
Reds Bolt Convention of State Federation: Harass Delegates With Their Adroit Program: Resolutions Condemning Government Are Defeated

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E.G. Hall of Minneapolis and G.W. Lawson of St. Paul succeeded themselves as President and Secretary-Treasurer, respectively, of the Minnesota State Federation of Labor. They were elected without opposition at the close of a rather noisy convention held at Faribault Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of this week [July 16-18, 1917].

From the outset of the convention the Socialists, styling themselves liberals or progressives, attempted to thwart the constructive efforts of the trade union delegates by injecting into the proceedings artfully drawn resolutions which, if passed, would have committed the federation to un-American policies in dealing with grave foreign issues which are now taxing to the utmost the hearts and brains of our greatest statesmen. Finally when they found they could not boss the job the Socialists bolted the convention.

In every instance the majority defeated with emphasis all resolutions not cleanly phrased in support of our government during the present crisis.

The first resolution drawn by the Socialists protested against government employment of nonunion labor in the construction of certain building at Fort Snelling [Hennepin County, MN]. The committee attempted to keep the resolution in the committee room, but it was brought before the general assembly, where C. Vandenberg of Minneapolis began an impassioned plea for its adoption. His talk was

brought to an abrupt close by President E.G. Hall, following cries of "treason" from members of the convention.

"If you are fighting for the rights of labor in this state, for God's sake take a wholehearted stand against this government which is traitorously crushing the heart of the workman," Vandenberg began. In a moment the convention was in an uproar.

"Treason, throw him out," "we will not listen to such talk," and like cries arose as the old line members of the organization started for the platform on which Vandenberg was standing.

President E.G. Hall, with the assistance of the sergeants-at-arms, restored order and warned the speaker. A vote was taken and the resolution defeated by 220 to 80.

Safety Commission Assailed.

The next resolution called for a special session of the legislature to repeal the law under which the Minnesota Public Safety Commission operates. Should the governor fail in calling the legislature in special session, it was resolved that a statewide strike in all lines of labor be called to be effective until such time as the commission was dissolved. After a heated debate, in which it was pointed out that the labor organizations of the state have no representative among the members of the commission, the body voted down the resolution by approximately the same vote as the first resolution.

The third resolution which was voted down was to the effect that the federal government be asked to define the object of the war and on what terms this country will be willing to make peace.

Anticonscription Lost.

A heated debate resulted from the introduction of the fourth resolution, which asked that the government repeal the conscription act. This resolution met the same fate as the others, as did a resolution favoring the conscription of wealth.

The last two resolutions presented favored the stand taken by the Nonpartisan League with regard to the conscription of wealth and that sympathy be expressed for the downtrodden laborers of Ireland, Belgium, France, England, and Germany. These two were voted down, but it was announced that the vote against them was because of the manner in which they were worded.

Socialists Cheer Van Lear.

Addressing the convention Tuesday [July 17, 1917] Mayor Thomas Van Lear of Minneapolis was loudly cheered by socialist delegates when he denounced the Wilson administration for its effort in the war with Germany.

“If my eyes do not deceive me and my ears do not hear falsely,” he said, “in our effort to carry democracy to the world, we are in grave danger of carrying so much of it away that we may be leaving only autocracy here.

“We have been told that we are entering a conflict to democratize the world. If this be true, the people of the United States have a right to say to those who rule the nation, gentlemen, we want to know what kind of democracy we are carrying to the world.

Sees Tendency to Militarism.

“Civil society should never give up its rights to military rule except in cases where civil government cannot operate. As an American citizen I object to the tendency of militarism, against which we have been told we are warring, superseding rights of civil life. The people can still maintain their rights and carry on this war in a better manner than if these rights are taken away from them.”

Completing his address, the mayor invited the federation to hold its 1918 convention in Minneapolis. Virginia and Red Wing also sought the next convention.

Nonpartisans Plan Campaign.

L.W. Samuelson, member of the Executive Board of the Nonpartisan League of Minnesota, said his organization would have a complete ticket of state and legislative candidates at the next general election. Petitions were in circulation here in behalf of Victor L. Power, mayor of Hibbing, as the Nonpartisan candidate for governor, and were signed by socialist and labor delegates.

W.M. English, secretary of the North Dakota federation, told of the political success of the Nonpartisan League working with organized labor in that state.

Late Wednesday afternoon [July 18], just before the election of officers, the radicals, composed of Socialists, who were dissatisfied with the proceedings of the convention, bolted, and met in another hall, but no publicity was given to the proceedings of their meeting.

Just before the election of officers a bitter fight was precipitated over the proposition to make the terms of the President and Secretary-Treasurer two years, instead of one, as formerly, but the supporters of the long term were in control, and the change finally made.

President E.G. Hall of Minneapolis and Secretary George W. Lawson of St. Paul were re-elected without opposition, the threatened opposition not materializing. W.J. Dutcher of Duluth withdrew as a candidate for Secretary Wednesday morning.

The following Vice Presidents were elected: First district, John Kirby, Red Wing; Third district, C. Bellaire and P.H. Waters, St. Paul; Fifth district, Fred Hester and R.D. Nolan, Minneapolis; Sixth district, C.F. Dahl, St. Cloud; Eighth district, W.L. Murnian and Henry Perrault, Duluth; Ninth district, George Jackson.

Virginia was unanimously awarded the 1918 convention.

The *Minnesota Union Advocate* of St. Paul was chosen the official organ.

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