



HENRY KUHN (1859-1930)

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY: 1890-1906

A 40TH ANNIVERSARY SKETCH
OF ITS EARLY HISTORY

By Henry Kuhn

THE real history of the Socialist Labor Party, viewing the organization in the light of its present-day tactical position, may truly be said to have begun in 1890—forty years ago—hence the Fortieth Anniversary celebration which furnishes the occasion for this sketch.

The “Socialistic.”

Prior to 1890 there had been in existence an organization, formed in 1876 by German immigrants, who had called it the “Sozialistische Arbeiter Partei,” a name somewhat woodenly translated into English as “Socialistic Labor Party,” and with that terminal “ic” the organization—really a propaganda body rather than a political party—re-enforced in numbers by new waves of German immigrants exiled from their country after the enactment of the anti-Socialist laws under the Bismarck regime, reached the period at which this sketch begins.

It is not here the purpose to relate in detail what this organization did and failed to do prior to 1890. Suffice it to say that, due to the exotic character of its membership, its leadership reflecting the mental make-up thereof, it never struck roots in the soil of the American working class.

In 1890 that “Socialistic Labor Party” had just got over an internal fight, the so-called Rosenberg-Busche-*Volkszeitung* controversy. A national convention had been held in Chicago in 1889, headquarters had been removed from Manhattan to Brooklyn, a new National Secretary, Benjamin J. Gretsche, had been chosen, and, what proved of vastly greater importance, a new member had been acquired, destined to play a distinguished role.

Enter De Leon.

The new member, Daniel De Leon by name, formerly a lecturer on international law at Columbia University, was quite an acquisition as subsequent events demonstrated. He had been active in the United Labor party movement of 1886, which had nominated Henry George, the Single Taxer, for mayor of New York, and had in that movement come in contact with Socialists who introduced him to the works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. De Leon rapidly absorbed the philosophy of Socialism. He had never been a follower of Henry George, whose Single Tax theory he always regarded as a middle class emanation, but had been connected with what was in those days known as the “Nationalist” movement, sponsored by a group of intellectuals gathered around Edward Bellamy, author of a book entitled “Looking Backward,” which was then widely read and had given that Nationalist movement a collectivist tinge.

The Early Press.

In 1890 the S.L.P. published two official organs, the *Workman’s Advocate* in English, of which Lucien Sanial had been made editor in 1889, and *Der Sozialist* in German, of which Hugo Vogt was the editor. The *Workman’s Advocate*, a small four-page paper, was considered inadequate to serve the needs of the Party, and an agitation for a larger paper sprang up. In pursuance of this purpose a monster picnic was arranged in 1890 to raise funds for the new paper and early in April, 1891, the new publication was launched, bearing the title THE PEOPLE, issued not by the Party direct but by the New Yorker Volkszeitung Corporation. It was a large sheet of many pages, most of them filled with boiler plate. Lucien Sanial continued as the editor, with De Leon aiding him as associate editor. THE PEOPLE continued in that size and shape and under that editorial management for just one year. At the end of the first year both size and shape of the paper were reduced; it became a four-page as the *Workman’s Advocate* had been, and Lucien Sanial, having resigned as editor because of failing eyesight, was succeeded in the editorial chair by Daniel De Leon.

The New Policy.

The change proved to be of tremendous importance for both the Party and the

Party organ. De Leon, a masterful personality, brilliant writer and lecturer and an indefatigable worker, as soon as he had his bearings in the labor movement—which did not take long—placed THE PEOPLE in a commanding position among the labor papers of the country and there began to shape itself, in outline at first but becoming more distinct as time went on, the policy toward the economic side of the labor movement which distinguished the Socialist Labor Party of all Socialist parties the world over, and found its crowning apex in the concept and structure of Industrial Unionism—the one and only way in which the potential power of the working class can be gathered, consolidated, made to serve the purpose of the working class revolution, and become the framework of the future Industrial Republic.

