
Letter to E.M. Wormley in St. Joseph, MO from William L. Garver, State Secretary, Socialist Party of Missouri in Springfield, October 18, 1919.

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Springfield, Mo., October 18, 1919. vote ever getting anything.

E.M. Wormley,
St. Joseph, Mo.

Dear Comrade:—

I am in receipt of your letter telling me that the local at St. Joseph went to the Left Wing the last meeting, and asking me the real cause of the split.

I am surprised that the local has left the party and did not even think it a matter of courtesy to inform the State Office. However, in these times courtesy has come to be considered by many as a bourgeois quality and not worthwhile. So let that pass.

In asking for the real cause, you are asking me to write a book. I would refer you to the last number of the National Party Bulletin and the other issues of the same, in which the matter is gone into quite fully. If you have not got these available, I will try to send you some. But appreciating the spirit in which the question is asked, I will try in a brief two pages to tell you what I think is the cause.

The Real Cause of the Split.

The foreign federations, as a result of the Russian and Hungarian revolutions, had grown faster than the rest of the party, until they constituted over 50 percent of the membership.

Many members of these federations are not naturalized citizens of the country, could not vote, and as a natural result did not have much confidence in the

This was accentuated by the knowledge that the Russian and Hungarian revolutions had been secured without the vote. The feeling grew stronger and stronger that the vote was no good.

About this time some members of the party who had given up hope in political action for quite a while coined the term Mass Action, and this term was taken up as showing a method better than political action. Although to this day it is difficult for the student who desires the truth to tell what it means, unless it means force pure and simple.

This ideal appealed to the members of the foreign federations and, having autonomy, they elected officials who gave expression to that view in all their communications, and the same cry was taken up by their papers. The result was the beginning of indiscriminate criticism of the party officials because of their conservatism. They were accused of being near office seekers. It was said they made a fetish of political action. It was only a step to accuse them of being Scheidemanns and betrayers of the Russian Revolution, although every act showed the contrary.

A slate was formed in secret by the opponents of the officials to capture the party. And the evidence goes to show that the foreign federations voted almost as a unit for the slate. The side who were with the officials had no slate. And always in the past the slate and caucus methods have been condemned as being of the nature of the old party machine political methods.

When the National Committee met in May to canvass the vote for the new National Executive Committee, numerous persons appeared before the

committee and filed charges of fraud, submitted affidavits, and presented evidence of gross irregularities. The result was that the referendum was held up and a national convention called to act upon the matter, the old committee holding in the meantime, because they would naturally hold until their successors were seated.

Now, the half-informed will tell you that the holding up of the referendum was the cause of the split. But it should be clear to anyone that it was the effect of what had gone on before. The formation of a slate and the methods used to elect that slate show that there was a division before the holding of the referendum or the expulsion of Michigan, which occurred at the same time.

To show that this split existed before the action of the National Committee in May, it is only necessary to call attention to the fact that the National Committee had at a previous meeting called for a General Amnesty Convention in Chicago, and had invited labor bodies, and liberal bodies who were not Socialists, but who were in favor of amnesty for political prisoners.

The mass action groups immediately declared war and began to sabotage this amnesty convention, accusing the national officials of being compromisers and joining in with capitalist auxiliaries. The criticisms of the officials became more and more heated and intemperate. Exaggeration of every little word or deed became the thing to do.

The hypersensitiveness of some revolutionaries caused them to come to the point where one to be a true revolutionist must refuse to be on even speaking terms with anyone who was not a revolutionist.

Then just back of the amnesty convention was the action of the National Committee in electing 3 delegates to go to the Berne (Switzerland) International Conference. The opponents of the officials claimed that the committee exceeded its powers, that they as a committee had no power to elect these delegates. The point was not made at that time that the conference was not revolutionary but middle class, not to say capitalist. This contention did not come up until later, when the Italian delegates had refused to take their seats in the Berne Conference because of its compromising spirit and the Russians had issued a call for what they called the Third International.

Then the opponents accused the National Committee of being compromisers for seeking to send delegates to the Berne Convention.

They entirely overlook the fact that the American delegates might have been able to tell the Berne delegates the true inwardness of Mr. Wilson, whom the European Socialists were bowing down to at this time, and might have been able to make a profound change in the attitude of the Berne Convention.

Mr. [Robert] Lansing of the United States State Department saw this, if the revolutionists did not, and passports were denied.

Well, I cannot write all day. So will close. Give the old comrades, especially Dr. Good and Hitzelberger, my regards. And write again.

Faternally,

W.L. Garver,

State Secretary of Missouri Socialist Party.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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