
Chicago Police Invade Hall of Communists: Red Decorations Torn Down — Lawyer Beaten Unconscious — New Party Formed.

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CHICAGO, Sept. 1 [1919].— Less than 24 hours after bolting “Left Wingers” had launched their Communist Party, another Communist Party was born this afternoon at Smolny Institute, as the home of the Russian Federation at 1221 Blue Island Avenue is officially known.

This was convoked by the Michigan crowd and the Russian Federation, together with the National Committee of the Left Wing, many of the latter being members of both Communist Parties and bending their efforts for consolidation of the two. About 100 delegates attended.

The cradle of the new party was rudely rocked by the hands of the Chicago police just before its birth. The room of its nativity, a square hall with a gallery, had been draped with red. As the Chicago police regulations forbid red, a platoon of detectives tore down the decorations.

Lawyer Beaten Unconscious.

L.M. Montgomery, a local lawyer Communist, aired his views of this proceeding on the police and is now recovering consciousness in the LaSalle Street Police Station as a result.

After this baptism of blood, the new babe came to life with a 20 minute speech delivered by Louis C. Fraina of Boston, elected temporary chairman. An orchestra of 10 pieces gave zest to

the singing of “The International,” after which the convention settled down to the business of electing committees on credentials and rules of procedure.

But the methodical way in which the Russian Federation voted without a single exception for a prearranged slate proved to be interesting, inasmuch as it foreshadowed clearly one of the rocks on which the Communist Party is headed for a split.

According to the report of Adolph Germer, National Secretary of the Socialist Party, the foreign language federations formed at the last summing up almost 53 percent of the total membership of the Socialist Party. A majority of these groups have gone with the Communist Party, forming thereby a majority there.

Reed Becomes Obnoxious.

John Reed, Ludwig Lore, Ben Gitlow, and others have become obnoxious to the rest of the Left Wing element for their strenuous objection to control by the Russian and allied foreign language groups.

This one hope of the rest is that the Slav group will not seek domination. This hope seemed doomed, as was shown by the vote and personnel of the first committee elected yesterday afternoon at the Communist convention — that on creden-

tials.

Those elected were Elbaum of Detroit, Stilson of Cook County, Kopnagel of Ohio, Olkin of Philadelphia, Lunin of New York, Ballam of Massachusetts, Balthesides of Massachusetts, and Torsinger of Ohio, an almost solid Russian delegation.†

Not a hand showed in the Russian section, which sat at one large table, when votes called for I.E. Ferguson, C.E. Ruthenberg, Fraina, or any of the other stalwarts of the non-Russian Communists. If the Russians, who are under the leadership of Nicholas Hourwich of New York, continue to show the same united front, developments will be interesting.

Although Dennis E. Batt, leader of the Michigan crowd, opened the convention as temporary chairman, the cards seem stacked against the whole group as continuing to function with the new Communist Party. The Michigan group, who were the first to send out a call for the formation of this party, differ in fundamentals from the rest of the participants.

They are exclusively for political action, whereas the others minimize it. On the other hand,

the Michigan group minimizes industrial organization as a means to revolution and does not believe in mass action at all, whereas mass action and industrial organization are considered the trump card by their present partners.

Louis Fraina in his opening speech declared that all controversies between them and the Socialist Party were at an end. But this he means not that peace had come, but that thereafter the Socialist Party was to be “common enemy with the rest of the bourgeoisie.”

After electing a committee to draw rules and regulations for the convention, it adjourned for lunch.

The real event of interest is the conference now going on between a committee of 5, elected by the Communist Party number 1 at the meeting of the Lefts on Sunday [the Communist Labor Party] and the Steering Committee of Communist Party number 2. The Left Committee consists of Ludwig Lore of New York, A. Bauer of California, Katterfeld, A. Wagenknecht, and Kate Greenhalgh of Seattle. It is a case of who comes to whom as supplicant. The outlook is for at least a temporary union of the bodies.

†- The hegemony of the Russian Federation in the old Communist Party of America has been greatly exaggerated, both in this article and in the scholarly literature. Actually Daniel Elbaum was from the Polish Federation, Joseph Stilson from the Lithuanian, Meyer Lunin from the Jewish, John Ballam from the Latvian. The nationality of Olkin, Kopnagel, Balthesides, and Torsinger are unknown at this time, but judging by surnames the 4 were clearly not all Russians. Nor was the CPA a Federation-dominated organization in marked contrast to a “native-born” Communist Labor Party, as is often implied. The five members of the CLP’s first National Executive Committee included Max Bedacht (born in Germany), Alexander Bilan (born in Lithuania), Jack Carney (born in Ireland), L.E. Katterfeld (born in Germany), and the second generation son of Swedish parents, Edward Lindgren.

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport.

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