, who presided over the association’s convention. There was considerable applause when he made a plea for working class solidarity on the basis of class interest.

The reading of the Socialist convention’s resolution was warmly applauded, and Mrs. Hazlett’s brief address on the Negro problem was also well received. She emphasized the point that it was to the interest of the exploiting classes to keep the black and white races divided and mutually hostile. Chairman Bagnall thanked the committee and agreed that there was no solution to the Negro problem that was not also a settlement of the industrial question.

### **Hillquit Leaves.**

Upon reassembling in the afternoon, Julius Gerber was seated in place of Morris Hillquit, who was called back to New York. Later in

the day Edmund T. Melms was seated in place of Berger, who had to leave.

The motion on propaganda among women was carried, 21 to 8, with practically no debate. The subject of organization and lecture circuits brought out a discussion of the conditions under which party lecturers have had to work hitherto. The motion was carried.

Then followed the approval or disapproval of a series of motions without debate, headed education, and the resolution was carried by viva voce vote. Immediate demands were tabled on the motion of Mayor Hoan, the motions on direct action, sabotage, and mass action being likewise tabled on motion of [Jacob] Ojala of Ohio.

The question of Socialist congressmen voting for military appropriations brought out a demonstration of enthusiasm that swept the convention. Coleman, Wisconsin, amended to add "except in case of actual invasion of the country." Berger seconded, he said, to bring out a point. Kruse said: "The doctrine of this motion is the kind of doctrine our party has grown great upon. We only fall down when we split hairs over the difference between offensive and defensive wars."

### **Resolution Carried.**

Kruse's spirited statement of the party's historic position was an electric spark that made the delegates sit up and cheer. Berger said, "I have stood on the St. Louis platform, and never more than now have I felt its importance. I am against militarism because it is used against the workers. I am against it because it divides the workers. And yet I am no pacifist. The Russians are no pacifists. We are against militarism because it is in the hands of our enemies." Berger then withdrew his second to Coleman's amendment, Coleman withdrew the amendment, and the motion went through with a whoop.

A resolution, page 4, column 2, after Berger insisted that chambers of commerce were not as dangerous to us as the American Legion and the Ku Klux Klan, was tabled. There was a hot tilt over the meaning of political action, page 4. Solomon asserted that under Motion 2 it would be possible for anarchists and advocates of bomb throwing to claim that these were political acts and therefore demand membership in the party. Kruse, however, insisted that No. 2 accurately described the party's actual practice. Hoan made a speech demanding the ousting of anarchists from the party.

“If anyone doesn’t believe in political action, if they don’t believe in taking off their coats and working on election day, they don’t belong in the party,” he said.

*Edited by Tim Davenport*

1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR · October 2013 · Non-commercial reproduction permitted.