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# Debate on Seating the Minnesota Delegation at the Emergency National Convention of the Socialist Party of America: Chicago, IL — August 31, 1919.

From the uncorrected *Proceedings of the National Convention of the Socialist Party at Machinists' Hall, 113 S. Ashland Blvd., Chicago, IL.* State Historical Society of Wisconsin, micro 2094, reel 1, pp. 163-226.

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**Comrade [Jacob] Panken [NY]:** As I reported this afternoon, there are 2 delegations from the state of Minnesota. The situation in Minnesota is a rather involved one. The State Executive Committee of the state and the State Secretary [Charles Dirba] evidently did not work in agreement and accord, and the delegation was elected by referendum vote. The State Executive Committee then met, and they elected a new delegation to supercede the other, and they charge as follows: That the Secretary [Dirba] permitted the Ukrainian local of Minneapolis to nominate delegates and sending their nominations to vote on. Second, that the suspended locals and federations were permitted to participate in the balloting of the candidates and their vote was tabulated with those of the other locals. Third, that the Secretary [Dirba] systematically failed to send ballots on the nomination and election of delegates to locals who were known to oppose the contesting delegation. Fourth, the canvassing board was not convened to count the ballots and tabulate the same.

Comrade Friedman appeared for the delegation; he is a member of the State Executive Board, and contesting the seating of Comrades Jack Carney, Charles Dirba, Carl Haglund, H. Holm, C.A. Hathaway, Carl Skoglund, and Joseph Ungar. Comrade Carney appeared for the delegates whose seats were contested, and admitted the truth of the 1st, 2nd, and 4th complaints stated in the charge, and denied the 3rd. The third is that the Secretary systematically failed to send ballots on the nomination and election of delegates to

locals who were known to oppose the contesting delegations. He further stated that, even if your [credentials] committee recommends the seating of the delegation represented by him, and for whom he spoke, such delegation would not accept a seat in this convention. Your committee—

**Comrade [William] Kruse [IL]:** A point of order. Would that really come under a report on a contest?

**Chairman [Algernon] Lee [NY]:** this is not a question to the committee. I supposed you rose for some question to elucidate the report. The committee will proceed.

**Comrade Panken:** Your committee finds that the documentary evidence submitted to your committee justifies the position taken by the State Executive Board, and recommends that Comrades Charles S. Wells, Andrew Hanson, T.E. Latimer, George Hoffman, S. Friedman, J. Soltis, and H.L. Kramerman be seated as the duly accredited delegates from the state of Minnesota.

**Chairman Lee:** You have heard the report of the recommendation of the committee. Are you ready to vote?

**Comrade [James] Oneal [NY]:** In order that we may be able to better discuss this entire case, it would be well for the chairman of the committee [Panken] to tell us what these documents are upon which they base their recommendations. He merely mentioned that he has documentary evidence. We want to know what they are.

**Chairman Lee:** The committee will give the answer.

**Comrade Panken:** We have before us the Minnesota Bulletin, showing a tabulation of the vote. In the Bulletin, it appears that the South Slavic Federation voted, the Ironton Language Federation branch voted, the Minneapolis Lettish [Latvian] Federation voted, the Russian branch voted, the Scandinavian branch voted, and the Ukrainian branch voted.

We also had this question as to whether the State Executive Board had been recalled, and it was submitted to us, and it was not denied that the State Secretary [Dirba] sent out the following: "The next meeting of the State Executive Board will be held Monday evening, July 21st [1919], at 8 o'clock, and every member and alternate is urged to attend, regardless of the recall. The State Executive Board is in duty bound to carry on the current business of the state organization, even if the recall is carried." So that they admitted or conceded that the State Executive Board continues to act as the duly constituted and authorized State Executive Board for the state of Minnesota.

In addition to that, there were two affidavits; one affidavit from 4 comrades, who were secretaries of branches in Minneapolis of the Socialist Party, in which

they informed us that no ballots were sent to them for the purpose of making possible their voting on the election of delegates to the convention. Another affidavit was submitted to us from comrades who are members of the Canvassing Committee, the committee that is to count the ballots, in which they informed us that they were never informed nor were they requested to appear and take part in the canvassing board to canvass the votes as they were sent in to the State Office. These documents are in our possession, and they have been submitted to us.

**Comrade [Rose] Weiss [NJ]:** I would like to ask whether this delegation that the committee recommends be seated has been elected by the membership of Minnesota or whether it has not.

**Comrade Panken:** No, it has not. It has been elected by the State Executive Committee.

**Comrade Weiss:** Has it been elected or appointed?

**Comrade Panken:** Appointed by the State Executive Committee. They had no time to send out and call for nominations on the referendum vote, and we follow the same policy in the Minnesota case as we



**"Comrade Chairman!"**

*The New York delegation: Assemblyman Louis Waldman, Alderman Algernon Lee, Ex-Assemblyman Abraham Shiplacoff, Judge Jacob Panken, Assemblyman August Claessens, Alderman Abraham Beckerman, Assemblyman U. Solomon, Alderman Alexander Bronstein.*

did in the Utah case.

**Comrade [Oliver] Wilson [IL]:** I would like to ask the chairman of the Credentials Committee [Panken] what reason the party gave for stating that if the delegates were seated in this convention, they would not take the seats?

**Comrade Panken:** I don't know whether Comrade Carney would want me to state just what reason he advanced.

**Comrade Wilson:** I think the convention ought to know.

**Comrade Panken:** But, it is a matter of public record. There was a great number of comrades and delegates at that hearing. The hearing was very crowded all the time. I must say everybody was vitally interested in what we were doing in the committee room. He said that he would not take a seat in this convention because it wasn't a proletarian party, and because the Left Wing delegates had been excluded from the convention.

**Comrade Wilson:** Was there anything developed in the hearing before the contest committee about the State Convention held in Minneapolis last—

**Comrade Panken:** No.

**Comrade Wilson:** These others you recommend be seated were appointed by the Executive Board of the party in Minnesota. Did anything develop about Comrade Germer going to Minnesota and getting that Executive Board together and having these delegates appointed?

**Comrade Panken:** No. All we got in the hearing was that Germer did go to Minnesota and had a meeting with the State Executive Board; that he got them to appoint delegates was not brought out.

**Comrade [William] Henry [IN]:** I would like to ask the chairman of the committee [Panken] if Comrade Carney didn't tell this committee that, regardless of the statements of some of the comrades that they didn't get ballots, that he didn't make the statement that ballots had been sent to all the locals, and, if any of them didn't receive them, it wasn't his fault.

**Comrade Panken:** No, he didn't say that. What he did say was this: That he doesn't know of his own knowledge whether they were sent [by State Sec. Dirba], but he assumes that they were sent, and that his assumption is as good as the evidence of the 4 secre-

taries whose affidavits were submitted to us — these ballots may have been sent through the mail, add they may have been mislaid somewhere or gone astray.

**Comrade Henry:** I am not in favor of seating any delegates where the rank and file have had a chance, as was reported to the committee from Comrade Carney of Minnesota, where quite a number of comrades — I forget just the number — did participate in the election of delegates. If I heard the facts in this case, I understand that a great majority of the comrades of Minnesota were active and participated in the referendum, which leads me to believe that the referendum was more or less honest. I don't know that there was any small holding up of the ballots by some few locals or branches or not, but the facts are, from what I heard in the committee room, that there was a large number of comrades in Minnesota that did vote, that were in favor of the original position of Comrade Carney and the rest of these comrades that they should represent them in this convention; and I am not in favor of seating the [replacement] delegation from Minnesota, since a large number of the membership have signified their desire for another set of comrades to represent them here.

A part of the Executive Board, as it was there — as it seems they didn't all agree and didn't all function together — a part of an Executive Board appointed a delegation to come here that is not in harmony with the feelings of the comrades in Minnesota, if I can judge the statement that was given before this committee, and I am not in favor of seating these delegates that were appointed by this Executive Committee. Rather would I see that the comrades be seated that the membership voted on, regardless of some of the things that might be brought up that will tend to throw sand in the eyes of the comrades in regard to this case. (*Applause.*) I want to see the sentiment of the rank and file backed up just as near as possible. I want to see those comrades get what they want, and I believe that I am more willing to trust the sentiments of the comrades of the rank and file, where 12 or 15 hundred voted for delegates, which showed the sentiment, showed what they wanted, rather than 4 or 5 members of the State Executive Committee. I am in favor of seating the men, whether they want to come in here or not; but, as a matter of justice to the boys that cast their votes in the referendum, that the men be given a

chance, if they want to, to sit in this convention, since they did get the votes from the rank and file for delegates to this convention. (*Applause.*)

**Comrade [Julius] Gerber [NY]:** I move an amendment to the motion. The motion, as I understand, is that the committee seat Comrades Charles S. Wells, Andrew Hanson, T.E. Latimer, George Hoffman, S. Friedman, J. Soltis, and H.L. Kramerman. I move as an amendment that this convention do not approve of the recommendation of the committee, do not seat these delegates, but neither does this convention seat the other delegates.

