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# A Letter to the Membership

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We are now face to face with the greatest test of our devotion and loyalty to the Socialist Party. With confidence in the future of our Party and its ultimate triumph, we can pass through the crisis of these immediate days.

The false cry of “wolf” has now become the truth. The Party in New York is split — split by the disloyalty of men who would rule or ruin, who would maintain control of a Party that they do not represent. By persisting in a motion of reorganization — euphemistic name for split and expulsion — the Old Guard has made it necessary for the healthy, vital, active, and loyal members of the Party to act. When, by a vote of 48 to 44, the gerrymandered City Central Committee refused to reconsider its motion of “reorganization” and then later adopted the recommendation of the Old Guard [New York State] Executive Committee calling for action against any comrade who participates in or supports the work of *The Socialist Call*, it became apparent that the die was cast.

## No More Clique Rule.

Just as history placed upon the shoulders of the DeLeons the burden for splitting the old Socialist Labor Party, it will add to the list of Party wreckers and breeders of disunity the names of Louis Waldman, Julius Gerber, James Oneal, and Algernon Lee. In this moment of

crisis, the loyal members of the Socialist Party will at least rejoice in the fact that we are through with the unhappy days in which the will of the Party is disregarded by a clique which rules by Tammany tricks and political conniving.

After two years of threatening split, the Old Guard has now brought it about. After two years of offending against basic Socialist ethics and Party principles, they have committed the final act of split and expulsion. Our comrades will recall the list of their offenses.

They have persisted in their course of Party wrecking while those they have maligned have been ready to make every sacrifice short of abandoning Socialist principle in order that the party might ride safely through the storm. Even after the decision to reorganize, in this very twilight hour, those who love the Party have offered to negotiate lest further damage be done to the Party, and have declared that they *are prepared to work out arrangements to have one paper in New York* if the Old Guard will give assurances that democracy is to be restored. The Old Guard refused to listen.

### **Tried to Split Party.**

They have refused to recognize the authority of the Party National Convention and have waged a consistent campaign of vilification against the National Office and the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of the United States. They have libeled and slandered the wholesome leadership of our national organization as being “communist” and “un-American” and “irresponsible.” They have utilized the columns of the capitalist press in order to discredit the national Party.

They have threatened to split the Party nationally and have attempted vainly to call conferences of State Committees to write a Party platform and choose national candidates, but the State Committees have refused to participate in the work of splitting.

They have systematically excluded from membership in the Party young people whose energies are vital to the growth of the movement and have invented pretexts for such exclusions. They have closed the doors of the Party to young Socialists whose zeal for Socialism has already been tested by years of service and activity in the Young Peo-

ple's Socialist League. They have disregarded the national constitution and the orders of the National Executive Committee in maintaining this practice. They have broken the peace pact which they signed with the National Executive Committee by persisting in the practice of ignoring the applications of the Yipsels and by refusing to reinstate the Buffalo comrades as agreed. They have disregarded the intent and the provisions of the peace pact and renewed Party warfare by new acts of aggression.

### **No Constructive Work.**

They have done no constructive work in behalf of Socialism and permitted the Party vote to fall incredibly. They have attempted to justify their ineptness in the offices which they usurped by claiming that the Party's inactivity was due to a minority when indeed they have refused even to set forth a program of Party activity. They have accused this "minority" of sabotage when in fact it was the "minority" which carried on the work of the Party in the unemployed organizations, in the trade unions, in the cultural movement, and in the political campaigns.

They have wasted the assets of the party in propagandizing against Party members instead of against capitalism.

They have bred and maintained Harry Lang, whose pen has been utilized by the Hearst Press, the worst enemy of American Labor, with the consent of Abe Cahan.

### **Condoned Corruption.**

They have condoned corruption by Socialist trade unionists, permitting persons found guilty of misconduct in their unions to remain members of the Socialist Party. They have whitewashed the offenses of men like Nemser, while their own grievance committee has stated that "it was, perhaps, unfortunate that in the line of Union activity and where Union pioneering was to be done, the relationship of Nemser and Silverman as the head of an Employers Association appeared too close" and "that it is true that a Socialist who acts in the capacity of Union leader must use greater discretion in his relation-

ship with representatives of employers.” They have excused his failure to produce the books of the union on the ground, in part, that “those who set up the books would be mighty poor bookkeepers if the story of corruption could be so evident.”

They have abandoned the traditional position of the Socialist Party and have supported dual unionism in the Teachers’ Union and Retail Salesmen’s Union.

They have accused those with whom they differed as being Communists, while they themselves have united with Communists in disruptive union activities in Local 22 of the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union. While falsely accusing others of adhering to Communist principles, they have themselves indulged in Communist practices.

They have waged a campaign of libel against the national leader of the Party, Norman Thomas, and have brought frivolous charges against him for upholding the dignity and honor of the Party in debating against Communism. They have denied to our foremost spokesman the use of the Party rostrum in the last campaign.

They have sought to maintain control of the Party by disbanding branches of the Socialist Party and denying them representation in the City Central Committee. They have sought to assure their retention of power in the local, after having lost it in the nation, by trying to reorganize the local on the eve of Central Committee elections and by expelling those who oppose their control.

They have converted the Executive Committee of the local into an Old Guard caucus by excluding the representatives of Bronx and Queens counties who, under the bylaws, are members of the Executive Committee.

They have disregarded the bylaws of the local, have refused to call a city convention, membership meetings, and referenda, as required.

### **Membership Resentment.**

They have committed offenses against the Party which are too numerous to be listed, but which have met with the uniform resentment of the Party membership.

They have precipitated the gravest crisis the Party has known since 1919, have made it impossible for the Party membership to function, have threatened expulsions, have attempted to make it a breach of discipline for comrades to support *The Socialist Call* and its activities, while they supported the scurrilous *New Leader*.

By their undemocratic, illegal, unsocialist conduct they have compelled all loyal Socialists to refuse to associate with a gerrymandered, synthetic City Central Committee which disregards the bylaws of the local and which assigns to the equally spurious Executive Committee complete and dictatorial powers over the life of the Party.

By their unsocialist conduct, they have read themselves out of the Socialist Party and have made it necessary to establish a real Central Committee which will function as the democratic expression of the wishes of the New York Socialists.

### **We Build for Socialism.**

As a result of this long train of events, the Party has been brought into disrepute and growth has stopped in New York. The loyal Socialist delegates to the City Central Committee, numbering 46 and representing 37 branches, have reestablished democratic procedure in the Party and will see to it that the work of building for Socialism shall be resumed in New York. They have set up the office of Local New York at 21 East 17th Street and urge upon the Party members that they shall continue to organize for Socialism.

Throughout the country, the comrades have looked with horror upon the acts perpetrated by the Old Guard. Already, by resolution and letter, they have expressed their solidarity with the membership of Local New York. A long suffering National Executive Committee will now act in the interest of preserving the Party and its idealism. Of this the comrades may be confident.

Norman Thomas, the national leader of the Party, has stated: "The time has come for loyal Socialists to act.... As Socialists we cannot accept the rule of an oligarchy within the Socialist Party, which uses means it thinks may further its own end of dominance. We shall prove our loyalty to Socialism by our acts."

Comrades, the indignities which you have suffered at the hands of the Old Guard oligarchy are at an end. It is possible once again to function in behalf of Socialism in New York City. Build the Socialist Party as the effective agency for working class emancipation.

Fraternally yours,

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*Edited by Tim Davenport*

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