The Left Wing and the Communist Party

A Statement by the National Council

THE purpose of this statement is to set forth the position of the National Left Wing Council in relation to the Socialist Party; also in relation to the controversy which has arisen within the ranks of the Left Wing.

The National Left Wing Council came into existence on June 23rd, 1919, by action of the National Left Wing Conference held in New York June 21st to 24th. Since this Council was created by the National Left Wing Conference, the most exact way of arriving at an understanding of the character and purposes of the Council is by reference to the proceedings of the Conference.

On June 23rd (fifth session) the Conference Committee on Organization reported, among other matters, as follows:

"This Conference shall organize as the Left Wing Section of the Socialist Party and shall have as its object the capturing of the Socialist Party for revolutionary Socialism."

(Adopted by vote of 43 to 14; recorded as not voting, 14.)

"Toward this end the Conference shall elect a National Council of nine members to act as the executive of the Left Wing Section. The National Council shall elect an executive secretary."

Whereupon the Conference proceeded with the election of the Council, the following being declared elected: Ruthenberg, Fraina, Ferguson, Ballam, Wolfe, Cohen, Gitlow, Larkin, MacAlpine. Announced as not taking part in this election, 24 delegates.

"The National Council is authorized to publish one or more educational and propaganda papers; issue declarations; print literature; route speakers and undertake such other activity as will place the principles and program of the Left Wing Section before the rank and file of the Socialist Party membership.

The National Council shall co-ordinate all suspended and expelled branches, locals, state organizations and Language Federations, issue a temporary dues stamp to these organizations and do all in their power to keep these organizations intact until such time as they may again function as sub-divisions of a national organization."

"The National Council shall direct an agitation to realize the following results and conditions at the National Emergency Convention of the Socialist Party:

a) It shall assist in all ways within its power to secure the election of Left Wing delegates to the Emergency Convention of the Socialist Party.

b) It shall call upon all suspended and expelled sub-divisions of the Socialist Party to elect delegates to the Emergency Convention of the Socialist Party; shall insist that these delegates be seated at this convention and that the convention organize as if no suspensions or expulsions had occured.

c) The National Council shall exert every influence to the end that the Emergency Convention of the Socialist Party may adopt the Left Wing Manifesto and Program as the basis for the Party's platform and policy.

d) It shall insist that the Emergency Convention of the Socialist Party affiliate the Socialist Party with the Communist International which affiliation has in fact been decided by referendum vote.

e) It shall demand that the Emergency Convention of the Socialist Party shall recognize the validity of the National Referendum elections for a new National Executive Committee, International Delegates and an International Secretary.

f) However, there may come a time when by the ready assistance of capitalist courts the Right Wing reactionaries will retain legal possession of the party machinery and property. Should therefore the National Emergency Convention prove reactionary and in the control through the assistance of capitalist police powers, of the moderate and despotic officialdom of the party; should this Emergency Convention rule in favor of the shameful acts of the present autocratic National Executive Committee, then the Left Wing Delegates to this Convention shall immediately organize a new Communist Party, representing the vast majority of the present Socialist Party, a party which shall speak the will of the rank and file of the more than 50 per cent of the party already expelled and suspended, a party which will be true to the Communist International and revolutionary Socialism.

g) The National Council shall be instructed to call delegates from all branches, locals, state and Socialist Federations to meet in Chicago or any other place designated to which the Emergency Convention is summoned. In the event that such Convention refuses to seat the Left Wing delegates—the delegates accepting the Left Wing Manifesto—the Council shall call such delegates, expelled to call delegates from all branches, locals, party based on the call summoning the Convention in Moscow on the initiative of the Communist Party in Russia.

(Note: this call is incorporated in the Platform adopted by the Left Wing Conference.)

h) In the event that the National Emergency Convention of the Socialist Party is not called on August 30th, as at present scheduled. the National Council is instructed to call the delegates who have already been voted upon, and hold a convention that will organize a new party then and there at Chicago on Aug. 30th, the Communist Party. (Unanimously carried.)"

At a further stage of the Conference (eighth session) a resolution was adopted that we call a conference in Chicago on September first of all revolutionary elements desirous of uniting with the revolutionary Socialist Party, or with the Communist Party to be organized by the Left Wing delegates who may secede from the convention of the Socialist Party on Aug. 30th. In explanation of this resolution reference was made to a group of expelled members of the S. L. P. who might be desirous of joining themselves with a Bolshevik party; also it was stated that this provision would include such Federation groups as might want to join with the Left Wing on September first.

The final motion of the Conference was as follows: "That all business that may be left over, if any, shall be refered to the National Council, and that we do now adjourn to meet in Chicago September first."

From the foregoing it is clear that the National Council carries over the Left Wing Conference of June 21-24 to September first. Meanwhile its central task is to bring together at Chicago delegates from all groups desirous of establishing in the United States a party of revolutionary Socialism.

