
Minutes of the National Convention of the Proletarian Party of America: Held in Chicago, Illinois — Sept. 2-4, 1923

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The Convention was called to order by the National Secretary,
John Keracher, September 2, 1923, at 11:45 am.

Delegate Philip Kerr was elected temporary chairman.

Delegate Margaret B. Irvin was elected temporary secretary.

Appointment of Credentials Committee comprised of Comrades
Renner, Kerr, and Peterson by the National Executive Committee was
concurred in by the Convention.

Delegates reported present and seated were the following:

Philadelphia — Frank Bauman, M.B. Irvin.

Chicago — Carl Berreitter, Ed Anderson.

San Francisco — James Sinclair.

Grand Rapids — Adrian Luyendyck.

Detroit — Oscar Peterson, Al Renner.

Cleveland — Sam Myers, Bernard Tamarkin.

Jackson [MI] — John Dahl.

Flint — Carl Talbott.

Rochester — C.M. O'Brien, Sam Essman.

Buffalo — A.J. McGregor.

Milwaukee — John Wagner.

Ann Arbor — Albert E. Burt.

The following fraternal delegates were also seated:

Rochester — Sol Horowitz.

Chicago — Clarence Hemmingson.

Milwaukee — Charles J. Klein.

Detroit — Mrs. Bertha Lang Peterson, Ernest Greenberg.

Others seated were National Secretary Keracher and member of the National Executive Committee Philip Kerr.

Reporting for the National Executive Committee, delegate C.M. O'Brien briefly outlined the work undertaken by the Committee since the last convention of the party held in Detroit in 1921. The principal points touched upon by Comrade O'Brien had reference to a communication purporting to come from the Communist International and another from the Workers Party, both inviting the Proletarian Party to join the Workers Party, and without going into a detailed discussion of the subject pointed out that this matter had been given full publicity in the columns of the party press.

The Labor Digest, he said, had been launched upon repeated recommendations from members in various sections of the country, it being felt that by the publication of such a paper a greater number of workers would be reached than was being reached by *The Proletarian*. At a meeting of the National Executive Committee held in the spring of 1923 it was decided to commence the publication of a weekly paper about May 1st [1923]. Comrade O'Brien pointed out that up to the present time the paper had not been a financial success, and in his opinion was not as good as it might have been, attributing this to the shortage of funds and inadequate assistance in getting out the paper and also to overwork of those in charge of the National Office. Upon motion duly made and seconded the report of Delegate O'Brien for the National Executive Committee was adopted.

The report of the Credentials Committee was read and all delegates present were seated, the fraternal delegates being given a voice but not a vote. Upon action duly made and seconded, the report of the Credentials Committee was accepted.

On motion of Delegate Essman, duly seconded, the temporary officers were elected permanent officers of the Convention.

Report of the National Secretary.

National Secretary Keracher briefly outlined the activities of the organization from the time he took over the National Office nearly 18 months ago. At that time the organization was in bad condition financially, which for a time retarded the work of party extension. He pointed out that in spite of the backward tendency of other working class political groups the Proletarian party had succeeded in entering new territory and putting new locals in the field.

Party Press: With reference to the party press the National Secretary pointed out that while the circulation of *The Proletarian* had increased considerably, yet more rapid circulation had been hampered by lack of funds. He briefly outlined the agitation which resulted in the launching of *The Labor Digest*, stating that a paper lighter than *The Proletarian* was needed to reach the masses of the workers. Experience has shown that *The Labor Digest* is reaching sections of the working class not accessible to *The Proletarian*. The work of raising funds necessary to the publication of *The Labor Digest* was supervised by a committee of comrades in Chicago. Of the \$2,000 which they set out to secure before publication they succeeded in raising \$779.97. The procuring of the amount originally stipulated was made difficult by an effort put forth at the same time on the Day's Wage Fund, designed to extend party activities. Comrade Keracher directed attention to the fact that the expenses of the publication were greatly in excess of the income of the National Office; that since the publication of *The Labor Digest* there has been a deficit weekly equivalent to the monthly deficit suffered before its publication.

The National Secretary related that while we do not have a large number of organizers in the field there have been greater efforts this summer than ever before. It has been the experience of organizers that in every section they have visited there are groups who are willing to line up with the Proletarian Party. A large influx of members, however, is not expected. A steady growth is more desirable at this time. In the past summer it has been possible to organize a number of new locals. He urged that the Convention take steps to perfect the structure of the organization, to provide for the carrying on of more extensive educational work, and to extend the party activities into territory remaining untouched.

