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# Convention at Indianapolis:

**Delegates Execute the Mandate of the Rank and File and Secure a United Socialist Party — Synopsis of the Proceedings — Selection of Committees — “Immediate Demands” — Platform, Constitution, and Resolutions — Name “Socialist Party” Adopted — St. Louis Selected as Seat of National Committee with Greenbaum as National Secretary — Harmony Marks the Entire Proceedings...**

by A.M. Simons

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The ratification of the union of Socialist forces in the United States was declared at Indianapolis on Thursday, August 1st [1901], 10:30 pm, when the chairman's gavel fell for the last time in announcing that having completed its work, “this convention is now adjourned.” With one final cheer the hundred-and-thirty-odd delegates, who had for the preceding 4 days wrought so laboriously, faithfully and successfully, in carrying out the mandate of their constituents, rose from their seats, filed out of the hall, and a few hours later were speeding by rail, North, South, East, and West, with the feeling that the jealousies, recriminations, and misunderstandings of the past had been removed, that a new era had arisen in the history of socialism, and that henceforth the struggle against capitalism would be carried on throughout the land by an organized harmonious party working for one common object and standing upon a common platform. They looked upon their work and saw that it was good. SOCIALIST UNITY had been realized.

## **General Results.**

With the general results of the convention, the readers of *The Call* are no doubt already familiar. The last issued contained the information that unity was practically certain, though not formally ratified as described above, that the name “SOCIALIST PARTY” had been chosen as the designation of the united forces, together with a notice of the discussion on so-called

“immediate demands” and the position taken by the delegates thereon. It only remains to add that St. Louis was selected as the seat of the National Committee, and that Comrade Leon Greenbaum of the same city was elected National Secretary by acclamation, to complete the outline of the general results of the convention.

## **Synopsis of Proceedings.**

A brief synopsis of the daily proceedings of this body is all that can possibly be given in these columns, concluding with some general remarks and observations suggested by the composition and action of this representative body of socialists. Although a full stenographic report has been secured by the Chicago comrades in addition to the official stenographic report, it is obviously impossible to present within the space limits of *The Workers' Call* even a condensation of the mass of matter secured by the stenographers. This will no doubt eventually materialize in pamphlet form.† Meanwhile the best that can possibly be given here is a brief notice of the most important proceedings of each day.

## **Capitalist Press Falsehoods.**

With the preliminary work of the convention before its settling into permanent form, our readers are already familiar. The temporary Chairman, Dr.

†- No pamphlet was ever produced but the Socialist Party of America Papers held by Duke University and published in a microfilm edition contains two specimens of the typescripts of the stenogram which were circulated.

Herron, was made permanent Chairman for the remainder of the day, the report of the Committee on Credentials was read, of which the general results were given in last week's issue.

Report of Committee on Rules dealing with limitation of speeches, roll calls, methods of voting, etc. was made, times of sitting and recess ruled upon, provision made for special sessions, committees elected on Platform, Constitution, and Resolutions, and other preliminaries were settled on the first day of the convention [Monday, July 29, 1901].

On Tuesday [July 30], owing to the fact that one of the local capitalist papers had falsely alleged the hostility of the convention to Eugene V. Debs, late Presidential candidate of the SDP, it was ordered that a telegram assuring Comrade Debs of the esteem and confidence of the convention be sent. This was unanimously agreed to, and in addition a motion repudiating the malignant falsehoods of the *Indianapolis Sentinel*, the journal in question, was passed without a dissenting vote. It should have been previously stated that Comrade James Carey of Haverhill, Mass., was elected Chairman for this day.

### **Reports of National Secretaries.**

The National Secretaries of the Chicago and Springfield Boards made their reports of finances, membership, etc., showing the general standing of the respective wings of the SDP. The Chairman [Carey] then read several telegrams and communications which had been received in the interim, all of them expressing confidence that the results of the convention would terminate in the unity and solidification of Socialist forces. Each communication when read was received with vigorous applause.

### **Committee on Resolutions.**

The report of the Committee on Resolutions was then heard. Resolutions on the attitude of the convention towards trade unions and on the negro question were referred back to the committee for further consideration. One concerning grievances and opinions of members to be expressed freely through the party press was tabled, while another from the local Barbers' Union requesting support and endorsement

was passed.

Next came the report on Platform, and the minority report recommending that "immediate demands" be stricken from the party platform. Before the discussion commenced, Comrade Vahlteich, representing the Karl Marx Club of Chicago, read an excellent paper in English dealing with the possibility of Socialist unity mainly from the standpoint of the question about to be discussed. It was received with hearty applause.