In 1891 two more things happened in the S.L.P. One was a nation-wide tour of agitation arranged with De Leon as the speaker. The tour carried him to the Pacific Coast, was the means of establishing for the Party many new contacts, led to the eventual formation of a number of new Party Sections, adding to the membership and increasing the Party's propagandist power. The other was the resignation of the then National Secretary, Benjamin J. Gretsck, and the election early in September of that year of Henry Kuhn as his successor.

General View of the Labor Movement.

A glance at the economic side of the labor movement will now be in order. There were in the field, besides the organizations of the different railway brotherhoods, the “Noble Order of the Knights of Labor,” as its founders had called it, a secret order with a ritual involving a good deal of mummery, but imbued with a sort of class instinct, stressing the organization of the unskilled rather than of crafts, although taking in the latter as well. At one time, in the middle of the eighties, the order had run up to a membership of about one million and it had cut a wide swath, but at the period here under consideration it had passed its zenith and was on the decline. There was also the American Federation of Labor, formed in 1881, then as now frankly based upon craft unionism. There were also a number of independent bodies, so-called “progressive unions,” most of which had been affiliated with the K. of L. and in the declining days of the order had withdrawn; some stood outside the A.F. of L., others at intervals belonged.

Locally, the unions were joined together in central labor unions or trade assemblies or whatever other name they might assume. In New York and Brooklyn

rival central bodies existed, the Central Labor Union in the respective cities housing the unions belonging to the A.F. of L., while the progressive unions in each city had a Central Labor Federation. The progressives were largely organized and managed by men who were or thought they were Socialists and they comprised such trades as bakers, brewers, cabinetmakers, cigarmakers, etc. Some of these were “dual unions,” with A.F. of L. unions existing in the same trade and with constant conflicts resulting from that state of affairs. A few years later, when the Jewish immigration assumed large dimensions, Jewish unions came into being and these eventually formed their own central body in New York under the name United Hebrew Trades.

“Boring from Within.”

The Knights of Labor were organized in local central bodies known as District Assemblies, of which there might exist more than one in a given locality. The form of organization of the K. of L., less rigid than that of the craft-based A.F. of L., provided for trade and for “mixed” local assemblies, and it was through the latter that many tradeless intellectuals entered the order and played quite a role for a time. De Leon, too, joined the K. of L. via that route, becoming a member of Mixed Assembly 1563 and was sent by that body as its delegate to the central body, District Assembly 49, an organization with considerable prestige in those days. This happened in July, 1891, and from that time on began a ceaseless “boring from within” that made the fakers in D.A. 49, of whom there were plenty, very unhappy, causing them much loss of sleep and bringing not a few to the verge of nervous prostration.

The struggle thus carried on by De Leon in D.A. 49 excited national attention. It was carried from D.A. 49 into the General Assembly—the name given to the national conventions of the order—and finally culminated in the defeat of the reactionary head of the national organization, General Master Workman Terence V. Powderly—who was then promptly taken care of by the capitalist class in a political job. The delegation of D.A. 49, although it did defeat Powderly, could not prevent the election of another faker, James R. Sovereign, to succeed him. The latter, sustained by the crooked capitalist influences typical of the economic part of the American labor movement in that day and this, and being a Populist besides, carried on in the same old Powderly way until in 1894, when the General Assembly met in New Orleans, La., and he was then so nearly upset that he promised to let

D.A. 49 name the editor of the national official journal of the order. Lucien Sanial was marked for the position but never got it for the reason that Sovereign went back on his promise, and to save himself from the reckoning sure to come at the next General Assembly to be held in Washington, D.C., in 1895, packed that convention and wrecked the order, that is, he set going a chain of events which before long caused it to disappear from the scene of the American labor movement.

“No Politics in the Union.”

During these years of incessant struggle D.A. 49 and the Central Labor Federation of New York had been more or less allied in the sense that both bodies were dominated by the Socialist element. In the Central Labor Federation of New York as well as in that of Brooklyn the local Sections of the Socialist Labor Party had direct representation, and the fact that this was so gave color to the A.F. of L. slogan of that time, “No politics in the union,” by which the capitalist politicians in that body meant, of course, no labor or Socialist politics. Lucien Sanial was the delegate of Section New York to the Central Labor Federation, and Lucien Sanial was chosen by that body to represent it at the national convention of the American Federation of Labor held in Detroit in 1892.