Upon motion duly made and seconded the report of the National Secretary was adopted.

Election of Committees.

Upon motion duly made and seconded the Resolutions Committee comprised of Delegates Peterson, Essman, and McGregor was elected.

Upon motion duly made and seconded Delegates O'Brien, Tamarkin, and Bauman were elected the Committee on Constitution.

Upon motion duly made and seconded the Manifesto Committee comprised of Delegates Talbott, Sinclair, and Anderson was elected.

Reports were received from delegates on the activities of their respective locals — of meetings conducted by them, literature disposed of, growth of organization and prospects.

Upon motion duly made and seconded the Convention adjourned to give the respective committees an opportunity to meet.

September 3, 1923.

The Convention was called to order at 10:45 am. The minutes of the previous session were read and, after two minor corrections suggested by Comrades Keracher and O'Brien, it was moved and seconded that they be accepted as corrected. *Carried.*

Report of Comrade Keracher on the Kerr proposition. It was moved and seconded that the recommendations of Comrade Keracher in connection therewith be concurred in. *Carried.*

Report of Resolutions Committee.

After a prolonged discussion re: the Party's attitude towards the Communist International and the Workers Party, which included the reading of a 23 page article drawn up by Comrade Ernest Greenberg, it was duly moved and seconded that the following resolution be adopted:

Resolved, that the Proletarian Party of America continue to work in harmony with and support the general principles of the Communist International insofar as it is possible for an unaffiliated party to do so.

Carried.

It was moved and seconded that the Convention adjourn at 1:30 pm to reconvene at 2:30 pm. *Carried.*

The Convention was called to order by Comrade Keracher at 2:30 pm. The permanent chairman [Kerr] being absent, Comrade Renner was elected temporary chairman.

The work of the Resolutions Committee was proceeded with. After further discussing the Party's attitude toward the Workers Party, including the reading of their so-called "Offer of Unity" dated June 28, 1923 (received on the eve of the Farmer-Labor Party Conference), and a letter received purporting to be a Minority Report of Local Philadelphia, it was duly moved and seconded that the following resolution be adopted:

Resolved, that this Convention approve the action of the National Executive Committee in refusing to join the Workers Party.

Adopted unanimously.

After fully discussing the Party's attitude toward the Trade Union Educational League it was duly moved and seconded that the following resolution be adopted:

Resolved, that members of the Proletarian Party shall not accept membership in nor the discipline of the Trade Union Educational League.

Adopted.

To facilitate the work of this Convention it was moved and seconded that Resolution No. 6 be referred to the Committee on Constitution. *Carried.*

Nos. 7 and 8 were considered as one. (7) Educational Work and Party Papers. (8) Discontinuance of *The Proletarian*. It was moved and seconded that both of these resolutions be tabled. *Carried.*

Moved and seconded that Resolution No. 9 be tabled. *Carried.*

Manifesto Committee.

It was moved and seconded that the Manifesto Committee be permitted to enlarge itself and reconvene. *Carried.*

Upon suggestion of Comrade Keracher that a committee be selected to outline the balance of the work of the Convention, it was duly moved and seconded that a committee of three be elected to revise the agenda so that nothing be omitted that it is desirable to take up at this Convention. *Carried.* Comrades Berreiter, Keracher, and Myers were elected.

Constitution Committee.

It was moved and seconded that the following amendments to the Constitution be adopted:

Article 4, Section 1. The National Office shall each week furnish the Locals with form blanks, questioning these Locals as to their various activities and conditions, financial, study class, and other activities.

Article 6. Section 1. Each Local shall be entitled to one delegate for 25 members or fraction thereof and one additional delegate for each additional 25 members or major fraction thereof.

Article 2. Section 6a. A member three or more months in arrears with dues or assessments either national or local shall be automatically suspended and must not serve as officer or on any committee. Such member can not vote or participate in discussions at party meetings. However, no one shall cease to be a member if the Local receives satisfactory reasons of inability to keep such dues and assessments paid to date.

Article 12. Section 2. Financing of the National Office shall be taken care of by special weekly taxation of each local according to its ability to raise funds, this ability to be determined by the National Executive Committee. *Carried.*

It was moved and seconded that the Convention recess to reconvene at 7:00 o'clock. *Carried.*

The session adjourned at 5:15 pm.

