
Large Section of Old Local [Cuyahoga County, OH] Back in Party [event of Sept. 28, 1919]

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William M. Brandt, National Executive Committeeman from Missouri, was sent to the delegate convention of the Cleveland, Ohio, Socialists, called to discuss the party situation last Sunday week [Sept. 28, 1919].

Brandt reported to the National Executive Committee that although the convention had been called by the Socialist Party, and it was made up of Socialist Party members, that those in control, chiefly C.E. Ruthenberg, now Secretary of the "Communist Party," refused to give him an opportunity to speak for the Socialist Party. In the program arranged time was given for the "committee" and the "Communist Laborites" to present their case, but no time was allotted to those faithful to the Socialist Party. Ruthenberg spoke for the "Communists," Alfred Wagenknecht and Alexander Bilan for the "Communist Laborites."

Under the conditions, with 3/4 of the delegates representing foreign language branches, and all the suspended foreign branches being represented, and with the Ruthenberg machine in good working order, ruthenberg having been for years Secretary of the Cleveland Socialist Party [Local Cuyahoga County], it was easy to understand that he should dominate the convention for the "Communists."

The surprise of the meeting, however, was the fact that the Communist Labor Party, headed by its Secretary, Alfred Wagenknecht, also Secretary of the Ohio Socialist Party, could only muster 3 votes.

National Executive Committeeman Brandt reported to the committee that the English membership was with the party, as was the membership of the Jewish and Finnish branches. He said that the convention was well attended by the police and secret service men.

Immediately the majority had voted for the "Communist Party," the Socialists withdrew and made plans to continue the Socialist Party organization, electing a County Committee, and John G. Willert, former Socialist member of the city council, as secretary. Brandt estimates that while 25 percent of the membership is inclined toward the Communist Party, at least 25 percent is loyal to the Socialist Party, with 50 percent indifferent. He feels that the better part of this 50 percent can be brought into the Socialist Party. Delegates of the Swedish and Hungarian branches attended the convention but refused to vote because they claimed the struggle was one of office seekers in which they were not interested. There were 34 delegates in all who even refused to vote.

The absolute lack of sympathy with the abortive "Communist Labor Party" in Ohio is typical of the situation in other states, according to reports to the National Executive Committee. The strength of the Communist Party, of course, is to be found exclusively in some of the foreign language federations.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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