
Scuttling the Ship:

A Statement of the Seven Suspended Language Federations, June 2, 1919.

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Comrades:—

There is hardly a Party member who does not know that the trend within the Party for the last several months has been toward revolutionary and uncompromising Socialism. We have all been taught a great lesson by the Schneidemanns and Kautskys of Germany, the Hendersons of England, and Socialist-patriots the world over. We know that that brand of “Socialism,” the kind that always trades and compromises with the capitalist classes, and the supporters of which, in times of war and revolution, do not hesitate to go and revenge themselves upon comrades of such sterling character as Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, and others, we know that “Socialists” believing in this kind of “Socialism” are not to be trusted with our Party management.

And so for many months a struggle has been going on in our Party in this country between the revolutionary element and the opportunists who control the Party machinery. The members of the Party, having learned that Scheidemann “Socialism” means defeat instead of victory for the working class, have taken a radical and revolutionary attitude in line with the new International. This radical stand on the part of the Party members has been named the “Left Wing” within the Party. The Socialists in most large industrial centers have joined the Left Wing. Boston, Cleveland, Buffalo, San Francisco, Oakland, Portland, Philadelphia, Detroit, Seattle, and scores of other Locals and even state organizations of our Party have officially adopted the Left Wing program.

The Russian, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Polish, Hungarian, South Slavic, and Lettish [Latvian] language federations of the Socialist Party, containing over 30,000 members, also uphold this Left Wing position. These federations and the comrades in them, knowing the situation in Europe, have for a long time requested the Socialist Party in this country to take a definite stand upon the side of the Lenin and Liebknecht Socialists of Europe.

It was because these seven language federations of the Party criticized the National Executive Committee for its straddling of this important question that seven members of the committee suspended these federations at its meeting, May 24 to 30th.

If this matter were not so serious it would indeed be laughable. We submit to you, comrade, that it is rather funny for a little group of seven desperate men to suspend over thirty thousand members from the Socialist Party. Such an act has never been perpetrated upon the Socialist Party before. Never in the history of the Party has a set of officials acted in such a high-handed and autocratic manner. Let it be indelibly impressed upon your brain, comrade — *seven* men suspend over *thirty thousand* members from the Party — and seven is only a minority of the National Executive Committee.

This is not the worst of it. Here is what this autocratic group of seven National Committeemen (*sic.*) did:

1. They suspended seven language federa-

tions, containing over 30,000 members, from the Socialist Party.

2. They refused these federations a trial.

3. They refused to give these federations a chance to prepare their case.

4. They refused to postpone the suspension until the Executive Committees of the federations could act in the matter.

5. The autocratic National Executive Committeemen even went so far as to fail to give any of the federations a copy of the charges while the debate on the motion to suspend was being acted upon.

6. They also expelled the Socialist Party of Michigan, containing about 6,000 members, without a trial.

7. This group of seven suspended the entire election of officials of the Socialist Party under the clumsy excuse that the votes cannot be tabulated because some branches and locals voted as a unit and for candidates not the choice of the reactionary group of seven.

In short, this group of seven National Committeemen, drunk with power they assumed, feeling aggrieved because these federations dared to criticize the National Executive Committee, made themselves guilty of an act which will discredit them forever in the International Socialist movement.

We say that even if we were guilty of acts not in conformity with the constitution, and *this we deny* — but even if we were guilty of such acts, *we had a right to a fair trial with notice that charges were to be placed against us*. No Party members will say that we have not the right to a fair trial and the right to time to prepare our case. Every capitalist court gives this right, but it was denied us in the Socialist Party.

The charges against us, which we have been allowed to see since we have been convicted and suspended, contain numerous counts so misleading and farfetched that it is useless to reply to them.

In the main we are charged with being Left Wing Socialists and with making propaganda in the Party for Left Wing Socialism. We are further charged with trying to capture the Socialist Party. To this we answer that we did do all we could legitimately do to place the administration of our Party into the hands of real comrades who are in full harmony with revolutionary Socialism. And we only wish we had succeeded in this long before now, for the acts of the *seven autocrats* on the National Executive Committee must prove to every comrade that a change in Party administration, its program and tactics, is very much needed. The counts in the charges claiming we violated the Party constitution do not apply at all, and the autocratic seven stretch the constitution in an effort to make it apply to a case they wanted to trump up against us.

We claim that the *true reason for our suspension is that the autocratic seven of the National Executive Committee know that if we, the Revolutionary Socialists, were permitted to remain in the party, the opportunistic clique would not control the coming National Convention, and that our suspension was voted so that moderate, reform, traitor "Socialism" would prevail in that Convention*. In fact, several of the autocratic seven openly stated that we were suspended so that we would not be able to control the coming National Convention.

And now — *what do you think of this, comrades?* We were suspended by this autocratic seven; but they were not satisfied with that — *they fired us out of National Headquarters*, and we had to look around for other quarters. We had an idea that suspension was only a temporary state and that we might some day be reinstated either by the membership or the National Convention. In such case we might have been allowed to remain in the National Headquarters building to carry on our work until the membership or the National Convention gave its decision upon the acts of the reactionary seven. But no, we were fired out of the building by a motion passed by this group of seven

and a motion to give us to July 1st to find other quarters was lost.

We call upon all Party members to give this protest of ours the attention it deserves. We call upon you to rebuke these seven National Executive Committee members for their traitorous actions against the Socialist movement. We have given our unstinted financial support to the Socialist Party in all matters, even though we thought that in many instances the funds were squandered or misapplied. We have not helped as much as we could in purchasing the National Headquarters building because we wanted first to make sure where the ownership rested. That we were right in being slow to support the headquarters fund *is now proven by the fact that this same autocratic seven placed the entire property in the hands of a board of directors which can in no way be controlled either by the Party membership or the National Executive Committee.*

We feel assured that no member of the Party will contend that seven members of the party have a right to suspend over *thirty thousand* and expel *nearly six thousand*, even if those seven are National Executive Committeemen.

Think of this, comrade! Do we elect our officials to serve us, to build up the Party, or do we elect them to disrupt us and split our forces?

We will gladly give further information, should you desire to get clear upon the points involved in this controversy. But the main question

will remain this: *Shall seven desperate party officials be permitted to suspend over thirty thousand and expel six thousand members without giving them a trial or a chance to prepare their side of the case so that the party membership may be fully informed?*

The autocratic seven upon the National Executive Committee acted in a more tyrannical manner than any officials of our party have dared to act up to now.

Protest against this action. Rebuke the autocratic seven. Let us make our Party a Party of Revolutionary Socialism.

Fraternally submitted,

Joseph V. Stilson, for the Lithuanian Federation;

Alexander Stoklitsky, for the Russian Federation;

Leo Frankl, for the Hungarian Federation;

Paul H. Ladan, for the Ukrainian Federation;

George Selakovich, for the South Slavic Federation;

Otto Purin, for the Lettish [Latvian] Federation;

Joseph Kowalski, for the Polish Federation.

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Edited by Tim Davenport.

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