
**Report of the Secretary
to the General Committee
of the Socialist Party of St. Louis
[August 4, 1919]
by W.M. Brandt**

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St. Louis, Mo., August 4, 1919.

To the delegates of the General Committee.

Comrades:—

In our local Socialist Party movement we are facing a situation that requires decisive action, as I have intimated in my notice for this monthly meeting. Permit me to submit for your consideration and action some of the main facts, together with certain definite recommendations.

Beginning June 21, 1919, and continuing for four days, there was held in New York City a convention of the so-called "Left Wing" elements in our Socialist Party. Before the Left Wing convention had concluded its "work," it had split right in two, 31 of the delegates present, representing the Michigan state organization, a number of Foreign Language Federations, and a few others, bolted the convention and proceeded to organize what they now call the "Communist Party."

**The Minority "Left Wing" group
of the Left Wing Movement.**

These Left Wing Bolters who left the Left Wing convention issued an official call for the formation of this "Communist Party" at a convention to be held in Chicago, beginning September 1st, 1919.

The call issued for this convention is signed by 7 members of their "National Organization Committee" and their National Secretary, with national headquarters at 1221 Blue Island Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

This "Communist Party" of the Left Wing people created by the Left Wing Bolters of the New York Left Wing convention of last June, also proceeded to publish their own official paper, called *The Communist*, with publishing address in Chicago, in which names of their organization committee members, their secretary, organizer, and treasurer are given. In the first number of this paper, dated July 19, 1919, there appeared an article by Alexander Stoklitsky, Organizer for this "Communist Party," and Translator-Secretary of the Russian Language Federation, in which he, Stoklitsky, frankly states that the slogan "Capture the Party for Revolutionary Socialism!" was used for the purpose of rupturing the Socialist Party, and now, since the split has occurred, it is their duty to organize a "Communist Party." In the same article the writer refers to the "Social traitors headed by Berger and Hillquit," and then concludes with the appeal: "*Down with the Socialist Party!*"

In that same number of this Chicago *Communist* paper there also appears a write-up from the Russian-speaking branches of Boston, and this article concludes with a similar appeal: "*Down with the Socialist Party of America!*" For the information of the comrades I might add that the officers of this "Communist Party" are Dennis E. Batt (editor of the Detroit *Proletarian*), Secretary; Alexander Stoklitsky (Translator-Secretary of the Russian Language Federation), Organizer; J.V. Stilson (Translator-Secretary of the Lithuanian Language Federation), Treasurer.

Here is another illustration of the queer work done against the Socialist Party: In *The Communist* of July 26, 1919, there appeared a prominently placed article, containing the information that the state organization of Michigan has levied a \$1.00 assessment to meet the expenses of this Communist Party organization. Then in the same issue the Secretary of this Communist Party announces that he is in a position to supply charters, application for membership cards, dues stamps, etc....

In other words: here you find one wing of the Left Wing that comes out openly and by its very official work tells us of its secession from the Socialist Party. These Bolters from the New York Left Wing

convention have established their own Left Wing Organization under the name of Communist Party!

The Majority Left Wing Group of the Left Wing Movement.

That part of the New York Left Wing convention that remained, has also formed an official party of its own by electing I.E. Ferguson as National Secretary, with headquarters at 43 West 29th Street, New York City; also electing a National Council and is functioning as a regularly organized party movement. This group of the Left Wing has not only threatened with secession, but by its very acts and action, it has already seceded from the Socialist Party organization. Its official organ, *Revolutionary Age*, in its issue of July 19, 1919, publishes an article by the Secretary advising all party members who support the Left Wing to pay the Special National Convention Assessment of the Socialist Party, not to our National Socialist Party headquarters, under whose authority and jurisdiction the assessment was levied, but to the Ohio Left Wing Office in Cleveland, and that the National Left Wing Convention or Council that is to meet on September 1st, 1919, would dispose of these special assessment monies. Such action leaves no other interpretation than secession from the Socialist Party and obtaining money under false pretenses.