The instructions to the National Council cover: 1) co-operation with delegates elected to the Emergency Convention under the regular party methods who are recognized and instructed by the Left Wing groups within their respective States; 2) co-operation with delegates elected by expelled and suspended Left Wing groups, aside from the regular party elections; 3) co-operation with delegates from groups not within the Socialist Party, who desire to affiliate themselves with us on the basis of the Left Wing Manifesto and Program.

From the side of the machinery to be used by the National Left Wing Council, the instructions of the Conference cover: 1) the Emergency Convention; 2) an August 30th Convention in case the Emergency Convention is put off; 3) a special conference on September first with all elements desiring to unite on a Communist basis; 4) the reconvening of the Left Wing Conference on September first.

Finally, from the angle of the actual tasks to be fulfilled there are two clear-cut alternatives: 1) control of the Emergency Convention by the Left Wing delegates regularly elected, seating by them of Left Wing delegates elected by suffrage of expelled and suspended locals, States and Federations, and transformation of the Socialist Party into an organization of revolutionary Socialism; or 2) formation of a new party regardless of the Emergency Convention, on August 30th, or on September first, to be called the Communist Party.

The National Council is now engaged in gathering information, mobilizing the Left Wing forces, and carrying on the propaganda which will assure a party of revolutionary Socialism, by nation-wide co-operation of the Left Wing elements, by September first. Those who have attempted to raise the contention that the National Left Wing Conference did not sufficiently lay the basis for a Communist Party by September first deliberately misstate the plain facts.

There is no part of the Left Wing Conference program which is open to legitimate attack by any member of the Left Wing. That the National Left Wing Council is acting upon this program with a view to making the broadest possible preparation for the launching of a new party of revolutionary Socialism on August 30th and September first is conclusively shown by the record of our work and statements in *The Revolutionary Age*.

The main argument of the minority group in the Left Wing Conference was that it is impossible to expect the Right Wing to surrender control at the Emergency Convention. How then can there be any question, under the instructions above quoted, of the formation of a Communist Party outside the Emergency Convention? How could the National Council, assuming it were so disposed, which is not the fact, evade the responsibility for opening a convention to start the Communist Party.

Also, under these instructions, how could a Left Wing Emergency Convention—seating all Left Wing delegates—fail to establish a Communist Party?

Obviously there is no sincere argument that the Left Wing Conference did not completely cover the situation.

Let those who favor a Communist Party realize once for all, on the face of the Conference record itself, that so far as the question of a new party is concerned the minority group was defeated in the Conference on but one point: *the immediate formation, at New York, of a Communist Party.* Such an action would have been without mandate from the party membership; it would have been without

reckoning of the viewpoint of many thousands of revolutionary Socialists who are still members of the Socialist Party in good standing; it would have been the coup d'etat of a partially representative body, ignoring many states and tens of thousands of party members; it would have meant a surrender of the splendid propaganda opportunities within the Socialist Party until August 30th. But as for the principle of a Communist Party, and guarantees of its beginning by September first, there can be no dispute about the actions of the Conference.

So far as the minority group in the Conference are now attempting to claim a difference with the majority of the Conference, that claim falls to pieces when the actual facts of the Conference are considered. At the Sunday evening session of the Conference (third session, June 22) there was a roll call vote of 55 to 38 against the proposition of immediate organization of a new party. On Monday morning all delegates continued their participation in the Conference, though part of the minority group refused to vote on the proposition to join the Michigan call for a September first Convention to start a new Socialist Party. On Monday afternoon, all delegates voting, there was an election of a committee to take over the work of the Conference provided that a raid and arrests should make it impossible to bring a quorum together again. Four of the delegates elected to this committee later identified themselves with the minority which discontinued activity within the Conference, though not leaving. This step of conditional secession from the Conference occurred only after defeat of the proposition that each Federation should have a member on the National Left Wing Council, to be designated by the Executive Committee of the Federation, in addition to the 9 members to be elected by the Conference (in which election the Federation representatives would also participate). In a word, this meant that the National Council of the Left Wing should become subsidiary to the Central Executive Committees of the Federations. This proposition was defeated 23 to 41.

On Monday evening (sixth session) the following announcement was made: "Some 31 comrades from the various foreign federations, and some English comrades met about half an hour ago and decided to organize a new Communist Party on the basis of the principles laid down by the National Left Wing Conference on June 22nd, for which purpose they joined the convention call of the Michigan State Convention of September 1st. At the same time it was decided to withhold all activities of those 31 members from active participation in this Conference, and reserve their right to resume those activities at the time that they find fit."

