
Replies of the National Committee of the SPA to the Proposed Emergency National Convention of 1917.

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Chicago, March 12, 1917.

To the National Committee

Dear Comrades:—

The Executive Committee met at the National Office on Saturday, March 10, 1917, and after a careful consideration of the situation confronting the Socialist Party in the event of War, it was decided to issue a call for a special convention, subject to the approval of the National Committee. The following message was sent to the members of the National Committee:

“National Executive Committee proposes to call an Emergency Convention on April 7th in place of contemplated September convention to determine Party policy in case of war and transact other Party business. Language federations unanimously favor plan. Endorsement of National Committee desired. Do you approve? Vote immediately by wire.”

We have the following replies:

EDDY (Arizona):— Do not approve calling emergency convention. Premature and unconstitutional.

McKEE (California):— I approve emergency convention but strongly urge an early meeting of the National Committee instead.

COLLINS (Colorado):— Answering your telegram of today I vote yes. Expenses will be hard for some of us. Please notify all members about same at once.

PLUNKETT (Connecticut):— Telegram received. I vote yes for the National Convention to be held during April. Let me know the number of delegates Connecticut is entitled to.

NORTON (Delaware):— On Emergency convention I vote yes.

PIERCE (District of Columbia):— national Committee meeting can determine Party policy in case of war just as well as Emergency convention with less expense. Neither can do more than submit policy to referendum. I vote against emergency convention and favor National Committee meeting.

PIMBLY (Florida):— Must comply with section two article eleven. Hence vote no.

CLARK (Idaho):— I approve calling emergency convention.

FENIMORE (Indiana):— Emergency Convention hereby endorsed.

McCRILLIS (Iowa):— Message received. I approve convention call of NEC.

BELOOF (Kansas):— I vote for the proposed convention.

WORK (Illinois):— I preferred and proposed that, instead of calling a convention, the Executive Committee should formulate a policy to be followed by the party in case of war, together with the reasons, and recommend to the membership that the same be initiated for a referendum vote. As everyone else was in favor of the convention, however, I voted for it for the sake of unity of action.

STARK (Kentucky):— Call for Emergency meeting OK.

ENEMARK (Maine):— I favor plan of convention April seventh.

NEISTADT (Maryland):— I vote yes.

ROEWER and ONEAL (Massachusetts):— We favor emergency convention April seventh if practical.

SALA (Minnesota):— I favor plan of NEC.

BROMS (Minnesota):— National Committee

business regarding April convention, I vote yes.

LESTER (Mississippi):— I approve of emergency convention proposal, will attend if held.

GREENE (Missouri):— Vote yes on emergency convention.

GOEBEL (New Jersey):— Opposed to April convention. Impossible to elect delegate in time. Also mean big burden of debt. You should urge meeting National Committee in preference.

PARKS (New Mexico):— Approve call. Secure and mail Santa Fe transportation.

BOUDIN (New York):— I approve National Executive Committee proposition for emergency convention.

MERRILL (New York):— Record me in favor special convention April.

SOLOMON (New York):— Record me as favoring proposal for a special national convention on April seventh.

LEE (New York):— I approve plan for emergency convention.

PREVEY (Ohio):— I approve of Emergency Convention proposal by committee.

CUMBIE (Oklahoma):— Vote yes on emergency call. Keep me informed.

HOLT and SINCLAIR (Oklahoma):— We are unalterably opposed to calling either special convention at this time. No good can be accomplished now without a more adequate method of National publicity. Because the nation has gone crazy is no reason for us to do likewise. If you must do something put protest petition in the hands of every party member at once.

STREIFF (Oregon):— I approve emergency convention of April seventh.

ERVIN (Pennsylvania):— Yes.

MAURER (Pennsylvania):— Replying to your wire I vote yes.

REVELISE (South Carolina):— Record me as voting yes on proposed convention.

ATWOOD (South Carolina):— National Committee has no right whatever to call a convention. I move National Committee meet then. If moved second same.

KEMPTON (Utah):— Just received your proposal to meet April seventh instead of September. Am heartily in favor of same. Utah will be represented at

this convention.