It must here be noted that the Central Labor Federation, when originally organized late in the eighties, had been chartered by the American Federation of Labor. Subsequently it had merged with the Central Labor Union and had deposited its charter with the A.F. of L. Again separating from the Central Labor Union and assuming its former position, it had been denied the return of its charter on the ground that a political body, the Socialist Labor Party, was affiliated with it. The selection of Sanial, S.L.P. delegate to the C.L.F., to represent the central body at the A.F. of L. convention, was taking the bull squarely by the horns. The issue was: Is the Socialist Labor Party a bona fide labor organization or is it to be regarded as any other capitalist or middle class political party? Sanial, his credentials contested, fought the battle on that issue. The convention rejected his credentials.

In 1893 a severe industrial crisis swept over the country. The American Federation of Labor national convention met that year in Chicago under the shadow of that crisis. Millions of workers were jobless, misery and destitution abounded. Thomas J. Morgan of Chicago, a member of the Socialist Labor Party, represented the machinists’ union in that convention, and it was he who introduced a program

summed up in eleven planks, of which Plank 10 called for “The collective ownership by the people of all means of production and distribution.” Both in preamble and resolution this program called for independent political action. Such was the psychology of the hour that the convention adopted and referred the proposal to a referendum vote. And there too the proposal carried.

It would be misleading to say that the capitalist politicians who managed the convention were caught napping; a more correct way of putting it is to say that they were then faced with a situation which, for the moment, was too much for them to handle. At the next convention, held in Denver in 1894, they had again caught their breath, and Plank 10, with all it implied and was ornamented with, was buried under an avalanche of adverse votes. And “they got away with it,” notwithstanding the previous adoption of the program by referendum, the rank and file, in the mass, hardly knowing what all the fuss was about.

All these events, plus the general lay of the land punctuated by a capitalism becoming more and more aggressive, finally brought on the inevitable reaction. The Socialists, finding the capitalist “labor lieutenant” firmly entrenched in the economic organizations of labor, finding also that the logical outcome of the “boring from within” policy is that you bore yourself out as soon as you begin to bore successfully, determined to set up their own national economic body based squarely on the principle of the class struggle and with the ultimate aim, the overthrow of the capitalist system, plainly stated.

The Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance.

On December 6, 1895, a committee of District Assembly 49, Knights of Labor, met with the General Executive Board of the Central Labor Federation—and thus and then the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance was born, the organization which so vitally affected the subsequent course of the Socialist Labor Party and, by the opposition it aroused among the pure and simple trade union element present also in the Socialist movement of that day, paved the way for the Party split in 1899.

A Real Socialist Political Party.

Let us now revert to the history of the Party proper. In 1893 a national convention was held in Chicago. That convention marked the changing complexion of the membership by doing two things: it did away with the system of proxy

delegates to national conventions hitherto in vogue; and it prevented by a tie vote the removal of the seat of the N.E.C. to St. Louis, which, at that time, would have been a positive calamity and might have changed the entire course of events. The year before (1892) had witnessed, for the first time in the history of the United States, the nomination of a Socialist presidential ticket, Simon Wing of Massachusetts being the candidate for President, and Charles H. Matchett of New York the candidate for Vice President. The ticket got on the ballot in six states and polled 21,512 votes, a good beginning all things considered, because Socialist political action had to make its way in the face of the then rising tide of the so-called People's party, the most desperate attempt of the American middle class to stem, on the political field, the encroaching power of maturing American capitalism.

If the decade of the eighties had marked the formative period of American capitalism, the next one, that of the nineties, saw the growing maturity and consolidation of capitalist power, punctuated by violent and often large-scale conflicts between capital and labor, chiefly in the mining, the transportation and the steel industries. The powers of state, the police, the courts, the militia, even the regular army were freely resorted to to beat down the resistance of the workers, to say nothing of the hordes of deputy sheriffs and Pinkertons mobilized on such occasions.