**[Unnamed] Comrade:** I second it.

**Comrade Gerber:** I agree absolutely with Comrade Henry in what he said. And, I think, more. It is not only for us to get the expression of opinion of the comrades, but I think this convention ought to establish a rule that a State Committee or State Executive Committee, or any other committee, cannot appoint or elect delegates to a convention. (*Applause.*) That we ought to establish a rule that these delegates to this convention should be elected by the rank and file of the membership, and nobody else. This is not the US Senate, as it was prior to the amendment, but it is a representative body of the rank and file of the membership of the Socialist Party, and should be so. I am, therefore, opposed to the seating of these delegates, who were elected or appointed by the Executive Committee or State Committee.

I equally, however, oppose the seating of the other delegation as long as there were a certain number of branches and locals in the state that didn't receive ballots to vote on the delegations to the National Convention; because, if you will establish the precedent here that it is sufficient that 1 or 2 branches or 3 branches have voted, and that is sufficient to elect a delegation, you will open the door to all kinds of corrupt Tammany tactics, and we don't want that in the

Socialist Party. (*Applause.*) Whether it is the fault of the Secretary [Dirba], or whose fault it is, I think it is the Secretary's business, and, by making this precedent here, we will make it the business of the State Secretary that, when he sends ballots out for a referendum vote, whether it be an election of delegates to a convention or whether it be any other question that may be before the members, that he make it his business to follow it up with another letter inquiring whether they received their ballots or whether they didn't, so that he can send them another set of ballots in case they didn't receive the first set of ballots. I think we owe it to ourselves and to the party that we establish a precedent at this convention that this convention and the conventions of the Socialist Party must be composed of delegates representing the membership of the Socialist Party, and that each and every member of the Socialist Party get an equal chance and an equal right to vote for those comrades that he or she wishes to vote for.†

**Comrade [Steven] Bircher [NY]:** The motion of the committee, I believe, is out of order, because of the appointment of the committee, or the delegation. The amendment, in my estimation, is just as much out of order because of the fact, as it has been mentioned here, that 14 or 15 hundred members have voted on this referendum. If they have voted, it shows that the party membership had an opportunity to vote. It is said that some branches have not received their ballots; that "some of the branches have not received their ballots" is altogether too possible and too probable. We know that we have had quite considerable trouble with the post office authorities, and, if we are to believe the statement made by the National [Executive] Committee that tons of literature and mail have been held up in the post office, then we must also believe the State Secretaries that they have sent out the call, that they have sent out the ballots, and

†- The great advocate of rank and file voting rights Gerber neglects to mention the way in which he and his fellows on the New York State Executive Committee in June 1919 summarily suspended and "reorganized" upwards of half of the state party membership for their support of the Left Wing program. In this way, a small clique on the State Executive Committee, bolstered by a majority of the State Committee, successfully disfranchised several thousand Socialist Party members, preventing them from voting for representatives at the forthcoming National Convention. Gerber's pretended abhorrence of "corrupt Tammany tactics" is precious. In reality, the crude power politics exemplified by the wholesale suspension and "reorganization" of dissident locals and branches practiced by Gerber & Co. in New York in 1919 would have made Daniel DeLeon blush. Further, under Gerber's system of honoring rank and file participation by denying them any right of participation if an election should be imperfect, there would be nothing stopping a devious Minority Faction State Secretary from negating a Majority Faction in a state election by "forgetting" to send ballots to a few of his allies and then generating affidavits to "protest" the failure and thus invalidate the entire slate.



that they were held up by the post office authorities in some way or another.

If they were sent out by the Secretary, and if they were received by some branches, naturally they should have been received by others. If they were not, there is no doubt someone has heard about the casting of the vote for delegates, and there should have been a protest made on the part of the branches that were awaiting a thing of this kind. We can't say they didn't know anything about it. All the Socialist papers were filled with the coming convention. It cannot be said nobody knew anything about it. They knew that a vote was coming, and that a vote was being carried on, and should have asked for it. I believe that the amendment should be voted down, since the delegates elected by the membership of that state have had an opportunity of expressing their opinion.

**Comrade [J.S.] Nagel [OK]:** I was a member of that committee, and I wish to state now what occurred there. There was no Tammany tactics, and I presume that the gentlemen on the stand know more about Tammany tactics than I do. It was a legal meeting, and Mr. Carney appeared there and he stated that he represented the Minnesota delegation.

**Chairman Lee:** Will you allow me to interrupt you for a moment? I think you misunderstood. Delegate Gerber's remarks about Tammany tactics referred to things that happened in Minnesota and not to things that happened in this building. Am I not right?

**Comrade Gerber:** That's correct. Did you understand I referred to the committee?

**Comrade Nagel:** Yes.

**Comrade Gerber:** No; that's wrong. I meant to say I didn't want to have any Tammany tactics by which you can supply ballots to one crowd to vote, and not another crowd of people that you don't want to. And, which may have been the case.

**Comrade Nagel:** I will explain this. This is what occurred. Comrade Carney appeared there, and he was given all the time that he wanted, and he was not in-

terrupted. No man was allowed to interrupt him, and he made us quite an argument. But, his argument was not for the purpose of seating his delegation. That is the point I want you to understand. He told us, in substance, that he had come there for the purpose of telling us, and he spoke for all of them, that, as far as this convention was concerned, it could go to hell,



*Jack Carney of Duluth, Minnesota*

and that was his words, and he thought that that was the place where we ought to go (*laughter*) and I think he was sincere about it (*laughter*), and he was no Irishman, and he made a pretty witty speech. He stated that there was several of his connections in the Socialist Party, and he was now hooked up with the new organization, and we took him at his word; if he didn't belong to the Socialist Party, he certainly has no business in this convention, it doesn't make any difference how regularly they were

elected. He was speaking for them. It was a matter of admission on the part of Carney. He says, "We want nothing to do with you fellows. You are plutocrats, and I am the only proletarian in the United States." (*Laughter.*) And, we took him at his word, and I think he truthfully spoke. So, there was nothing for us to do. We thought that the state should be represented, and, if Carney would not associate with us, we thought probably that the other fellows would (*laughter*), and we admitted them.

**Comrade [Abraham] Beckerman [NY]:** I am at a loss to appreciate the psychology of a delegation that sends a representative to tell our committee that, in case they are recognized, they won't recognize us. It reminds me of the fellow who woke up somebody else to tell him that he had 2 more hours to sleep. (*Laughter.*) I absolutely cannot understand the psychology any more than I can understand the psychology of

certain gentlemen who have the greatest contempt for political action and yet are opposing the Socialist Party in the primaries. I say that the demagogue of demagogues is he who constantly [poses] as the representative of the rank and file exclusively, and the other fellow represents God knows who. I always watch very carefully the self-appointed representative of the rank and file. (*Applause.*)

As it stands here, it is shown conclusively that some of the rank and file voted and some of the rank and file did not, and, it is also shown that certain members have been disfranchised by the National Executive Committee, in defiance of the constitution of the Socialist Party. Now, I say this: that this delegation that seems to be contesting the seat does not want the seat at all. I say that Comrade Gerber's amendment is wrong, because the state of Minnesota is entitled to representation, and, if they can [not] get representation from the whole rank and file, then it is better [to get some] representation...from the State Committee, which at least was elected by the whole rank and file. I say that the state of Minnesota is entitled to representation; that the [substitute delegation] is willing to sit in the convention, and does want to be with the Socialist Party and the Socialist Party exclusively. And, therefore, I say that the motion to support the recommendation of the committee should be carried by this convention, and the delegation recommended by this committee should be seated.

**Comrade [William] Kruse [IL]:** Let us not get away from the fact that the issue before the convention is not the idiosyncrasies of Jack Carney. Here is a movement in the state of Minnesota. It is a distinct and regularly organized Socialist Party. It had a State Executive Committee, and the State Executive Committee was recalled by the membership in the state of Minnesota. It, thereupon, had a referendum. Perhaps that referendum was conducted properly; perhaps, it was not. The committee made no report of whether or not the absence of the illegal votes, so-called, would have made any material difference in the showing. However that may be, the members did express themselves through a referendum, and then this Executive Committee, that had practically been repudiated, with the assistance of Comrade Germer sent down some delegates here.

Now, I maintain that this is not a convention of

State Executive Committees, repudiated or otherwise. I maintain that this is not a convention of State Executive Committees, repudiated or otherwise. I maintain that this is supposed to be a convention representing the rank and file of the Socialist Party. It does not make a particle of difference, comrades, whether the delegates, the personnel of the delegations, want to serve. Certain comrades are entitled to sit in this convention, if they see fit to exercise their rights. If Jack Carney doesn't want to sit in this convention, that's his business; but, if the rank and file of Minnesota elected Jack Carney, we should have a seat here for Jack Carney for him to occupy, if he sees fit to do so. The very least that should be done is the acceptance of this amendment.

