
First Day's Proceedings of the Cleveland Conference of the CPPA, Dec. 11, 1922.

Unsigned report published as "Ruthenberg Raises Demand for Seating the Four Delegates of the Workers Party (First Day's Proceedings)" in *The Worker* [New York], v. 5, whole no. 254 (Dec. 23, 1922), pg. 2.
The most likely author of this article is William F. Dunne.

Speaking with a dramatic intensity that brought a new note into the routine discussions of the conference, red-haired Robert D. Cramer, editor of the *Minneapolis Labor Review*, representing the Minneapolis Trades and Labor Assembly here threw a bombshell into the ranks of officialdom that is trying to strangle a Labor Party movement, when he rose and defended the Workers Party in answer to a wild and irresponsible attack made upon it by Edwin Keating of the National Committee for the Conference for Progressive Political Action.

The credentials committee had finished its report without mentioning the Workers Party. C.E. Ruthenberg rose from the floor and asked why no disposition had been made of credentials of the Workers Party delegates.

J.G. Brown, President of the Farmer-Labor Party of Illinois and secretary of the credentials committee, replied that no credentials had been received from the Workers Party. While Ruthenberg was informing him that credentials had been filed with the committee for four delegates, Keating, with a wild look in his eyes, dashed to the front of the platform and announced, seemingly of his own volition, that "The matter might as well be settled here." He said: "Let us decide now. If this party has the brazen effrontery to present credentials to this convention this committee should not receive the credentials because this convention does not want representatives of the

so-called Workers Party."

Dennis Batt, representing the Detroit Federation of Labor, then rose and, raising a point of information, inquired on what grounds Keating based his statement concerning the wishes of the convention. Keating, apparently believing that the conference and the well-filled gallery would burst into wild applause at his utterances, replied that the Workers Party was an un-American organization. This patriotic utterance brought forth boos, catcalls, and hisses in place of the expected applause. With somewhat lessened confidence Keating went on and charged that the activities of the Workers Party were disruptive; that they worked in the interest of the employers and that it had no place in a gathering that he graced with his presence. These remarks were made in a dead silence, the assemblage being more or less amazed at the display of ignorance on the part of one of the high salaried employees of the Progressive political movement.

Workers Party Defended.

It was then that Cramer arose and said:

"In view of the attack that has been made on the Workers Party, it will only be justice to tell this convention that in the city of Minneapolis the Workers Party has not been a disruptive force. It has worked in concert with the political ambitions of labor in the last campaign and its work in

the labor movement has been that of education for harmony and not for disruption.

“If this is to be a Conference for Progressive Political Action representing the trade unionist of Minneapolis, I certainly hope that it will not take the same attitude in regard to the Workers Party that the Department of Justice and William J. Burns [Detective Agency] are taking.

“There is only one question to be decided here. That is: is this a Workers Party, made up of workers — working men and working women, working people? I don’t think there can be any question about that. The very fact of the persecution that this organization has suffered at the hands of the very department that has tied up the finances of the railway organizations marks it a working class organization. The very persecution by the Department of Justice and William J. Burns should be sufficient credential for them to sit here. That should not be overlooked.”

He was frequently interrupted by applause from all quarters of the house, showing conclusively that the delegates thoroughly disapproved of the language of the Department of Justice and other red-baiters used by Keating. The matter of seating the Workers Party delegates was referred back to the credentials committee.

After adjournment, the Workers Party and the delegates of the Young Workers League appeared before the credentials committee and discovered that the missing credentials had mysteriously appeared. Short statements on the position of the Workers Party were made to the credentials committee by the delegation and the matter will come before the conference tomorrow.

Oppose Local Union Delegates.

Another controversy arose in the afternoon session over the seating of delegates from local unions. The majority report of the credentials committee recommended that delegates from local unions be not seated. The minority report was

submitted by delegates Brown and Bocks and was adopted by the convention on the motion of Max Hayes, representing the Typographical Union. This matter was also referred back to the credentials committee and as the majority report was defeated by a two-to-one vote, it is probable that these delegates will be seated.

The convention was opened by William H. Johnston, International President of the Machinists Union. He read a speech which showed a labored attempt to avoid a mention of anything that would offend the respectable elements to which the right wing of the conference makes its appeal. It was filled with such phrases as “predatory interests,” “privileged groups,” “corporate rule,” “welfare of the people,” “public interest,” and had as its high note a demand for “equal and exact justice for all,” whatever that means. It was a frank appeal for the support of the middle class and lower middle class elements. There was absolutely no indication in the entire speech of any understanding of the tremendous changes that are taking place in the industrial and political life of the nation.

Forget Class Struggle.

As a proof that no sign of the class struggle is to be allowed to creep into the campaigns of the right wing of this conferences, it lacks nothing. Johnston aroused no enthusiasm except when he claimed credit for the conference for the defeat of all reactionaries and the success of all liberals and progressives in the recent election.

It is openly announced by the right wing group that all attempts to establish a Labor party at this time will be strangled. They are definitely committed to the “reward and punish” policy despite their seeming differences with the Gompers machine.

More than that, the attitude of the Socialist Party delegation here seems to indicate that most of these differences have been adjusted and that no real fight for a Labor Party will be made by

them. On the other hand, the delegates representing the Farmer-Labor Party declare that this issue will be fought out here and that they are going to use all their influence to swing the conference for independent political action based on a party organized in the unions and organizations of the farmers.

Paper Organizations Recognized.

There are many organizations seated here that exist only on paper, such as Single Tax leagues, Jewish Poale Zion, the League for Industrial Democracy, and various legislative committees and other bodies which merely furnish votes against the clear-cut working class political action.

The fact that representatives of these paper organizations are seated, while the Workers Party with a dues-paying membership of 20,000 is denied admission, shows that the right wing element with whom the Socialist Party delegates are aligned are not interested in strengthening the political movement of the workers. One hundred and forty-three delegates have been seated. More are expected tomorrow and the bulk of the representation, the roster shows, is from the railway organizations.

Cleveland "S.P." Mass Meeting Turns Out to be Big Fizzle.

On the even of the Cleveland Conference for Progressive Political Action, the Socialist Party, which is playing the Johnston-Gompers game, tried to impress the delegates from the labor unions with their wide influence among the masses, so they held a "mass meeting" with all the shining lights of the Party present. The principal speakers were Hillquit, Berger, Maurer, and others.

The masses responded to the number of about 250, and half a hundred of those were Workers Party members that came out to witness the fizzle.

Evidently the deplorable showing of this discredited and decrepit party had no effect upon those in charge of the Conference, for seven representatives of the Socialist Party were seated, while International Unions representing tens and hundreds of thousands were only entitled to three delegates.

No wonder the "SP" is trying to become the tail end of any sort of organization as an excuse to hide from the contempt of the working class of the nation.

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