That working class resentment against the treatment meted out in these conflicts did not more strongly manifest itself in revolutionary political action along Socialist lines, nor in the upbuilding of powerful economic bodies with revolutionary aims, was probably due in a measure to the existence of the Populist movement with its radical phrases, its advocacy of cheap and plentiful money as a cure for all social ills, but of course the fundamental reason was always the lack of classconsciousness resulting from the historic background of a country not so far removed from the pioneer stage.

For all that, the vote polled by the Socialist Labor Party in state and congressional elections grew perceptibly. In New York City in particular, in the 16th Assembly District of Manhattan, De Leon carried on a rousing campaign for several successive years, polling a vote outstripping that of the Republican candidate and worrying the dominant Tammany Hall crowd not a little. Prior to that, in 1896, De Leon had been the candidate of the Party for Congress in the 9th Congressional District (Manhattan), conducting a vigorous campaign and polling the very respectable vote of 4,300. Elsewhere, in Paterson, N.J., Adams, Mass.,

Holyoke, Mass., Haverhill, Mass., S.L.P. candidates were elected in municipal contests. Matthew Maguire was elected a member of the Board of Aldermen in Paterson for two successive terms, while the notorious James F. Carey became a member of the city council in Haverhill but betrayed the trust placed in him by voting an appropriation for what he claimed was a “sanitary” armory for the militia. Generally, the Party’s vote advanced, reaching its highest mark in 1898 when the vote reached 82,204, double that of the presidential year 1896 and four times that of 1892.

S.T. and L.A. Endorsed.

The next national convention of the Party, that of 1896, was far more momentous than the preceding one. The most incisive action was the endorsement by the convention of the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance formed only a few months before. The subject was introduced by William L. Brower, chairman of the delegation of the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance who, given the floor, announced that the statement of the delegation to the convention would be made by delegate Hugo Vogt and the latter thereupon presented the case of the Alliance in a lengthy address, at the close of which delegate De Leon introduced the following resolution:

“Whereas, Both the A.F. of L. and the K. of L., or what is left of them, have fallen hopelessly into the hands of dishonest and ignorant leaders;

“Whereas, These bodies have taken shape as the buffers for capitalism, against whom every intelligent effort of the working class for emancipation has hitherto gone to pieces;

“Whereas, The policy of ‘propitiating’ the leaders of these organizations has been tried long enough by the progressive movement, and is to a great extent responsible for the power which these leaders have wielded in the protection of capitalism and the selling out of the workers;

“Whereas, No organization of labor can accomplish anything for the workers that does not proceed from the principle that an irrepressible conflict rages between the capitalist and the working class, a conflict that can be settled only by the total overthrow of the former and the establishment of the Socialist Commonwealth; and

“Whereas, This conflict is essentially a political one, needing the combined political and economic efforts of the working class; therefore be it

“Resolved, That we hail with unqualified joy the formation of the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance as a giant stride toward throwing off the yoke of wage slavery and of the robber class of capitalists. We call upon the Socialists of the land to carry the revolutionary spirit of the S.T. and L.A. into all the organizations of the workers, and thus consolidate and

concentrate the proletariat of America in one irresistible classconscious army, equipped with both the shield of the economic organization and the sword of the Socialist Labor Party ballot.”

It must here be noted that the opposition to so incisive an action was rather feeble. When the resolution was put to a vote it was carried 71 to 6, one delegate—Kreft, of Philadelphia—not voting. When one goes over the names of the delegates voting in favor, quite a few can be picked out who subsequently became violent enemies of the organization they had voted to endorse, and who, when the split came in 1899, lined up with the *Volkszeitung* Kangaroos.

The 1896 Campaign.

