
Preparations for the National Convention to Organize the Communist Party of America [events of Aug. 27, 1919]

by Louis Loebel

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Report Made by: L. Loebel

Place Where Made: Chicago, Ill.

Date When Made: Aug. 29, 1919.

Period for Which Made: Aug. 27, 1919.

*Title of Case and Offense Charged
or Nature of Matter Under Investigation:*

**In re: Communist Party of America,
National Convention of Sept. 1.**

*Statement of Operations, Evidence Collected, Names and
Addresses of Persons Interviewed, Places Visited, Etc.:*

At Chicago:

I visited the headquarters of the Communist Party at 1221 Blue Island Ave., and had lengthy conversations with Dennis E. Batt and O.C. Johnson of the National Organization Committee, and with J. Kowalski, Polish Translator-Secretary. Isaac E. Ferguson, whom I was particularly anxious to meet, and for whom I waited at the headquarters for a considerable while, did not come. Our conversations started with my showing a clipping from the *St. Louis Star* of Aug. 25 [1919], relative to a meeting of the moderate Socialists held on Aug. 24 at St. Louis, Mo. It may be noted that 2 days after the revoking of the charter of the St. Louis Socialist Party by the state organization, I.E. Ferguson was in St. Louis, the principal speaker at a poorly attended meeting of the Left Wing Section, and on the following day, Aug. 24, the expelled Socialist Party had met in the same hall with Adolph Germer as the principal speaker of the meeting.

Ferguson urged his hearers to abandon the Socialist Party and join the recently organized Communist Party, while Germer made an appeal to stand by the old organization, referring to the Communists as "Impossibilists" and "who have gotten in a mad frenzy as the result of intoxication over the revolution in Europe." The expelled Socialists elected a temporary Executive Committee with a view to reorganize and "Horribile dictu." The following are among the members of this committee: W.M. Brandt, Secretary of the old Socialist Party, who was a strong advocate of the Left Wing movement before his bitter enemy, Henry Tichenor, declared himself identical with the Left Wingers; Phil Wagner, formerly editor of the *Rip-Saw*, *Social Revolutionist*, and *The Melting Pot*, who was anything but a moderate socialist and who is on a desperate warpath with Tichenor, owing to certain financial transactions in which Tichenor had gotten the best of him; and Will O. Long, formerly a Democrat, later a revolutionist, then a Republican, and finally a Socialist, who sent his sister to take the chair at this meeting in his place, apparently not wanting to take the risk of presiding at a conservative Socialist meeting for fear that he may be the loser, should the Communist Party be a success. These "birds" are well known in St. Louis, and in their efforts to save the old party there are certain "financial" reasons in back of it, all 3 being considerably interested in the "Labor Publishing Co." It goes without saying that this "family quarrel" will have a beneficial effect upon the situation in St. Louis.

Batt and Johnson read the article with great interest and ridiculed Germer's action, calling him a "contemptible cur, who called the attention of the government to the radicalism of the Communist Party." They

stated that the organizing of the Communist Party, before the Socialist convention takes place, was an imperative necessity, as it would have been utterly impossible to capture the Socialist Party at the convention in view of the poor chance for the delegates of the expelled Socialist branches and foreign federations being seated. Further conversation was carried on along the lines of the prospects of the Communist Party to emerge triumphant from the war against capitalism with the establishing of a "Dictatorship of the Proletariat."

With reference to the convention, I learned that there are expected between 280 and 300 delegates, that only members of the Communist Party will be permitted to the conventions, and that newspaper reporters will be permitted, providing the delegates will vote affirmative in this respect.

After spending a short time in reading some literature, I had to leave, as I noticed J. Fraenkel working in the other room, whom I didn't deem advisable to meet at that particular place. As I learned, he is here only temporarily, to take care of some Hungarian translations, his home being in Cleveland, Ohio, where i broke up a radical Socialist group in 1914, of which he was one of the leaders.

I spent the balance of the day in Bureau office conferring with Agent Rouda and reviewing some of his summary reports on the radical situation.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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