
The Left Wing and the Truth.

by Adolph Germer

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The worst crime charged against the National Executive Committee is that they didn't give Michigan and the suspended Language Federations a trial. The party funds are spent and Alfred Wagenknecht sends an elaborate press service all over the country and circularizes locals and branches as well as individuals, inflaming their minds against the national organization.

If everything Wagenknecht and his associates write and say were true I would join them in their protest against the National Executive Committee. If only one-hundredth part were true, the "Left Wing" would have a case. Let us examine the records and see how much reliance can be placed in the claims of the "Left Wing" factionalists.

In my report to the National Executive Committee [May 24, 1919] I quoted the newly-adopted Michigan constitution. I'll quote it again:

"Any member, local, or branch of a local, advocating legislative reforms or supporting organizations formed for the purpose of advocating such reforms, shall be expelled from the Socialist Party. The State Executive Committee is authorized to revoke the charter of any local that does not conform to this amendment."

It is written in plain English and anyone can see at a glance what it means. Neither the majority (the "Despotic Seven") nor I were drawing upon imagination when we said that anyone who advocated the national platform, adopted by the overwhelming majority of the membership, is fired out

of the party in Michigan.

When a person joins the party the following agreement is signed on the application card:

"In all my political actions while a member of the Socialist Party I agree to be guided by the constitution and platform of that party."

Does this mean what it says or does it not? If it means what it says, has anyone or even a state organization or language federation the right to repudiate it and still remain in the party?

When Comrade Stedman made the motion to revoke the charter of Michigan, [NEC members] Katterfeld and Wagenknecht began to play for time. They were caught unawares and their machinery was not in good working order. Time is what they needed so they could get the wires busy.

That the facts were admitted can be seen from the records which I quote:

Question by Stedman: "Are there any questions about the facts?"

Wagenknecht: "I do not know a thing about the facts, I take it for granted that the facts as stated here are correct."

I repeat, the facts are admitted. But Katterfeld, whose fame for wrecking the party financially is remembered by the older members of the party, wanted the state committee of Michigan to tell what the clauses above quoted means. Every day's delay meant at least \$60 expenditure to the National Office [in per diem to NEC mem-

bers]. Can the above mean anything different than what is put into it in plain English?

That there was no misunderstanding on the part of the so-called "Despotic Seven" members of the National Executive Committee can be clearly seen from the following letter:

Detroit, Mich., June 6, 1919.

The Socialist Party of the US,
803 West Madison St., Chicago, Ill.

Comrades:—

We, the North East Branch SP (Jewish) were suspended by our city central committee for the offense of participating in protest movement against the pogroms on the Jewish people in Poland. (The have also suspended the other two Jewish branches.) We cannot see that we have committed such a terrible crime against the principles of International Socialism by our participation in this anti-pogrom movement to deserve suspension. You comrades of the national executive understand well that those pogroms are organized by the Polish bourgeoisie with the purpose to suppress the Socialist revolution in Poland by means of pogroms and the spreading of national hate. The Jewish working class are the most sufferers of this pogroms.

As our branch wants to be true to the principles of the Socialist Party of the United States, we would like you to advise us whether we are wrong in this guess or not.

We would also like to be informed in regard to the suspension of the Michigan Socialist branches of the party and what steps will be taken to connect the loyal Socialist branches with the national executive.

Yours for Socialism,

The North East Branch SP,
Resolution Committee,
by S. Scott

Here branches are expelled for participating in a protest against the outrages committed against the Jews, many of whom are our Comrades.

Should some local, branch, or individual participate in a protest against such massacres as Ludlow and Holly Grove, they would be fired out of the Socialist Party in Michigan. **Who is it that is**

despotic? Can you as a Socialist stand for this?

The letters from the Jewish branch prove beyond any possible question that the National Executive Committee was not mistaken.

The facts are admitted by Wagenknecht, they were not denied by Katterfeld, and now they go frantic because "Michigan was not given a trial."

But there are some more records that the Wagenknecht-Katterfeld-Fraina press service will not contain.