Of this minority, the Federation delegates did not support the Michigan call when offered in the Conference, because they disagreed with the call in principle. On the other hand, the Federation delegates accepted the basis in principle for a new party as laid down by the majority of the Conference. Not one delegate left the Conference on the issue of immediate formation of the Communist Party. The Michigan call itself, and so the Michigan delegates explained, conceded the advisability of the campaign in connection with the Emergency Convention of August 30th. In other words, the Michigan call added absolutely nothing to the actions of the Conference, and was simply a bid to let the Conference make of the National Left Wing a tail to the kite of Michigan.

Three sets of delegates made up this curious minority: 1) the Michigan group which wanted the Conference to accept in toto its prearranged plan and program, substituting the will and judgment of the Michigan State Convention for that of a group of delegates from all over the country, a group which has not even yet joined itself in any way with the National Left Wing, but was given the courtesy of representation at the Conference as an expelled State; 2) a small group of delegates who persisted in their demand for immediate formation of a new party, who obviously compromised their position by joining in a call for a new party on September 1st; 3) the largest element of the minority, the Federation delegates—who acted only after defeat of the proposition to give absolute control of the Left Wing to the Federation Executive Committees. This group was openly opposed in principle to the Michigan group, yet joined with the Michigan group when they found that these delegates were ready to abandon their principles for the sake of "putting over" their *coup d'etat*.

Let anyone answer: which one of these groups acted on *principle* in separating themselves from the National Left Wing?

The call for the September 1st Convention made by this strangely assembled minority is based directly upon the Platform formulated by the Conference. Evidently the Conference did not falter in the principles of revolutionary Socialism. Neither in principle or tactics did the Conference waver or compromise on a single point, and the experience since the Conference proves beyond a doubt that the majority chose the best way in which to bring together all the elements in the Socialist Party ready for a Communist Party of revolutionary Socialism.

Comrades of the Left Wing: there is much important work to be done during the next month for the future of revolutionary Socialism in America—for a Communist Party that will be much more than a flourish of a glorious name, for a party that will actually bring into common action all the revolutionary proletarian elements in the United States. The Council has already appealed to you for funds wherewith to carry on its work. The Council has already urged upon you the support of Left Wing candidates to the Emergency Convention, or the formation of separate Left Wing provisional organizations as the basis for representation at Chicago. The Council appeals to you also for information about your local or branch so that we may know how to bring our plans into conformity with the varied party situation in the different States.

We address ourselves in this statement primarily to those already in accord with the fundamental principles of Communism, to those who have already grasped the vital significance of the Left Wing movement in the class struggle in America. We are just as eager to deal with the questions of those who have not heretofore been presented with the opportunity to study developments in world history and in Socialism itself out of which the Left Wing movement took form. But in the exigencies of the immediate party campaign we are forced to deal first with the pressing problems of party reorganization. However, we shall welcome the opportunity to answer all questions, through our Secretary, and to bring our literature into the hands of those not as yet aligned with the Left Wing.

We repeat our appeals for funds and for active co-operation. The response already has been most encouraging, but there are many parts of the country yet to be heard from. Act at once. Do your part to give the Socialist movement in this country an impetus on Aug. 30th which will carry us a long way toward the goal of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in America!

National Left Wing Council.

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From a Soldier in France

IN the midst of the deluge of abuse that is being directed against Soviet Russia by the press it is gratifying to find a few courageous publications like yours, attempting to stem the tide, presenting the case of the Russian workers and explaining and justifying the new society they are trying to build upon the ruins of the monarchy. The A. E. F. have even less access than you to any authentic and reliable information on Russian affairs and while I possess little accurate knowledge of the stirring and momentous events in that land of mystery and promise, I do know something of the principles and practices of the American press. This knowledge suggests to me but one interpretation of the campaign of hate that is being waged with such vigor against the Soviets namely: that the privileges for which that press stands and the interests whose message it preaches are in danger, perhaps even threatened with early and complete annihilation in Russia as the hands of a victorious proletariat, an event that could not but hasten the doom of special privilege in other lands outside of Russia. In no other way can I account for the hysterical and vicious denunciations of Bolshevism and its leaders that stare at me from every page of the daily papers. The strategy and also the tactics here employed so closely resemble the plan of campaign pursued by the press in the ceaseless industrial war in the States that it is possible to make a fairly accurate estimate of the character, the strength and the purposes of the Bolsheviki. And having observed the habits of the press in that war and noted its utter lack of the sportsmanlike spirit and its shameful disregard of the most elemental requirements of literary honor, and knowing something of the sinister influences that control it, I cannot effect any surprise at its present behavior.

I cannot resist the conclusion that the masters of America, disturbed by visions of a Socialist government in Russia, are in their rage and desperation sounding through their mouthpiece the call for the sympathetic strike, the boycott, the lockout, the blacklist and even for the war of extermination in defense and on behalf of their vanishing brethren in Russia. In this they are obeying, though in a blind and stupid way, the instinct of self preservation. They are fools of more kinds than one but yet shrewd enough to understand that if the Russian proletariat wins, the American proletariat cannot lose.