In Minnesota, we know that things are not always as balmy and pure in the party as things ought to be. At least, it has that reputation. It is very likely that there has been some things pulled on either side; but, if we must come to a choice, we should at least give an even break to a delegated body that is elected by a referendum, though slight irregularities might occur in that referendum; as opposed to a body of delegates elected by a small Executive Committee, and assisted by the national officials, who are personally interested in the outcome of this convention. Now, I want to urge you that the very least that you can do is to support the Gerber amendment, that we will seat neither of these delegations, because neither of them comes to us with the proper record.

**Comrade [Adolph] Germer [National Secretary]:** The difficulty with Comrade Kruse is that he knows [more] about what other people do than those people do themselves, and, of course, assumes to be an authority for other people's acts. No, if Kruse had taken the pains to inquire, I could have showed him that the [Minnesota] State Executive Committee asked me to come up there, insisted on my coming up there and asking the delegates to come down.

Here was the situation in Minnesota: The National Executive Committee, as you well know, suspended certain foreign language federations. Notice was sent to all the State Secretaries. They were informed that the branches of these federations, during the period of their suspensions, were not allowed to participate in party affairs. The State Executive Board of Minnesota passed a motion to approve the action of

the National Executive Committee, but the State Secretary [Dirba], not satisfied with that, submitted a referendum to rescind the action of the State Executive Board, and, in that referendum to rescind the action of approving the action of the National Executive Committee, he permitted the foreign language federations that were interested to also vote, and, of course, their vote precipitated the action of the State Executive Board. Now, in reference to the recall of the State Executive Board, the same facts hold good. The suspended language branches were permitted to vote for the recall of the State Executive Board, and this result was not announced until the 18th day of August in the year of our Lord, 1919. Now, that is the attitude of the State Executive Committee.

At the earnest solicitation of 5 members of the 7 of the State Executive Board, and at that State Executive Board meeting when the State Secretary [Dirba] made a report on the result on those referendums and admitted the fact that the suspended foreign language federations were permitted to vote, the State Executive Board passed a motion that the referendum be declared illegal, in view of the fact that these suspended language branches had participated, and there were not any 1200 votes cast, Comrade Gerber; I think some 700. In fact, some [the state?] didn't have more than 14 or 15 hundred members. Now, those are the facts.

**Comrade Panken:** Out of that 700, 314 came from the language groups.

**Comrade [W.K.] Tennyson [AR]:** Will you yield for a question?

**Comrade Germer:** No, not until I get through. So, that is the way that the election work was conducted, the State Secretary [Dirba] overriding the action of the State Executive Board. Here was the 18th day of August, 12 days from the convention. The State Secretary [Dirba] refused, when the referendum was conducted, to give the State Executive Board the list of locals and branch secretaries that they might reach the members of the state with a statement of their side. In addition to that, the State Secretary [Dirba] on the front page of the Minnesota Bulletin you have seen here printed a letter from the secretary of a suspended language branch urging the application of the Left Wing, and then stated that "these candidates are pledged to the Left Wing program, and for that reason you ought to support them."

Now, there is nothing in the national constitution that prohibits the State Executive Committee from appointing delegates. I don't say it is a good idea to appoint them, but there is nothing in the constitution that prevents it. All it says is that they shall be elected at a certain time; nothing as to the method of election. Even as good a constitutional lawyer as Kruse cannot show me how delegates shall be elected [in the constitution]. When the State Secretary [Dirba], after the State Executive Committee adopted the motion to declare this referendum illegal, in view of the participation of the foreign language branches, said, "I don't recognize your action—"

Chairman Lee: One minute, Comrade Germer.

Comrade Germer: "—I don't recognize your action," he [Dirba] said, "You might as well take your hat and walk out." Of course, the State Executive Committee and I walked out. We held another meeting, and there the State Executive Board elected delegates in order to have Minnesota represented at this convention. It is true, [that] Comrade Carney said, "We don't want a seat — but we don't want the other fellow seated." Now, this is like the "dog in the manger," who will not eat themselves but prevent others from doing it.

**Comrade [Abraham] Shiplacoff [NY]:** I rise to amend the original motion: "That the delegates elected or appointed by the Executive Committee of the state of Minnesota be given a voice but not a vote in this convention." And I make that as a sort of compromise, for this reason: I think that the state of Minnesota ought not, because of the unfortunate condition there, sever its relationship entirely with this Socialist Party and with the doings of the convention; but that, at the same time, because of the method of their election, which is not, I hope, approved by the majority of the members here, that they will not be given the regular powers vested in all the other delegates. That is my motion.

**Comrade Beckerman:** I second that motion.

**Comrade Tennyson:** I asked the floor a moment ago. I still would like to ask a question [of National Secretary Germer]. You say that the State Executive Committee of Minnesota on the 18th day of August elected or appointed these delegates.

**Comrade Germer:** Yes. They did that, under the state constitution of Minnesota, which said that where

it is not specifically set forth in the constitution, the Executive Committee has power to act.

**Comrade Tennyson:** I wish to state, while I am on the floor, that the refusal of these delegates has been based upon the argument throughout this convention of affiliating with the Left Wing organization, and adopting Left Wing manifestations. I want it satisfied in my mind whether or not there has been a Left Wing organization duly organized and constituted that some or any or all of these delegates are affiliated with. In the first place, the constitution here sets out that we should not use, combine, affiliate, or otherwise mix and mingle with any political parties or other organizations. Now, if we construe that in the strict letter of the constitution, I want to say to you that it will also bar us from affiliating with the various labor organizations. We have got to use some implication when we go to place a construction upon that. We have got to use some consideration and deliberation, and the moment we go to mention the fact of delegates affiliating themselves with organizations in the various states—

**Comrade Wilson:** I don't see that that has anything to do with the question that is up.

**Chairman Lee:** The Chair will admit that the comrade is speaking far from the question before the house, but I didn't want to interrupt the delegate. I thought, perhaps, we would save time by letting it go. I will ask the delegate to speak as closely to the question as possible.

**Comrade Wilson:** I rise to a point of order, that the matter being talked about is not germane to the issue before the convention. I want a ruling on it.

**Chairman Lee:** The Chair will rule that Delegate Tennyson is discussing the motion before the house. He is not discussing it in a way that appeals to the comrade there [Wilson] as being pertinent, but the comrade will comrade [Tennyson] will come as directly as he can to the actual issue.

**Comrade Tennyson:** Will you permit me to explain why I drifted off on that line of talk?

**Comrade Lee:** You have 2 more minutes.

**Comrade Tennyson:** The Speaker who preceded me mentioned the fact that portions of Minnesota affiliated themselves with the Left Wing organization. I want him to find out if there was such a thing in existence, for the benefit of this organization. (*Laugh-*

*ter.*)

**Comrade [Valentine] Bausch [NJ]:** I hope and trust that this convention of delegates will vote down all the motions and amendments before the house on this subject, for one reason. It may be true — it probably is true — that illegal and unfair methods were used in the state of Minnesota in the selection of the delegates to this convention. Delegate Carney has told this convention and the committee that, regardless of the fact whether you seat their delegates or not, they are not going to come into this convention. The accusation has been made, ever since the beginning of this convention, that this is not a rank and file convention and not a proletarian convention. Let this convention issue a challenge to Comrade Carney and the other delegates that he assumes to speak for, let this convention offer the seat to that delegation in here, and, if they refuse to take the seat, let us test the loyalty and the rank and file's ability, and the proletarian generalship of the rank and file that selected this delegation on the referendum ballot — regardless of the fact that that referendum may be contested. Let us offer the seat, and, if they refuse to take it, let us say to the rank and file this: that Comrade Carney and the rest of those fellows proclaim that they are the only proletarians that can be found in the United States. (*Applause.*)

**Comrade [William] Brandt [MO]:** I think if we passed on the position, or rather took the position, which the last speaker has put in front of us, then it shall not only apply to Minnesota, but it must apply all around. The question now confronts us, if his position is to be given any consideration, is whether the language federation branches, where those federations were suspended, whether they should have a right to vote or not. I am affirming that they didn't have a right to vote, [because] a great majority, as I have been told, of the states would not give them the right to vote. If such was the fact, then that would be giving this one particular state an advantage which a number of the others do not enjoy, and I, for one, will not assume that that position is correct.

I take the position, and I am going to stand for it, that those branches have no right to vote; they have no authority to vote. Comrades, the next proposition confronting us is — this is no kindergarten. Let us know exactly what confronts us. Here is a group of



comrades whom I have got more respect for, Carney and his crowd, than I have for a whole lot of others. (*Applause.*) They have the decency and the manhood and courage to stand up and tell you where they are at, and there are a bunch of others that won't do that. (*Applause.*) I have more respect for people of that kind than I have for a whole lot of others that I know that have been around this hall. Now, comrades, what's the use for us to assume or attempt to think this is a kindergarten?

I have kept in fairly close touch with the situation. I see the comrade's [Carney's] paper every week [Duluth *Truth*]. I know what their position has been. We heard the report from this committee, that this convention can go to hell. The committee further informs us that he [Carney] was authorized to speak for his delegation. He wants nothing to do with us, absolutely nothing. He is going into another convention. Pretty near everyone who has kept abreast of the times knows that he intended to go there for quite a little while. Why should we make a school, a child's school, a kindergarten, out of this convention?

