
Motion to the National Committee, SPA [on Apparent Fusionism in Milwaukee].

[March 23, 1905]

by William Trautmann,
National Committeeman for Ohio

Published in *The Socialist* [Toledo, Ohio], whole no. 236 (April 1, 1905), pg. 5.

Relative to the article which The Socialist reported as appearing in Die Wahrheit of Milwaukee, Wis., edited by Victor L. Berger, issue of March 18 [1905], the following motion has been made by National Committeeman Trautmann of Ohio and submitted for a vote to the National Committee, under date of March 23:

The National Committee calls upon the State Executive Board of Wisconsin to proceed at once with an investigation as to whether a collusion or secret or open understanding exists in the city of Milwaukee between the Social Democratic Party organization, or a member or members thereof and representatives of capitalist parties; and said State Executive Committee be demanded to ascertain whether the endorsement of the state candidates running on capitalist party tickets in a socialist paper has had the sanction and approval of the party members. In either case, if parties be found guilty of such gross violation of Socialist Party ethics, they to be disciplined, through the State Executive Committees, to the extent required by adopted rules of the Socialist Party.

“My reasons for making this motion are outlined below. A few weeks ago the Milwaukee *Wahrheit*, a paper which has heretofore been recognized as espousing socialist theories and in the propaganda of socialism, had editorially advocated to the members of the party to refrain from nominating a ticket in this coming spring election when the municipal judges are to be nominated and elected. Apparently a referendum vote of party members has so decided, judging from the following editorials, upon which these charges are founded. Under date of March 18th [1905], this paper, the *Wahrheit*, had these two editorials, of which copies are enclosed, and they contain, as accurately translated as possible, these advices to voters of the

Social Democratic Party ticket.

The editorials:

“For us only two questions of principle must be taken into consideration. First, that Judge Carpenter has openly declared himself against our party and against Socialism, and secondly, that he is using his seat in the bench to conquer for the Roman Catholic clergy, so far as he is concerned, a certain domination upon matters of the state. For these reasons we are opposed to Judge Carpenter.

Against Judge Carpenter is running ex-Judge and ex-Mayor Emil Wallber, no Socialist, but after all a liberal minded, rightly inclined man, who has never used his seat at the bench to fuse state and church matters together. In his favor also speaks the fact that he, when mayor of the city in 1886, resisted the attempts at interference by militia, that is to say that the then Governor Jerry Rusk had called up the militia upon request of the manufacturers over the head of Wallber. It will be remembered that at that time several Polanders were shot to death by the troops. Wallber was, as consequence of this, dropped by the capitalists, but in 1888 he was elected as municipal judge with the assistance of the trade unionists and the Socialists against his opponent, the reckless Mallory. It is true, Wallber does understand very little, or nothing at all of the social problem, and has also sided with the blue turners in preference to the red ones, but, however, he possesses enough fairness and insight never to oppose the demands of the organized workers and the Socialists. It is superfluous to state here that the election of judges in Milwaukee are non-partisan, and in view of the fact that the Social Democrats of Milwaukee have by a referendum vote decided with a big majority not to put up a ticket, every member is at liberty to vote for such a candidate as might suit him best. It is not our mission to help either of the dozen of candidates in getting into one of the half dozen positions as judge, but it must be our earnest endeavor to keep Mr. Carpenter out of office, and this can only be done by voting for his opponent candidate, for candidate Wallber.

The second editorial note:

We must repeat again and again that we have only a negative interest in the election of judges this spring, since the membership has by referendum vote decided not to nominate candidates. But because Judge Paul D. Carpenter is representing in this fight the Roman Catholic Clergy, and because the Roman Catholic Clergy has thrown down the gauntlet in Milwaukee to the Socialists and the organized workers individually, therefore we will have a word to say in this election, at least as far as Judge Carpenter is concerned.

I consider a further comment superfluous. "Non-partisan" elections from a socialist viewpoint? It is absolutely necessary for the Socialist Party as a whole to find out whether it is in line with Socialist tactics, discipline, and the integrity of the party to allow such bargain counter and counter-bargaining deals prevail in any part of the Union. If the party membership of Milwaukee has sanctioned such policy, then the Socialists all over the United States ought to know it; if they have not, then they will demand and give themselves such an explanation as will set them clear before the Socialists, and bring those who are responsible for this to give account for. The state autonomy plan and rules should not be a barrier against a full and thorough sifting of this vital matter, a repetition of the "Born Sheboygan," the "Wisconsin platform of last year" affairs should not be countenanced by the Socialist Party as a whole.

The only way to find these things out and clarify the movement is to have the State Executive Board of Wisconsin assert their rights in this matter, and the only way to impel them to do it is by offering such a motion as I have proposed.

For these reasons I move as above stated."

The vote upon this motion closes April 6, 1905.

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After the foregoing motion by Trautmann had been sent out National Committeeman Berger requested that the members of the National Committee withhold their vote upon the motion until he could transmit an explanation to them, through the National Office.

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Later National Committeeman Lamb [Michigan] presented a motion that Trautmann's motion be laid upon the table and gave the following as his reasons for so moving:

"1. Comrade Trautmann alleges or charges nothing. He merely expresses his suspicion that something somewhere, with somebody, may not be regular and he is merely asking the National Committee to constitute itself a detective agency, a "smelling committee" or a court of inquisition to ascertain if his suspicions are well founded. It is not proper that the National Committee should permit itself to be used in such way. Comrade Trautmann having alleged nothing, is merely asking the National Committee to go upon a heresy hunt. His motion should lie upon the table until he or others shall have made definite and specific charges that certain comrades or party organizations have violated some definite clause of our National Constitution. Until then the National Committee has no jurisdiction."

Vote upon this motion closes April 10 [1905].

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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