
Packed Meeting Holds Up Action on Left Wing Program (Events of March 16, 1919)

Unsigned news account in *Socialist News* [Cleveland], v. 5, whole no. 225 (March 22, 1919), pg. 3.

Efforts to secure the adoption of the Left Wing Program of Left Wing of the Socialist Party by Local Cuyahoga County were blocked last Sunday [March 16, 1919] by a faction of the party that claims to hold a radical position but seemingly does not know what it wants.

It developed at the opening of the meeting that the Russian Branch, most of the members of which have been in the party for only a month or two, had been organized to act together under a designated leader. Unable to themselves understand the proceedings, they were easily misled by persons who misrepresented the facts of the situation and who told them how to vote after interpreting the proceeding to suit their interests.

About 325 party members were present at the meeting and of these 175 were new members of the Russian Branch.

Their tactics of shouting down those who disagreed with them led to such a delay in the proceedings that nothing was accomplished at the meeting beyond the adoption of the rules presented by the city organizer, C.E. Ruthenberg, which were adopted as presented with only the slight changes making it possible to present amendments to the Left Wing Program verbally, in place of in writing, and changing the time allowed for debate from five minutes to ten minutes for each speaker.

The opposition to the Left Wing Program at the meeting did not come from the right, because

the sentiment indicated that so far as taking a radical position was concerned there would have been no more than a dozen votes in opposition from the conservative side. Rather did the opposition come from those who claim they are more radical than the "Left Wing Program" but although they controlled the meeting through packing it with the Russian Branch members who could not understand the proceedings, did not themselves take any concrete action to state their position.

The only action taken by the joint meeting, outside of the adoption of the rules, was to admit the members of the Young People's Socialist League with a voice and a vote. The action giving the members of this organization the right to vote was protested as a violation of the party constitution through admitting non-party members to decisions of the party policies, but was carried.

The rules as adopted provide for a vote on the question of adopting the Left Wing Program as a whole as the basis of a statement of the position of the party. Following such adoption, amendments are to be considered. Under a special order of business, a resolution endorsing the call for a national referendum on the question of holding an Emergency National Convention and instructing the international delegates of the party to attend only an international conference called by the Communist Party (Bolsheviki) of Russia and the Communist Party of Germany, will be considered.

It has developed since the meeting that the Russian comrades, who, through their attitude, blocked endorsement of the Left Wing Program and the endorsement of the Emergency Convention call, have learned that they were misled through inability to themselves understand the proceedings and through misrepresentations of the attitude of those who favored such action.

The joint meeting adjourned to meet again on March 30 at 2 pm. The meeting on that date will take place at Acme Hall, 2416 E 9th Street. It is the duty of every member of the party to be present at this meeting. The party policy should be determined by a representative gathering of all the branches of the party. The decision will only be representative of the party if so determined.

Party members who desire to secure copies of the Left Wing Program for study before the joint meeting, March 30, can do so at the Socialist Book Stand, 1222 Prospect Ave.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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