
Open Letter to Louis C. Fraina in Boston from Adolph Germer in Chicago, published April 2, 1919.

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[Dear Comrade Fraina:—]

In *The Revolutionary Age*, March 8 [1919], you publish an article entitled “We Must Have a National Emergency Convention.” That article contains several unfounded charges against the National Executive Committee and me in particular.

It has been well said that “a lie will travel around the world while the truth is pulling on its boots.”

The entire article breathes the desire to create suspicion and distrust rather than solidarity among our forces at a time when hundreds of our comrades are either in prison or facing prisons, and when the existence of our whole movement is challenged by the plutocrats.

Easy to Spread Falsehood.

It is a thousand times easier to circulate a falsehood, and create distrust, than it is to instill confidence in the honesty and integrity of those who have been selected, wisely or unwisely, to administer the affairs of the Socialist Party. It seems to be human nature to believe that persons in official party positions always have “ulterior motives.” There are also persons who regard it as a greater duty to carry on an internal quarrel, regardless of the consequences to the movement, than to enlist new converts to our cause.

I have never had time for internal bickerings and would pay no attention to the effusions from *The Revolutionary Age* were it not that the propaganda is carried on so persistently.

You sneer at my “strict parliamentary procedure” and adherence to “constitutional law.”

Quotes Party’s Constitution.

The national constitution of the Socialist Party is the will of the membership. It was adopted by referendum and laid down “as the law to govern those whom they have elected to executive positions.”

You retreat behind the National Executive Committee’s election of delegates to the international conference, not stating to your readers that there was no time to elect by referendum vote. Besides, you fail to call to the attention of your readers the fact that the constitution has the following two authorizing clauses:

Art. III, Sec. 1. — The affairs of the Socialist Party shall be administered by the National Executive Committee, its sub-committees and officials, the national convention, and the general vote of the party.

And

Art. IV, Sec. 1. — The duties and powers of the committee shall be:

(a) To represent the party in all national and international affairs.

Will of Membership.

This is the will of the membership, expressed by referendum when the constitution was adopted. Why did you not call this to the attention of your readers?

If the membership, in its national constitution, which is the fundamental law of the Socialist Party, says that a referendum must be initiated in a certain way, I presume that it is expected of us to have it so initiated and in no other manner.

It is amusing to see how the writer of the article twists words to suit his purpose. When the National

Executive Committee decided upon calling an amnesty conference, it was with no thought whatever of heading off a national party convention.

The thought the committee had in mind was to arouse and combine every element in the country that was interested in the subject of amnesty, and bring all possible pressure to bear upon the administration to compel the release of all wartime prisoners.

Of course, it is the privilege of *The Revolutionary Age* to pride itself of “boycotting” such a conference and urge others to do the same. It is the privilege of *The Revolutionary Age* to bark at the moon while our comrades are languishing in filthy prisons. To the old and experienced comrades, at least, it is agreeable that we should combine every element that can bring pressure to bear upon the Democratic administration and force open the prison doors and regain freedom for the wartime victims.

Asks for Proof.

You say: “The decision to hold an amnesty convention is an attempt to use the comrades whose adherence to party principles has landed them in jail as a means of defeating the wishes of the revolutionary section of the movement.”

How do you know that? What proof do you have to substantiate any such statement? As one who is on his way to prison and who approves of calling the amnesty convention, I brand such a charge as a fabrication conceived by a fertile imagination.

You further say: “If the party convention so decides, ways and means can be found of cooperating with other organizations interested in amnesty.” But let me ask — why delay the agitation for the release of political prisoners? Is it because “propagandists” are more interested in carrying on a discussion of purely tactical or theoretical party matters than they are in agitating for the release of our comrades in jail?

Declares Charge Untrue.

Again, you charge that when I advised the locals, branches, and individual comrades that the Boston resolution could not be accepted as a motion for a referendum, I informed such locals, branches, and individuals that the only motion properly initiated was

from Local Queens County [NY]. And you add that you have been informed at this late date I made an objection to the Queens County resolution. What is the source of your information? Please reveal it. The ballots for a convention will be shipped out in the next few days. I challenge you [to show] where and when I objected to the constitutionality of the Queens County motion.

I frankly confess that I doubt the wisdom of holding a national party convention this year, but at no time have I said that the Queens County motion was not constitutional.

Questions Wisdom of Meet.

I question the wisdom of a national convention for several reasons. First, on account of the expense involved. We are just emerging from the indebtedness that has served as a brake on the party for several years. A convention will cost between \$15,000 and \$20,000 if all the states send delegates. All the states are not in a financial condition to pay the expense of delegates. The Queens County motion makes no provision for financing the convention. In fact, no mention is made of it.

A convention can not finance itself and unless provision is made, there is a grave probability of having representation only from the states more favorably situated financially, leaving the weaker states without delegates.

That objection would not be sufficient were it not that we are to have a national party convention next April or May for the purpose of nominating Presidential candidates and formulating our platform and program for the Presidential campaign.

Cites Experience of Past.

You may answer that we can formulate our platform and program this year and nominate our candidates either at this year’s convention or by referendum.

I hope it will be sufficient to remind the comrades who raise that contention of our experience with both the platform and the nomination of the Presidential candidate in 1916. The convention enthusiasts always insist that new world conditions demand a new party declaration; that our present declarations

and program are out of date.

It will require no extended argument to convince persons who think that any statement adopted at a convention this year will be entirely out of date for our Presidential campaign.

In addition, the party must carry on a nationwide campaign for the release of wartime political prisoners. This can not be done on good intentions. It costs money.

Up to Party Membership.

The spirit of *The Revolutionary Age* is clearly revealed in the appeal to the members to protest against the explanation respecting the Boston resolution. You are not satisfied with the National Office accepting the national constitution as a guide for the Socialist Party.

From all that I have read in *The Revolutionary Age* and in most of the resolutions and communications sent to this office in favor of a convention, I am convinced the proposed convention is not intended as a gathering to work out ways and means of combining the masses in a coherent movement to hasten the day of social emancipation.

One of the champions of the convention idea put it very bluntly the other day when he said: "We want to see who is boss in the party." Others have expressed it more tactfully.

It is up to the members to decide whether or not a convention shall be held. If they decide in the affirmative, like a good soldier, I yield to their desire and will leave nothing undone to help make it a success.

[Adolph Germer.]

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