
Debate on the Actions of the NEC at the Emergency National Convention of the Socialist Party of America, Chicago — Sept. 4, 1919.

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Sixth Day.

Thursday, September 4, 1919.
10 o'clock am.

Chairman [Jacob] Panken [NY]: He first orders the reading of the minutes.

Comrade [Samuel] Orr [NY]: I move that we dispense with the reading of the minutes.

Adopted.

Chairman Panken: The next order of business is the reading of the supplemental report of the National Executive Committee.

Comrade [James] Oneal [NY]: Said report is as follows:

[report is read]†

On motion the discussion on this report was limited to two hours.

Comrade [Valentine] Bausch [NJ] was elected Chairman of the day and Comrade [John S.] Block [NY] was elected Vice-Chairman.

Comrade [Abraham] Beckerman [NY]: I move that this Convention concur in the action of the National Executive Committee in suspending the foreign federations specified [and] in revoking the charters of the states specified and withholding the referendums specified in this report.

Seconded.

Comrade [Seymour] Stedman [NY]: A point of information.

Chairman Bausch: The Chair is inclined to rule that motion out of order. I believe that you have set aside two hours to discuss this question first pro and con, and I believe after that has been done the motion would be in order.

Comrade Beckerman: I take an appeal from the decision of the Chair. The Chair is mistaken, I believe. There is no such thing as an abstract discussion and then to make a motion when we are through discussing because the motion can be so worded that it will require two more hours discussion on the motion itself. The Chair's decision is opposed to parliamentary procedure.

Chairman Bausch: I believe I am justified in ruling the motion out of order for this reason: You have decided on a 2 hour limit to thrash this matter out, and I believe in doing that. You have dispensed with the regular order of business. You are now going to go into a discussion session on the supplementary report of the committee and I believe it is injustice to everybody here with different opinions on this matter to discuss this thing before we come to any solution in regard to the motion.

On a vote, the chair was not sustained.

Comrade [C.G.] Taylor [MI]: I wish to state that in this case the state of Michigan is very vitally interested in this. Two members of our delegation have found it necessary to go home, leaving the state of

†- There is a gap here in the stenogram for insertion of the text of the report. This document was published in full in the *New York Call* for Sept. 7, 1919, pg. 5 and is available as a free downloadable pdf from www.marxisthistory.org.

Michigan represented by only two delegates. We have a comrade in the convention without credentials that I think, under the circumstances, should be seated, and I so move.

Chairman Bausch: The Chair will declare that motion out of order.

Comrade Beckerman: I don't believe it is very necessary for many comrades to take the floor on this proposition so far as supporting the side of the National Executive Committee. It would require a great deal of argument from the other side for those who would say that the National Executive Committee was not justified in taking the action it did. It is one matter to have Left Wing principles and a desire to make the party grow more to the left in view of the development throughout the world, and another matter to set aside party platforms and party principles, and in doing so not only set aside these platforms and principles but the party itself. Our party meets in convention at varied periods and draws up certain platforms. The platform is sent to a referendum of the membership. If it is approved it becomes the platform of the Socialist Party, and must be subscribed to by every organization within the Socialist Party, and by every member thereof until the platform is changed by the membership of the party. If any member or any organization takes it upon itself or himself to set aside that platform and take the platform out of the Socialist Party, that individual or organization by doing so rules itself automatically out of the Socialist Party. (*Applause.*)

The Socialist Party permits the initiation of any change of platform that anyone thinks is necessary. It permits this thing to go to a referendum vote, and when the membership has decided it becomes the new platform of the Socialist Party. In the case of the foreign federations, they have deliberately set aside the decisions of the National Executive Committee; they have deliberately set aside the party platform and have taken unto themselves a platform out of the Socialist Party before the Socialist Party membership decided to change this platform. In that sense the National Executive Committee was compelled to suspend the federations. I am glad to say that we have in the National Executive Committee a body of men who were strong enough to go through with a proposition like this, and if we had weakness in the NEC, then we would absolutely have no party whatsoever today. (*Ap-*

plause.)

There is no organization of any kind that can exist without bylaws, constitution, and party discipline, and the National Executive Committee that would permit anybody anywhere in the country [to] adopt any platform it wanted and break any rules it saw fit, such a National Executive Committee would be absolutely betraying the Socialist Party, and if it permitted this thing to go on there would be absolutely no party left. I don't care how many states were suspended, and I don't care how many foreign federations were suspended, but if these acts were not done, if the National Executive Committee were not to do what they did, then you would have absolutely nothing left, and you would have no organization in the future; whereas, at the present time, we have a possibility and an opportunity of once again building up our organization on the lines of discipline, constitution, bylaws, and regulations that every organization must have. Now, this convention unanimously decided that the National Executive Committee was correct in setting aside the election. This convention was of the unanimous opinion that they believed that the elections were fraudulent and that the National Executive Committee in this respect was correct in setting aside the elections. I would want to hear the logic on a situation which says on the one hand that the elections were fraudulent, and on the other hand, that the federations that were responsible for these frauds should not be suspended for the frauds that they committed against the membership of the Socialist Party. Take for instance this: "Resolved, that the act of the National Executive Committee in expelling the Socialists of Michigan from the Socialist Party without giving the state a trial or hearing in its own defense..." has been disproved.

Chairman Bausch: Your time is up.

Comrade Charles Solomon [NY]: I want to confess that nothing has been added to the case, as far as I am concerned, by the remarks of Comrade Beckerman. I don't see how any member who wants the supplementary report adopted, can make it any stronger by taking the floor. I want to express my unlimited admiration for the almost judicial genius of the men who drew this report. I consider it a masterpiece. We voted here to consume not more than 2 hours in the discussion of the report. We who want this report adopted can very well afford to give the entire time to

the opposition. I don't see how the opposition can make any argument against the adoption of this report unanimously. (*Applause.*)

Comrade [Henry] Askeli [IL]: I want to protest against limiting the time on this discussion of this report. I want to say that I am not a Left Winger. I haven't taken any part in the organization, but I, nevertheless, have the courage to say — I will agree with the comrade from New York [Solomon] that this is a judicial report, and it is well worded, and it is a good defense of the actions of the NEC — I have the courage to say a few words against this report.

Now, as to the suspension of the federations, they tried to justify those suspensions of the federations. They tried to say that the federations were given a trial. I still maintain that the federations were not given a trial.... Of course, the Translator-Secretaries appeared before the committee, and then they were carefully examined in the presence of the National Executive Committee. Do you call that a fair trial? Every criminal and every crook would be given a trial, or at least time to prepare for a trial, and these comrades were not given time to prepare, and that is a fact. Now, those comrades in the National Executive Committee took at least two weeks' time to prepare.

What was the charges against them? One of the main charges was a letter that the Translators sent to the National Executive Committee. That same letter was presented to myself, but I didn't feel like signing it, because I didn't agree with it. It was foolish, in my judgment. Only the Translator-Secretaries sent it; the federation Executive Committees did not have anything to do in preparing that letter. The federation National Executive Committee and the federation membership should have been consulted before the suspension was put into effect.

Now, in the Michigan case I think that they were not given a trial, and they admit they didn't give [Michigan] a trial. I am in full harmony with the National Executive Committee that Michigan committed a violation of party law, but the judgment on the Michigan state organization was premature. The Michigan Convention adopted an entire reform plan, in their convention, then submitted this proposition to a referendum. The referendum in Michigan ended the 30th of May [1919]; the National Executive Committee, May 26th, 4 days before the ending of the ref-

erendum in Michigan, expelled the state of Michigan because of this entire reform plan. Why act so hasty? Why didn't the National Executive Committee await the time of expiration of that referendum?

