
The Unity Convention

by Walter Thomas Mills

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The Unity Convention had 150 delegates. These delegates had additional credentials of others sufficient to make a total vote in the convention of 12,000.

The convention was in session for four full days. Its work was done with the most intense earnestness, but not an ugly personality marred the proceedings from start to finish.

Socialist Unity has been accomplished. the independent parties, the party of Springfield, and the party of Chicago are no more. The work was so satisfactory to all parties that the comrades who were bound by a referendum of their party gave their unanimous assurance that they would urge its adoption by their party, and later, after consultation together, gave their support to the Unity Resolution and voted for it, like all the rest, and without any conditions. This was done after prolonged debate of all possible features of the unity question, was about the last act of the convention, and was carried without a dissenting vote. On its adoption for the first and only time this convention followed the conventional usage of "long, loud, uproarious, and repeated cheers."

The name of the new party is the Socialist Party.

The platform is too long for use on a paster [propaganda sticker], on an envelope corner, or for direct quotation in a public address. It is explicit in saying many things, but its length will prevent it from saying them very often, or to very many people. It outlines the argument for Socialism from the standpoint of the evolutionary philosophy and will make a first class speech.

The convention took the position that what was to be said on the subject of the immediate demands should be said in the platform. The positions usually taken by the Socialists as these questions are taken, but so stated as to clearly express the revolutionary program as related to all such measures.

Apart from the platform, special resolutions were adopted relating to trade unions, the farmers, the industrial crisis in Puerto Rico, and the negro as a competitor with white labor, and in all these cases the resolutions were so drawn as to declare the readiness of the Socialists to cooperate in anything which can in any way aid the workers in their immediate contests with capitalism; but in every instance the identity of interest between all workers was made clear, and this whether native or foreign, in unions or out, in shop, field, or mine, and without regard to color, race, sex, or present kind of servitude.

There was a strong feeling in the convention that it was a mistake to scatter these utterances through a series of detached and unreliable resolutions and to separate them from the contingency phases of the platform. I would have added to the effective use of these utterances and of the platform itself, had the platform been the briefest statement of the central ideas of Socialism, and all these other matters gathered into a paper making both a statement and an exposition of the party's position regarding them. But it would be a poor spirited Socialist who, having obtained so much that he wanted, would complain because it was not delivered in the kind of package that he likes.

The new constitution provides for state autonomy, there is to be no national organ, each organized state will carry on its own propaganda, each state will furnish its own share of the national funds in its own way — with or without dues as it may elect — the constitution may be amended, a national officer removed, the national headquarters changed, a national convention called, or any act of the National Committee may be made subject to the referendum of the party on the request of 5 local organizations.

The National Committee is composed of one member of each state and 5 from the seat of the headquarters. St. Louis is the new headquarters. Leon Greenbaum is the new National Secretary. The new united party is here at last. It is on its feet and is doing business. Don't watch it grow. Fall in, all along the line, and make it grow.

Walter Thomas Mills.

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Edited by Tim Davenport

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