

---

# People Ready for Socialism; Party Starting Work — Germer.

**National Secretary Predicts Staggering Vote in 1920 — Sees International Unity.  
Emergency Convention Will Take Strong Stand; Immediate Demands to Be Cut.**

Unsigned reportage published in the *New York Call*, July 24, 1919, pp. 1-2.

Predicting a wave of Socialist enthusiasm and party growth unprecedented in this country, Adolph Germer, National Secretary of the Socialist Party, painted a rosy picture of the future of the movement yesterday in an interview for *The Call*.

“It is the present economic and political situation that is doing it,” said Germer, who is in New York on Socialist Party business.

“Nothing can prevent our reaping the harvest of the discontent but we ourselves. The world is in chaos, and the mass of the American people are in a receptive state of mind. Nothing can keep us back — unless we don’t want to go forward.”

“What will be the party’s international stand?” Germer was asked.

## **Sees International Unity.**

“I cannot say officially,” said the National Executive Secretary. “That is for the emergency convention to decide. But for myself, and speaking unofficially, as I think I sense the feeling of the party members, I believe that we will unite in some sort of an international.

“The old Second International, of which Camille Huysmans is secretary, is functioning after a fashion, but we are not members of it. We have not paid any dues since the war started. I will not say that we will join the Moscow International, the so-called ‘Communist’ International,

but I for one am opposed to entering into any sort of international alliance that excludes the Communists of Russia and the Spartacans and Communists of Germany and Hungary.”

The Moscow International, the report of whose proceedings is just being made public in America, excluded many elements that have fought valiantly against jingoism and imperialism during the war. The American Socialist Party was not invited to attend.

“We don’t know much about the proceedings of the Moscow Congress,” said Germer, “but I would not like to exclude such brave and gallant groups as the Independents in Germany and the Independent Labour Party in England. I would not sit at the same table with the social-patriots and the Junker allies, but to exclude Hugo Haase and Ramsey MacDonald does not appeal to me. But there is no way of telling when the international alignment will be within the next few months.”

The internal troubles of the party will not trouble it much longer, Germer thinks.

## **Time Ripe for Propaganda.**

“The situation as it existed last winter,” said Germer, “was wonderfully promising. If we had been able to remain united, nothing would have been too much to hope for. The time is ripe, and rotten ripe, for our propaganda. But the internal

discussions and wranglings have sterilized our efforts to a very large extent.

“Now, however, we are going to work. The national convention that will meet on August 30 will take a strong stand, a resolute stand. Then, all those who do not care to remain with us can go their way. We will go our way, as we have always gone. We will be human. We will be men. We do not want to be angels with wings,” Germer smiled.

“What will the platform of the party be like?”

“I imagine that it will be the strongest and most definite that the party has ever adopted.

### **To Cut Immediate Demands.**

“We probably will eliminate the long catalog of immediate demands that have marred our platforms in the past. We probably will not take up so much space with the list of reforms to the judiciary, to the electoral college, and to the various departments of government. As I see it, we will state the fact that we expect to get something out of capitalism now; that we will not wait for the sweet by-and-by, in the sky, when we die, for all the good things of life. We want something from capitalism in the sweet now-and-now. But when we have stated that, we will be through. Then we will go to the main statement of our position.”

The party is in a rather shattered condition, thanks to persecution from without and differences within, said Germer.

“But that need not worry us. There are thousands of old-time Comrades who had relapsed into inactivity, and who are only awaiting some stirring event to recall them to life. The time has come now. When the party gets rid of its internal disorders, when the decks are cleared, when we point our craft at the goal, we will be ready for work, and they will come back to us.

“The returned soldiers are flocking to our standard. They know what they had to suffer. I

met a soldier the other day who put it this way: ‘This is the last time that you ever get me to fight to make the world safe for the Democratic Party.’”

### **People Are Ready.**

“President Wilson sent us into the war with beautiful phrases, perfumed with the choicest odors. People who took him at his word naturally believed that when the war was over there would be something akin to paradise in the world. But we are a little short of that blissful state. Ask any average person what we went to war for., He will catch onto the joke at once and laugh. The people are ready for something. They don’t know what — but they are waiting.

