
First Convention of the Communist Party of America, Day 6 — Sept. 6, 1919.

by James O. Peyronnin

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Report Made by: James O. Peyronnin
Place Where Made: Chicago, Ill.
Date When Made: Sept. 12, 1919.
Period for Which Made: Sept. 6, 1919.

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

**In Re: First Convention
“Communist Party of America,”
Chicago, Illinois.**

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

At Chicago.

Following is a detailed report of the 6th day session of the above mentioned convention:

John J. Ballam of Mass. Chairman for the day.

Telegram read by the Secretary: The 4th Assembly District, Manhattan Left Wing, demands that both Communist conventions unite into one, will not stand for two parties. Signed: 4th Assembly District, Left Wing Manhattan.

Charles M. O'Brien appealed to the delegates to expedite the business of the convention, and bitterly criticized the body as a whole for tolerating dominating tactics of the foreign element of the convention to control the convention.

In report of September 5, 1919, Employee quoted the complete program of the Communist Party

as adopted. The program in question was not acted upon by the body until this day, September 6, 1919. Each paragraph or clause was voted on seriatim. Practically the entire forenoon of this day was utilized by the body in discussions on this report.

Mimeograph copies of the Manifesto as proposed by the Majority were distributed to all the delegates.

Convention adjourned to reconvene at 3 pm.

Regularly moved and seconded that regardless of the mass meeting of the Communist Party, which takes place at 8 pm, Douglas Park Auditorium, the convention will remain in session until 11 pm, with a short interlude for supper. *Carried.*

Motion made by I.E. Ferguson to elect the following officers: International Secretary and alternate; 4 International Delegates and 4 alternates; 15 members of the Central Executive Committee and 5 alternates; a National Secretary and a National Editor.

A. Renner of Detroit, now seated with the Michigan group, strongly opposed the election of officers at this time. He stated that there are certain delegates who are struggling for time in which to put something over; that the reports of the committees should by all means be acted upon before the election of officers, and that the motion by Ferguson was out of order. Dennis E. Batt of Detroit strongly supported the motion of Renner.

The motion by Ferguson of Chicago, who seemed now to be in unity with the Russian Revolutionary Organization to control the convention, was carried, that the body proceed with the election of officers.

FOR INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY:

Nominees Louis C. Fraina, A. Renner, I.E. Ferguson, Dennis E. Batt. All declined with the exception of Fraina, and it was moved and carried that the Secretary cast the ballot. I.E. Ferguson elected alternate for International Secretary.

FOUR INTERNATIONAL DELEGATES: C.E. Ruthenberg, N.I. Hourwich, I.E. Ferguson, A. Stoklitsky, Marion Sproule, A. Renner, nominated. Two latter declined. Moved, seconded, and carried that the Secretary cast the ballot for the first 4 named delegates.

Daniel Elbaum, A. Bittelman, John J. Ballam, and J. Lovestone elected for alternates for International Delegates.

15 MEMBERS — CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

Following are the names of those elected: John Schwartz, A. Bittelman, John J. Ballam, N.I. Hourwich, Daniel Elbaum, K.B. Karosas, Max Cohen, O. Tyverovsky, C.E. Ruthenberg, I.E. Ferguson, J. Lovestone, Louis Fraina, Petrov, G. Ashkenuzi, and Wolf.

Following are the alternates elected for the Central Executive Committee: Alexis Georgian, [Meyer] Lunin (New York), Chester Bixby, Rose Pastor Stokes, J.J. Kravsevich.

FOR NATIONAL SECRETARY: A. Renner, declined; Dennis E. Batt, declined; C.E. Ruthenberg, accepted.

By the Chairman [Ballam]: If there is no objection the chair will have the Secretary cast the ballot.

FOR NATIONAL EDITOR: Dennis E. Batt, declined; Louis C. Fraina, accepted.

By the Chairman [Ballam]: If there is no objection from the body the Secretary will cast the ballot for the convention.

I.E. Ferguson moved the adoption of the Manifesto as proposed by the Majority committee — properly supported.

To the surprise of many of the delegates, there were no discussions, and the body voted for the adoption of the Manifesto as proposed by the Majority.

A female delegate, not listed, and who has had practically nothing to offer up to this time before the Convention, and whose name could not be ascertained, stated as follows, concerning the Manifesto as adopted by the Convention: I refuse to take this paper back with me and tell the membership that this is what you

have adopted; I cannot understand the position some of you delegates have taken.