Report of Organization Committee.

Election of Officers. Nominations for National Executive Committee: McGregor, Renner, Hemmingson, Sinclair, Lyendyck, Essman, Kerr, Berreiter, Talbott, Dahl, Fahey, Keracher, Tamarkin, Camfield, Myers, Wagner, O'Brien, Bauman, Peterson, Cole, McPhie, Anderson.

After declinations the remaining 15 (as follows) were elected by unanimous ballot: McGregor, Berreitter, Talbott, Cole, Kerr, Tamarkin, Camfield, Fahey, O'Brien, Bauman, Peterson, McPhie, Renner, Hemmingson, Anderson.

John Keracher was nominated for National Secretary, and it was moved and seconded that he be elected. *Carried.*

Financial Matters. It was moved and seconded that a Finance Committee of 5 be elected to bring before the Convention tomorrow specific methods for raising funds. *Carried.*

Moved and seconded that the secretary be instructed to cast a unanimous ballot for the election of the following five as the Finance Committee: Berreiter, Wagner, Tamarkin, Bauman, McGregor. *Carried.*

Adjourned at 10:50 pm.

September 4, 1923.

The Convention convened at 10:00 am, and on request of the committees, adjourned to meet again at 1:00 pm.

The convention was called to order at 1:00 pm and proceeded with the report of the Finance Committee. The committee recommended that a certain amount be apportioned to each local according to ability to raise funds to meet the weekly deficit, and that a special secretary be elected for the work, apart from the National Office. Motion to that effect was carried. Finance secretary elected Bernard Tamarkin of Cleveland.

After listening to report of Editorial Committee, a motion was made and seconded that the report of the Editorial Committee be accepted. Carried.

Constitution Committee. It was moved and seconded that the following be adopted:

Delegates to the national convention shall be elected at least 30 days prior to the opening session.

Not less than 30 days before the convention date, the National Secretary shall prepare and transmit to Locals an agenda of the convention.

At the same time the National Executive Committee shall have drawn up a provisional Constitution, Manifesto, and Program, to be printed in a bulletin. *Carried.*

Moved and seconded that the following resolution be adopted:

Resolved that the Proletarian Party shall maintain its separate existence from other working class parties upon the basis of its Constitution and Program, except at such time that a crisis may arise in the working class movement which necessitates the combined unity of the working class. At such time it will be the duty of the Proletarian Party to cooperate with other working class parties.

Adopted.

New Business.

Party extension. Moved and seconded that the question of District Organizers be left in the hands of the Executive Committee. Carried.

Young People's Organizations. Moved and seconded that the work of organizing young people's organizations be left in the hands of the Executive Committee.

Good and Welfare.

A general discussion of party conditions was carried on with the following comrades participating: Essman, O'Brien, Keracher, McGregor, Sinclair, Berreitter, Peterson, Wagner, and Bauman.

Moved and seconded that the convention adjourn to reconvene at 6:30 pm. *Carried.*

Session adjourned at 5:00 pm.

Convention reconvened at 6:45 pm.

Moved and seconded that inasmuch as the Manifesto is not complete it should be left in the hands of the Manifesto Committee to finish and to be turned over to the National Executive Committee. *Carried unanimously.*

For information of delegates, letters from the Workers Party, signed by C.E. Ruthenberg, Executive Secretary, re: so-called unification with the Workers Party, and from the Civil Liberties Bureau, re: the Rose case, read by Comrade Keracher.

Moved and seconded that the letter from the Workers Party be turned over to the new Executive Committee and that it need not be answered at this time. *Carried.*

Moved and seconded that the Executive Secretary [Keracher] inform the Civil Liberties Bureau that the Proletarian Party is without funds to finance the Rose case but if they suggest any way to arrange it the Proletarian Party will be glad to cooperate with them. *Carried.*

After full discussion of the Batt case, discipline, etc., it was moved and seconded that the following resolution be adopted:

Resolved, that Party members who support in any way candidates for political office other than those endorsed by the Proletarian Party shall be expelled.

Carried.

Functioning in Trade Unions. After full discussion it was moved and seconded that this question be referred to the Manifesto Committee. *Carried.*

After remarks by Comrade Keracher in regard to the work of the Convention, the Party's responsibilities, etc., etc., it was duly moved and seconded that the Convention adjourn. *Carried.*

Convention adjourned at 10:40 pm.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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