
Ohio Socialist Convention Makes Party History: Endorses Left Wing Program and Instructs Delegates to the National Convention to Work for its Adoption by that Body [events of June 27-28, 1919]

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No more instructive convention was ever held by the Socialist Party of Ohio than that which convened June 27 [1919] at Socialist Hall, Cincinnati. The debates gave evidence of great progress in Socialist thought within the year and the average intelligence of the delegates attending is a credit to the Ohio movement. This does not mean that there is no room for improvement. It means that improvement has taken place "since we last met" and that is a sure sign that we are neither of the "stand pat" variety of Socialists nor yet of the "back up" kind.

The Cincinnati comrades had the arrangements well in hand. Lotta Burke, Otto Rucktaeschel, Otto Hoefler, and many others whose names we have for the time forgotten, did duty as Jimmy Higginses during all sessions and no demand made upon them was too small or too large to fulfill. For this the convention and the party expresses its appreciation. The Cincinnati comrades have an ideal headquarters and many delegates voiced the wish that their city were as fortunate in this regard.

The convention was opened by State Secretary Alfred Wagenknecht at 10:05 am on June 27th. C.E. Ruthenberg was elected chairman for the first day. Lawrence A. Zitt was elected chairman for the second day. Carl Hacker and John Fromholtz acted as secretaries. All these comrades were Cleveland delegates.

Committees on Program and Municipal Platform, Constitution, Resolutions, Officers' Reports and Audit, and Organization and Propaganda were elected in short order, whereupon the convention adjourned for several hours to give the committees time to do their work.

The greatest dispatch and efficiency marked the actions of the convention. The discussions were to the point and the absence of tactics more or less dilatory, which comrades sometimes have a habit of indulging in, saved much time.

Succeeding the report of the State Secretary [Alfred Wagenknecht], which was presented in last week's Ohio Socialist, came the report of the Committee on Program and Municipal Platform. This committee reported the Left Wing Program [of the June 1919 Left Wing National Conference] as it appeared in last week's issue of the paper as the program of the party, as a program to govern its actions. It is not meant, nor for that matter is any left Wing Program so far adopted meant, to constitute a Socialist Party platform. The program is a criticism of past party tactics and a statement of changes which are essential if we are ever to function as the party of the working class.

An entire evening was given to debate upon the Left Wing Program with the result that when the vote was taken 47 favored it and only 7 opposed it, 3 or 4 of those voting in the negative only because so instructed by their locals. Ohio delegates to the Emergency National Convention are, according to a motion passed, instructed to vote for this program and work for its adoption.

This same committee also submitted a resolution severely condemning the actions of the National Executive Committee in expelling and suspending the Socialist Party of Michigan and 7 language federations. Subsequently the committee reported a municipal platform, to be used by all locals in Ohio placing municipal tickets in the field. Both the resolution and the municipal platform will be found in the minutes of the convention printed on another page.

The Committee on Constitution gave the state constitution of the party a more thorough overhauling than it has had for

years. Much useless lumber was removed and several radical changes made. The provision for a State Committee was stricken from the constitution, as were the provisions for a legal State Committee and a legal State Executive Committee, and the State Secretary be elected for a term of two years each was voted down by the convention [*sic.*].

Division of funds as provided for in the constitution was abolished. All expenses of the organization will hereafter be met by the general fund. The State Executive Committee, if the amendment carries [in referendum vote of the membership], will hereafter designate the state headquarters city. the press stamp feature was abolished and in its place a raise of dues was voted, it being tacitly understood that part of the proceeds from this increase would be used to finance the *Ohio Socialist*. Locals will, if the amendment carries, hereafter pay 20 cents per stamp or \$4 per book of 20 stamps and will accordingly raise their dues to the members to 35 cents per month. The initiation fee will be 50 cents, half of which will be retained by the local which admits the applicant.

Other minor changes were made, all of which will appear upon the ballot which will in a short time go to the membership. All acts of the state convention must be adopted by membership referendum before they finally become party law.

The Resolutions Committee reported resolutions upon political prisoners, unemployment, mass propaganda, expulsion of language federations, special national convention assessment stamps, intervention in Russia, party-owned printing plant, greetings to class war prisoners, greetings to Soviet Russia. All these resolutions will be found in the minutes as printed upon another page in this issue.

The Committee on Officers's Report and Audit challenged part of the State Secretary's report but otherwise found the financial condition of the party and the conduct of the State Office a subject for commendation. The Committee on Organization and Propaganda, the last committee to report, made several recommendations which locals are advised to follow, and that part of its report which provided that the convention endorse

the movement of the Finnish District Agitation Committee to better organize the Finnish-speaking people into the Socialist Party was adopted.

The convention adjourned in the greatest enthusiasm. Cheers were given for the success of the working classes in Europe and for the imprisoned class war victims, upon which "The Red Flag" was sung. And so passed into history what many delegates said was the best state convention ever held in Ohio. New circumstances, new tricks of the capitalist class, have made a restatement of Socialist tactics necessary. This has caused a controversy in the party. The convention places the Socialist Party of Ohio uncompromisingly on the side of the Left Wing and although some of the actions taken may appear drastic to many members in the state, they are also absolutely necessary in view of the attempt being made by "stand pat" party officials to disrupt the organization.

We recommend that all locals and branches have thorough discussions upon all acts of this convention so that when the state referendum finally reaches the membership, an intelligent vote will be cast.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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