In the same number of that Left Wing publication we find the report of the Organization Committee at the Left Wing New York Convention, which was adopted, with the recommendation that “a thorough campaign must be made to control the August 30th National Party Convention.” The same paper calls upon all Left Wing members to win the allotment of delegates to the National Socialist Party Convention and that in the formation of a new party these Left Wing delegates would constitute the only representation of the respective states. The convention of the Left Wingers decided in case they failed to *capture* the National Socialist Party Convention, they would forthwith secede and form a “Communist Party.”

Under date of July 12, 1919, their official organ, *The Revolutionary Age*, says:

“The progress of history has exploded a fake unity within the Socialist ranks. The Left Wing is obnoxious to these elements and the Left Wing will drive them out of the Party.”

Then the same official organ says:

“All efforts should now be concentrated on the nomination and election of the Left Wing delegates to the Emergency Convention of August 30th; failing the August 30th Convention, delegates thus elected for Left Wing representation will be ready to take part in the convention to organize a Communist Party. If the Left Wing delegates are not nominated under the regular methods it will be necessary to form a provisional Left Wing organization for the purpose of nominations and balloting for Left Wing delegates, and to be ready to claim full participation in the convention to organize a new party.”

In the same issue of the *Revolutionary Age*, the readers are informed that in Ohio, where the Left Wingers captured the state organization, the State Convention adopted a resolution, providing that should the Left Wing fail to capture the Socialist Party National Convention of August 30, 1919, the Ohio delegation stands instructed to participate in the organization of a new party. Information is given by that paper that in New York the Left Wing is already functioning as a regular party organization in City and State.

Again in the *Revolutionary Age* under date of July 5, 1919, we find the following:

“A Split not alone inevitable, but necessary.”

“The unity must be broken.”

“The Left Wing will brook no compromise.”

“The unity of the Party is broken.”

We also find in this same issue the following:

“That the National Council (left wing) call a conference in Chicago, September 1, 1919, of all revolutionary elements willing to unite with a revolutionary Socialist Party or with a Communist Party that may be organized by Left Wing delegates seceding from the Convention of the Socialist Party to be held Aug. 30.”

I submit for your information copies of resolutions adopted by the Ohio state convention to the effect that the Ohio Left Wing would refuse to turn over the money received for the sale of the special Socialist Party assessment stamps to our National Socialist Party headquarters, and in addition the Ohio delegates stand instructed to

form a new party, if the August 30th convention cannot be captured for the Left Wing.

Left Wing Secretary Ferguson announces officially that he is ready to sell special propaganda stamps and dues stamps. On July 26th, 1919, a committee of five Left Wingers appeared in the office of National Secretary Adolph Germer and demanded that he turn over to them the affairs of the office.¹ The same committee of Left Wingers rented a hall in the same building where our August 30th National Convention is to be held, so that in the even they find themselves in the minority they will be prepared to immediately withdraw to that hall and form a new party. *This is not threatened secession, this is actually secession!*

At two special meetings of our General Committee held on June 16 and June 23, 1919, a statement dealing with the controversy was discussed at length and adopted, and this statement has since received the endorsement of active comrades and officials of the Socialist Party throughout the country; alleged Right Wingers and alleged Left Wingers declared it as the best, fairest, and clearest statement that has been presented on this controversy. But notwithstanding the adoption of this statement, pledging ourselves to await the action of the National Party convention and the party membership referendum, the 8th-and-9th Ward Branch informs this General Committee officially that it endorsed this Left Wing movement.

In *The Ohio Socialist* and other official literature sent out by the Left Wing organization we are informed that the St. Louis Jewish Branch, with 40 members, endorsed the Cleveland Call for an immediate referendum to reinstate the Michigan state and Foreign Language Federations before the convention would have time to act on the matter. And this was done in view of the fact that nearly all of these same Left Wing organizations have openly seceded from the Socialist Party and formed a dual party organization.