There is only 2 hours given for this discussion, and I will yield to other speakers, but I want to say this, that if this action is not condemned we are going to submit a minority proposition and submit that to the membership. Our [Finnish] federation is only a small one. We used to have 15,000 and 10,000 members, and now it is about 5,000, or a little more.

Comrade [John] LaDuca [Italian Federation]: I had made up my mind not to take the floor upon this question, but I changed it again when I heard the statement made by Comrade Askeli. As regards the action of the National Executive Committee in suspending the federations, I have been opposed to it personally and my federation has been opposed to it on the ground that it was to some extent tsaristic and we thought perhaps wrongful; that the whole thing should be thrashed out in this convention. We always [have maintained], myself and my federation, that it was absolutely justified; that it was backed up by common sense and by our constitution. Comrade Askeli's statement that the letter presented by the Translators to the NEC was not an act of the federation, but of the individual Translator, is not true. I personally appeared before the NEC and asked the privilege of the floor, and asked each and every one of the Secretaries present whether this act was their own act or the act of the federation, and they unanimously replied that it was the act of their federation.

Now, then, Comrade Askeli tried to make an impatient appeal of a moral character. He said every crook, criminal, and pickpocket has at least a fair trial. Let me inform Comrade Askeli, as little as I know about judicial proceedings, that every crook, pickpocket, or liar that goes before a court and pleads guilty needs no trial. When he pleads guilty the trial is over. Did these federations plead guilty? I wish that the comrade on the National Executive Committee who makes this report [Oneal] would have included that letter, and then let us find out whether they had any trials. They pleaded guilty in every one of their actions and they opposed that right on the floor of the National Executive Committee meeting. So they pleaded guilty and no more trial is necessary. So [much] for the federa-

tions.

Now, going to the Michigan situation. Michigan also did not have no trial. As a matter of fact, the records of the meeting of the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party reveal this; that [Michigan State Secretary John] Keracher was before the committee, called in haste by some delegate or some good friend; he was asked specifically by Comrade Oneal, speaking for the committee and not for any individual, "Isn't it a fact that this resolution of yours, this new plank of yours, was supported by a majority of the referendum?" Keracher said, "I refuse to give this committee any information." Now, is that a right or is it not a right? Comrade Keracher said further, "That case is closed. You have expelled us. What do you want information for?" That was the implication, perhaps not the exact words. Then Comrade [George] Goebel spoke up and said, "The committee is still meeting. We may revoke our position or may change it. We may revoke the expulsions." And then Keracher said, "I still maintain that I owe you no information." Now, if the referendum didn't break up that [anti-political] resolution [of the Michigan State Convention], why didn't Keracher say so? If the referendum was not closed why didn't he say so? It was a deliberate attempt to challenge the authority of the committee; to challenge the good wishes of the committee to do justice to the state of Michigan. For no other cause, and for this cause only, for the action of the State Secretary alone, for everything that pertains to discipline and good will, he ought to be expelled.

I think I have answered everything that Comrade Askeli has said. I want to put myself on record before this convention, as I said in starting out, that I am opposed to the action of the NEC, for the reason that I have stated, that I earnestly believe that the NEC should have taken more cautious action. They could have, in my judgment, perhaps written to the comrades in Michigan, "See here, you revoke that silly thing you have put in the platform until the [national] convention can meet. Come to our convention and bring it before the convention of the Socialist Party, and then if the membership of the Socialist Party wants it, well and good." They didn't do that. They could have done it. They could have saved a whole lot of trouble by doing it. That is my personal judgment. Perhaps I am wrong but I think I am right. But so far as the action

of the NEC being justified, it is one thousand times justified and then one thousand times again.

Comrade [Rose] Weiss [NJ]: I am utterly opposed to the adoption of this resolution. Through this whole unfortunate controversy many mistakes have been made. The action of the National Executive Committee is, in my opinion, absolutely unwarranted and unconstitutional, and from the standpoint of politics one of the most stupid things that could have been done. For instance, on the first page, they dwell at great length on the action of the [federation Translator-] Secretaries in participating in the [political prisoner] amnesty [movement] and other matters. That was a question of the Secretaries alone. If the Secretaries were guilty they should be punished. But in expelling these thousands of comrades, who have worked hard for the movement and have given their time and their energy, their money, and everything they possess — those comrades have been guilty of nothing. They are condemned because, unfortunately, they have been led by some people who, for their personal ambitions, have seen fit to wreck the Socialist movement and to betray and mislead the people who were their followers.

The National Executive Committees says they regarded their action as temporary, and that the convention itself will decide whether the vote was sufficient. To my mind the only way in which that matter could have been decided was to have not only the reports and the statements of the National Executive Committee, but there should have been given an opportunity to the people who were suspended to come before this convention and lay their case before them. The National Executive Committee presumed to act as a temporary measure. I believe this is a court of final resort. If this court is one of final resort, then the persons whom you are trying should have been brought before this convention.

They say in the last page of the report that the committee did not exclude people with Left Wing tendencies. From the standpoint of politics merely, and I am not going to argue this matter at great length, from a constitutional standpoint, it would have been the course of wisdom to have admitted to the floor of this convention on the very first day all those delegates who came without credentials showing that they were elected by the membership. You would have been perfectly safe; you are in the majority, because these com-

rades number no more than 25 or 30. The comrades sitting here who have voted for the Left Wing, or for the opposition, many of them have been forced into that position by what they regard as the arbitrary action of the majority. Many of these would have voted with the majority had the minority been allowed to come here prepared to present their case.

In the case of the state of Massachusetts the clause accepted [by the membership] does not in my mind or in the mind of anyone who reads the matter carefully, constitute any violation of the constitution. On page 7 there occurs what, in my mind, is a typical example of what Comrade Solomon characterizes as judicial reasoning. It is exactly the sort of reasoning the Supreme Court of any state would have indulged in to differentiate and render a decision in what otherwise would be a clear case of a violation of the law. It says: "The National Executive Committee has the power to grant state charters and has done so in the past." Now, in any court of law, unless that particular charter has been granted by the National Executive Committee, that charter could not be revoked by the National Executive Committee. As to the proposed referendum that the National Executive Committee objected to because it tended to weaken them, the National Executive Committee did not know whether that was done intentionally. It does not appear that they made any effort to find out. It would be the simplest thing in the world to write a letter to the Ohio comrades telling them that this was a violation of a certain section of the constitution, and if you want a referendum you must eliminate this clause. This creates a suspicion in my mind that is not entirely cast aside by this report.

Chairman Bausch: Your time is up.

Comrade [Jacob] Panken [NY]: [*After declaring a point of information.*] On page 2 of the report the last paragraph reads as follows: "We might add that in voting these suspensions we regarded our action as temporary. We provided that the convention should decide whether the evidence was sufficient to justify suspension, and also urged that the language federations have their own representatives at the convention to present their case to the delegates."

Comrade [Fred B.] Chase [NH]: A point of order. A point of information is something that the delegate asks, not that he gives.

Comrade Panken: No, I am asking for it. I am stating a ground for the information. I want to know from the report what has been done to bring the representatives of the language federations to the convention to be heard.

Comrade Oneal: I presume the National Secretary [Adolph Germer] could answer that. I presume nothing has been done for the good reason that it became apparent shortly after the action was taken that the language federations had no desire to come before the convention and present their case, because they frankly stated, as we all reported, that the only reason why they adopted this propaganda within the party was for the purpose of destroying the party and not with the view of getting the case before the convention.