I further want to say that I am not in favor of the proposition of Comrade Gerber. I am in favor of the report of the committee. The state organization should have some representation. I hold it is not right on our part to debar the state from having any representation at all. I am in favor of the report of the committee.

(*Cries of "Question!"*)

**Comrade [Joseph] Bearak [MA]:** I rise to call for the previous question.

**A Comrade:** I move to lay the previous question on the table.

**Chairman Lee:** The delegate I happened to recognize moves the previous question. I have to put it to the house. The previous question is moved.

(*The motion for the previous question was lost on a viva voce vote. There were cries for a division.*)

**Chairman Lee:** The "nos" appear to have it, the "nos" have it and the motion for the previous question is lost.

**Comrade Weiss:** Mr. Chairman—

**Comrade [Alexander] Braunstein [NY]:** Comrade Weiss wants the floor.

**Chairman Lee:** I have recognized Delegate Weiss twice. I am trying to recognize different parts of the

house, and different individuals, as well as I can.

**Comrade Braunstein:** I have been trying to get the floor for the last half hour.

**Comrade Weiss:** I have been, too.

**Comrade Braunstein:** I want to say that I am in favor of the amendment of Gerber. It has been stated that although the delegates selected by the Executive Board of Minnesota are not strictly [representative], they ought to be given representation merely for the purpose of having the state represented. I don't believe in a representation that does not represent anything at all, and those delegates don't represent the rank and file or anything else in the state of Minnesota. I also believe that the others cannot be seated for a very good reason. Either we have a constitution or we have not. They have not been legally elected and they cannot be seated because they are not elected. You cannot countenance an election in which part of the state is not given a choice. I think we ought to have fair play.

**Comrade [Fred] Chase [NH]:** Speaking upon this question that comes before this convention, the controversy that should be settled and ought to be settled, and ought to be discussed, and ought to come before this convention in order that we can clear it — you keep hinting at it, you keep dodging it — the real question that ought to be settled by this convention before we go any further is whether that [National] Executive Committee had any right to unseat your national federations, your language federations. That is the question. (*Applause.*) Whether they had any right to unseat part of the membership of the Socialist Party. That is the thing that is involved in this question of seating Comrade Carney and his delegates, or seating the other delegates. This all comes right into the same proposition, and we ought to face it right here tonight and have the thing thrashed out and have our decision made whether or not these actions of our National Executive Committee are illegal, as we believe them to be — shall stand or not — or whether the Socialist Party should go ahead and reinstate its membership and try and organize this convention, as I think it ought to be, upon that reinstated membership. All of that comes into the question whether comrade Carney shall be seated or not.

You heard his statement about this committee, that he was anxious to come into a convention where Ohio could be seated, where Minnesota could be

seated, where the delegates that ought to come from Massachusetts and New York and the other states could be seated. He would be glad to come into such a convention. I think, myself, if there is any way to get at it in the proper shape, in order to get at this question, that we ought to thrash it out here tonight as to where the National Executive Committee stood upon that occasion, and I hope it will be thrashed out; and those branches, if they were illegally suspended and expelled on mere technicalities, will be reinstated, as they ought to be, that we can have a real Socialist convention, and not a Socialist convention where delegates have been expelled before the convention, and certain members and delegates come from New York, and they are coming upon dues stamps bought by these same Left Wingers, or they could not come here as they come today. (*Applause.*)

The delegates from Massachusetts stand here in the same way. At the last referendum that was taken, the whole Massachusetts membership, they were all defeated...by the Executive Board of Massachusetts. Those are the facts that come to you — and these delegates come here and pray to the god “Democracy.” God help Democracy, if that is the kind of thing that is going to be passed out to us.

I hope Comrade Carney will be reinstated, speaking upon that question. I hope that he and his delegates will be seated, and I hope that you will vote to reinstate the whole Socialist Party of the United States, as it ought to be, and have a real Socialist convention that will go out and be able to fight the capitalists. (*Loud applause.*)

**Comrade [Seymour] Stedman [IL]:** I think the last comrade has raised the issue which should be decided upon this report, and that is the right of the [National] Executive Committee to suspend the foreign federations. It is raised in this case because the votes were counted from the foreign suspended federations for the purpose of electing Comrade Carney

and the others. It arose under this proceeding, and it can dispose of the entire issue. If the conduct of the National Executive Committee is disapproved and it was void, then Comrade Carney comes into this convention by the right of the action of this convention in overruling the [National] Executive Committee. We may just as well face that now, and face the future of the Socialist Party. (*Applause.*)

The die is cast! The lines are drawn. The Communists are in the hall; they are holding their convention. Either we should go down and beg for quarter, or stand by our guns. (*Loud applause.*) Directly and indirectly, you have been threatened for 6 months. They state the position to you now. Let's camouflage no longer. Have our debate out. Sustain the [National] Executive Committee of the Socialist Party, or surrender to the Communists. (*Cries of “Good!” and applause.*)

**Comrade [Dan] Hoan [WI]:** Mr. Chairman and comrades, I should like to ask this convention to consider what it would do with a state referendum held perfectly legal and honest and honorable in every respect, and subsequent to that time the delegates that were elected by the referendum vote decided to join hands with a Democratic Party or a Non-Partisan League or some organization, and told the Socialist Party to go to hell, if you please, and didn't care for seats in your convention. The fact is that this delegation had told us that they have joined hands with a new political party.† We have got to face the issue that we have elements in this party that do not believe in political action. (*Applause.*) <Sentence garbled.> Those who have and those who have not believed in political action never have and never will be able to mix together in a political organization of the Socialist Party. (*Applause.*)

The fact is that in the state of Minnesota you have that element that don't believe in political action. I was there in the campaign when the State Committee resigned right in the middle of it to injure the

†- To be precise, the Minnesota delegation joined *two* new political parties — only Jack Carney went downstairs in Machinists' Hall to attend what became the founding convention of the Communist Labor Party; State Secretary Charles Dirba and his colleagues on the Minnesota delegation weren't in the building at all, instead choosing to attend the founding convention of the Communist Party of America, which began elsewhere in Chicago on September 1, 1919. The fact that Carney alone represented the Minnesota delegation before Jacob Panken and the Credentials Committee rather than State Secretary Dirba (who could have better refuted charges that he practiced shenanigans in ballot distribution) is explained by this: the rest of the Minnesota delegation had already given up on the Socialist Party convention. Carney was elected to the 5 member CLP National Executive Committee by the convention, incidentally, and the weekly paper he edited in Duluth, *Truth*, became a CLP organ. The paper continued to publish until April 1923, when it was discontinued and its subscription list turned over to *The Daily Worker*.

chance of the working class electing their ticket in that state. I am here to tell you that the time has come to act. In the state of Minnesota they [the State Executive Board has] selected comrades in harmony with the principles of this party, upon which we are founded and upon which we grow and develop, and for which we are proud. Will you take in here men who tell you to go to hell, and have already joined the Communist Party? Or will you give the State [Executive] Committee of Minnesota the power that they have to send here men that want to join hands and will join hands in making this the greatest political organization? Will you elect that character of men who have no use for you and will continue to sacrifice you, not only in your branches, not only in your meetings, but destroy every chance of success that the working class has in this country, not only to emancipate themselves from industrial slavery, but who attempt to assassinate the chance of political action?

I trust that you will stand by the report of the committee and seat the delegates appointed by the State [Executive] Committee. There was no other means at their hands. The die is cast! Stand by your National Executive Committee, and, after this contest, we will elect the kind of National Executive Committee we want or elect the old committee, and let the rank and file that is left of this party, that believe in political action, elect then the National [Executive] Committee they desire. I thank you.

**Comrade [E.S.] Cohen [DC]:** Mr. Chairman—

**Comrade Weiss:** It is more than half an hour since I asked the floor.

**Chairman Lee:** It is more than an hour since some of our members have asked the floor. I will recognize Comrade Cohen.

**Comrade Cohen:** I do want to make this point: if Comrade Carney says he would refuse a seat, even if it was granted to him, because [seats were] refused to other delegates, if this is the position that he takes, he is not taking any different position than our comrade in prison, comrade Debs, when he said he would refuse a pardon if the rest of his comrades were not pardoned.

(Applause.)

**Comrade Weiss:** Once more I ask the floor.

**Chairman Lee:** I will recognize Comrade Haller.

**Comrade [Frederick] Haller [MD]:** I think we have had a great deal of heated discussion. We have had so much heat that we have had a little less light than we ought to have. I want to try to bring you back to the matter that is before the house. The [credentials] committee has made a report. In that report it has given its reasons. It has given the facts as they found them. Now, those facts are not the question as to whether there is within the party those who seek to get control of the party. That is beside the issue. So far as I am concerned, I have no objection to anybody forming any combination they will, so long as they remain within the party.