### **"Immediate Demands."**

The important question of "immediate demands" was warmly contested, although the limits of good order and courtesy were never overstepped. Amongst those who spoke in favor of the minority report were Delegates Simons, Wilshire, Murphy, Clemens, and McSweeney; while on the other side, Hoehn, Hillquit, Berger, Harriman, Sieverman, and Goebel were the most exhaustive speakers. As it was evident that the matter could not be settled in the prescribed limits of this day, a special 8 o'clock session was passed.

Comrade Herron read and moved a substitute amending the majority report on immediate demands so as to clearly express the distinction between capitalist and socialist interpretations of these demands, and expressing the distinct class interests of the worker in each one of them. This substitute was accepted. More discussion then ensued, Delegates Klenke, Ryan, and Hayes declaring opposition to immediate demands as amended. The time limit of the special session expired, leaving the matter still open, several delegates insisting on their determination to be heard on the question.

On Wednesday morning [July 31], with Max Hayes of Cleveland as Chairman, the debate continued. Delegates Spring, Carey, Costley, Wanhope, Hedrick, and Hamilton speaking against the demands. It being evident, however, that insistence upon their abolition might possibly defeat the main object of the assembly, names of delegates were asked for withdrawal of opposition, and many were so given. When the vote was finally taken it was announced that the majority report on "immediate demands" as amended, was carried by a roll call majority of 4,033, showing that 5,358

votes had been cast for the retention and 1,325 against. The names of the Chicago delegates who voted upon this question and the position taken by them, have been published in the preceding issue of this paper.

### **Platform is Discussed.**

The report of the Committee on Platform was then taken up by paragraphs. The entire platform was adopted with several slight amendments which in the opinion of the convention more clearly expressed its meaning. The "farmers' plank," however, was stricken out and finally referred to a Special Committee on Resolutions, not however before a long and exhaustive discussion had taken place on the question in which Delegates Simon, Hoehn, Hillquit, Spring, Mills, Berger, Carey, Origo, Sieverman, Harriman, and Stedman were the principal speakers.

It should have been stated that "immediate demand" no. 3, referring to the same subject, was stricken out and referred to the special committee above mentioned.

As a conclusion to the demands, a clause warning the working class against fraudulent imitations designed to perpetuate capitalism was carried after an animated discussion. The platform as a whole was then adopted.

### **Name Socialist Party Adopted.**

Then came the report of the Committee on Constitution, the name of the party being the first matter to be decided. As it was growing late, a motion for a special session from 8 pm was carried.

Finally the name SOCIALIST PARTY was adopted by a vote of 79 to 19. The minority demanded a roll call, which showed 1,393 [proxy] votes against the name.

Next followed the matter of National Committee, in discussion of which a very large number of the delegates took part. The question was still under consideration when the convention adjourned for the day.

### **Resolutions Again Taken Up.**

Delegate Philip Brown of Chicago was elected Chairman for Thursday [Aug. 1]. The debate on the

Constitution proceeded for a short time and then the Secretaries were instructed to prepare a copy of the Constitution so far as it had been adopted, the convention turning its attention in the meantime to resolutions. A resolution of sympathy with the striking steel workers was unanimously adopted and ordered telegraphed.

A resolution defining the attitude of Socialists towards the trade unions was adopted.

A resolution debarring members of the party from accepting appointive positions from the hands of the capitalist class was referred to the Committee on Constitution.

A resolution debarring party members from joining the state militia took the same course.

The following resolutions were adopted: One to establish a permanent committee on municipal affairs, said committee to be composed of 5 members of the convention. One to provide Spanish-speaking Socialist organizers for Puerto Rico, \$200 to be applied to this purpose. This resolution was first tabled, then reconsidered and adopted. One on the negro question was referred to a committee for amendment and adopted as amended.

Several other minor resolutions were tabled.

The city of St. Louis, Mo., was chosen as National Headquarters, as against Chicago. On roll call the vote showed St. Louis — 3,517; Chicago — 3,096. The names of Cleveland, O., Indianapolis, Ind., and Davenport, Ia., were also placed in nomination, but were afterwards withdrawn.

A resolution defining the position of Socialists towards the farmers and general agricultural population was adopted. A resolution on injunctions was also carried.

The resolutions referred to the Committee on Constitution took the following course. The one dealing with "appointive officials, etc." was referred to the National Committee to be sent to a referendum. The other dealing with party members joining the militia was amended to read: "No member, etc., to enter the armed service of a capitalist class," and was adopted.

### **Debate on Constitution.**

It would be impossible to give in the columns of this paper any account of the debate on constitu-

tion. So long, voluminous, and protracted was the debate which centered around "state autonomy" that we must refer our readers to the full stenographic report which will doubtless shortly appear. All of these questions, which included duties and powers of National Committee, organization of states and territories, basis of representation, payment of dues, etc., were discussed in a manner which showed strikingly the constructive ability, forethought, and keenness of the delegates who took the most prominent part in these discussions, but unfortunately are too long for publication, and could not be done justice to within the limits of our space.