Comrade [William H.] Henry [IN]: I want to speak for what I believe has been the sentiment in our state. When I come to the convention I always like to try to represent my comrades, whether I personally agree in one particular position or not. I have noticed, I think, that a number of comrades from various sections do not attempt at all times to represent what the membership thinks best. Now, I was in favor, from the start, that if these comrades had committed some acts that were unconstitutional, or at least [if] the committee thought so, that this matter ought to be brought before the convention, and let the convention decide the entire matter. In many cases the National Executive Committee or a few comrades may take action like in this case, whether it is justified or not. Presuming that it was not justified, presuming that what he had done was entirely unjustified, the fact remains that these comrades were put out of the party, and that it has naturally disorganized them and caused prejudices and dissensions that could have possibly been eliminated by the convention. I did not hear this supplemental report, I was in the committee meeting. I don't say that the National Executive Committee did not act honest in this convention in thinking it was doing the right thing for the party.

The same thing is true with reference to the referendum business. When I reported my referendum from Indiana I was satisfied there was some work that was not right, but I suggested that the National Executive Committee count the ballot [tally] as I sent them in from the state and report them, and anything

that seemed to be irregular should be brought to the convention, and let the convention decide it. I have been told by a number of comrades of this particular Left Wing group — I am not a member of the Left Wing and never subscribed to the tactics of the Left Wing. I am a Right Winger. I am just simply an International Socialist, as I understand it. (*Applause.*) I don't believe in wings. I want the whole bird, and when I get the whole bird I will get the wings, feathers, and everything that goes with it. But the proposition was this: if the entire matter had been left to the convention, I am satisfied that the convention would thrash it out. As I say, I have been told by a number of comrades that they would be glad, and would have insisted on some of this rottenness that they knew was rotten work in the referendum, being straightened out in this convention. And I believe it could be straightened out in the convention.

It is true that there are some of our members, or ex-members, rather, of the Left Wing fashion, and they did take action that I think was thoroughly unconstitutional, action that I was not satisfied with at all. But in my state the State Executive Committee and myself as State Secretary, felt that if we stayed out of the fight in the state organization and we followed the dictation of the National Executive Committee, the best we could hope was that the entire matter would be straightened out in the convention. We refused to get mixed up in it. We did not like the comrades in Ohio or some other state that had state papers to get together and use their state papers to sway the membership in any one particular direction, which I think was a great mistake on the part of the comrades who had that particular power at the time — and that was what caused all this trouble.

You will remember the fact that we haven't had a convention for so long that there have been many changes in the general development of things the world over, and we could not wait until the convention met to make decisions. I don't want the National Executive Committee to have too much power, to revoke charters and to put fellows out of the organization and disorganize things, until the convention or the rank and file have a chance to decide what is or what is not to be done. In our state we would never do that. We always leave it to the convention and the rank and file.

Comrade [Adolph] Dreifuss [German Federa-

tion]: I want to say at the outset that I am not a Left Winger and intend to stick to the party even if every member of the German Federation will get out of the party. I don't care. But let me tell you that the National Executive Committee made the biggest mistake of its whole term by acting the way it did in this crisis. It is true that it might be a judicial report but I don't think that we should render a judicial report for a Socialist report. The members of our party are not guilty; they are not loyal; they are just common workers, and by the act of the National Executive Committee they are driven away from the party. You have by this act not only driven away the foreign federations, members of foreign federations, but English branches just as well. They say and they repeatedly say, that everyone has a right to his opinion, and every member of the party has a right to an opinion, and in a convention assembled you can decide which way you want to vote.

Now, of course, you say they put themselves out. They are out of the party and with the Left Wing program. They put themselves out of the party by acting, for instances, as the Michigan comrades acted. That is just where I differ from the comrades in treating these comrades that way. They might have endorsed the Left Wing program with the intention of coming here and fighting for the Left Wing program. They had the intention of bringing us to a decision here. Instead of saying [they] "endorse" they [said] "we adopt" [the Left Wing program]. They are not lawyers, as I said, and the members in the country didn't know, they never knew why they were expelled. Here are the leaders of the different factions, leaders of the different federations, and [the members] are told, "You are expelled because you differ with the National Executive Committee." It was the poorest thing that I ever saw. Nobody could get wise on it. Nobody knew what they meant by this letter that was sent out — [that] everyone that did not agree with the National Executive Committee would simply be thrown out, if they had the power to throw them out. Of course, they couldn't throw out the whole party, but they threw out whomever they could throw out.

I say, even the constitution is not clear on that point, and even if the constitution had been clear, they should have given the membership a chance to express themselves. To the devil with the Translator-Secretar-

ies — they are not the membership! To the devil with the State Secretaries of Minnesota and Michigan and anywhere else — they are not the membership! Therefore, the National Executive Committee should have said, if they had the power to do so, “This is what you did against the spirit and the wording of the constitution. Now, we give you a certain time limit, within 2 weeks or 3 weeks, to put this question up to your membership, and if your membership oppose you, then we know where the membership stands and then we can expel them.” But not upon the word of a man. This whole trouble within the Socialist Party could have been prevented. It is all right to say that the National Executive Committee was absolutely correct, but the membership has a different following and [after] we have taken this following into consideration, then after this convention we could go out and could say: “Now, here, this is the work of the Socialist Party. Stick to the Socialist Party because everyone did get a fair trial, and a comrade’s trial and a Socialist trial, an not a judicial trial.”

Comrade [George J.] Peck [IA]: I came here for information, whether the Left Wing was right or the National Executive Committee was right. The information that I have got since I have been here looks very much like the Left Wingers are wrong. It looks like they bolted the convention. They never offered to bring in any evidence at this convention to show that they were in the right. The report that we have got from the National Executive Committee shows that what action they took they took merely for the purpose of keeping the organization together. Now, if the Left Wingers had gotten in here and you would have allowed all states to be represented, I actually believe that your convention here would have broken up and we would have no organization, for the simple reason that the Left Wingers show on their face since we started this convention that they have been trying in various ways to break up the organization.

In my state as a whole I don’t know whether we have any controversy. One of our delegates, a personal friend of mine, is sitting here today as a visitor. I never made any protest for him to be seated because I really thought he wasn’t entitled to a seat here — and he is not a Left Winger either. He is a real American Socialist and wants to be with the Socialist Party. I never made any kick for him to be seated for the reason that

I didn’t believe he was entitled to be seated, and I voted for some others to be seated in which there was probably some doubt in my mind, but I would like to have seen the Left Wingers seated here and bring in their evidence and their report and show us whether they were innocent or whether they were guilty. Now, to take it as it is, I believe the National Executive Committee should be upheld in the stand they took because I believe they did it for the purpose of keeping the organization together, and I don’t see any reason why we should take any other action only to accept their report.

Comrade [William] Kruse [IL]: I find myself in hearty agreement with Comrade Solomon of New York when he said it was entirely unnecessary for those who want to uphold the action of the National Executive Committee to take the floor. I think he is right. I know what the vote on this question is to be. I believe we knew that on the first day of the convention. We know where we stand pretty well. I don’t think there should be 2 hours spent on this discussion. I feel that this report and this motion should not be adopted; at least without some reservation. I believe it will be adopted without any reservation. I don’t doubt for one moment that the National Executive Committee had a legal right under the party constitution, and especially under that interpretation of the party constitution, to do just exactly what they did. But I do doubt very seriously their wisdom in taking their action in the drastic form in which they took it. I believe the NEC was very unwise in taking this drastic action because by taking that stand they confused the issue. The national membership wanted a National Emergency Convention for the purpose of getting clear on principles, and not on personality, but by taking the action which you did, you put the whole matter on a personal basis, and the question came as to whether one delegate made the right kind of motion or another make the right kind of speech. If we could have had a convention here and have a hearing on the question of which principle was right, the principle of the Left Wing, the principle of the Center, or the principle of the extreme Right, I believe that this would have been a thoroughly worthwhile convention in every way, and a split would not have occurred the way it did. I am convinced of that. But as it is, this convention amounts more or less to a Right Wing caucus

and the other convention amounts to more or less a Left Wing caucus, and that is all we have today. And when you holler about their bolting the convention, I think the responsibility must be centered in two places and not one.

