
Semi-Annual Report of the National Committee of the Socialist Party, September 12, 1902.

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St. Louis, Mo.,
September 12, 1902.

To the Members of the Socialist Party.

Comrades:

Your National Committee, in submitting its semi-annual report, deems it wise to confine itself to a statement of the difficulties confronting the party in order that the membership, being possessed of the facts, may take appropriate action.

While socialist sentiment has increased throughout the country with marked rapidity, and while many very gratifying changes have taken place in our movement, we must in all candor say that the party organization has not been equal to the opportunities presented thereby. Since the last national convention [Indianapolis: July 29-Aug. 1, 1901] the movement has been divided into as many parties as there are states, each directed by a State Committee proceeding in its own weak fashion and according to its own conception of principles and tactics, with the result that the Socialist Party today is no stronger than the strongest state organization affiliated. Instead of being a united party, we are fast becoming a mere "federation of Socialist Parties," each of these parties having its territorial limits and jealously guarding against any encroachment upon its domain.

Such a condition has led to endless confusion and needless waste of energy and funds.

Each state committee is bearing the burden of nursing an infant Socialist Party, and thus doing in each state what the party did on a national scale many years ago. Consequently, regardless of their good in-

tentions, they are unable to properly meet their obligations to the national organization.

In matters of organization and propaganda the desire of most State Committees to till their own field makes us appear as an army of truck farmers instead of the "bonanza" farmers we might be were our operations conducted on a national scale. The most serious danger lies in questions of principles and tactics. The practical independence of the state organizations from the party as a whole makes it possible for young and inexperienced State Committees to place the party in many painful and contradictory situations.

We recommend a careful study of the situation by all comrades, and set forth below some of the facts which lead us to the opinions herein expressed.

Financial.

At this time Illinois, Oklahoma, and Wisconsin are in arrears for July and August [1902]; Nebraska and New York for June, July, and August; and Kansas and North Dakota since March. The national constitution makes it mandatory upon State Committees to pay national dues monthly, but the National Committee has no power to enforce this provision, which the State Committees for the most part have not lived up to.

In Kansas, the dues system having been abolished, the State Committee collects no dues from the comrades and pays no dues to the national organization.

Thus, although its fixed expense are increasing in proportion to the growth of the movement, the fluctuating revenues of the national organization cause serious embarrassment at all times.

Methods of State Committees.

The national constitution requires the State Committees to make semi-annual reports, but the National Committee has no power to enforce this provision, which is not being observed. The absence of reports from State Committees leaves the National Committee in the dark about conditions in the states.

In remitting national dues, the State Committees, as a rule, do not state what locals have paid, nor on what month the dues apply, nor the number of members paid for by each local.

As a consequence, the National Secretary [Leon Greenbaum] is unable to determine whether the states are forwarding their full quota of national dues.

It has been impossible since the Unity Convention [July-Aug. 1901] to determine the number of locals and membership of the party in the United States, in the absence of reports by the State Committees. This condition of affairs is attended with many dangers. Should a State Secretary for any reason be absent from his post, it is possible that neither the state nor national organizations would know the names and locations of locals in the state. One instance of this kind occurred recently in Nebraska. The State Committee of Wisconsin has refused a list of its locals up to the present time. Were this example generally followed we could not reach the membership in any national emergency.

Propaganda.

In order to meet the requirements of the movement for widespread propaganda, the National Committee started the Labor Lecture Bureau. That it is the most economic and far-reaching system of propaganda ever inaugurated in the Socialist movement is proven by requests for speakers from trade unions and party organizations in every state and territory, but the operations of this Lecture Bureau cannot be extended under existing conditions. National dues being diverted or withheld by State Committees, the National Committee is helpless to furnish a national system of agitation. The locals, being thrown on their own resources, are obliged to pay extravagantly for individual propaganda. The amount of money spent in planless propaganda in one month by State Committees and locals,

would enable the National Committee to maintain a corps of clear and able speakers for one year under the systematic and economic method of the Labor Lecture Bureau, with the added advantage of reaching the trade union movement.

Agitation as at present conducted is sectional, being confined to the territory which can pay high prices for speakers.

A proper Socialist agitation is one that reaches into every section of the country, and regulates the cost with consideration for the scant funds of the proletarian organizations.

Party Organization.

The national constitution gives the State Committees sole control of all matters pertaining to organization within the respective states, and as a result a division of energy has been created, depriving the national organization of the national cooperation necessary to send organizers into unorganized states.

The work of organization as conducted exclusively by State Committees has in some instances been totally neglected, in others it languishes or is being conducted spasmodically, while in no instance have the results reached the degree of efficiency and stability that will in the end only be achieved by national cooperative effort.

The whole work of organization is segregated, sectional, and at cross purposes.

Under the present system the State Committees cannot insure permanency of employment to comrades most highly qualified as organizers, to induce them to undertake the work of the party.

Tactics and Principles.

The separation of the party into state organizations, each being supreme in its own state, holds forth a prospect of political advantage, very tempting to certain men. As a result, there have been factional fights in 5 states. Under the operation of the national constitution, the National Committee cannot interfere to prevent or settle such troubles before they reach a serious stage, but must wait until there is a split in the state.

Such a struggle is now in progress in Nebraska.

The fact that organizations in new states consist of elements inexperienced in the philosophy and tactics of the international Socialist movement naturally leads to political expressions, platforms, and party tactics which conflict with Socialist principles and practices, and which are essentially middle class.

The factional fight in Utah was largely caused by such conditions, and the National Committee could not interfere until there was a split and rival State Committees to deal with.

The independent tendencies of the state organizations find expression in different tactics by different states on questions of national policy, so that while the National Committee may be attempting to rally the comrades of the country on a certain line of action, conflicting policies may be urged by one or more State Committees. This confusion in organization and in tactics is well illustrated at this time by many of our comrades who seem to think that Socialist principles are justification for applauding a division on Socialist lines between the economic organizations of the working class.

While the Socialist Party in national convention has solemnly pledged itself to the unification of the trade unions, yet a contrary policy has been set up in the West by comrades acting in a dual capacity as organizers of the American Labor Union and the Socialist Party, thus misrepresenting the attitude of our party and compromising it in their attempts to build up a rival organization to the American Federation of Labor.

Conclusions.

The expense of holding a National Committee meeting in January last [1902] amounted to almost \$700. As there are now twice as many organized states as were then represented, the next meeting would cost about \$1,500.

The national organization has not a cent toward meeting this expense, and if same is deducted as before by the states represented from funds due the National Committee, it will cause a recurrence of existing embarrassment, which not alone deprives the National Committee of sufficient funds for current expenses, but subjects us to the mortification of pleading constant bankruptcy to creditors of former National Committees and humiliates your Local Quorum, which must henceforth decline to endure this condition. Furthermore, we do not believe that a meeting of the National Committee would suffice to thoroughly and decisively solve the problems herein presented; it would not bring about the general degree of understanding required between the comrades upon party policy and tactics.

The indefinite continuance of the present laxity of organization and confusion in methods so threatens the stability of our party that, no other means being sufficient to meet the emergency, we suggest to the consideration of the comrades such constitutional steps as may be necessary for holding a national convention of the Socialist Party.

Meanwhile the conditions at present existing can be partially alleviated if the comrades in the delinquent states will hold their respective State Committees accountable in their dealings with the national organization.

Faternally,

*G.A. Hoehn,
M. Ballard Dunn,
William Brandt,
L.E. Hillebrand,
E. Val. Putnam,*

Local Quorum

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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