After the Constitution had been adopted as amended several resolutions came up for consideration.

### **Final Resolutions.**

It was resolved first that the parties to the convention merge and amalgamate into one party. Carried unanimously. A resolution that the new SOCIALIST PARTY assume the debts of the parties to the convention also went through, as did another instructing the NEC to compile and publish a report of the proceedings of the convention.

### **Election of National Secretary.**

The Committee on Arrangements then reported, and a collection (in cash and personal pledges) was taken up to defray present expenses.

Comrade Leon Greenbaum of St. Louis was then elected National Secretary, and a resolution recognizing the services of Comrades Theodore Debs and William Butscher was adopted.

A Local Quorum of 5 was elected to act as Provisional Committee with power to fill their own vacancies. It was moved that this Quorum should also act as a Literary Revision Committee on Platform, Constitution, etc., which motion was concurred in.

### **Convention Adjourns.**

It was now growing late and the Chairman [Brown] had reached the point where the question as

to whether there was any more business to be brought before the convention was in order. There was no answer to the query, but Delegate Berger of Milwaukee took the floor, and in a short address accepted the proceedings of the convention as final, subject to the referendum of the membership of the SDP with headquarters at Chicago. After several further felicitous and congratulatory remarks, and sanguine forecasts for the future of Socialism, the speaker resumed his seat amidst loud and repeated cheers from all present. †

Once more the Chairman asked if there was any further business before the convention. This time the reply came in the shape of a motion that "this convention do now adjourn." The motion was seconded, put, and carried, and with the final stroke of the Chairman's gavel, the Indianapolis Convention passed into history, and the SOCIALIST PARTY, united, organized, and equipped for the struggle with capitalism and the emancipation of the working class, issued forth, strong and confident in the vigorous life and energy with which the convention in its own dissolution had endowed it.

### **Concluding Remarks.**

Little more remains to be said which might properly come under the head of a report of this convention. The SOCIALIST PARTY starts its career with many advantages which were impossible of attainment by earlier organizations carrying on the labor movement. Besides it has the inestimable advantage of the experience of its predecessors, and if wisely conducted should be able to avoid their mistakes. Judging from the proceedings of the convention it may be reasonably inferred that this experience will not be wasted. The conduct of the delegates, above all, shows that not only has the stock of economic knowledge possessed by Socialists increased remarkably, not only has their constructive and organizing ability shown a striking development, but the spirit of stupid intolerance has been largely eradicated, while not an atom of the revolutionary position has been abandoned. Disruption, based upon personalities and misunderstandings which accumulate in intensity as opponents obstinately resolve not to understand or make reasonable allow-

†- Victor Berger was the de facto leader of the Chicago SDP and had been one of the greatest obstacles to unification over the course of the previous year.

ances for each other's position, differences on minor details of tactics, we may assert with tolerable assurance, will never again be permitted to occur. These, in reality immaterial differences, though some of them yet undoubtedly exist to various extents, are in the opinion of this convention no bar to unity. Disruption can only come in the future when fundamental principles are threatened. In such cases it seems unavoidable, and on the whole perhaps it is best that this should be so. If there is any tendency in the future which will bring fundamental differences of principle into the Socialist ranks (and we think there is little or no reason for believing that such a tendency exists), then internal struggles will break forth anew despite our efforts; but if not, it devolves upon us entirely to see that minor questions and disputes and misunderstandings are not permitted to produce an effect that can only be reasonably caused by divergence on essential principles.

We have on particular safeguard against this condition of affairs: a greater and stronger bond than can be furnished by adjurations for mutual concessions, forbearance, and sentimental brotherhood. Let us never forget the nature of the struggle in which we are engaged. In the midst of our petty internal frictions let us never lose sight of the fact that THE enemy is CAPI-

TALISM; that while we may even have just ground for complaint against another comrade or that we occupy an impregnable position against some minor measure which though adopted by the party, seems to us unwarrantable, let us never forget that while we expend energy in asserting ourselves upon these petty grievances and attracting the attention of other comrades to them, the exploitation, which is our chief object to abolish, still goes on strengthening and fortifying itself while we desist from attacking it, to foment differences which in no sense should prevent united action in the struggle. The constant remembrance of these things should be our strongest bond of unity, while we fight the enemy from one common platform, based upon the unavoidable hostility of economic classes.

The SOCIALIST PARTY will live and struggle and finally conquer by pursuing and adhering to the spirit manifested by the delegates whose united voices gave its birth at the Indianapolis Convention. The movement in these United States has been committed to its safekeeping. Let us be, above all things, SOCIALISTS, so that when the working class ask an account of our stewardship, we may be able to justify the trust which has been reposed in us.

*Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.*

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