
Letter to Alfred Wagenknecht, in Cleveland from Julius Gerber, in New York City, August 12, 1919. †

A document in the Socialist Party of America Papers, Duke University, microfilm reel 101.

August 12, 1919.

Mr. A. Wagenknecht,
3207 Clark Street,
Cleveland, Ohio.

Dear Comrade:—

I am in receipt of your circular sent by you to all Locals, Branches, and Young People's Socialist Leagues of the United States, asking support for what you term the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party.

Permit me to ask you what right or authority have the gentlemen and women signed to this letter to assume the function as the NEC of the Socialist Party?

Both you, Comrade Wagenknecht, and [L.E.] Katterfeld were present at the last meeting of the NEC. Both you and Katterfeld voted for the holding of an Emergency National Convention on August 30th [1919], and both you and Katterfeld voted to place on the order of business of the Convention the thorough investigation of the methods employed at the last referendum election of members of the NEC and an investigation of the reasons for the suspension from the party organization of Michigan and the 7 language federations.

If you and the people behind you, including your so-called NEC, do not trust the rank and file of the party, and are afraid that you will not be able to control the Emergency Convention (to use the phrase of your friend [Isaac] Ferguson), then why should the rank and file trust or have confidence in you or the people back of you?

It is an old maxim that he who enters court must do so with clean hands. Let us see whether yours are clean.

Prior to your becoming National Executive Secretary, P.T. [pro tempore], you were employed by the NEC as director of the Organization and Propaganda Department, elected by the National Executive Committee, of which you were a member, at the same time holding on to your post as Secretary of the State Organization of Ohio, and Editor of *The Ohio Socialist*, something unheard of in the annals of the Socialist Party. When you left the National Office you took with you a complete list of all State, Local, and Branch Secretaries, property of the National Office of the party which no one has a right to give to an outsider, nor to use without the consent of the NEC. In plain words, you misappropriated the property of the party, to use it for your own personal purposes, to break up the party.

You, as State Secretary of Ohio, refused to give to the National Office a list of the Locals and Branches of Ohio; but you, as an employee of the National Office, violate the trust placed in you and appropriate to yourself the mailing list of the National Office. Are we not justified in the belief that A. Wagenknecht, as a member of the NEC, was instrumental in creating in the National Office a department, and making himself the head of that department, in order to get a foothold in the National Office, have access to the files and mailing list, and copy or appropriate the same to use it in breaking up the party?

Some years ago a friend of yours, a member of the National Committee from Ohio, was expelled from the party for a similar stunt, but he was too clumsy.

†- On the letterhead of the Socialist Party of New York County, 239 E 84th Street, New York.

He did not secure a job in the National Office; he merely bribed an employee in the office to abstract certain documents from the office for him. You certainly have improved on him. You will not take chances, and besides not only save money, but add to your income by creating a job for yourself, drawing a fairly good salary (while holding on to several other paid positions), permitting you to come to the office when no one was around and select the papers you want.

Are we not justified to believe that you have planned to split the party at least as far back as last January [1919]? How can we have confidence in a person acting as National Secretary for the party who deliberately planned to break the party at a time when everything in the party seemed to be harmonious? How can we trust you when the first step in your campaign was dishonest by securing for yourself a position in the office while you yourself were a member of the NEC? What guarantee have we that you will not betray us again as you did by appropriating documents and lists to which you were not entitled? And how can we have confidence in your so-called NEC, who seem to approve of your actions, and some of whom have perhaps helped you to carry out your plan?

You ask us to support morally and financially what you term the New NEC. How can we, as Socialists, support any body of men and women who have thrown all morals to the winds, who have condoned the stuffing of the ballot box, and the padding of membership lists, and whose first act in office is to select you as their Secretary, for no other reason than because you are in possession of the party's mailing list, which came into your possession by unfair means?

It is also curious to note the personnel of your so-called NEC.

