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# NEC Declaration to the Party:

## Issued by the [new] National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party — An American Communist Party Urged.

### [adopted July 27, 1919] †

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This meeting of the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party occurs under extraordinary circumstances. Elected by the votes of the membership — overwhelmingly — it is compelled to meet without the cooperation of the old party administration.

The old NEC, overwhelmingly repudiated on referendum, usurped power and attempted to prevent the new NEC from functioning. This usurpatory action, together with the expulsion and suspension of more than 35,000 revolutionary comrades from the party, is a desperate move to retain control of the party for moderate, counterrevolutionary Socialism.

The old NEC is dead; it throttled the will of the revolutionary masses in the party; you comrades, must act; we meet simply to provide you the opportunity to act and assert your supremacy.

At this moment of crisis — of crisis in the world of Capitalism and Socialism — action is imperative. Action is imperative against Capitalism and against moderate Socialism in the party.

Your NEC, accordingly, acting under mandate of the party membership, convened in session at Chicago, July 26-27 [1919].

It met to rally our revolutionary forces for the struggle against Capitalism.

It met to rally the party members for the definite assertion of Communist Socialism in the American movement.

It met as a revolutionary NEC expressing the revolutionary sentiments in the party. Your NEC, by unanimous decision of the members in session decided:

1.— To oust National Executive Secretary Germer, who refuses to recognize your NEC as the organ of the party.

2.— To reinstate the expelled state organizations of Michigan and Massachusetts, and the suspended Language Federations, restoring to the party, with all rights, more than 35,000 comrades.

3.— To reorganize the Socialist Party as a Communist Party, in harmony with our affiliation with the Communist International.

4.— To call upon the members, regardless of the party-wrecking of the old NEC, to rally to the support of the class war prisoners.

5.— To consider seriously and comprehensively problems of organization shamefully neglected by the old party administration.

6.— To request the cooperation of the National Council of the Left Wing Section, Socialist Party (and its official organ, *The Revolutionary Age*) as an organized expression of the revolutionary sentiments of the party.

7.— To assume full control of the Emergency National Convention on August 30 [1919], the old NEC and its Executive Secretaries leaving no authority to organize or postpone this Convention. We will shortly inform you of the place where the Convention will meet, together with the roster of delegates. Our temporary Executive Secretary [Alfred Wagenknecht] will call the convention to order.

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†- This NEC Declaration was drafted by a committee of 3 of the new NEC, consisting of Ludwig Katterfeld, Louis Fraina, and Harry Wicks. After amendment it was approved unanimously by the 8 members of the new NEC in attendance at its July 26-27 session.

The purpose of the old NEC is to retain control for moderate petty bourgeois Socialism as against the proletarian Socialism of the Left Wing. It sabotaged the election; it expelled and suspended more than 35,000 members (and threatens to expel more) in order to control the Convention. This must be prevented; and your NEC, accordingly, assumes full control of this Convention — the most important in the party's history — in order that it shall actually become an expression of the revolutionary Socialism in the party. No postponement of the convention by the old NEC must be recognized by the party; no pleas of lack of money must be accepted; your NEC assumes full financial responsibility. At this moment of crisis in the world of Capitalism and of Socialism, to abandon the Convention is treason to the revolutionary proletariat.

On the issues of the Convention, your NEC adopts the following declaration:

The movement which culminated in the calling of the Emergency National Convention of August 30 [1919], did not have its origin in a contest over administrative actions of the party Executive Committee; its origin was a demand by large sections of the party membership for a reformulation of the party tactics and a restatement of its principles in harmony with the revolutionary Socialist practice of the Bolsheviks in Russia.

Local after local, in resolutions and demonstrations, urged the National Executive Committee to call a convention, great masses of the membership declared their adherence to the new revolutionary principles, but the National Executive Committee, the representative of moderate Socialism — the Socialism of Scheidemann and Kerensky — acting as self-appointed guardians of the party, refused to accede to the demand of the membership for a convention.

It was only after the membership itself had taken the matter out of the hands of the National Executive Committee and had endorsed the convention by an overwhelming vote, that the convention was finally called.

