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# Hillquit Again National Chairman: Dramatic Session Ends in His Re-election

by James Oneal

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Milwaukee.— Following a dramatic session of the Socialist convention on Monday [May 23, 1932], Morris Hillquit of New York was elected Chairman of the National Executive Committee over Daniel W. Hoan, Mayor of Milwaukee. The vote stood 105 for Hillquit and Hoan, 80. Hillquit's vote represented 7,526 party members and Hoan's 6,984.

From the time that delegates began to arrive it was evident that this election would prove tense interest. Caucuses were held by many delegates supporting their respective candidates but underlying all this was a fundamental difference as to what the Socialist Party should be and what it should represent.

Here it should be said that Comrade Hoan was not an enthusiastic partisan in his own behalf. Although Comrade Hillquit took the floor during the debate, Comrade Hoan declined to participate in it. The unfortunate thing about the election is that the opponents of Hillquit selected the Mayor of the city in which the convention met regardless of the effect if Comrade Hoan was defeated. The result was that the press of the country carried stories that Comrade Hoan had in some way been rebuked in his own city by his own party.

Of course this is not true, but it is obvious that in staging this struggle and selecting Comrade Hoan as candidate the opposition has rendered a disservice to the party in Milwaukee. Had they selected any other candidate this would not have occurred.

Several attempts were made to compromise, which meant an outward appearance of harmony while the fundamental issues

would have been concealed. One such attempt was made just before the afternoon session opened but the Hillquit group refused to consider it. They held that the office of Chairman was not important in itself, that back of the contest was the question of what the character of the Socialist Party is to be. They preferred to be defeated because whether defeated or victorious the issues involved would be dramatized and that was more important than the chairmanship, which had become merely a symbol of these issues.

The debate, with one or two exceptions, was devoid of personalities. There were many delegates on both sides who have a deep affection for both men. Jim Maurer, in nominating Hillquit, was right when he brought out this point in a stirring speech, and others repeated it.

William Quick, assistant city attorney of Milwaukee, nominated Dan Hoan. Among those who supported Hoan on the floor were Heywood Broun, Norman Thomas, and B. Charney Vladeck of the New York delegation. Louis Waldman, Jacob Panken, Charles Solomon, and Algernon Lee of the New York delegation supported Hillquit. Waldman's speech was especially moving as he recalled Hillquit's services during the war and his rising from a sick bed when suffering from tuberculosis to defend the Socialist Assemblymen on trial at Albany.

Hillquit began by saying that there were three discordant groups in the convention representing a vague "American Socialism" and hurled a challenge to "the unholy alliance working against why I and my friends stand for."<sup>1</sup> He made an amusing reference to Heywood Broun to whom, he said, "Socialism is a novelty."

"I represent the working class, Marxian, international type of Socialism," said Hillquit, and declared that some comrades think that they can organize a Socialist movement out of college students. "I made the unfortunate choice of being born in an un-American country, of Jewish parents. They speak of ability to translate sentiments into votes. I say frankly that is not the su-

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<sup>1</sup> This refers to a working alliance between the young, radical New York Militant faction and a section of the constructive socialist Wisconsin delegation.

preme Socialist accomplishment. And if they challenge me on these principles, as a matter of principle I accept the challenge.”

The roll call was followed with intense interest by delegates and visitors and it was not till an hour later that the result was announced. The delegates had returned to their hotel and when the result became known there was much discussion regarding the influences that had led to it.

*Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport*

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