On July 20, 1919, Local St. Louis held a public mass meeting at New Club Hall in defense of the Russian and Hungarian Soviet governments and to protest against our own country continuing the war and blockade against those working class governments. The Arrangements Committee of our Local St. Louis, in charge of the details of

¹ The delegation was attempting to implement the mandate of the abrogated 1919 party election, which would have selected Alfred Wagenknecht as Executive Secretary and established Left Wing majority control of the National Executive Committee, had the ballots been legally tallied.

the meeting, met and decided that, in the interest of the cause of the Russian and Hungarian Socialist Republics, in whose interests the meeting was called, no literature dealing with this Wing controversy should be sold or even given away at said public mass meeting. But notwithstanding of this action of our party, and although notified of our committee's action, Joseph Stutz and Steve Witkay, members of the 8th-and-9th Ward Branch; William Waddell, alias George Moser, member of the 14th Ward Branch; and Joseph Norvell, member of the Jewish Branch, distributed and sold, in the hallway and on the steps of the meeting place, numerous copies of the *Revolutionary Age* of July 5th issue, and this number of the official paper of the New York-Ohio Left Wing group was, 14 of its 16 pages, devoted to the controversy and was full of malicious attacks on the Socialist Party. Copies of this paper, together with documents covering all the quotations and charges I make in this report, are herewith submitted, also the official minutes of the Executive Committee held July 9th and 25, 1919.

Furthermore I wish to acquaint you with the following information: On July 23, 1919, I was handed an alleged meeting notice by Joseph Stutz, recording secretary of the 8th-and-9th Ward Branch, who asked me to run off 80 copies on the mimeograph machine. The notice was written in German, and herewith find and exact translation of his letter and my answer.

(Translated Copy.)

Invitation and Appeal.

Comrades:—

We have reached the dividing line!

The same crisis, which the Socialist labor movement of Europe had to go through, has finally found its way to Imperialist America! On the one side we also find here the Scheidemanns and Eberts, the representatives of capitalist parliamentary Socialists and Traitors of the cause of the Proletariat. On the other side we find the uncompromising defenders of class-conscious Revolutionary Socialism — the American Liebknechts and Adlers!

Miserable hypocrites and shortsighted blockheads will attempt to remove from the world the seriousness of the situation by dead silence or ignorant jokes; they are throwing sand in your

eyes in order that they — the Socialist hedge-cacklers — may quietly proceed with their old humdrum work in the same old beaten path, undisturbed and untroubled.

But it is our duty to take a decided attitude!

Where do we want to go? To the Right or to the Left?

The election of delegates to the National Convention gives us an opportunity to render our decision!

In accordance with the decision of the meeting of the 8th- and-9th Ward Branch of the Socialist Party of St. Louis, held on July 9, it was agreed, in consideration of the importance of the election of delegates, to hold an

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING

on Wednesday, July 30, 1919, at 8 o'clock pm, at the auditorium of the Soulard Library, (corner Soulard and 7th Streets), at which

COMRADE LACHER

will speak on the subject:

“The demands of the Class-Conscious Proletariat — a Constructive Party Program” and “Election of the Delegates.”

Comrades!

If you have the welfare and the woes of the exploited and poorest classes, to which you also belong, really at heart, then you must prove by your presence and participation in the fate of our party that you are class-conscious fighters! Let every one of you bring along a comrade in misery, in order that he also hear the gospel of the emancipation from wage slavery and become a revolutionary fighter for our cause!

Down with Capitalism!

Down with the wage system!

Up with the standard of our Freedom!

Through struggle to Victory!

With Socialist greetings,

Joseph M. Stutz,
Secretary.

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(Copy.)

July 24, 1919.

Jos. Stutz, Secretary, 8-9 Ward Branche,
1808 S 12th Street, City.

Dear Comrade:—

Just prior to the opening of the Executive Committee meeting held last evening, July 23rd, you handed me a five page letter written in German, and of which you requested that I run off 80 copies on our mimeograph and have them ready for you by Saturday afternoon, July 26th, the letter being, as you stated, a meeting notice to the members of your branch.

Not being able to read German, I gave the letter this morning to the comrades downstairs,² requesting them to make an exact translation of the letter in English for me, and I find there is in the letter a scurrilous and slanderous attack upon those comrades who have remained loyal to the Socialist Party.

