
The Proletarian Party of America.

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DoJ/FBI Investigative Files, NARA M-1085, reel 940, case 202600-1778-45X.

Historical.

In 1916 two of the active leaders of the Left Wing movement at Detroit were DENNIS E. BATT and JOHN KERACHER. They considered even the Left Wing too conservative and decided to establish a new organization — which first took the name “Proletarian Club,” later becoming the “Proletarian University,” and after developing taking the name “The Proletarian Party.” A charter was applied for and permitted participation in local elections. No material showing, however, was made along this line, because the majority of the members were aliens and of course could not vote. Propaganda of an ultra radical nature, however, was the principal aim and the activities of the leaders met with a measure of success. “Proletarian Clubs” were founded in many cities, even outside the state, and both Batt and Keracher traveled to the eastern cities on organization work. By 1920 the Cleveland organization was 250 members. Buffalo was and continues to be one of the most active centers.

Therefore, in order to understand the organization a brief outline of the activities of its two chiefs is indispensable.

Dennis E. Batt.

An American citizen — evidently by birth, as he claims publicly it is not his fault he is an American — but his shame. He is about 35 years of age. (*Lenon 6/21/21*).

On June 20th, 1919, at Madison Square Garden, speaking at a mass meeting, defied the authorities to send him “back where he came from” — claiming his family had been in the United States over 200 years. (*Davis 6/20/19*).

Even at this time he was extreme in his radical utterances, claiming, “We have here in the United States the most ruthless, brutal government on the face of the earth.” This statement was applauded. He was speaking for the release of “political prisoners.” (*Ibid.*)

Batt was a member of the National Organization Committee of the Communist Party of America (*K-40 7/2/19*) and later one of the first Secretaries of the Communist Party and editor of *The Communist*, official organ. (*Loula 1/10/19*).

On August 19, 1919, in speaking of the deportation of Stoklitsky, he said “The United States is afraid to jail alien radicals, so it deports them knowing they would face the firing squad as soon as they landed in their countries.” (*Allen 8/19/19*).

In June 1919 he was a delegate to the National Left Wing conference at New York. (*Pelto 7/14/19*). See my brief in the Weinstein case. Distribution of the Manifesto of the Left Wing, as adopted, has been declared sufficient to justify conviction (see Court of Appeals in New York in Ben Gitlow case) under state statutes.

The Police of Milwaukee prohibited a speech by him on September 14, 1919, on “Communism and What it Means to the Workers.” (*Sawyer 9/14/19*).

Batt was arrested at Chicago on September 3, 1919 on a warrant charging violation of the Illinois Seditious Law. He was held for the grand jury. (*Allen 10/9/19*). Held under \$1,000 bond. Released from Cook County Jail January 1, 1920. (*Lenon 3/4/20*).

Disagreed with Fraina and Nicholas Hourwich on question of minority rule. (*Schmit 11/2/19*).

Batt was a leader in the International Association of Machinists (AF of L). (*Churchill 11/6/19*).

Longhand lists of officers, taken from headquarters, show Batt was *state* secretary of the Communist

Party for Michigan. (List.)

He appears in the official photo of the first convention of the Communist Party. (See photo.)

On November 3, 1919, urged the workers not to strike for more money out of everything. (*C.L. Harris* 10/27/19).

May Day 1920 he was agitating in favor of the outlaw railroad strikers. (*Apelman* 5/12/20).

Spoke for the Amalgamated Metal Workers on September 20, 1920 at Detroit. (*Apelman* 9/11/20).

Left Chicago September 26, 1919 for Detroit for conference with Executive Committee of the Detroit *Proletarian* on question of combining with the paper *The Communist* (official organ of the CPA). (*Loula* 9/26/19).

On August 23, 1919, *The Communist* published the "Call for a National Convention for the Purpose of Organizing the Communist Party of America." This document, revolutionary throughout, was signed by Isaac Ferguson and Dennis E. Batt. (*M.I.D.* 11/20/20).

In a letter to Alexander Stoklitsky, William Rich says of Batt, "he is an American comrade, though he has a little more red in him than the ordinary American. Having a good Russian Bolshevik instructor, I am sure he will be a good Bolshevik. By training him in this he will make a good comrade." (*Hoover memo* 1/15/20).

Appointed to represent the Detroit Federation of Labor at the *International Council of Trade and Industrial Unions*. (*Voice of Labor* 7/8/21).

Understood to have left for Moscow in March or April 1921. No record in Detroit of passport application. (*Barkey* 3/26/21).