But, we have this: the committee reports to us that there were affidavits made before them that in 4 instances ballots were not sent to the secretaries of locals. Now, then, those affidavits were presented to that committee, they raised the presumption that ballots were not sent to them. The burden, then, was upon the State Secretary, Mr. Carney, to show that he had sent ballots.† And his statement as to that he did not rise to the dignity of an affidavit: it didn't rise even to the dignity of a positive statement that he had sent the ballots. He simply said, in effect, that he must have sent them.‡ Now, if it was only one case or only one local not getting the ballots, it might fairly be assumed that it was an oversight, and not intentional; but, when it comes to 4, the presumption is that the ballots were intentionally withheld from them. And, if that is so, they were intentionally withheld for a purpose, and that purpose was to disfranchise the members of that local. That is the question we have before us. Now, therefore, an election based upon such a proceeding necessarily can't stand, to say nothing of the position they now take that they will not take the seat, even if they are admitted to be seated in the convention.

Now, the question then comes — what is the remedy? Shall Minnesota be deprived of all representation in this convention? Or shall this vote [results of

†- The 1919 Minnesota State Secretary was Charles Dirba, not Jack Carney. Dirba had given up on the Socialist Party altogether and was not in the building, Carney continued to follow the Left Wing Section/Communist Labor Party policy of attempting to win sympathetic SPA delegates and rank and filers over to the Communist movement by exposing the machinations of the Regulars.

‡- Actually, Carney had said, in effect, that he presumed State Secretary Dirba had sent the ballots. He had no way of providing any more positive statement than that since mailing ballots was not his job.

the referendum] be excluded? If that be done, then it would be within the power of any Secretary in any state to prevent his state from being represented in the National Convention, unless he knows beforehand that it is going to be represented as he wants it to be represented.† No remedy. Absolutely no remedy. My idea about the matter is that if you accept the report of the committee, you will come nearer doing right than by any other action that you can take. I would accept the report of the committee, and not visit any punishment upon the state of Minnesota by denying it representation.

As to the comrade who perpetrated that trick, he may be dealt with. It is not germane to the question, but, if I was asked, I would say that, us to him, I wouldn't give him a chance to resign from the party. I would expel him from the party.‡ There is the remedy.

**A Comrade:** He is out.

**Comrade Haller:** Well, even so, I would expel him. That, then, would be a warning to others not to resort to any such tricks as that. It seems to me that the logical thing to do is to accept the report of the committee, and to seat these delegates who the committee recommends.

**Comrade Weiss:** After 2 days waiting on the part of most of us, the crucial question has come up. In spite of the fact that we haven't been in accord, most of us realize that the question to be decided was the legality of the action of the [National] Executive Committee in expelling more than half the membership of the Socialist Party. If I remember correctly, Comrade Carney, in stating his reasons to the committee for refusing to participate in this convention, was that he didn't recognize that action as legal. Comrade Carney is not alone in that position. That question has been raised in the minds of a good many of us, and the National Executive Committee is not so clear in its position. It is not so absolutely sure of its correctness, and the rank and file of the organization, and I speak for New Jersey, has repudiated that action; and the rank and file has repudiated Comrade [George] Goe-

bel, who represents the state on the National Executive Committee. He has not been elected a delegate to this convention. They have not approved of that. There is a good deal of dissatisfaction, not only among the members in New Jersey, but among the members in other states, with the action of the National Executive Committee.

And, as far as Comrade Carney telling this convention, or the members of it, to seek accommodation in a warmer climate, [this] is not altogether the result of a heated and frenzied passion. There was some reason back of that, and the recital of the facts, as Comrade Carney stated them and as I heard them did not altogether convince me that he was wrong. I, therefore, state to this convention that the only thing we can honestly do is to seat all delegates [elected by the referendum] to repudiate the action of the [National] Executive Committee in suspending these members.

**A Comrade:** And, go to hell, anyhow.

**Chairman Lee:** Don't interrupt the speaker.

**Comrade Weiss:** The only thing that this convention can honestly do, in order that it may go down in history that it did make some effort to save the party from the wreck that is now confronting it, is to repudiate this action of the National Executive Committee. The Communists and the so-called "Left Wing" have been accused of trying to break our party. If the party is broken up, it is just as much and more the fault of the actions of the National Executive Committee as it is of the Left Wingers. (*Applause.*) The National Executive Committee has much to answer for.

I came to this convention, as did the rest of the delegates from New Jersey, to take neither side. We want neither "Right" nor "Left." We were instructed to come to this convention to do everything in our power to bring about a harmonious and united position in the party, and to prevent either faction from using the party for their own personal animosities, to make it a personal quarrel, and that's what it is. A certain group is controlling, and a certain group is trying to control. I don't agree with everything that the Left Wing has done, but I certainly don't agree with what

†- Although this may or may not be what Haller has in mind, as alluded to in an earlier footnote: if a discrepancy as to whether ballots were sent to *every* local was ruled by the convention to be sufficient cause to set aside a referendum of party members, then in the future there would be absolutely nothing stopping a mischievous State Secretary of a minority faction from sabotaging and negating his state's election by "failing" to send ballots to allies in various locals, who could then file affidavits of protest.

‡- Expulsions were the purview of the state organizations, rhetoric of the delegate from Maryland notwithstanding.



the Right Wing has done. (*Applause.*)

**Comrade [Victor] Berger [WI]:** A point of order. (*Cries of "Sit down!" from the outside.*) I don't want to see these hounds and high-binders— (*Interrupted by yelling.*)

**Chairman Lee:** You have made your point of order, and your point of order, insofar— (*Drowned by yelling.*) Let the delegates take their seats, with the exception of Comrade Weiss. The house will be in order.

(*After prolonged disturbance.*) I am going to say now that this convention, which consists of the delegates of this convention, is going to transact its business. It is advisable that delegates of the convention on either side or any side should refrain from loud demonstrations of approval or disapproval, because we will get along with business faster. It is necessary that those who are in the hall and who are not delegates to the convention should confine themselves to listening. They are here as guests and witnesses of the convention. They are not here to take part in its proceedings.

Delegate Weiss has the floor for one minute longer.

**Comrade Weiss:** the situation seems to be about this — neither the Right nor the Left seem to be perfect, though they both have wings.† Comrade Goebel said on the floor of the meeting of Local Essex that these federations were expelled in order that the vote would be right. I maintain that if that was the purpose, the Socialist Party and the National Executive Committee will be "left."‡

The charge has been made by the so-called delegates of the Left that we cannot afford to ignore it — that the New York delegation has more representatives than they are entitled to; that the Massachusetts delegation has more representatives than they are entitled to.§ Now the Left is being investigated; they are being investigated without being allowed to appear here on the floor of the convention. I ask that these people

[the NEC] be investigated—

**Comrade Gerber:** All right, we will stand investigation.

**Chairman Lee:** Comrade Gerber, you will be in order. Delegate Kruse will take his seat.

**Comrade Weiss:** —if we are going to have an investigation on the floor. There has been too much talk of steamroller. I come here with an open mind, and the rest of the delegates from New Jersey, who came here, ready to hear both sides. We are beginning to suspect that a steamroller is working, and that it is working hard and well. (*Applause.*)

**Comrade [Ross] Brown [IN]:** Relating to what is being said here, and what is being done relative to the seating or unseating of the Minnesota delegation: I have been elected by the rank and file of the state of Indiana. Having been working in that state for the last 2 weeks, I believe I know the sentiments of the comrades and the co-workers in the state of Indiana. I don't believe that this sentiment is very much different from what it is in the other states throughout the United States. I came here to do what I could and think as best I can for the individuals who are at home, who didn't have the privilege of being delegates to this convention. I didn't come because I wanted to come, but because I ran 102 votes ahead of any other delegate elected in the state of Indiana. And, I am here.

I am not here for the purpose of helping any steamroller, or to help anyone being run over by any steamroller organization. I believe that if the rank and file of the state of Minnesota want representation, they should have it. I believe they will come a whole lot nearer getting representation from the individuals who were elected than by getting a so-called representation from those who were not elected from the rank and file of the state of Minnesota.

We must take under consideration that the average individual is a working man, who works up against a steam-heated oven of about 1800° F., until his brain gets loose and rattles like a peanut in the

†- Comrade Rose Weiss of New Jersey gets the 1919 Bad Socialist Pun Award.

‡- The stenogram reads "Lefts" in the plural, but this is probably a mistranscription of another pun, which is rendered here instead.

