
**Letter to Secretary of Labor
William B. Wilson in Washington, DC,
from William English Walling
in Greenwich, Connecticut,
May 2, 1917**

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Personal.

Greenwich, Connecticut,
May 2, 1917.

Dear Mr. Wilson:

I sent you yesterday an important clipping marked "Personal" without an accompanying letter, protesting against the possible appointment of [Morris] Hillquit as a member of the international commission to Russia, and urging that a member of the American Federation of Labor be sent to represent the American working class. I also pointed out the extreme danger of the effort to win the Russian working people for a purely German peace under the very plausible but deceptive slogan of "no annexation, no indemnities." This has been the program of pro-Kaiser Socialists from the very first day of the war — I refer, of course, to the Scheidemann group. Unfortunately it is also the program of the German Socialist Minority (Kautsky, Bernstein, Ledebour, et al.). Of course, this group is far more influential among the Socialists of the world outside of Germany. Undoubtedly its opposition to the German government at home is far more radical and sincere, but it does not differ in any important respect whatever from the Majority on international questions. A third faction, the very small Liebknecht-

Rosa Luxemburg group, is to be put in a somewhat different class, although we have no way of knowing whether its position is satisfactory to the non-German democracies of the world.

I write now to point out that none of the official leaders of the Majority now in control of the American Party can be trusted. On the contrary, all of them are in bitter opposition to the American government and the American people, and all are for immediate peace absolutely regardless of the question as to whether it would be favorable to German militarism or not. While Meyer London, for example, is somewhat less rabid than Hillquit and Berger, he has been notoriously pro-German throughout the war. Just one illustration — he advocated a plebiscite on Alsace-Lorraine, but this on the assumption, as publicly confessed by Hillquit, that Alsace and Lorraine, if considered as one unit, have been so packed with Germans in recent years that there would be a German majority. All the other foreign leaders here are of the same pro-German point of view.

The case is scarcely bettered with the relatively small ultra-pacifist American-born group, composed of such men as Debs and Benson. These have been won over absolutely by the German Minority to the program of immediate peace (which means a peace at any price), and to the peace policy of "no annexation, no indemnities,"

which gains importance from the fact that it is adopted, unanimously, I believe, by the Russian Councils of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies. It was adopted doubtless with the understanding that it meant exactly what it said. Kerensky, it is true, has given it an interpretation as meaning no *punitive* indemnities and no *forcible* annexation, a principle which would probably be accepted by all the world's leading democracies. But such an interpretation is obviously strained. Both the German and the Russian Socialists mean that not only Germany, but also Austria, Bulgaria, and Turkey are to keep absolutely every one of the conquests they have had previously to the present war — leaving the French, Polish, Ruthenian, Romanian, Italian, Armenian, and Syrian populations, now under the Central Empires, in the same position as before.

Pardon this rather long letter, for its object is entirely practical and can be put in a single sentence. The official Socialist Majority should not be represented in the delegation to Russia; the American Federation of Labor alone should represent our working people.

Very sincerely yours,

William English Walling.

P.S. I have a letter from A.M. Simons today stating that he will shortly leave the party. [Winfield] Gaylord it seems takes the same position, as does John Spargo, one of the members of the National Executive Committee. You are already aware that J.G. Phelps Stokes, Charles Edward Russell, Upton Sinclair, W.J. Ghent, and many others of the best known American Socialists without foreign connections are in complete and absolute opposition to the party and that all will leave it in case the treasonable resolutions of the recent St. Louis Convention [April 7-14, 1917] are passed by referendum.

Allan Benson, A.M. Simons, Winfield Gaylord, and Job Harriman have all openly expressed the view that the St. Louis resolutions are nothing more nor less than treason under the statutes of the United States. To send a supporter of these resolutions to Russia would obviously be insane.

J.G. Phelps Stokes has just written a careful letter to [Frank] Polk of the St. Department, giving at length the most urgent reasons why Hillquit and Berger should not even be permitted to sail for the so-called "international" Socialist conference at Stockholm now being engineered by Berlin.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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