Chairman John J. Ballam, an ultra-radical and strongly united with the “Bolshevists” of the Convention, replied to this delegate: By a vote of this body the Manifesto of the Majority has been adopted for the Communist Party of America. I therefore rule you out of order.

H.M. Wicks, said to be from Oregon, but representing the Cook County [Illinois] local, in conversation with Employee at the “press table” stated that Dennis E. Batt and A. Renner, although eager to hold offices in the Communist Party, refused the nominations on account of the control of the Convention by the Russian Federations.

Convention adjourned at 6 pm to reconvene at 7:30 pm.

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Convention called to order 7:30 pm.

C.E. Ruthenberg of the Constitution Committee read to the body the balance of the Constitution as proposed by that committee. The delegates acted upon each article and section seriatim. As stated in previous reports a copy of the Constitution of the Communist Party of America will be secured as soon as distributed and same will be submitted to the Bureau, Washington.

M.J. Golas of California moved as an amendment to the Constitution that a provision shall be drawn and inserted to the effect that all paid officers of the Communist Party shall receive \$35.00 [per week] for single men and \$45.00 for married men. The amendment was lost.

The Constitution in its entirety was put before the body and it was adopted as a whole with the amendments as voted for by the body.

It was now 9:45 pm, and Dennis E. Batt of Detroit, and of the Minority committee, asked for the floor, and stated in part as follows: I will not bother to discuss to any extent the junk which you threw on the table for the delegates to pass on, and which was thrown down the throats of some of the delegates of this convention. You so-called “100% Bolsheviks” will not deny the facts as they are. I dare say that 50 percent of you have not read [Marx’s] *Value, Price, and Profit*. Your

program does not deal at all with the delicate question of the High Cost of Living. Well, I have no hope of competing with or dominating the Russian Dictatorship of this Convention. (Batt in his discourse was very incitive and expressed himself with much force.) He continued at length about the works of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, etc. He told the Russian Dictatorship of the Convention “now you will endeavor to capture the masses as you have captured this convention, but you will find it vastly different — however, I do not propose to waste my breath arguing with you. **Batt** then read the entire Manifesto as proposed by the Minority, and as he read he referred to each paragraph as containing nothing but what Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, Lenin themselves would have it. It was evident that this proposed manifesto was prepared before the convention went into session, as Batt had on the table before him 10 to 15 books and pointed out to the delegates the substance of the Manifesto as containing word for word from the works of Marx, Engels, etc. **Batt** all through his discourse bitterly attacked the Russian Dictatorship of the Convention.

Copy of the Manifesto as proposed by the Minority committee, which consists of 20 pages, mimeographed, is attached to original page 7 of Employee’s report for September 5, 1919.

A communication was read by the Secretary of the Convention, signed by 22 delegates, asking that the minutes of the Convention show that the Manifesto, which was adopted by the body, was disapproved and not voted for by them.

Following are some of the names: Dennis E. Batt,

George A. Eastman, J.K. Danta, Carlton Talbott, MV. Breitmeyer, D.E. Early, O.C. Johnson, A. Renner. William Krispenz, August Herman, John Keracher, Fred Schulman, George A. Till, William Leslie, Charles M. O’Brien, Bernard Tamarkin, H.M. Wicks, Harry Anderson.

By Ballam, Chairman: Anyone going before their membership and saying that they have not had an opportunity to discuss or offer amendments or revise any part of the Manifesto as adopted is [uttering] a deliberated and downright falsehood, and the records of the convention will show that.

A. Bittelman, of the Majority committee, took the floor in defense of that committee against the accusations of Dennis E. Batt. He compared practically paragraph for paragraph of both manifestos, and in course of his inflammatory remarks, **Batt** vacated the hall for the balance of the night.

It was announced from that platform that \$197.05 was collected at the Communist Party mass meeting held at Douglas Park Auditorium that night, which amount would go to the treasury of the national organization.

The delegates, that is a portion of them, with Ballam, Chairman of the Day, as their leader, gave 3 cheers for the Manifesto of the Communist Party.

Convention adjourned at 12 am [midnight] to reconvene at 9 am.

Attached to original page 7 of this report is the “MANIFESTO OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY” adopted as a whole, marked exhibit “D,” consisting of pages 1 to 8 inclusive.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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