§- That alternative slates were not sent to Chicago and challenges made by the Left Wing at the appropriate juncture, thus pushing the massive New York delegation to the other side of the bench in the Credentials Committee was a blunder of colossal dimension. There was unquestionably a case to be made that the State Executive Committee of New York (as well as those SECs of several other states) violated their own legality in disfranchising the Left Wing, not to mention the issue of overrepresentation, due to the expulsion of perhaps half the members of the Socialist Party of New York. Once the New York delegation was seated, the outcome of the Emergency National Convention was decided.

shell. These hard-working, horny-handed sons of toil don't see the same things and don't see the same things exactly like some of us fellows, who have cut-glass in our homes, and fine linen, and dress a little better than the rest of them. We are here representing the rank and file of the Socialist Party. The worst thing that the organization can do is to fail to let the workers back at home have representation, and I think this convention here tonight ought to go on record as giving those delegates from every state in the Union, who have been elected by the rank and file of the Socialist Party, the right to seats in this convention, so that it could not be said, when we go home, that this is an autocratic organization. (*Applause.*)

I think that it is the most acceptable thing in the world for us to vote that those delegates who were elected by the [State] Executive Committee or the [State] Committee of the state of Minnesota should not be seated. If anyone should be seated from that state, it certainly appeals to me that it ought to be those that the working class in the state of Minnesota decided they wanted sent. I think this is the only way for us to get out of the wilderness. If not, we will run against some things that we don't expect. I say this for the good of the organization, and I believe it is the consensus of the rank and file, the individuals who are back home, and not in Chicago — the working class, whose only hope is in the great Socialist movement, that it might be able to blossom and bloom on the steppes of time, and make a government of, for, and by the working class, and not by the plutocrats, food-hogs, and profiteers. (*Applause.*)

**Comrade [August] Claessens [NY]:** I had no intention to take the floor on this issue, as long as it is confined to Minnesota, but, insofar as the challenge has been made, we might just as well face it. The question of the federations is the issue.

**Comrade Kruse:** A point of order.

**Chairman Lee:** What is your point of order?

**Comrade Kruse:** In the order of business we have a certain place where this discussion should have come up. I was trying to get the floor to make this point before. I maintain that even if we discuss this subject all night, that—

**Chairman Lee:** State your point of order.

**Comrade Kruse:** My point of order is this: the discussion on the question as to whether or not the

National Executive Committee was right in expelling the federations is under another order of business, and is not germane to this discussion. We can't decide the question here, no matter how much we discuss it.

**Chairman Lee:** The Chair holds that your point of order is not well taken. The delegates are discussing the question, in which this, among other things, is involved.

**Comrade Kruse:** I appeal from the decision of the Chair.

**Chairman Lee:** Comrade Hoan will come forward and take the Chair.

**Comrade Hoan, Vice-Chairman, in the Chair:** The decision of the Chair, having been appealed from, the question is whether the decision of the Chair shall stand as the decision of the convention.

**Comrade Kruse:** I make this appeal now for the sake of saving time; not for any purpose of obstructing the matter. I want to get this matter discussed, and discussed thoroughly, but I want it discussed at the proper time. We haven't any facts before the convention at the present time on this subject we are discussing, and we will not have any facts before the convention until after the report of the National Executive Committee is before us, and then we can discuss this matter. Now, what is the use of talking about something that we know nothing about? If we go into this subject, I agree that it is the most important subject we have, but we have 3 motions on the floor, and anybody who has just put his application card into the party and has been to only one meeting knows that when discussion is had on any motion, it must be on the motion that is involved. Now, this is too big a matter to be handled on a subsidiary motion of this kind. You must get your report first. You must get your facts first. What's the use of having an "order of business" if you don't live up to it.

**Chairman Lee:** The case of the contesting Minnesota delegation, which is not being taken up for action, is based on several charges, among which is that certain suspended locals and federations were permitted to take part in the vote, and that is an essential fact. The fact of the suspended branches of the federations taking part in the vote is an essential and material part of the whole case. It is impossible for the convention to decide, or the delegates to decide, upon the question whether this or that delegation should be

seated, or whether neither should be seated — we have all three propositions, I believe — without taking into account the material facts contained in the report and brought out in the discussion. It would, therefore, be entirely improper to exclude from the discussion of the Minnesota case the opinions of delegates discussing as to whether these members of these branches of the foreign federations have a right to vote. It is for this reason that certain delegates, in discussing the Minnesota case, brought in that question, whether it was proper or improper for those branches to be allowed to vote.

The Chair permitted the discussion to go on that line. No objection was made to that discussion until it had gone on for a very considerable time. Comrade Kruse then objected, and the Chair then ruled that this was a discussion, that it was pertinent to the question before the house — which is the motion, the amendment, and the amendment to the amendment, concerning the action to be taken upon the Minnesota case. It is upon these grounds, to leave the largest liberty of discussion to the delegates, in order that every delegate, whether he discusses it or not, may know when he comes to vote or have that as well as the material facts in mind, that I ruled that this matter, to which Comrade Kruse objected, can be admitted in debate.

**Vice-Chairman Hoan:** I shall now put the question. Those voting affirmatively will vote to sustain the decision of the Chair. Those who vote in the negative will vote to overrule the Chair.

*(A viva voce vote was taken.)* There seems to be some doubt. Those in favor of sustaining the Chair will raise their hands, and the tellers will count. Those voting to overrule the Chair will do likewise.

*(The count showed 92 for sustaining the Chair and 28 against.)*

**Vice-Chairman Hoan:** The decision of the Chair has been sustained, so ordered.

**Comrade Claessens:** I am sorry that we have to bring this up at this time. If the matter hadn't come up in the course of debate, I would have been perfectly satisfied to accept Comrade Gerber's motion that, in view of the deplorable condition in Minnesota, we accept neither delegation. But now the gauntlet has been thrown to us. The question of the federations is flung into our faces. We are going to accept it, under

this condition — I will speak for myself — that we will support the original motion of the committee. *(Applause.)* The reason of that is: when some comrades here, particularly Delegate Weiss, of New Jersey, speaks of the Left Wing and the Right Wing, making an arbitrary distinction and classification all her own, it might be the reflex of a legal mind. But if the two of us were to go to a restaurant for dinner tonight, and she selected the left wing of a chicken, that does not necessarily show that I am going to get the worst of the bargain. And that is the situation, my good comrades, in those section of the country where we got this in time and prevented it from corrupting the organization, as it has unfortunately in New Jersey, and in many other states.

I would be the last man to assume that the members of the foreign federations are crooked. They are no more crooked or more honest than the rest of us here; but they were made unfortunately the dupes of the most crooked country politicians that the Socialist Party has ever had. *(Applause.)* And I say that we have the opportunity of settling once and for all the idiotic condition that exists in the Socialist Party of the United States in which we permitted the affiliation of language federations to control the Socialist Party without the Socialist Party having a voice in the management of these federations. *(Applause.)* We gave them Translator-Secretaries and offices, and, instead of translating information of the Socialist Party to these great masses who could not read or write English, they used their offices to vilify and to blackball every man that had the decency to mention the fact that he had been in the struggle and in this party 10, 12, or 15 years.

And during the war they got their opportunity. They, with the assistance of the government of the United States, brought about the condition we have in the Socialist Party. Although it is not commendable, it is mighty healthy, I assure you. The government of the United States stopped our papers. It interfered with our mail. The only possible way of getting across anything pertaining to party matters was individual sheets that were published here, there, and everywhere, that were smuggled out to these members. Unfortunately, the party was not in the condition — I don't know who is to blame — but the condition is that none of our literature reached the extent of the so-called "Left Wing" group, and through those

papers every comrade who stood on the firing line ever since the party had been organized was branded as an Ebert, Scheidemann, and a reactionary; and those poor Dubbs that came into the party 3 or 4 months, believing what these self-styled leaders said, voted like sheep. †

Sheep, at least, I think would show some gratitude. But, they bolted. In New York we caught one gang just in time — the Hungarian branch — which was taking in 75 members at a clip, and the speech delivered at the meeting was, “Your red [party] card will be your passport to the Soviet Republic of Hungary. All you have to do is show your stand. Come in.” And they came in, and thousands of them came in throughout the country, who didn’t know the difference between socialism, communism, and rheumatism. (*Applause.*)

My good comrades, after the Left Wing leaders had engineered that move, they suddenly discovered that they had created a boomerang. When the Russian and Slavic and Hungarian thieves and intellectual misleaders meet, the whole police department of Chicago will be sufficient to keep their convention in order. ‡ (*Laughter and hooting.*) You hear the accents.

**Comrade Gerber:** It’s the stockyard.§

**Chairman Lee:** One minute.

**Comrade Claessens:** One minute more. Let me tell you that some of you will be sorry that you didn’t come here with gas masks. I say, even if this trouble had not come, sooner or later the party would have to sever its connection with these federations, and let them control their own affairs in the language that they understand; but, not to have a voice in and power to control an organization whose purpose they have absolutely no knowledge of, and whose language they don’t understand. It is a confession I know the members will probably make the most of. Well, the sooner we take this position, the best it is for all concerned. This issue is right to the point. I am glad it was brought out. I think this motion will give you the first understanding of the determination of this convention, if

everybody walks downstairs [to the CLP].

**Comrade [Louis] Engdahl [IL]:** If we are going to have a wide discussion of this proposition, let’s try to keep the issues squarely before us all the time. I want to speak for just a few moments in support of the amendment of Comrade Gerber not to seat either delegation. One of the delegations doesn’t want to sit; the other delegation should not have a seat. We have had it hurled into our faces that this is a struggle between the Communist Party and the Socialist Party. I say that this is a struggle between the old National Executive Committee and the Socialist Party of the United States. (*Applause.*) I have had it hurled into my face by men who are not Socialists, but men who are sympathizers. They come to me and they ask me how it is that a full delegation comes in here representing 200 members from Michigan when they have a delegation that represents 6,000 before they can have a seat in this convention. They ask me about other states, how they happen to get in here with a full delegation, and they say, “Why, that’s the way they pack a Democratic convention. That is the way the old machine is in all of the old parties, packing their convention when they try to put something over.”

