
Letter from Adolph Germer in Chicago to Morris Hillquit at Saranac Lake, NY, April 17, 1919.

Document 835 from the microfilm edition of the Morris Hillquit Papers.

April 17, 1919. eties with the result that the attendance at the meetings is getting smaller and the membership is decreasing.

Morris Hillquit,
The Santanoni,
Saranac Lake, NY

My dear Morris:—

I am in perfect accord with what you say respecting a more aggressive policy of the party but I am not ready to go as far as some of our “revolutionaries” would carry us. I am not in the least quarreling with their ideas as to what position the Socialist Party should take respecting the world developments, my quarrel is because of the methods that they pursue within the party. If the “revolutionists” sincerely think that they can set the world on edge overnight, I am perfectly willing to let them have whatever satisfaction they can get out of such beliefs. If they think the people are ready for revolution tomorrow, I am not going to disturb their optimism. And perhaps I am taking them entirely too seriously. It may be that they are mostly noise. However, in certain sections they have succeeded in converting our most active locals and branches into mere debating soci-



When I first opposed a convention I did it in the belief that if it could be postponed until next spring the gas attacks [by the Left Wing] would subside and we would be ready to go ahead with our work and take advantage of the unusual opportunities that are open to us. There are two elements in the party that I feel sure can be harmonized. The one is the so-called “right wing” and the other the so-called “center.” Personally I could never recognize any wings in the party. I have al-

ways looked upon the members as Socialists rather than as adherents to wings. But the other element, I cannot ignore. Their campaign of falsehoods in the *Revolutionary Age*, the *Proletarian*, the *Communist*, as well as by lefts of the Left Wing, is disorganizing some of our best locals. It seems we will have to go through the same experiences as in years gone by which consumed the energy of the party in factional squabbles instead of aggressive Socialist activity.

I am just making up a comparative statement of membership covering two corresponding periods. This shows that our increase has been almost totally in the foreign language federations and then mainly in the Russian, Lithua-

nian, and Ukrainian federations. We are not reaching the American worker who, after all, is needed to achieve the revolution. These federations are carrying on a persistent campaign first for their slate for the National Executive Committee and International delegates, and secondly for the Special National Convention.

One of the federations sent out a mimeographed blank to all of its branches for them to fill in and complain that they have not yet received ballots for the convention and party officials. These were circulated and several of them came to this office before it was time for the ballots to be sent. Another federation, the South Slavic, had the following resolution printed in blank form:

Mr. Adolph Germer,
803 W. Madison St.,
Chicago, Ill.

Dear Comrade:—

The South Slavic Int'l Socialist Branch No. _____ in _____ has voted in support of the resolution proposed by branch local Boston, Mass.

“That the Socialist Party shall participate only in an International Congress or Conference called by or in which participate the Communist Party of Russia (Bolsheviki) and the Communist Labor Party of Germany (Spartacans).”

_____ members in good standing.
Branch _____

Signed: _____
Branch Sec'y.

These were sent to their branches with the request that they be sent in here. Never before in the history of the party have such electioneering methods been conducted.† This morning's mail brought sixteen ballots from the Russian Branch

in Willimatic, Conn. There was not a single variation in the sixteen ballots — every one of them was as follows:

National Executive Committee —
Fraina,
Horwick [Hourwich],
Lindgren.

International Delegate —
Ferguson (in the party about a year),
Fraina (in the party less than 3 months),
Reed (in the party about 9 months),
Wagenknecht.

There were no votes cast for International Secretary.‡

I note your criticism with regard to the leadership in the party. The chief cause consisted in our difficulty in reaching the members. The *Bulletin* and the *Eye Opener* and our first class mail were held up while the *Revolutionary Age* and the *Proletarian* were permitted to circulate. We sought to overcome this by sending our mail from other cities and we succeeded in a large degree but we learned from time to time that some of it was held up by the postmasters in the communities to which it was addressed. To me it is significant that the *Revolutionary Age* can circulate while the *Eye Opener* and the *Bulletin* are virtually suppressed. It is significant that our circularizations were interfered with by the postal authorities while the mail of the “revolutionists” is, so far as I know, unmolested.§

There seems to be no doubt about the referendum going in favor of a convention. The motion to postpone the meeting of the National Executive Committee is carried. [National Executive Committee member George] Goebel today makes another motion to meet on May 24th. This, I think, will and ought to be adopted. If the com-

†- Perhaps so, but nor were they ever prohibited by party law.

‡- A contest pitting current International Secretary Hillquit against former International Secretary Katherine O'Hare.

§- No evidence supporting Germer's “conspiracy theory” has ever come to light. As he himself noted, strictness of the postal censorship varied from post office to post office.

mittee meets on the 24th, it will have work until about the 28th.† On that date the referendum on the National Convention of party officials closes and such action as will become necessary for the holding of the convention can immediately be taken.

There is another very important matter that in my opinion should be disposed of by the old committee and that is the formation of the organization to hold title of property for the party. This was started by the present committee and should be finished by it.

I hope you will be able to attend that meeting.

How soon do you expect to be released from prison life?‡ This question is asked of me time and again and of course, I always give the most encouraging replies.

With best wishes, I remain

Fraternally yours,

Adolph Germer

Executive Secretary.

†- The NEC wound up meeting May 24-30, 1919, in a seminal session that resulted in the summary expulsion of the Socialist Party of Michigan and the suspension of seven of the SPA's language federations.

‡- Hillquit was in the midst of a long period of recuperation from tuberculosis at a sanitarium at Saranac Lake in upstate New York.

Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.

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