The first name appended to your circular is that of Edward Lindgren, of Kings Country, NY. This man poses here as State Secretary of an organization that never was a part of the Socialist Party. Then we find Fred Harwood, who acts as State Secretary of the Socialist Party of New Jersey, who while a member of the NEC is under instructions of the State Committee of New Jersey to have nothing to do either with you or your committee, and who, at the last meeting of the New Jersey State Committee, denied having attended the meeting? Again the question arises, if Harwood is

a member of your committee, how can he, in the face of the decision and instructions of the State Committee of New Jersey, continue to act either as a member of your committee or as State Secretary? Or is he following in your footsteps, to hold on to the position for the job's sake and to accumulate as much of the party's property and documents as may be necessary for you and your associates to wreck the party?

That you laid your plans to wreck the party is evident from so many acts of yours and your associates, not only from your entering the National Office and appropriating the mailing list, but here is an other instance.

Your Mr. Ferguson, who styles himself National Secretary [of the National Left Wing Council], as far back as June [1919] called on all state organizations and locals to send all moneys for the special convention stamps to you (not to the Ohio State Committee) as State Secretary of Ohio, and now you become the Acting National Secretary. It seems that your party or group is not only devoid of honor but also of men. If there ever was an oligarchy, your group certainly has the Ex-King of Prussia beat. Here are but a few of the offices you hold:

State Secretary of Ohio —	A. Wagenknecht.
Editor, <i>Ohio Socialist</i> —	A. Wagenknecht.
Director of Department of Organization and Propaganda —	A. Wagenknecht.
Member of the NEC —	A. Wagenknecht.
Recipient of Funds from Special Convention Assessment —	A. Wagenknecht.
Possessor and Sole Owner of Misappropriated Party Mailing List—	A. Wagenknecht.
Delegate to the International Socialist Congress —	A. Wagenknecht.

...and least but not last (?)

National Executive Secretary PT —	A. Wagenknecht.
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The remainder of your associates are in the same category; each one has a half dozen or more titles and offices to his credit.

Local New York, as the oldest Socialist organization in the country, was always ready to help morally and financially the Socialist movement in the country, and to this day our local has helped the movement even in your own city (Cleveland) with men and material. But before we extend any assistance we must be convinced that what we are helping is a genuine So-

cialist movement, and in this respect you and your group fail utterly. Neither the personnel of your group nor you yourself inspire any confidence, and while there may be in the Socialist Party some wrongs that ought to be eradicated, some errors that ought to be righted, we rely on the common sense of the membership of the party to accomplish it. For this reason we have supported the movement for a special National Convention and we are glad that it will be held soon. We can assure the membership of the party that the men and women this local will send to the Convention will do all in their power to clean the party and the Socialist movement of the United States of all self-seekers, all those who are in the movement for what personal gain or glory they can get out of it, and of all those who were or are in our party not to help build a working class political organization to educate and organize the workers of the country for their emancipation, but to obstruct the growth of such organization, and who, when they could not rule, are now trying to ruin the party.

Our delegates will be instructed to clean from the ship of our party all barnacles of pseudo-anarchists and syndicalists so that the party will be in a position to carry out its mission, the abolition of the present capitalist state and the erection of the Socialist Cooperative Commonwealth.

Our delegates are instructed to do all in their power to clean [from] the party all Bourgeois Elements and the retainers of the capitalists who consciously or

otherwise are doing the dirty work.

The Socialist Party will withstand the attacks of the Capitalist Class both from without and from within, and when in the happy days to come the history of the Socialist movement in America is written, your name and those of your associates will be ranked with those of Judas Iscariot and Benedict Arnold.

For the above and other reasons too numerous to mention, we shall refuse to have anything to do with you or your associates. We have neither a man nor a penny for you, the would-be disrupters of the Socialist Party, but we shall give all we have to the genuine Socialist Party of America, and will do all in our power to make it what it was before you and your associates came into it — a true class-conscious political organization of the Working Class of America.

You and your associates can go to it. Do your worst. All you will get will be your 30 shekels. But the future belongs to the Socialist Party, and we are with the Socialist Party.

Executive Committee Socialist Party,
New York County.

Julius Gerber,
Executive Secretary.

JG/MRH

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