I say that we [the Left Wing] are in favor of political action, and when we say we are opposed to— (*noise drowns the speaker’s words*) —don’t let them hurl into our fact that we are anarchists. We have struggled in Illinois. Just as soon as the 7 language federations were hurled out of the Socialist Party, just as soon as the state organization of Michigan was thrown out of the Socialist Party, we in Illinois met, we in Chicago met, and we protested against that action by the National Executive Committee. We sent our protest to the National Executive Committee, and, when a referendum was inaugurated to repudiate that action, we sent in our seconds along with the other organizations. And, in addition to the other acts of the old National Executive Committee, this referendum was also thrown out and was not sent to a vote.

†- “Dubbs” is a reference to “Henry Dubb,” a cartoon character created by artist Ryan Walker, a simpleton working man who obviously believed everything he was told by his social “betters.” The comic strip was widely published in the Socialist press.

‡- The stenogram has “Slovak” for “Slavic,” which seems more likely a mistranscription than an accurate rendering of an ignorant statement. The 7 language federations suspended by the NEC in June were the Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, South Slavic (Slovenian/Croatian/Serbian), Lithuanian, Latvian, and Hungarian. While there was a small Slovak Federation of the Socialist Party in 1919, it was not the object of the NEC’s wrath.

§- A bit of anti-immigrant chauvinist banter between Claessens and Gerber.



We in Illinois, as I said, did the best we could to maintain all the allied organizations, with the result that we come here with 20 delegates, uncontested. But you can't expect, comrades, in a working class organization, where a spirit of rebellion and unrest is sweeping over the land, you can't help but have some of the members, some of the organizations, whether they are state or local, you cannot help but have them rise in rebellion against the kind of autocratic acts that have been put over by our National Executive Committee. (*Applause.*)

So, I say, the membership in Minnesota has elected a delegation; the membership of Minnesota by referendum has chosen comrades that they wanted seated in this convention. But we are notified that these comrades don't want to sit in this convention. They don't want to take part in the deliberations here. Therefore, I say neither should the delegates chosen by the State Executive Committee in Minnesota, with the National Secretary [Germer] present, neither should that delegation sit in this convention. Therefore, I would urge support of the Gerber amendment, which says that neither delegation shall have a seat or a voice in this convention of the Socialist Party.

**Comrade Germer:** I would like to ask Comrade Engdahl a question.

**Chairman Lee:** Will Comrade Engdahl take a question from Comrade Germer?

**Comrade Engdahl:** No, I won't.

**Comrade [Louis] Marcus [MA]:** I move the previous question.

**A Comrade:** Second.

(*Motion on the previous question lost.*)

**Comrade Shiplacoff:** I have a substitute motion.

**Chairman Lee:** Too late. Roberts' Rules of Or-

der are the authority, and we have a motion and two amendments.

**Comrade [James] Oneal [NY]:** I am glad this question has come up, because we all recognize that it would come up sooner or later in the convention. The language federations do seem to be the crucial question that faces the convention.

**Comrade [James] Sheahan [NY]:** A point of order. We are discussing the question that, according to the decision of the convention and according to your decision, could not be discussed.

**Chairman Lee:** You are mistaken.

**Comrade Sheahan:** We are discussing the question of the NEC, and the question before us is the seating of the delegates from Minnesota.

**Chairman Lee:** Your point of order is not well taken. What the Chair ruled was, in discussing this case, it is in order to consider the validity of the suspension of those federations, because that is involved in this case. That decision was appeal from, and sustained by a very strong vote of the house. Delegate Oneal will proceed.

**Comrade Oneal:** It has been stated about the autocracy of the National Executive Committee, and that this is a struggle between the delegates and the National Executive Committee.† Let me call your attention to the fact that last May, when the National Executive Committee took the action that it did in suspending the federations, it called this convention for the purpose of passing on that action, for the purpose of investigating the vote upon which they acted, in order that they might be able to ascertain whether that vote justified the action at all.‡ In addition to that, we [the NEC] suggested last May a proposition that would have avoided a struggle between the au-

†- James Oneal was the member of the National Executive Committee who successfully moved for the suspension of the 7 language federations at the May 24-30, 1919 meeting of that body in Chicago.

‡- There was building demand in the Socialist Party for an emergency convention to revamp the party's program in light of the changed post-war situation and a sense that the party administration was not doing anything to advance the revolutionary Socialist cause, at home or abroad. A referendum was brewing and rank and file sentiment was such that the convention would surely have been called. This demand was initially opposed by the party administration, citing the great expense of such gatherings and the fact that the exercise would need to be repeated the very next year to name a Presidential ticket. At the quarterly physical NEC session, held in May 1919, the Regulars found themselves facing a smashing defeat to the Left Wing in the 1919 referendum election for Executive Secretary and a new NEC. The body faced a July 1, 1919, constitutional deadline on its tenure. Led by James Oneal and Executive Secretary Adolph Germer, the Regulars suddenly attacked, expelling the Michigan organization, suspending the 7 federations, and taking over the Left Wing's call for a special convention. In subsequent weeks, other state organizations, such as Ohio and Massachusetts, would be similarly expelled and the Regular loyalists "reorganized." The Regulars then proceeded to effectively pack the convention that was to sit in judgment over whether convention packing was "legal."

tocracy of the National Executive Committee and the delegates. We suggested last May that in our report here to this convention we recommend that this [National] Executive Committee cease to exist with this convention, that the convention itself shall elect a committee to take charge of the affairs of the organization and proceed with the reorganization.† We did that last May, and I say to you that so far as we are concerned, after our report is submitted to this convention, this [National] Executive Committee no longer exists. It remains and it is up to the delegates to determine whether the evidence upon which we based our action was sufficient to warrant that action at all.

And let it not be forgotten that every 10 or 15 years in the Socialist movement of the world a wave of anarcho-syndicalism has swept over the Socialist movement of the world, and we all faced another wave after this worldwide war. <Sentence garbled.> I say to you that there is not an anarcho-syndicalist anywhere in the world that will ascribe to that proposition. And you who stand with the Left Wing, you who have been indulging in those adroit, those elusive phrases, those of you who have done that, you dare not go out in the open here, in the great cities of the United States, in great audiences and support that proposition and at the same time say that you represent a political party. You can indulge in mass action of the proletariat [against the] bourgeois state without ever casting a vote in your lives, and you know it. The difficulty here is that we have a camouflaged anarcho-syndicalism, and

you haven't got the courage to stand for the thing that you really stand for and speak for. (*Applause.*)

The issue is drawn in this convention, and we are going to draw it, and you are going to draw it downstairs, too [at the CLP convention], don't you forget it. It is because of the fact that we realize that this wave, this periodical wave, finally found a secure lodgment in the language federations of this country that we were forced to take the action we did. The evidence is before you in the report. Comrade Weiss says she comes here with an open mind. Others claim to have acted in the same way. At the same time, she tells us that many comrades, including herself, back in New Jersey had all concluded that National Executive Committee was a corrupt body. Perhaps not using her phrase, but she meant that very thing. What a peculiar open mind that is, to come to the convention with. (*Applause.*)

We say to you that we took this action, comrades, with the evidence in black and white. One item of the report shows that 28 votes were transferred from Hillquit to O'Hare. Is that Socialist dealings? Is it Socialist ethics? Is it Socialist fairness? Is it the thing we want in the Socialist Party? If it is, I say to you, let's make an open alliance with Tammany Hall and be done with it.‡ Talk about packing a convention. Comrades, wherever they got control of a local branch in the East, they disfranchise party members who have been members of the organization for 20 or 30 years. They said, only those who believe in the Left Wing

†- The Socialist Party's constitution is quite explicit: "Article III [Management], Sec. 3. (a) The call for the regular election of members of the National Executive Committee shall be issued on the first day of January, 1918, and on January 1st of each odd numbered year thereafter. Members elected in 1918 shall retire July 1st, 1919." Details of election procedure follow. Revision of this constitution was possible only in one way — not by fiat of the NEC, but by membership referendum, whether set forward by national convention or by initiative of the party locals: "Article XV [Amendments], Sec. 1. This constitution may be amended by a referendum of the party membership; amendments may be proposed by the National Convention, or upon the request of locals representing at least 8 percent of the entire membership on the basis of dues paid in the preceding year. All such amendments to be submitted seriatim to a referendum vote of the party membership."

In May of 1919, the NEC conducted a organizational coup, a seizure of power rather than admit defeat in the party election. The biannual election was abrogated over alleged unethical voting behavior, dissidents purged en masse, and the Emergency National Convention, which was given the task of ratifying these various actions of the outgoing NEC, was packed. In following this course, the Regular faction achieved a Pyrrhic victory, managing to maintain its grip on the party name and property, but setting in motion a chain reaction which resulted in the loss of fully 90% of the organization's membership within 3 years. While accusing the Left Wing of seeking to "rule or ruin" the Socialist Party, the Regular faction managed to do both.

