

---

# Socialist Party Convention

## [Editorial from *The New York Call*, Sept. 9, 1919]

Published in *The New York Call*, vol. 12, no. 252 (Sept. 9, 1919), pg. 8.  
Chief editorial writer for The Call was James Oneal.

The recent party convention at Chicago has completed its labors, and its work is well known to the readers of *The Call*. Full publicity has been given to its proceedings, and within the next few weeks intensive work of organization will face the membership. The Manifesto adopted by the convention is an inspiring document and will serve as an answer to all those who have charged that the party has changed, compromised, or retreated in any way. The first reports of the capitalist journals were rather patronizing of the convention. After the adoption of the Manifesto, with its clear analysis of capitalist imperialism, they fell back upon their old stock of invectives and denunciations. They had reasoned that a party schism which resulted in an independent movement by the suspended language federations meant an abandonment of internationalism and the reorganization of the party as on a conservative basis. Their disappointment is evident in their later comments on the work of the convention.

The establishment of a Communist party by these federations is an anomaly in the history of working class parties. There has not been another instance of alien workers attempting to establish a party that would appeal to native-born workers. That it is doomed to failure goes without saying. As well might a gathering of American workers in Italy attempt to establish an Italian party of the workers in that country. The Communist Party is also composed of two irreconcilable elements, the late Michigan organization of the party and the federations. The former has emphasized political action almost to the exclusion of the economic organizations of labor, at the same time prohibiting any program but an immediate demand for the social revolution. The language federations retain the concept of an immediate revolution, but reverse the emphasis on political and economic ac-

tion. A fatal schism divides these two groups, and it is certain that they cannot maintain any permanent alliance.

The Ohio organization, together with delegates from Washington and a few scattering delegates from other delegations, maintained a wavering center between the Communists and the party for several days. It was an opportunist policy of "watchful waiting" to determine what they should do. In the meantime, they sent a committee of five to negotiate with the Communists and were rebuffed. This threw the middle group back on its own resources, and, unable to delay any longer, they assembled and chose the party name of Communist Labor Party. The latter adopted a platform which is apparently another bid for the confidence of the Communists. It places scarcely any reliance on political action, this being defined in the following words: "Political action of the working class means any action taken by the workers to impose their will on capitalist society."

This definition would include any organized group formulating any kind of action so long as they call it "political." It opens the gates wide to all sorts of views and policies which in turn fosters schism and leads to disintegration. This was apparent in the discussions of the Communist Labor Party convention, where a wide variety of views was disclosed. Discipline is impossible with such a definition of political action. That the Ohio organization, the most powerful bloc in this convention, is unable to retain its own membership on this basis is evident from the fact that on Saturday [Sept. 6, 1919] the National Office of the Socialist Party received a number of applications for charters from Ohio.

The Socialist Party convention did a surprising amount of good and important work considering that three days were spent upon deciding the numerous contests for seats. In its actions it resorted to no equivocation. Its decisions are clear and comprehensive. The declaration of principles alone is tentative and purposely so. This was left for the convention next year. In the meantime a committee of seven will devote its time to the formulation of a permanent declaration of principles for next year. This declaration is to be mandatory for all subdivisions and is to be used in all campaigns. This will ensure that in all state and minor campaigns the fundamentals of the party program will be stated as well as the questions of immediate interest to the working class.

The Berne Conference was repudiated in terms that leave no doubt as to where the party stands. At the same time the party, with-

out a dissenting voice, maintains its position of aid and endorsement of the genuine fighters for Socialism and the working class in Russia, Germany, and other countries, while opposing all groups that support counter-revolution or who sanction support of coalition governments. The Socialist Party remains what it has proudly claimed to be, one of the three or four sections of the International that never surrendered to world imperialism during the bloody storm that swept the world for nearly five years.

It now remains for party members to take up the work of organization with renewed enthusiasm, confident that the sincere members who have been misled during the past few months will return. The next few years are pregnant with immense possibilities. The Socialist Party is the one organization of the toilers that rests on material reality and has charted a course that is sane and uncompromising.

*Edited by Tim Davenport*

1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR · April 2012 · Non-commercial reproduction permitted.