
“Engdahl is Right”

by Otto Branstetter

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Editor, Forum:

Much as we regret the fact, J. Louis Engdahl, County Secretary of Local Cook County (Chicago, Ill.) and editor of the party-owned paper, the *Chicago Socialist*, is correct in stating that there is one paramount issue at the Detroit convention.

The issue is whether or not the Socialist Party will continue to permit members avowedly hostile to our methods, our program, our tactics, and our form of organization to remain in the party for the purpose of sabotaging and destroying it.

The issue is clearly stated in a resolution on the agenda providing for the expulsion of party members who (after a thorough discussion of the resolution and its adoption by the convention) advocate, endorse, or support affiliation with the Communist International. The issue is not accused or created by the resolution; it exists. The resolution simply puts it in concrete form for discussion and action.

The justification for the resolution and for its adoption and enforcement is found in the proclamation of the Communist International refusing our application for affiliation, which contains the following:

Workers: Leave the American Socialist Party. It is your enemy and ours. Already in America there is a revolutionary party, the United Communist Party, the American section of the Communist International. These are our true comrades. Thousands of them have suffered for the revolution. This is the party of the revolutionary working class.

Join the United Communist Party.

This is their answer to our application for affiliation. It is a declaration of war against our party. It is an open avowal of their intention to destroy our organization as they have destroyed other Socialist organizations in other countries.

No one can be a thorough and consistent supporter of the Communist International and its methods without endorsing and supporting this proclamation along with the rest.

No one can support or defend this proclamation and remain a loyal and honest member of the Socialist Party. No member can support or endorse this proclamation without being guilty of party treason.

The support or endorsement of this proclamation or of the organization issuing it should have been considered party treason from the first day of its publication in this country, and should have subjected members supporting it to immediate expulsion.

But the Socialist Party is long suffering. It is loath to discipline members no matter what their offense. It habitually permits party sabotage and party treachery to go on unrebuked and unpunished until it has accomplished its work, and then, when it is too late, wakes up and attempts some belated action in its own defense.

This is true in the present instance. The only objection to the anti-Communist resolution is that it comes a year too late — but that is not an argument against its adoption at this time. It should be adopted and mark the beginning of a new policy by the party to the effect that the enemies of the party whose whole work and activity is destructive should be compelled to attack us from the outside, instead of from within.

Engdahl, in his own words, is “one who supports, endorses, and advocates affiliation with the Third International” and is on record as being in favor of accepting the 21 Points laid down by Moscow.

Among these “points” is the 7th, which demands the expulsion of Morris Hillquit. Engdahl is in favor of that expulsion.

Point 13 is as follows:

The Communist parties of those countries where the Communist activity is legal should make a cleansing of their members from time to time, as well as

those of the party organizations, in order systematically to free the party from the petty bourgeois elements which penetrate into it.

This means periodic, wholesale expulsions of members and locals which do not submit in every particular to the dictates of the Moscow committee. Engdahl is in favor of those wholesale expulsions.

Point 21 provides:

Those members of the party who reject the conditions and the theses of the Third International are liable to be excluded from the party. This applies principally to the delegates at the special congresses of the party.

This applies to the Detroit convention. If the majority at that convention should be in favor of accepting the 21 Points and applying for affiliation with the Communist International, it would be their duty to expel all the delegates who had opposed such affiliation or who were in disagreement with any of the conditions or proclamations or manifestos of the International. Such expulsions would have to be made before the application for affiliation would be granted. Engdahl is in favor of such expulsions.

And yet Engdahl, this same Engdahl who “supports, endorses, and advocates affiliation with the Third International,” the same Engdahl who is in favor of expelling Morris Hillquit because it is ordered by Moscow, who is in favor of expelling all the delegates at Detroit who are not in favor of accepting all the conditions and theses of Moscow, who is in favor of periodic wholesale expulsions of members and branches at the dictation of Moscow, thinks it is an outrage to consider expelling members who say or endorse “Workers, leave the American Socialist Party. It is your enemy and ours.”

This same Engdahl who believes that the party “should make a cleansing of their members from time to time” is alarmed for fear that the NEC may “start out on a campaign of heresy hunting.” This Engdahl who believes in expelling anybody and everybody who does not agree with Moscow thinks it would be a crime to expel anyone who did not agree with the Socialist Party of America.

The issue is quite clear. Shall we expel loyal, devoted members at the dictation of Moscow or shall we expel dishonest and treacher-

ous members who say: “Workers, leave the American Socialist Party. It is your enemy and ours”?

Shall we expel Morris Hillquit for party loyalty or shall we expel J. Louis Engdahl for party treason?

That is the issue. Until it is decided and decided right there is no possibility of rebuilding the party which has been destroyed largely through the efforts of the Communist International and its spokesmen and supporters within the Socialist Party. We should adopt the resolution and enforce it. We may be the first Socialist party to adopt this practical method of defense against those who are pledged to destroy us, but we will by no means be the last.

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Edited by Tim Davenport

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