In their effort to maintain their rule of the party the moderate Socialists of the National Executive Committee did not hesitate to disrupt the organization. Members have been expelled and suspended wholesale in order to influence the vote of the referendum election, and to give the old National Executive Committee and moderate Socialism control of the convention and the party. These reactionary and treacherous acts have injected into the present party situation a bitter struggle for control of the party organization and the danger exists that this factional struggle over democracy against autocracy within the organization may overshadow the original purpose of the call for a national convention — to reorganize the Socialist

Party of the US on the basis of the Communist Socialism which is sweeping through the ranks of the Proletarian movement of the world and everywhere bringing new inspiration and courage to the workers in their struggle for emancipation. The old National Executive Committee consciously inspired this process by attempting to refer to the convention the controversial questions over administrative actions, which its disruptive <dropped line>

Recognizing this danger we call upon the membership to elect representatives to the Emergency National Convention, not merely on the basis of settling questions arisen out of the reactionary administrative action of the old National Executive Committee — the issue is not party democracy as against party autocracy, but Revolutionary Socialism against Moderate Socialism — but on the basis of reorganizing the party for the achievement of Communist Socialism.

The action of the membership on this question has already been indicated in the overwhelming and all but unanimous endorsement by referendum vote of affiliation with the Communist International, side by side with the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Russia and the Communist Labor Party (Spartacans) of Germany and other Communist parties of Europe. The work of the Emergency National Convention of August 30 will be to reorganize the Socialist Party on the basis of Communist Socialist principles and tactics outlined in the declaration of the Communist International. *Out of the Emergency National Convention came the Communist Party of the United States.*

To carry out this purpose we adopt the following program:

1.— We reaffirm the call for the Emergency National Convention to be held on August 30, in Chicago, and call upon all party units to send delegates irrespective of any action which the usurping members of the former National Executive Committee may take.

2.— The convention will be held under the direction of this committee and the Executive Secretary elected by it [Alfred Wagenknecht] will make up the roster of delegates and will call the convention to order.

3.— We call upon all sections of the party expelled or suspended by the reactionary Executive Committee and reinstated by this committee, to send delegates as provided in the rules of party procedure.

4.— We call upon all party units expelled by state or local organizations to taken such actions, in accordance with their local rules, as will insure them representation. †

The Left Wing is simply the assertion of revolutionary Socialism in our party. It is a legitimate movement expressing the mass revolutionary sentiment of the party — legitimately organized to awaken the members to the necessity of Communist Socialism.

The party has, in referendum (also suppressed by the old NEC) overwhelmingly accepted affiliation with the Communist International.

†- This quoted section on "Issues of the Convention" was composed by a committee consisting of new NEC members C.E. Ruthenberg, Fred Harwood, and Louis Fraina.

This acceptance of the Bolshevik-Spartacan Communist International imposes the obligation for transforming the principles and tactics of the Socialist Party in accord with the Communist International — to build the Communist Party of the United States, the constituent elements of which are the revolutionary masses in our party.

You cannot, comrades, brook any compromise on this issue. You must act, and act uncompromisingly as an integral part of the Communist International.

The Communist Party in every nation is rallying the revolutionary proletariat against Capitalism and Imperialism. Harkening to the inspiration of the Communists of the First International and of the Paris Commune, and answering the call of the Communists of Russia, Hungary, and Germany, the Communist Party calls the proletariat to the final struggle.

Comrades, history calls to you! We must challenge Capitalism; we must rally the proletariat for the Communist struggle, in accord with our own conditions.

The Socialist Party is hampered in its activity. But August 30, in the Chicago Convention, will mark the end of the Left Wing controversy. Revolutionary Socialism will control. You will crush the moderates. You will act! You will transform our party into a Communist Party, to express the mass struggle of the proletariat.

Then — action! Then — the revolutionary struggle!

We must go to the proletariat. We must build our movement anew. We must get the masses in our party — and answer the Communist call for action.

There are 30 million American wage workers — the force of potential revolution. Our chief task is to awaken and organize these proletarian masses, wage the working class struggle.

It is our determination — as it is yours, comrades — to act on problems of organization. We shall, as conditions allow, develop and unify our means of action; we shall systematically develop our press under party ownership, establish a party-owned publishing house, a party school for agitators, and a comprehensive lecture bureau. We shall develop the necessary technique to get your call for revolutionary action to the masses of the American proletariat.

The final struggle is coming. Our deeds in the days to come shall make proletarian history. Comrades — prepare!

Now — do not relax your agitation. Do not allow the old NEC to hamper your struggle for our class war prisoners — concentrate on this issue locally. Integrate your organization. *Elect Left Wing delegates to the Emergency Convention* to express *your* revolutionary ideals.

You shall conquer!

Act, comrades — against Capitalism and reactionary Socialism.

Greetings to the revolutionary masses in our party! Long live the Communist International!

*Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.*

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