
Young Reds Break with Yellow SP

[events of Oct. 12-13, 1919]

by Maximilian Cohen

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Attributed to the paper's editor, Max Cohen.

Severance of all connections with the Socialist Party, repudiation of the Berne Conference “and all the Socialist groups that participated in or adhered to it,” affiliation with the Communist International, formation of an independent YPSL in the state of New York, and adoption of an unequivocal Communist program — these were the principle achievements of the two-day convention of the New York State Young People's Socialist League held on October 12th and 13th [1919] in the headquarters of the 2nd A.D. [Assembly District] Communist Party.

Although the convention took a supposedly “neutral” stand on the various factions of the American Socialist movement, there was a marked trend toward affiliation on a fraternal basis with the Communist Party, and this trend gathered force as the convention progressed. However, a “deal” was effected whereby the various factions agreed to wait for the national convention of the YPSL. In the meanwhile, they elected Joseph Siminoff, a member of the Communist Party, as state organizer, and chose 5 “communists” (one being a CLP member) out of the 7 members of the State Board of Control. Another strategic position, that of education director, was given Jack Haiken of the Communist Party.

The Socialist Party was represented at the convention by Alexander L. Trachtenberg, the CLP by Fannie Jacobs, and the Communist Party by Harry M. Winitsky on the first day and Bert

Wolfe on the second. The Rand School was represented by Bertha H. Maily and David P. Berenberg. The fraternal delegates from all 3 parties urged that the YPSL take an independent stand, but Winitsky, for the Communist Party, urged that there be a preparation for fraternal affiliation with the Communist Party by the National Convention. Wolfe pointed out that the artificial unity gotten from “neutrality” could not last and was already breaking up due to the uncompromising stand of Abraham Weinberg of the Communist Party and Herman Rosenthal of the Socialist Party, the former having refused to vote for “independence,” and the latter having opposed affiliation with the Third International as a virtual repudiation of the Socialist Party.

The work of the Constitution Committee consisted chiefly of pruning all references to the Socialist Party from the constitution. The new preamble occasioned a fight on the floor, because it stated that the “purposes of the YPSL shall be the organization of the proletarian youth, based on the lines of the class struggle, for the abolition of the capitalist state and the establishment of the Industrial Commonwealth.” Berenberg of the Rand School urged that this statement of purposes neglected the social and recreational functions of the YPSL and also gave it a distinctly political purpose which he did not think it should have. He was answered by [Oliver] Carlson, National Secretary of the YPSL. Wolfe of the Communist

Party urged the insertion of the words “through the dictatorship of the proletariat” on the ground that that was a crucial distinction between the Socialist and the Communist Internationals. A motion to that effect was made by Delegate Weinberg and carried.

A thoroughgoing communist program was adopted. It declares that this is the epoch of imperialism and the dissolution of the capitalist system; it repudiates the bourgeois ideology of “justice,” “democracy,” and other revolutionary doctrines of the 17th Century; it attacks the congress of the “Great Betrayal” at Berne, endorses the Communist International and the communist revolutions, and it pledges the YPSL to educate

the youth as to render it “free from the ghost of the old ‘moderate’ Socialist ideas that made the great betrayal possible.”

Resolution on the International.

We, the members of the YPSL of New York, repudiate the Berne Conference and all the Socialist groups that participated in or adhered to it. We declare ourselves an integral part of the International Communist movement. We are in complete harmony with the International Communist movement and call upon the International YPSL to affiliate with it. We affirm our solidarity with them and pledge ourselves to fight side by side with them in the international class struggle.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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