The moment the Michigan charter was revoked the wires were burned up with the telegrams from Wagenknecht and Katterfeld, and, Monday morning, John Keracher, State Secretary of Michigan, was in Chicago.

Comrade Oneal: "I would like to ask Comrade Keracher a question, if he is willing to answer it."

Comrade Keracher: "It will depend upon the nature of the question, Comrade. I am not quite sure whether I will answer it."

Comrade Oneal: "Well, I will put the question. It was reported here, and generally conceded by quite a number of comrades that this proposal had been adopted by a referendum vote."

Comrade Keracher: "I decline to give this body any information."

Comrade Goebel: "I am glad to see that we have a stenographer present and that while we are still in session we could change the act or the motion already adopted, but it can now be recorded that the Secretary of the state of Michigan refuses to give us any information that might perhaps have helped us."

Comrade Keracher: "Will you add after the action had been taken by the committee?"

Comrade Goebel: "It does not make any difference. We are still in session."

If the majority of the National Executive Committee had erred, here was an opportunity for the State Secretary of Michigan to put the National Executive Committee in the embarrassing position of reversing itself. Instead of that, this State Secretary, who seeks to malign the National Executive Committee, point blank refused to give information that might lead to an adjustment of the Michigan controversy.

If the National Executive Committee is au-

tocratic, what would you call the attitude of the Michigan State Secretary?

Were this all, an element of injustice might seem to exist in the Michigan state office. Keracher called a special state convention for June 15 [1919]. Our Finnish comrades in Michigan elected delegates and introduced the following resolution:

“Whereas, the last convention of the state of Michigan violated Section 3(a), Article X,[†] and Section 5, Article II,[‡] of the National Constitution in adopting and submitting to a referendum the so-called Constitutional Amendment of the Legislative Reform; and

“Whereas, the charter of the state organization of Michigan has been revoked by the National Executive Committee for the above reasons and the state declared unorganized; therefore

“Be It Resolved, by the Socialist Party of Michigan assembled in convention, June 15, 1919, That the action of the previous convention and its adoption by the state referendum is hereby declared null and void; and

“Be It Further Resolved, That we recognize the national constitution and platform as the supreme declaration of the Socialist Party until they are changed and amended at the national convention and the membership referendum.”

They were laughed at and told to send the resolution to the National Office instead of presenting it to the Keracher convention.

I say Keracher’s convention because he carried on a correspondence with individuals and instructed them to “see to it that the proper delegates are elected.” And they were. He needed a convention made to order.

The usual tirade of abuse was heaped upon the National Executive Committee but at no stage of the proceedings was the clause in the constitution interpreted to mean anything different from that which the committee placed on it.

The crowd in control of the Michigan state organization meant to repudiate the national platform and constitution and place itself outside the party. This is clear to the satisfaction of every open-minded comrade. All the abuse in which the ousted “Director of Organization and Propaganda” and his associates indulged cannot change the facts in the least.

That the element bent on “capturing the party” by fair or foul means is desperate is no surprise. The only surprise is that their trickery should receive support from many of our honest comrades.

†- Art. X, Sec. 3. (a) The platform of the Socialist Party shall be the supreme declaration of the party, and all state and municipal platforms shall conform thereto. No state or local organization shall under any circumstances fuse, combine, or compromise with any other political party or organization, or refrain from making nominations, in order to favor the candidate of such other organizations, nor shall any candidate of the Socialist Party accept any nomination or endorsement from any other party or political organization.

‡- Art. II, Sec. 5. All persons joining the Socialist Party shall sign the following pledge: [***]

“I, the undersigned, recognizing the class struggle between the capitalist class and the working class, and the necessity of the working class organizing itself into a political party for the purpose of obtaining collective ownership and democratic administration of the collectively used and socially necessary means of production and distribution, hereby apply for membership in the Socialist Party.

“I have no relations (as member or supporter) with any other political party.

“I am opposed to all political organizations that support and perpetuate the present capitalist profit system, and I am opposed to any form of trading or fusing with any such organizations to prolong that system.

“In all my political actions while a member of the Socialist Party I agree to be guided by the constitution and platform of that party.”

Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.

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