It is impossible in any speech of 5 minutes to cover all the points of the report. As to the referendum, if the referendum was irregular, it was the duty of the Secretary right then and there to tell them that it was irregular.

You talk about a fair trial. Who was the prosecutor in that trial? The National Executive Committee. Who was the jury in that trial? The National Executive Committee. Who was the judge in that trial? The National Executive Committee. And who was the executioner? The National Executive Committee. (*Applause.*) I don't care a hand whether the action was legally justified or not. I feel, for the sake of the party, and by party I don't mean this little body of delegates here, for the sake of those thousands of Jimmy Higgenses who are just a little bit in the muddle on this question, that you have contributed to that muddle by your arbitrary and drastic actions. I want to ask on behalf of those thousands of Jimmy Higgenses out there that you give them a fair and square deal, and solve this question of principle.

I didn't bolt this convention. I don't intend to. I will stick here and I will stick to the party to make the party what I think it ought to be. (*Applause.*) But, comrades, I want to say that there are a great many members who really think very much as I do, and many of the comrades are going to be misled by the expressions induced by such unwise action as the National Executive Committee has been guilty of. I feel you should have left the doors open to these federations to come back if they wanted to come back. Don't convict them before they get a hearing. Don't say they have gone with the other crowd. There are thousands of comrades just as true as any of those in any of the organized branches. Don't forget that. There are thousands of comrades who stand just as true to the principles of sane Socialism, just as true to the principles as we are going to espouse here today. There are thousands of those comrades that want to be in the party, but if you persist in putting up such an attitude they must take their stand on a question of principle, but they will not take their stand on the question of

whether you did right or not.

Comrade Panken: I am glad that Comrade Kruse has put the proposition before us on a question of principle, and that is just how this matter ought to be disposed of by this convention. It is not a question of any technical provision of the constitution. It is not a question of a judicially prepared report upon which you are to act. It is not a question of a lawyerlike construction upon a proposition that ought to control this convention. The question that you ought to determine is, what were the real issues in the case before us? That is the question, and I am glad that Henry and Kruse and the other members, who did not agree with the report of the National Executive Committee, have stated to this convention that the National Executive Committee had every justification for their act, for the expulsion and suspension of the states and the language federations.

But they say that it was an unwise act; that it wasn't good policy; that it wasn't good tactics to do that. What happened in the party? There was a difference of opinion. Comrades on the one hand and comrades on the other had come to the conclusion that there ought to be a revision in the policy of the party and in the program of the party. Some comrades went to a certain extent; other comrades went further than that crowd of comrades. They went to the extreme. Now, you are to judge the action of the National Executive Committee from just that viewpoint and that viewpoint only.

What are the facts? If you want to know what the facts were, you have got to inquire as to what the facts are. And what are the facts? When these language federations were suspended from the party, did they make any attempt to remain within the party? Did they make any attempt to plan to come before the National Convention and present the National Convention their point of view? No. Several language federations sounded a call for another party — for the organization of the Communist Party. When [Joseph] Coldwell came into this convention and he took the position with the extreme Left, and he bolted the convention, even before the Committee on Contests had made its report, I spoke to him afterwards. He said the reason he had bolted was because he didn't want the report of the National Executive Committee to be acted upon before the Committee on Contests should

report. I pointed out to him, even before the Committee on Contests reported, and after the convention asked for the National Executive Committee report, and had it ready before this convention — he told me that he had made a mistake and that he had gone downstairs to the Left Wing, and I am informed today that yesterday he left the convention of the Left Wing organization, and on the floor of that convention he said that he won't tie up with a crowd of anarchists. His position is to remain with the Socialist Party. If they are not Socialists they should not be here — they are not Socialists. They have organized a Communist Party. They have organized a non-political organization, and they have no place in the Socialist meeting.

Comrade [Federick] Haller [MD]: The membership of the party in Maryland, to a very large extent, entertains that feeling. It was based, of course, on insufficient information. It was based upon information that trickled through in language that was vile — circulars and papers that had teeth and claws, bloody teeth and bloody claws in it. So strong was my sympathy and my feeling in the matter that it must have emanated from some of the members down below. I have heard this report. While I haven't changed my mind on that subject, I have come to the conclusion that the only thing we can do and the thing we must do, is to sustain the action of the National Executive Committee. (*Applause.*)

Now, as to the constitution, if we had no constitution, every organization has an inherent right to protect itself and save itself from destruction. (*Applause.*) And in the absence of the organization, its representative, its National Executive Committee, must carry out its will. We are all going to agree, I think, or practically all agree, that we must support that which the National Executive Committee has done, that these language branches and state branches had ridden themselves out of the party.

The question comes up, raised by Comrade Askei, as to whether it was down in legal form. Of course, in such a matter as that, lawyers, I take it — take me, a lawyer — we lawyers are apt to lose sight of the substance in following the manner of procedure. We are apt to think there should have been a Bill of Complaint, an Answer, a Reply, Rebuttal, and Sur-Rebuttal, and that when we came to a hearing that there

should be rules of evidence, and so forth. There is hardly ever a case when a man is accused of something, but what he knows what he is accused of. These people know what they were accused of. It is necessary, of course, it is fair, generally, to give notice, even when they know — but there is no claim made here that the language federations and the states don't know what they are accused of. There is no claim made that they didn't know the interpretation, and the only interpretation, that could be put upon the sections of the constitution upon which the accusations were made. They didn't claim that they had a defense. There is no claim made on that point, or on that score at all. So that you might say, and justly say, that the judgment against them stands by confession.

Sweeping aside all matter of procedure, the substance of the matter is that they violated the constitution of the party. They went forth for the purpose of disrupting the party, honest in their opinion and honest in their conviction, thinking the party no longer stood for what they thought. They went forth to do that, and they knew what the consequences would be. Of course, our membership is wrought up by this subject in Maryland, as they are in other places; and, if we say that the National Executive Committee in some instances indulged in rough shoeing, the same thing can be said of the others. There was rough shoe methods on both sides of the matter; still we have no right to condemn one any more than the other. It seems to me that if the constitution means as I have stated, you have got to endorse the action of the National Executive Committee. One comrade today said to me that was his view of it, but he said he is going to go home and tell his constituents that we gave the National Committee hell.

Comrade [Lauri] Moilanen [OR]: I think the National Executive Committee is really trying to do its best to conserve the party. I don't question the honesty of the committee. But I question the wisdom of the action they took in suspending the language federations and the Michigan organization. Now, take the state of Michigan, for instance. There is always some local or group of individuals, rather, who cause trouble to the party, and who violate the party constitution and principles. The National Executive Committee, in suspending the entire state all at once, also suspended those locals that did not stand for the illegal actions of

these groups that I have mentioned. I am sure that these different leaders in the Left Wing movement that were not honestly trying to convert these members of the party to their views would have left if that unfortunate action of the National Executive Committee had not been taken.

Now, I feel that mass expulsion like that is a very serious thing. It is easy to say, "Expulsion." It is easy to say, "If you don't conform to my views, get out." And we will organize another party. That sounds fine, but when you have expelled the locals that I have been speaking about, you will find out how hard it is. Members who worked conscientiously for the advancement of the Socialist movement feel that this action leads to nowhere. I feel that the National Executive Committee should have informed the language federations most carefully and in as many details as possible, of the action taken by their leaders, and then the language federations could have considered the issue, they could have passed on them, and then it would have been a comparatively easy matter to see just where they were. It could have been very easy, and I am sure that these radical leaders, or anarchist leaders, as some call them, would have been left out in the cold. The rank and file of the suspended language federations really should have no other thought than that of advocating certain conditions resulting from a peculiar situation.