Spoke before the Workers' Unity Council (Detroit) — an attempt at amalgamating all workers' bodies for purposes of agitation, demonstrations, propaganda, education, and legal defense. He said, "...the evil of unemployment will be remedied only when the present social system is destroyed. The workmen alone are able to accomplish that. The dictatorship of capitalism must be displaced by that of the workmen and conducted with the same iron discipline." (*New Yorker Volkszeitung* 1/11/21).

In April 1921 Batt was understood to be with Haywood in an eastern city. (*Morton* 4/23/21). The only logical inference is that they were working on the

Moscow plans — both having gone thence later.

Batt had been connected with the Mooney Defense League, the International Defense League for Political Prisoners, and similar organizations. (*Lenon* 5/21/21).

At Cleveland on January 16, 1919, Batt spoke to about 400 people. Some of his utterances were:

"I grasp the hand of Lenin and Liebknecht and call them comrades..."

"I like this country so well I want the workers to have it..."

"The state is an organized power of oppression, created and maintained in society by different classes..."

"They (the capitalists) have control of the government and that government grants the right of ownership. If you attempt to seize and hold, some people say, 'what is going to happen to you?' If you attempt to do as the Anarchist says — ignore the state — go ahead and take control, what is going to happen? You are going to hear the pleasant music of the machine gun and the whine of the shrapnel shells..."

"Get control of the political state. Once you are in the saddle of political power, these policemen will take your orders as well. Once you are in control of the government you are on the right end of the machine gun..."

"As soon as we get strong enough we propose to take these things away from the capitalist class. If we take them back, they will have to go to work... There is a Proletarian University in existence in Cleveland..."

"How are you going to get political power? Nobody can tell you how to get political power. The immediate conditions surrounding the country at the time and the internal conditions are going to determine how the working class is going to take political power. *I would not say it will be necessary for the workers to go as far in this country as they have over there. It is not nice to fight unless you have to and we don't want to fight. We hope the capitalist class in this country won't be so stupid as to make us fight.*" (*Morton* 9/16/19).

John Keracher.

Alias John "Kerr." Alien (British subject) with first papers here.

Born Dundee, Scotland, January 16, 1881. Arrived at New York in 1908 or 1909. Unmarried. First

papers about 1915. Fed from Scotland, using the name John Kerr, to avoid payment of debts. (*Apelman* 8/18/20).

Operates the “Reliance Shoe House,” 612 Dix Avenue, Detroit, Michigan.

Admits being an alien and an active member of the Communist Party. (*Apelman* 1/9/20).

Arrested on immigrant warrant January 2, 1920 and proceedings cancelled on June 7, 1920. Record of hearing before immigrant inspector on file.

Close friend of Isaac Ferguson.

Delegate to first convention of the Communist Party of America (though he claims now he disapproved some of its actions and left the convention before its conclusion) and secretary of the Detroit local of the Party. (*Kahn* 10/31/19).

Secretary of the “Proletarian University” at Detroit and associate editor of *The Proletarian* — official organ of subject party. Keracher writes most of the articles in the organ.

When examined by the immigrant inspector, Keracher denied not only his membership in the Communist Party but also his belief in the objectionable features of the program.

However, the evidence conclusively shows Keracher to have been a member of the national organization committee, who, with Batt and others, including Alexander Stoklitsky, signed the call for the convention. Keracher denies even his signature to this call, and the Department of Labor — contrary to the recommendation of its own inspector and in the face of a mass of conclusive evidence — believed Keracher.

Keracher has spoken in many cities on behalf of both the Communist Party (at first) and the *Proletarian* (later). He says his speeches are on “Socialism.”

His testimony shows him in a brazen disregard for the truth, to have entered the United States without proper inspection, and to have committed fraud upon the immigrant authorities at the time of entry.

* * *

Conclusion.

The Proletarian Party undoubtedly presents a novel case. It is and it is not in one of the various classes of ultra-radical organizations as we have known them. It has made consistent efforts, in its program and activities, to avoid the use of terms as well as clearly expressed tactics which would make it objectionable. How well it has succeeded depends entirely upon the viewpoint of the reader as well as his experience with the origin and development of the ultra-radical movements both at home and abroad. If the failure to use direct terms in the program is intended as camouflage — and I am strongly disposed to so accept it — the attempt is futile, for where they have avoided using the express terms “forcible” or “mass action” and so forth, they have not been able to avoid the “dictatorship of the proletariat,” the “Third International,” the overthrow of the “capitalist state,” the use of armed citizenry against the police and army, which are legal agencies of organized government employed according to law on works opposed to the accomplishment of communist aims, and so forth.

Keeping in mind the decisions in the Abern, Kospud, Gitlow, and other cases, I have no difficulty at concluding that the party falls within the proscriptions of the deportation statutes, in spite of the present differences with the Communists, which may be genuine, may not.

All of which is respectfully submitted:

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