SUITOR (Vermont):— Yes, approve change of date.

GNEISER (West Virginia):— By all means issue call. Invite representatives of all labor unions, SLP and Pacifists to participate.

SADLER (Washington):— Yes. National Committee meeting. Time too short election convention delegates.

MELMS (Wisconsin):— I am in favor of holding said convention.

HASTINGS (Wyoming):— While I will be unable to attend emergency convention I vote yes. I agree the NEC that it is badly needed to set the Party right on many questions, especially the question of war.

WILLIAMS (California):— I favor emergency convention April seventh. I vote yes.

LESUEUR (North Dakota):— Vote yes on Convention.

EDDY (Arizona):— I voted in the negative. I could not find any authority in the constitution for calling a special convention except by referendum of the membership. More than that, such a convention to accomplish its purpose would have to reflect absolutely the position of the membership on various matters which should come up for consideration. In the time specified it would be absolutely impossible to elect delegates by referendum, while they should not only be so elected but instructed to a certain degree.

If the press has not exaggerated the imminence of war and if the party is not sufficiently on record and anything is to be gained by so early a meeting, why not a committee meeting, which would be legal? Out here we don't think there is much to be excited about.

If we have a convention at all this year, we should make it the big party event of the decade. Every matter which is likely to come up should have thorough and thoughtful consideration by the membership in advance. The work of the convention should be to discuss and compare various policies and tactics and come to a definite decision to guide us. While the war is a terribly big thing, it should not make us lose all sense of values. If half the energy which we have devoted to trying to settle European problems had been expended in solving American problems, these last two

years, we would be in a better position to exert an influence now. We have done well to work for peace, but I think we have lost our perspective.

BUSELER (Arkansas):— I vote no on the proposition. In case of war our Executive and National Committee could act and do all work necessary. Cut out these conventions altogether, they are too expensive for Socialists.

HURST (Rhode Island):— I approve special meeting for April seventh.

WILK (Georgia):— Thoroughly approve of holding convention on April seventh.

WHITE (North Carolina):— I favor the emergency convention on April seventh.

BRAUN (Tennessee):— I vote no on calling emergency convention. Results of convention at this time will not justify strain on party finances. Before convention will be called, all indications point that we will already be at war, and as American Socialists are hopelessly divided, running from one extreme to the other, from non-resistance to jingoism, I believe that party unity can best be served by delaying convention.

KATTERFELD (Washington):— I vote yes for emergency convention April seventh.

NOONAN (Louisiana):— I vote yes on emergency convention.

GREENE (New Hampshire):— I wish to change my vote to call an emergency convention. I vote no. At this time, after thinking it over, we are late in action and if we now get busy it would not be given due consideration and expense would be thrown away.

ROSSON (Texas):— No, Rule 5 prohibits such action against war party policy.

WHITE (North Carolina):— My conviction has been all the while that we needed an early meeting of the National Committee or National Convention so

that matters which are important in a time like we are in and are facing should be dealt with. I have favored every move that points to an early meeting of the National Committee or National Convention. I went so far as to make an unconstitutional motion in order to speed up matters. I favor an effort to reorganize all disorganized states or territories. I favor an action to put printing press for circular letters, etc., in all states where they have not got one and that it will be under control of the State Secretary and Committee. Again, I would favor that we move National Headquarters to Washington, DC and that State Organizations have their headquarters at the State's Capitol where practical, and if impractical in the beginning, work to that point. We must as I see it, begin a campaign of education on one hand and a campaign for votes on the other, or strictly political movement.

RODRIGUEZ:— I vote no on plan to hold special national convention and endorse comment of Eddy of Arizona. It is a wrong expenditure of money we haven't got. Eddy says, "If we have a convention at all this year, we should make it the big party event of the decade. Every matter which is likely to come up should have a thorough consideration by the membership in advance." And she is right. In any emergency, the National Committee and National Executive Committee are better able to handle the situation than a convention called unlawfully, without much thought, and without giving the party membership the opportunity of electing delegates by a referendum vote. It is more likely to be a machine convention, than a real representative Party Convention.

Fraternally submitted,

Adolph Germer, Executive Secretary.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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