The feeling of the Oregon locals is against the party simply because of the position of the National Executive Committee. Up to that time we didn't know very much about the Left Wing in the West. They tried to conform to the party constitution and rules and regulations laid down by the convention, and also by the National Executive Committee, but in this matter practically all the locals in the West have taken a positive stand, that the National Executive Committee was too hasty in expelling the federations.

On motion, the convention adjourned until 2 o'clock.

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Thursday, September 4, 1919.
2 o'clock pm.

Convention called to order by Chairman Bausch.

Comrade [Peter] Kastoff [MA]: The speakers so far have stated that the action of the National Executive Committee was not proper, and hasty. I would confine myself to the case of the state of Massachusetts. In the case of the state of Massachusetts, and in many other states, if the National Executive Committee didn't take the action that they did take, we wouldn't have had this convention, for the simple reason that in the Massachusetts State Convention, the Left Wing, or a majority of the Russian Federations, adopted the Left Wing program and also elected 2 delegates to the Left Wing Convention [New York: June 21-24, 1919]. In order to clear that point, the Russian Federations last year increased their membership a great deal more than the English speaking branches... [T]he State Secretary [took action towards] most of the English speaking branches of the state, knowing where they stood, [and withheld] the referendum. For instance, the American branch of the city of Springfield was never sent the ballot with which to vote, but we had to borrow our ballots from the Jewish branch and the Finnish branch. In [such] cases their aim was to disrupt the movement, and also to organize a Communist Party in the state — and that they did. Therefore, I think the action of the National Executive Committee was justifiable.

Comrade [Oliver C.] Wilson of Illinois: I move as an amendment to the motion that it is the sense of this convention that the supplemental report of the National Executive Committee be received; that the convention concurs that the administration of discipline is necessary and justified; [and feels] that had the National Executive Committee made sufficient effort to acquaint the membership of the suspended and expelled organization with the facts and endeavored to have them repudiate their officials, that many of the members now outside of the party would have remained in; and that the state organizations be permitted to re-charter branches of the suspended federations whose members are willing to abide by the platform and constitution of the Socialist Party.

Seconded.

Comrade Wilson: It seems to me that the acts of the past are of the past. It is not going to do very much good to fight about whether the National Executive Committee had too much or too little wisdom. I think, after everything has been said and all

the facts that have been developed here, that everybody realizes that something had to be done. You can't have an organization unless you have discipline, and, if you don't have discipline, if one fellow wants to do one thing and some other fellow something else, you might just as well go out of business. From the time that this thing happened, I felt that the committee took the best course for the good of the party that could have been taken, but the fact is that it took a certain course, and we are in a certain position, and I am more interested now in getting the party back on its feet, and in getting those into the party that want in the party. I am not doing something here that may place obstacles in the road of rebuilding the organization. I want, in other words, to remove as far as possible every misunderstanding and to have this convention make the best possible record before the convention, because in the next 60 days you are going to have the fight of your life to put this movement on its feet again and make it what it ought to be.

When the Constitution Committee reports, they will report certain changes, one of which will make conditions of this kind impossible in the future, if it is adopted. And after all, I blame the St. Louis arrangement practically abolishing National Conventions and centering power in the hands of a few men who have nobody to consult with, and who have to act, or there would be no action taken. I blame the system that was adopted in our last [convention] more for this trouble — the expulsions or suspensions I referred to — than anything else. But I think, if this amendment or something similar to this is adopted, when we go back to our people it is going to be easy to justify the actions of this convention as compared with the rump Left Wing/Communist Labor Party Convention, of the people that bolted out of here, or the so-called Communist Party that is now meeting at 1221 Blue Island Avenue. I don't see why any of us should put in any of our two-by-four ideas, or our personalities, between the organization and its welfare, but that is what is going to happen if any of you people on either side of this discussion don't take the right attitude.

Comrade [Joseph] Bearak [MA]: I just want to speak regarding the state of Massachusetts. The question this morning has been raised as to why the Na-

tional Executive Committee was in such a hurry. With respect to the state of Massachusetts, our convention was held May 30, 31, and June 1st [1919]. At that convention delegates were elected to the Left Wing Convention to be held in New York on June 16.† At that [state] convention a resolution was passed that no resolution, constitution, platform, or anything else be sent to referendum; but that instead mimeograph copies [be] sent out to the locals, and the same to be translated into Jewish [Yiddish] and Finnish, and distributed throughout the state, so that the membership could read it.

I want to say one more thing, that 48 Finnish comrades sent a protest against the adoption of the Left Wing manifesto, as it was adopted. A motion was made to adopt it, and a comrade asked for the floor to amend one of the paragraphs. Here is the resolution; in the official minutes printed in the official paper of June 10 you will find a protest signed by the 48 Finnish delegates who were there at the convention. Now, here is the situation: They refused to give us the right to discuss the Left Wing manifesto. We had no right to vote upon it. They adopted it. That very convention decided what should go to referendum and what should not. They passed a motion, and instead of a referendum, it was mimeographed and sent out to the members merely for information.

Now I say that those of us who want to remain in the Socialist Party, if we did not back up the action of the NEC, had the National Executive Committee not acted as they did, Massachusetts today would not have been at this conventions, and we simply won't be represented in the Left Wing. But what did you do? Soon after the National Executive Committee expelled the state they didn't wait but came to this convention and held a contest upon delegates. They immediately called a state convention and [some] bolted out of the convention and they find themselves in the Communist Party. One local in Worcester, which was the so-called Left Wing, came back into the regular party.

I want to say that the National Executive Committee did the only proper thing in order to maintain the membership. Had not the National Executive Committee taken the stand it did, certain branches would have left the party anyway. Comrade Kostoff

†- The National Conference of the Left Wing was actually held in New York from June 21-24, 1919.

represented Springfield at the convention; he left. My branch was ruled from the convention. And if the National Executive Committee had allowed the Socialist Party of Massachusetts to change itself into a Communist Party, we would have been not where we are today. I say to you that the action of the National Executive Committee regarding Massachusetts was absolutely justified, taking into consideration the acts done at the Massachusetts Convention held last May and June.

Comrade [Daniel] Hoan [WI]: I want to say a few words against the amendment offered by Comrade Wilson, that the doors now be left wide open for taking back into the Socialist Party the men and women who have attempted to stab the party in the back under the plea that they now will accept the platform of the party. It must be understood that we have unanimously declared that a certain bunch of people so corrupted the ballot and the vote of our comrades as to vitiate the entire referendum of this party. We have gone on record as saying that the entire referendum be set aside, because of the crooked work of the alleged Socialists. Some of us have heard that at the convention of the Left Wing yesterday they have taken off the camouflage of being Socialists. They have voted out political action. They stand now clearly before you for just what they are — Anarchists.

We should not throw open the gate to the men who will come before you and say, “We are Socialists, we accept your platform,” and then proceed to stab you in the back at every turn in the road. This is the danger that confronts us. They have gone to the comrades and they have lied. They have come to us here with their proclamations and they have lied. For what purpose? Are we now to take these men in for any good purpose? It is our business to go back to the rank and file and tell them the truth. We should make a finding of fact summed up as follows: “That a conspiracy of crooks, spies, and anarchists exists for the purpose of misleading the rank and file, and of corrupting and wrecking the party. Is there anyone here that can deny it? (*Cries of “Yes!”*)”

Comrade Weiss: Yes.

Comrade Hoan: The convention downstairs has gone on record for anarchy, and you can’t deny it. If these people put their heads together and say, “We are going to lie to all the rest of the comrades until we

control this party, and then we will run it to suit ourselves and to wreck it,” it is for you who have come here to look the facts in the face and to send back to the comrades exactly what the facts are, [to declare] that a conspiracy of crooks, anarchists, and spies have set out to wreck this party. (*Applause.*) That is the truth.