‡- Twenty-eight votes is a statistically insignificant number in an election with tens of thousands of votes cast. An entire inconvenient election was abrogated using a handful of such penny-ante irregularities as a convenient excuse. A canvas of the results of 27 states showed Kate O'Hare defeating Morris Hillquit in the International Secretary race by a margin well in excess of 2-to-1. (See: "Present Party Officialdom Overwhelmingly Repudiated by National Referendum," *The Ohio Socialist*, June 18, 1919, pg. 3. Tabulation of the Hillquit vote corrected in copy of this material available online from [www.marxisthistory.org](http://www.marxisthistory.org).)

program should have a right to serve the party as secretary, as organizer, as delegates to the convention, as delegates to the county committee. One party was to play the deuce; the other was to close their lips. You didn't have a word to say in the organization. Talk about autocratic socialism. It was the flying wedge of revolutionary emotionalists swept off their feet by the world war.

<Garbled sentence.> So, there is the situation. I am glad that the issue was drawn. It has been drawn before. It was drawn in the old International in the days of Marx and Engels. We had to fight it there. We had to fight it in every congress, international and national, and we have got to fight it here. So far as I am concerned, the Socialist movement is not going to be driven underground, if I can avoid it, merely because there are a lot of hot-headed emotionalists and perhaps some ancient pamphleteers in the party.

**Comrade [Jacob] Salutsky [NY]:** You don't want to mix the issue of the [Minnesota State] Executive Committee, who sent 4 delegates, with the issue whether we shall let the Left Wing in the party. One is too big a proposition and the other is too small to put them together and force us to decide the merits. We took it for granted when we started the discussion that the exclusion of the federations was more or less justified, under the circumstances. The issue in this case was not Communism, Anarchism, or Socialism; nothing of the kind. The Minnesota case is not the issue. It is a question of methods. If they were expelled, they had no right to proceed in the proceeding. Consequently, the election was wrong. But the second method of appointing a delegation of 4 by a committee of 5 or 7 was not regular. I think neither side should be seated.

**Comrade [John] McCarthy [CT]:** I dare say that there are very few here but what will agree with me. I have been patiently waiting for some cessation of this mess. I, therefore, ask all of you who have good intentions in your heart to stop this. I have been compensated for coming here. I come with no compensation, and I expect not to be compensated. Now, I don't think there is anyone here who has got an open heart that wants to see this thing out more than I do. But, I would ask someone who is capable of doing it — if there are two sides, to kindly favor themselves and ourselves to stop this mess before it gets too far... That's why I plead

to those who are trying to represent [what's] right; but it looks to me that there is an element that is deliberately trying to misrepresent.

**Comrade [U.] Solomon [NY]:** I will try to strip the discussion of all ornamentation and embellishment. In my judgment, there is no such thing as an open mind at this convention. There may be a few who will insist that they are open-minded, but they are such a negligible factor that they cannot influence the issue materially one way or the other. If you succeed in making any difference in the alignment here today, the success will be only superficial. The fundamental issue is already here determined, and no amount of discussion will make any material difference. We did not come here, as far as I am concerned, to look for perfection. We came here to stand on one side of the question, and I tell you I stand flat-footed on one side of the question, because I believe it was right, not only right but expedient, and that's as good a commendation as you can get under a complex situation of this kind. That is exactly where I stand.

What have you done here? You have been here for 3 days, and what have you accomplished? You have accomplished exactly what the people downstairs [the CLP] wanted you to accomplish. You have spent your time in idle discussion, while they are down forming an organization of the Communist Party. Here you have it place before you by Comrade Carney that you can go to hell, and he won't sit in your convention. Somebody raises the question and says that he represents the people who voted for him. Do you want me and others like me to understand that the people who voted for him, those who didn't belong to the language federations voted for him, and at the same time gave him the mandate to come to this convention and tell us to go to hell? If that is what they voted for him for, then I want to tell you that we should not only disregard him but disregard the several hundred who elected him. (*Applause.*) That's talking frankly. That's putting it to you so that you can't possibly misunderstand it. If he represents an electorate that expected him to come here and tell you that he does not want a seat in your convention, you should not only dismiss him but, at the same time, dismiss those who voted for him.

You know the die is cast, and Comrade Stedman spoke the truth. No matter what you do, the

Communist Party will be formed, and, even if you support or refuse to support the recommendation of the committee investigating the referendum, that would not have any fundamental effect upon the situation at all. You could not possibly placate them, and the thing that we must make perfectly clear is that this debate is serving only one purpose, and that is the purpose of the comrades on the other side. Here we tried to send greetings to Eugene V. Debs this afternoon, and O'Hare and others in jail. The point was raised, and we haven't done it. Before we have done it, the people downstairs [the CLP] will have done it. You should have done a great many things by this time that you haven't done, and they will be getting ready to do those things, if they haven't already done those things.

As far as the actual proceeding under consideration is concerned, whether we should seat the Minnesota delegation or not, the situation is made more complicated by the Gerber amendment. He tells us, and says it without qualification, that we should not seat the Carney delegation — he mentions that without qualification or reservation. However, he does not take the proposition that we should seat the delegation elected by the State [Executive] Committee in the same unreserved and unqualified way. He leaves that open to discussion. Now, we have been referred to the provision of the constitution that, where it is not specifically provided against, it is in the judgment of the committee to appoint delegates. I would not accept the recommendation under those terms, because I think that would be unfair, even though the proposition may be open. At the same time put that kind of compromise upon the recommendation and seat them here without a voice.

**Comrade [Theresa] Malkiel [NY]:** I move the previous question.

**A Comrade:** I second it.

*(Motion to put the previous question carried.)*

**Chairman Lee:** Under the rules, the committee has 5 minutes in which to close.

**Comrade Panken:** I would like to ask this convention one question. The question has been raised by many delegates as to the advisability of seating these delegates because of the fact that [the delegation] was appointed or elected by the State Executive Committee. I want to ask this question why wasn't that very

same question raised when the Committee on Conventions reported on the Utah delegation? The very same situation or a similar situation existed in the case of Utah. In Utah, the delegation was elected by the convention, not in accordance with the constitutional provision of the state, but there was an emergency. A fraud has been perpetrated, and they have no time to send out a call for nominations. They have no time to send out a referendum.

What happened in the state of Minnesota? A fraud has been perpetrated. Four branches of the Socialist Party were denied the right to participate in that election. Another fraud has been perpetrated, or rather, a mandate of the party has been ignored. The party, through its duly constituted National Executive Committee, the party through its functioning National Executive Committee, has suspended a language federation in the United States. A direction was given or the instruction was given to the State Secretary, or was given to all the State Secretaries, that these comrades who stand suspended cannot participate in the election and cannot vote. Yet, in defiance of the mandate of the party, violating that mandate of the party, the state of Minnesota sent out ballots to the language group branches and refused and failed to send out ballots to the duly recognized branches of the Socialist Party. What inference are we to draw? Shall we draw the inference that it was a mistake, or shall we draw the inference, and the direct inference in this case, that those who were known to vote against this delegation were disfranchised, and those that had no vote were given the vote? That is the situation in this case.

Let me put this to you very clearly, comrades. Carney said to me, when I asked him the question, "I won't sit in your convention." And, I am informed now by the newspaper men that a party has been organized on the floor below. Do you want this convention to elect a committee and send them down into that convention and ask Carney to come back? I, for one, for the committee, say "No." They have cast the die. They have cast their lot with the Communists, and those that want to go with the Communists, let them go, and we will stay with the Socialist Party.

**A Comrade:** Let them go right now.

**Comrade Panken:** Right now. One suggestion for the committee. The committee agrees to accept Comrade Shiplacoff's amendment to the amendment



that the delegates from Minnesota be seated with a voice but not a vote (*applause*), the delegates that we recommend to be seated.

**Chairman Lee:** As I understand, the substitute motion is to sustain the report of the committee, that the delegates, Wells and others, be seated with a voice but no vote. The amendment is that neither of the two delegations be seated. (*Cries of "Where's the motion?"*) The original motion is that the report of the committee, as already amended be sustained, that the delegation, consisting of Wells and others, be seated with a voice but without a vote. The amendment is that neither of the two contesting delegations be seated.

**A Comrade:** Who made that amendment?

**Chairman Lee:** Comrade Gerber made that amendment. We will vote first upon the amendment that neither of the contesting delegations shall be seated.

*(The motion was lost.)*

**Chairman Lee:** The vote now records upon the motion that the delegation, consisting of Comrade Wells and others, be seated in this convention with a voice but without a vote.

*(The motion carried.)*

**Chairman Lee:** The committee will proceed.

Comrade [John] Block [NY]: May I ask, in view of what we have just heard, that I now have unanimous consent to read these telegrams? I hope they will not be objected to.

**Comrade Gerber:** I move that it be granted.

**A Comrade:** I second it.

\* \* \*

*Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.*

*Pen-and-ink drawing "Comrade Chairman!" by Art Young, from The Liberator, October 1919.*

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