“And it is our job to tell them what is what.”

“I have met people everywhere who have been humbugged by the cant and claptrap of the old parties, by conventional ‘patriotism.’ Now they are through. They are vague as to what is going to come next, but they are ready to listen to anything. And that is where our work will come in.”

The convention of next month will be a momentous one. The various Socialist factions are looking toward it with the keenest interest. But when it is over the great day for Socialism will come.

### **Sees Big Vote in 1920.**

“We will have the party machinery,” said Germer, “and we will direct the people right. We will send out organizers and speakers everywhere and carry the light of our message. We will build up our party so that when 1920 comes the vote for Socialism will be staggering. And I have no doubt but that the candidate to do the staggering will be a certain distinguished guest of the United States at Atlanta, Ga.”

Germer was asked what effect the laws that are being passed against radical thought will have on the movement.

“Nothing,” said Germer, with emphasis. “Bismarck tried it. And there aren’t any men as big as Bismarck in America now. They can’t do it. You cannot legislate against thought. Laws can’t keep people from thinking. The thought that they are trying to legislate out of existence is the reflex of the capitalist conditions that they support and benefit by. That thought will express itself in one way or another. And, if the oppressors of the people force that thought to express itself in the way that used to be popular in Russia, then those who forced it will be responsible for what they do.

“The laws that have been passed are called ‘criminal syndicalism’ laws. They prohibit the advocating of violence or overthrow of government by physical force. California, Pennsylvania, and Illinois have such laws. We do not object to the wording of the laws, but to their application. We know that they are the entering wedge. We know that, as the Sherman law was supposed to prevent the organization of trusts, and was used to rob the unions of their funds; we know that, as the Espionage Act was supposed to catch German spies, and actually caught Socialist writers and speakers, so such laws against what they in their ignorance call ‘syndicalism’ are aimed at us.

“But they can’t keep us down.”

Germer said that the state secretary of the Socialist Party in California and the state organizer in the coast state have been indicted under

that law.

“It is dawning upon the people,” he said, “that we went into the war with Wilson’s ideals and that we came out with loot.”

### **Trying to Get Two Big Men.**

The national office, said Germer, is negotiating now to get two of the foremost Socialists of Great Britain to come to America for speaking tours. J. Ramsay and Robert Smillie, “Bob” Smillie, leader of the miners, a worker in the same trade as Germer himself, big of mind, big of body — those two great Socialist leaders are about to visit us.

“And when they tour the country for the party...” smiled Gerber.

But he didn’t finish. He was probably thinking of the enthusiasm that will be evoked and the gains to the party that will accrue when they come. And he doesn’t seem to worry about that 20 year sentence at all.† It seems as if there is something bigger in the world to him than his personal comfort and even his life.

And he gives to that thing, the Socialist movement, everything there is in him with the enthusiasm and the devotion that many people believed had about died out in America. And that spirit is what makes the Socialist Party what it has been and what it will be.

†- Executive Secretary Adolph Germer was one of five leading members of the Socialist Party prosecuted by the federal government under the so-called Espionage Act in an effort to decapitate the leadership of the party. The “Chicago defendants” included editor of the SP’s official organ, J. Louis Engdahl, the head of the party’s youth section, William F. Kruse, the head of the party’s propaganda department, Irwin St. John Tucker, and Wisconsin Congressman and newspaper publisher Victor Berger. The group was secretly indicted by a grand jury on Feb. 2, 1918; the indictment was publicized on March 9; trial before conservative jurist Kennesaw Mountain Landis began Dec. 6, 1918 and ended Jan. 4, 1919. The case went to the jury on Jan. 9, 1919, and the five were convicted that same day. On Feb. 20, 1919 — more than four months after termination of the European war — the five were sentenced to terms of 20 years in federal prison. Germer was released on \$25,000 bond pending appeal, security ironically provided in large part by future Communist Labor Party founder William Bross Lloyd.

*Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport.*

*Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2005. • Free reproduction permitted.*