Your second fact of finding should be that, if these federations and states had not been suspended, the purpose of this conspiracy in wrecking the party would have been attained. Is there anybody that disbelieves that, when they know that these men came on the floor of this convention and intended by disorder and loud noise and everything else, to take possession, and to call in the police officers of Chicago to see that only delegates properly accredited here could be admitted?

Your third finding of fact is that, because of this, and because of the admitted fact, no further trial [of the suspended federations or states] was necessary or wise. We therefore commend the stand of the National Executive Committee, and I therefore offer that as an amendment to the original motion, to proceed, and the findings of fact to be received. I hope we are not going to be led by soft words and soft soap and inveigling facts.

Comrade [Abraham] Shiplacoff [NY]: In the first place, I want to deny that the judicial report of the action of the committee was strictly a “Jew-dicial” report because I was the only Jew on the committee. I want to say, comrades, that the fundamental error of those that want to condemn us — and where did you ever see and Executive Committee, or any kind of committee, that did the dirty work of any movement that wasn’t condemned? — especially you [who] have looked upon our act as a punitive act, whereas it wasn’t the intention of any of the members of the National Executive Committee, so far as I know, to punish anybody. (*Applause.*) It was purely an administrative act for expediency, and to save, if possible, a dangerous condition in the movement, and nothing else. (*Applause.*) Now I want to ask those who are so charitable toward us to bear that in mind, and forget that there was any intention of punishing anybody. Examine the facts carefully and you will find we never intended to do anything of the kind.

I will admit there was a certain amount of prejudice due to a great many conditions brought about by

these people. I came from Kings County. What did they do with me, for instance, and the rest of us there? When we pleaded with the [county] convention to let us discuss the [Left Wing] manifesto, which contained a very revolutionary clause, a young fellow, who, by the way, enlisted in the navy — he wasn't drafted but enlisted — he said, "Take it as you can." I don't know that the word conspiracy can be used, but I don't know what other term you can use for that sort of persistent and consistent method that has been used everywhere to browbeat Socialists that have participated in the movement for years and years. By whom? By 52,000 Russian comrades that just entered the movement within the first 16 months, if you please, of the second Russian Revolution. They stayed out of the movement and they came in only recently.

With all these things, I will admit that possibly it wasn't absolutely the judicial thing that could be done, but I haven't heard from any of the comrades any suggestion as to what could have been done to save the situation, so that these people won't bring their Communist Convention over here and scatter us all over the world. That is the question. We were very careful. I remember having asked Comrade [Joseph] Stilson [of the Lithuanian Federation], and the rest of the Secretaries who came there — there were 6 or 7 of them, Polish, Lithuanian, and the others — do you people speak in the name of your organization? Are you authorized to do it? Does Stilson have the right to speak? Yes? Do you want a stenographer? Yes. All right. We postponed action and secured a stenographer so that [Stilson] would have a full chance to do his work; for two days he was on the floor, and occupied most of the time of the session. He was given all possible opportunity to express his views, and he stated pretty good reasons at the time. I call your attention to the fact that the constitution says: "That no state and/or local organization shall under any circumstances fuse, combine, or compromise with any other political party or organization," if you please — not merely a political party, but an organization.

In conclusion, I want to say that I am willing to accept the amendment. I am perfectly willing to stand for myself. I am not speaking in the name of the committee, but speaking for myself. I am perfectly willing to let you people even make goats of the members of the National Executive Committee if you think that

you can save things. But I want to tell you that, so far as these elements are concerned, men like [Louis] Fraina, Stilson, and John Reed (who supported Woodrow Wilson) — men of that type you will never get into the movement without endangering it.

Comrade Brown [TN]: I didn't come here on the first day to play politics, and I am not going to play them today. I took the position before I came here, and I want to repeat it, that it was a mighty good thing for the Socialist Party that we have men on the Executive Committee who had backbone. If we didn't have that caliber of men, we would not be sitting here today (*applause*) and we might as well make up our minds to that. I want to say this: I know some of the comrades that are taking this position. I have all the confidence in the world in their sincerity, and I believe in their honesty. I believe they are doing what they think is good for the movement, but I certainly do thank God that it wasn't you kind of people that were on the Executive Committee when the crisis came on. And I hope we will be out of this crisis after a while. And I sincerely trust, when the new committee is elected, it will have people on it who have got the courage to say yes or no.

I am not here to throw people out of the window, to play politics, or to make a goat of people. I am here to say, "Were those people right or were they wrong?" So far as I am concerned, I have had information enough to justify myself in believing, to prove conclusively without any doubt, that they were right. It was the only thing that they could do. I have heard some people who possibly are now going to try to make goats out of them, saying that they were right. You are not going to help the party at all by attempting to condemn the Executive Committee. You are not going to help the party at all to go back into your districts and attempt to say that the Executive Committee didn't do the right thing.

One comrade state it was our hope that we could come here before everybody, have [L.E.] Katterfeld, Fraina, and all the rest, and lay the matter before the entire convention, and have a complete hearing of the whole proposition. In the first place, there was a very goodly sized crowd who made no attempt to come here, nor wouldn't come here if they had a chance. In the second place, I want to say this, that if that crowd whom we are talking about had been in control of this

convention, the reports of your committee would have never been allowed to be made in this convention. They would not have allowed it. They would not want to see their dirty work exposed before this Socialist convention. For that reason, I am in favor of the original motion.

Comrades, let us stand up, don't let's play favorites. Don't let's dodge any issue. Let's stand up for what we think is right and what we think is wrong. Let's have the courage to go back home and tell our people what we honestly believed as right and what we believed as wrong. Don't attempt to go back there and mislead them. Tell them that the Executive Committee was right, and I honestly believe that, precluding one or two things, it was right. Don't go back there and attempt to mix the issue. You will only create confusion and you will have this fight continuing for god knows how long. But, leave this convention and go back home and tell your people exactly what you think is honest, what you think is right, and what you think is true. If you do that, you will have a movement, but you will never have a movement by attempting to straddle this question.

Comrade [Louis] Engdahl [IL]: I don't think there is any reason to get excited. The mayor of Milwaukee [Dan Hoan] got excited, and everybody became anarchists all of a sudden once more. I don't think you can take 30 or 35,000 comrades, who have belonged to the Socialist Party for a long time, and all of a sudden classify them into a group of anarchists.

Comrade: The leaders.

Comrade Engdahl: Their leaders may be anarchists, some of them, but it is the membership we are after. It is the 30 or 35,000 comrades that we have to reach. Those are the ones we are trying to reach with this amendment, because, in spite of the conditions and other differences in the Socialist Party, and between the other organization that has split away, we have to carry on our struggle to reach the great membership of the working class. When these expulsions took place, when these suspensions took place, I could not believe that all of these comrades ought to be thrown out of the party. I come from a section of the city of Chicago where we have practically a branch of all the different organizations in the expelled federations. All of those organizations have members in my part of the city, and I went out and I talked to these

different comrades. I said, "What do you think about it? Why stand behind the officials of your federations? Is this the position that you are taking?" And I told them I didn't think that that was they position they should or had taken, the position that had been passed up to the National Executive Committee, because I know that those comrades in every political campaign had contributed from their pockets whatever they could, they had gone on and distributed literature on election day, they had stood at the polling places all day long in the effort to roll up a victorious vote for the Socialist Party.