I should hardly think it would be necessary for me to remind you that I have been elected by the Socialist Party membership of St. Louis as their official to advance the interests of the party. It is beyond my understanding that the secretary of the Socialist Party should help in this nefarious work against our party.

After carefully reading the translated copy of your letter, I want to inform you that I will not comply with your request. I consider this my duty as I believe that constitutional and real Socialist methods should be used to settle this or any other controversy. You add insult to injury by requesting me to aid you in further defaming and slandering our Socialist Party, and helping the plans of the *so-called left-wingers* to either capture or wreck our party.

Fraternally yours,

W.M. Brandt,
Secretary.

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² Reference is presumably to the editorial office of the German language newspaper of Local St. Louis, the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*.

Furthermore I desire to submit for your information and consideration a copy of *The Melting Pot* for August 1919, published by Henry M. Tichenor and Mary Tichenor, members of the 13th Ward South Branch. In this issue our party is informed that *The Melting Pot* is the organ of the Left Wing Section of the Socialist Party of St. Louis, and on the front page we find an announcement an appeal signed by George Moser (alias William Waddell), 14th Ward Branch, SP, in which the readers are informed that a local Left Wing Section was organized in St. Louis on July 12, 1919, at the Melting Pot Office, 809 Pontiac Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

Here we find that a secret underground organization was formed, by and of some of our party members, for the avowed purpose of destroying the Socialist Party in St. Louis. Which of the Left Wing groups of the Left Wing these St. Louis Left Wingers represent, I do not know;³ but I do hold that both wings have openly and frankly, by their acts and actions, seceded from our Socialist Party, and that those who formed or endorsed this organization, by their action, have helped and are helping this secessionist movement.

In a statement made by Comrade Debs in jail, when visited by a comrade, he declared: "Anyone who seeks to divide the party into factions at a time when hundreds of our comrades are in jail and the party is being attacked by the whole power of the capitalist class, is not a good Socialist and commits little short of treason to the party."

Comrades, I consider it my duty to lay this entire matter before this General Committee, and to supplement this statement of facts with the following charges, to the end that the entire affair may be sifted down to the bottom and the General Committee take decisive action in the matter.

I herewith prefer the following charges:

(1) I charge that the 8-9 Ward Branch and the Jewish Branch have repudiated the action of our General Committee and of our Party in the endorsement of the Left Wing movement and in their continuous approval of the secessionists.

(2) I charge that Joseph Stutz and Steve Witkay, members of the 8-9 Ward Branch, and E. Lacher, claiming to be a member of the 8-9 Ward Branch, William Waddell, alias George Moser, member of the

³ Tichenor and his *Melting Pot* ultimately lined up with the Communist Labor Party,.

14th Ward Branch, and Joseph Norvell, member of the Jewish Branch, did in violation of the rules of our Party Organization distribute a slanderous and villifying literature against our Party at the New Club Hall public mass meeting held Sunday, July 20, 1919.

(3) I charge that Joseph Stutz, member of the 8th-and-9th Ward Branch and E. Lacher, claiming to be a member of the 8th-and-9th Ward Branch; Henry and Mary Tichenor, members of the 13th South Ward Branch; William Waddell, alias George Moser, member of the 14th Ward Branch; John Braun, member of the 24th Ward Branch; and Joseph Norvell, member of the Jewish Branch, have taken part in the organization and proceedings of a dual party organization here in St. Louis, and have allied themselves to the National Left Wing organization or organizations that have, by their official statements and announcements openly and unquestionably seceded from the Socialist Party; and this secret underground organization was exposed at the meeting of our Local Party Executive Committee held on July 23, and that they have come out in public print only after such exposure.

Article 15, Section 1, of our Local Socialist Party Constitution provides that where charges are preferred against the Executive Committee or any of its members, a special committee shall hear the charges. Due to the fact that three of those charged are members of the Executive Committee, I recommend that a special committee of five be elected to hear the charges and report their findings and recommendations to a special meeting of this General Committee to be held Monday, August 11, 1919, at 8 pm, at 940 Chouteau Avenue.

Signed *W.M. Brandt*,
Secretary.

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Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport

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