And I tried to get all the information I could, with the result that in the Polish Federation, for instance, they told us that the Translator-Secretary was merely a temporary officer, that the Executive Committee in the federation was in disagreement with the position taken by the Translator-Secretary, and that they would hope that the National Executive Committee could at least have waited long enough until they could have elected a new Translator-Secretary. Here in the city of Chicago we discussed the matter with the Executive Committee of the Slovak Federation and, after discussing with them, we found or at least I found that there was some disagreement among the Executive Committee of this federation. So, I could not help but come to the conclusion that the National Executive Committee would have done well to have gone over the heads of the Translator-Secretaries of these federations to find out where they stood, but, I feel, comrades, that this action has been taken.

What we are trying to do now is not to look at the past. We are trying to build for the future. I am not afraid that, in this crisis, any anarchists are going to come into the Socialist Party. I am not afraid that the anarchists are going to capture or try to capture the Socialist Party now, when they have such an excellent opportunity to capture the Communist Party or the Communist Labor Party. But, I ask of you, and I think that every opportunity ought to be given to the comrades who want to come into the Socialist Party and take their places with the rest of us.

Even before these expulsions and suspensions took place, there were branches of these different language federations which had already broken away. Here in Chicago, even in the Russian Federation, we had a branch that had broken away from their federation

because of the position that the officials of those federations had taken. I feel that there are dislocated branches of these different organizations and, from the news I got from the other convention, there will be even isolated branches of your English organizations that will hesitate for some time before they can sit down and find out where they really stand. I say that the amendment is not throwing open the doors too far for anyone; the amendment shouldn't be to throw open the doors too far for anyone in this convention. I say, by adopting the amendment, we will get all the real Socialists in the United States (*applause*) together under the banner of International Socialism. (*Applause.*)

Comrade [Patrick] Quinlan [NJ]: I think, when the matter was discussed a while ago, Comrades Panken and Solomon referred to the question of principles, and that it was not an individual matter. If you will go back to the time when the trouble originally arose, and it will be about the adoption of the St. Louis platform and the reception it got back home in some of the states and cities, it was because the St. Louis platform was shot full of holes by some of the delegates here that the trouble developed in some states and some federations, and some not many miles from the city of New York. Admitting there was one law for the comrades in New York, and one law for the comrades in other states, the different comrades who made up the federations, the comrades who made up what I call a lunatic branch, led by Comrade Fraina, they considered that they, too, would take the law into their own hands, because we took the law into our own hands to ignore the party discipline and the St. Louis platform and we shot it full of holes — and no one here can deny it — and that is the cause of all the trouble.

Now, frankly, I don't believe in politics. If the National Executive Committee is right, let it be right and let us endorse it. But, I ask those who would support the National Executive Committee and thereby condemn the federations, should do so provided their own hands are clean. If you knew the position in New York, with reference to the Left Wing, you wouldn't waste time talking. They are just a bunch of lunatics to make trouble. They don't believe in political action.

† - Berger apparently here indicates that under strict parliamentary procedure the only way to amend a standing amendment on the floor was to defeat it and propose a new amendment in its wake. This does not seem to have actually been this case at this convention, which apparently allowed one amendment to an amendment.

I wouldn't consider the Left Wing. I haven't considered it. I know it too well in New Jersey and in New York. The point to consider is, shall you adopt the report as it is, or adopt it with reservations? ... I believe it should be changed, and give us a chance to sustain the committee and at the same time tell them they did wrong and acted hastily. (*Applause.*)

Chairman Bausch: The 2 hours have closed now. (*Applause.*) Comrade Oneal will speak for the committee in closing the debate.

Comrade Victerson: A point of information. On page 9, attacking the resolution of the state of Ohio, there is this resolution among them: "Resolved, that the action of the National Executive Committee in preparing to place the property of the Socialist Party in the hands of a board of directors, 3 to be elected for 3 years, 3 for 6 years, and 3 for 9 years, these directors not being subject to recall either by the National Executive Committee or the membership of the Party, be reversed and rescinded." Now, the National Executive Committee has nothing whatever to say about this resolution. I would like to hear what they have to say about this.

Comrade Pankin: A point of information. The amendment before the house that Wilson has made may be acceptable to a great many of the delegates provided there is a change that can be made thereto. Is there any way of presenting that change to the convention? (*Cries of "No!"*)

A comrade: A point of order. The Chairman should look over in this direction once in a while.

Comrade [Henry] Schlegel [PA]: A point of personal privilege. Pennsylvania has not occupied much of the time. I feel inclined that they should have an opportunity to be heard on this question, one of our speakers especially. We have been between the barrage of New Jersey and New York long enough. Let Pennsylvania have a little to say.

Chairman Bausch: Comrade Oneal will report for the committee.

Comrade Pankin: Will you read that? I want to know whereby we can make some change in that amendment.

Comrade Berger: Vote it down. †

Comrade Bausch: I don't suppose we are all parliamentarians. I believe, if Wilson will get together with you on this proposition, and the comrade who seconded the amendment agrees with it and accepts it, OK.

Comrade Pankin: I spoke to Comrade Wilson before I asked the question, otherwise I wouldn't have asked it. Wilson has agreed to accept a modification of the resolution.

Chairman Bausch: All right, you submit it.

Comrade Pankin: If you read the resolution, I have a substitute for a portion.

The Secretary read the amendment of Comrade Wilson.

Comrade Pankin: In place of the last paragraph, Comrade Wilson agrees to accept the following: "that the incoming National Executive Committee shall reorganize the language federations."

Comrade [Andrew] Lafin [ILL]: There is no provision in your national constitution for the National Executive Committee to organize any federation. That is purely a function of the state.

Comrade Oneal: The entire discussion on both sides here this afternoon resolved itself into a question as to whether the National Executive Committee acted wisely as it did, or whether it could have taken some action more wisely. Now, after all, that's a mere matter of opinion. No human being can possibly tell what would have been the result if we had simply closed our eyes to gross infractions and violations of the constitution, and let all the various elements come into the convention and then tell what would happen. Nobody on earth can tell. It is easy enough for comrades to come into the convention after results are apparent, and then to predict that, had some other course been taken, the result would have been otherwise. It is a mere matter of opinion and, from the very nature of the case, can be nothing else.

Now, I went through this. There wasn't a single member of the committee, when he came to face this situation, and especially when it came to the time for us to vote, there wasn't one of us but what felt sick at heart at the entire situation that was presented to us. I know what membership in the socialist movement means to comrades who give their lives to the movement. Many of the comrades in the language federations, and many of the comrades in the other organi-

zation, have been in the movement for years, some of them only a few years, but they deeply feel and deeply value their membership in the organization. I don't know of any worse penalty that you can impose upon me than to have me face a branch or the executives of the party in any capacity upon charges of deliberately throwing you out of the party. I don't know but what I would rather go to jail or to the penitentiary than to suffer a condition of that sort. And just because we felt that situation, that here were thousands and thousands of comrades, yet we were placed in a position where we had to face it, and if we didn't face it, the fight would have come from the other side, and you know that it would. (*Applause.*)

Now, there was the question; it was a question as to which side was to do the fighting, and not whether we wanted to avoid any fighting at all. You all want to recognize this, that the Executive Committee wanted to conserve the party at the most trying period in all the history of the Socialist Party. And I assure you here this afternoon, after my experience upon the Executive Committee, that you will never again get me on the Executive Committee, and particularly if we are facing a war. And I feel sorry for the comrades who are going to take our place for, in all probability, before their term is ended, they will have my pity.

Now, that is the situation? We were placed in an impossible situation, and it was impossible for us to satisfy all, and we had to act, and we had to take this action. The thing, as I say, that mad us so utterly sick at heart was to thing that we had to take a position whereby many of the comrades were at least put out of the party temporarily until this convention met. That's the entire situation. I regret that there was the innuendo and the covert suggestion that it was politics, and so on. Comrade Kruse has been particularly offensive along that line on quite a number of question that he has talked upon before the convention, and particularly in this case. Comrades., I have never been a politician in the movement, and I hope I never will. I haven't tried to follow politics. I have tried to follow principles. I have tried as best as possible, and I am sure the other members of the committee have, to follow out your rules and your regulations laid down in the constitution.

I am perfectly willing to assume that we have made mistakes here and there, but that is possible with

any kind of executive committee. An, I will tell you that you have selected 10 or 15 of the best informed men in the socialist movement in the world. Not even Lenin and Trotsky would have been able to satisfy the comrades in the United States during this period. There are comrades in Russia who are all right and have been talking for months about Lenin and Trotsky being reactionaries. I am positive if they were in the Russian Federation, they would have been expelled long ago in the United States. (*Laughter.*) I have no particular objection to the amendment, even in its original form as presented by Wilson. I see no objection for us to adopt such a resolution, provided that we admit the branches of the language federations provided they endorse the constitution, the platform, and the resolutions of the convention. After all, the same requirement is made of every state organization and every English speaking branch. Isn't that true? There is no reason why we shouldn't pass it, and I don't see that the amendment makes much difference.

We, by no means, are the wise men of the movement. Not only that, no may you could have put upon the National Executive Committee could have proven to the membership of the party that they were the wise men. It is impossible to do it. Now, the thing for us to do is to come to some agreement, and I think, judging from the temper of the convention, you are willing to accept this amendment. (*Cries of "No!" and "Yes!"*) However, you can decide it upon the vote. So far as I am personally concerned, I am willing to accept it. I have no objection to it at all. I only want to insist that we don't take this action without serious consideration. When we did have to face the situation, and we [of the NEC] had to respond "yes" or "no" upon a roll call vote, there wasn't a man on the committee but what felt sick and disgusted. We didn't do it without estimating what the possible results would be. But, we did it because we felt that it was our duty; that we owed it to the membership, and that, as a result, we would have to take the consequences, and we are taking them here today. (*Applause.*)

Chairman Bausch: Before passing on the question— (*Crises of "Question!"*) It seems to be the sentiment of the house that we go to a vote.

Comrade Beckerman: A point of order. My point of order is that, according to the rules adopted by this convention, the mover of a motion has a right

to take the floor before the vote is taken. That's the rule.

Comrade Wilson: I want to vote.

Chairman Bausch: It seems to be the sense of this convention—

Comrade Beckerman: What is your decision?

Chairman Bausch: I don't know of any such rule being adopted. (*Cries of "No!"*)

Comrade Beckerman: I will ask the Secretary to read that part of the rules.

Chairman Bausch: The Secretary has stated that there is no such rule adopted.

Comrade [Benjamin] Glassberg [NY], Secretary: I will answer that. I have not the rules before me, but I will state, and I am quite positive, that there is no such rule. I rule, therefore, that the chairman of the committee has the right to close the debate.

Comrade Beckerman: I withdraw my motion in favor of the amendment. That's all I want to say about it. (*Applause.*)

Comrade Victerson: I call for information.

Chairman Bausch: Sit down, please.

Comrade Block: A point of order. I am sorry that I have got to waste time on a point of order, but I don't like to see the Secretary, Chairman, and perhaps the entire delegation ignorant of the rules which they have adopted on this floor. Rule No. 2 of the Rules of Procedure adopted here reads as follows: "Speeches shall be limited to 5 minutes, except by unanimous consent, provided that the mover of any motion may have 5 minutes in which to close debate."

Comrade Kruse: A point of information. If we had a report of a committee, a motion to adopt the report, amendment to the motion, and an amendment to the amendment, each of these 4 people would have 5 minutes. Of course they would.

Chairman Bausch: Comrade Beckerman said what he wanted to say anyway. (*Cries of "Question!"*) The motion and the amendment will be put before the house. The Secretary will read the motion and the amendment.

Comrade [Patrick] Nagel [OK]: I want a roll call of the vote.

Secretary Glassberg: The motion made my Comrade Beckerman reads as follows: "I move that we concur in the action of the National Executive Committee in suspending the foreign federations

specified, in revoking the charters of the states specified, and withholding the referendum specified in this report.”

The amendment as made by Comrade Wilson of Illinois reads as follows, unless, I take it for granted that Wilson accepts Comrade Panken’s amendment: “I move as an amendment that it is the sense of this convention that the supplemental report of the National Executive Committee be received; that the convention concurs that the administration of discipline was necessary and justified, but feels that, had the National Executive Committee made a sufficient effort to acquaint the membership of the suspended and expelled organizations with the facts and endeavored to have them repudiate their officials, that many of the members now outside of the party would have remained, and that the state organizations be not [*sic.*] permitted to recharter branches of the suspended federations whose members are willing to abide by the platform and constitution of the Socialist Party.”

Chairman Bausch: That is the motion and amendment. A roll call vote has been demanded on this proposition.

Comrade [William] Karlin [NY]: A point of information. I want to know if this fact that Comrade Panken suggested on the floor materially changed the last part of that amendment?

Secretary Glassberg: I read the amendment as it now stands. It can’t change anything.

Comrade [Julius] Gerber [NY]: I want to know how to vote. Are you going to put the motion as amended in case the amendment is carried?

Chairman Bausch: Yes.

Comrade Gerber: Then I am satisfied, because I want to vote for both.

Comrade Karlin: Can we, on a roll call, vote for either the amendment or the motion?

Chairman Bausch: No. Let us proceed. Any reasons you have got, send to the Secretary later on.

The roll being called on the amendment, the vote stood 64 in favor of it and 39 against.

Chairman Bausch: The Secretary will now read the motion as amended, and we will vote on that.

Comrade Berger: In order to keep the record

straight, the Wisconsin delegates will, no doubt, have the right to put a statement in the record.

Comrades Weiss and Jones, of New Jersey, asked to be recorded as voting for the amendment for the reason that they do not under any circumstances wish to see the motion passed as originally put; they considered that the National Executive Committee have established a dangerous precedent, and their action should be condemned.

Comrade Braunstein: A point of information. It seems to me that the amendment embodies the idea of the motion itself. I want the motion read so that I can know how to vote. (*Cries of “No!”*)

Chairman Bausch: The Secretary will once again read the motion—

Comrade Braunstein: —as amended.

Chairman Bausch: —as amended.

Secretary Glassberg: The motion before us is the following: “That we concur with the action of the national Executive Committee in suspending the foreign language federations, in expelling the state federations [*sic.*], and in holding up the referendum of Local Cuyahoga,” plus the amendment which reads: “That it is the sense of this convention that the supplemental report of the National Executive Committee be received; that the convention concurs that the administration of discipline was necessary and justified, but feels that, had the National Executive Committee made a sufficient effort to acquaint the membership of the suspended and expelled organizations with the facts and endeavored to have them repudiate their officials, that many of the members now outside of the party might have remained in, and that the incoming National Executive Committee proceed with the reorganization of the foreign language federations and the expelled state organizations.”†

Chairman Bausch: We will go into a roll call on this motion. (*Cries of “No!”*) That has been demanded before.

Comrade [Max] Lulow [NY]: I move that we vote on this motion by a show of hands.

Comrade Panken: Under the rules we have adopted, it requires one-third of the body to go on record as favoring a roll call. Nobody has asked for a roll call.

†- Note that the content of this amended motion as recorded in the stenogram differs materially from the text of the amendment voted upon just before.

Comrade Berger: In order to make it clear, let there be a roll call.

Chairman Bausch: All in favor of having a roll call on this proposition, do so by raising the right hand.

Motion for roll call adopted.

The roll being called, the motion, as amended, was carried, 95 votes being recorded in favor thereof, and 8 against.

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