The convention nominated Charles H. Matchett of New York for President, and Matthew Maguire of New Jersey for Vice President, and then the S.L.P. sailed into the hottest campaign it had so far fought. The Democratic party had nominated William Jennings Bryan for President, had adopted a platform declaring for the free coinage of silver at the ratio of 16 to 1—that is, the United States Treasury was to coin all silver offered at the ratio of 16 ounces of silver to 1 ounce of gold—and the Democrats had by that move absorbed the Populist party hide and hair. The Republican party countered with the nomination of William McKinley and corresponding declarations in favor of the gold standard. The entire campaign was fought on the currency issue, the rival capitalist parties being generally designated as “gold bugs” and “silver bugs.”

The position of the Socialist Labor Party during that campaign was a difficult one in the sense that its determined opposition to the economic fallacy that cheap money and plenty of it is a panacea for all social ills was misunderstood by large numbers of workers who, swept off their feet by the plausible nonsense peddled by the silverites, concluded that the Socialists had lined up with the “gold bugs,” i.e., had been gobbled up by Wall Street. The mass of the workers did not understand the functions of money in capitalist society, had not the faintest conception that the cheap money theory flew straight in the face of the theory of exchange value, but were influenced by the pseudo-radical phrases mouthed by the Demo-Populists promising heaven on earth with the advent of an increased currency.

The campaign literature of the Party had to and did meet the issue squarely on the basis of working class economics, showing that cheaper money means higher commodity prices, that of the commodity labor power included to be sure, but with

no gain to labor since it also meant an increased cost of living.

Disturbance in the Jewish Movement.

No sooner was the campaign over than the opposition to the Party's revolutionary trade union policy began to assert itself and began to give itself organized form. The first disturbance proceeded from the Jewish part of the organization but did not at first manifest itself as in opposition to the Party policy. There existed at the time two Jewish Party papers, the *Arbeiter Zeitung*, a weekly, and the *Abendblatt*, a one-cent afternoon publication, both published by the same association of Party members. Internal friction involving jobs and the personal animosities growing therefrom had kept the association in a turmoil. The National Executive Committee had tried to settle the controversy through a board of arbitration, the decision of which both sides had in advance promised to accept, but which the losing side failed to live up to. The struggle grew apace and finally led to a reorganization of the Jewish part of the movement in New York, which in turn led to the formation of an opposition organization that in time gave birth to an opposition daily paper, the *Jewish Forward*. In due time this element coalesced with the element opposing the Party's trade union policy under the leadership of the *New Yorker Volkszeitung*.

Opportunism vs. Revolution.

The disturbance in the Jewish movement fell in the year 1897. The *Volkszeitung* had not as yet shown its hand but the underground work of sapping and mining was going on. The issue of the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance was hotly debated in and out of meetings. It was a repetition of the age-old conflict between the opportunist and the revolutionist elements, part and parcel of every revolutionary movement. The former wants numbers, large numbers, and is not unwilling to obscure and to screen the ultimate revolutionary purpose in order to get and hold numbers even at the risk of deceiving the followers. The latter wants clarity first and numbers only on the basis of clarity, hence will stress the ultimate aim of the movement. The former would hold out the hope that the working class can improve its condition under capitalism, and is forced by such an attitude to strive for immediate demands. The latter denies the possibility of such improvement for the class, though it may temporarily hold good for certain groups,

and demands an out-and-out revolutionary posture. Such is the age-old struggle between opportunist and revolutionist, the former always winning out at first, and the latter winning last and holding the field when the time is ripe and the hour for the change has struck. Such is the verdict of history.

The “Volkszeitung Corporation.”

Fully to understand the role played by the *Volkszeitung* and the corporation that published the paper it is necessary to make clear several points. The corporation, known as the “Socialistic Cooperative Publishing Association,” under its charter could admit to membership only members of the Socialist Labor Party. But it could not eliminate from its ranks members who for any reason had ceased to be members of the S.L.P. Thus, in the course of the years, there had been quite an accumulation of such ex-members who, if they attended meetings *in corpore* and with a set purpose, could make trouble. Of course, in ordinary times this would not happen for the reason that in ordinary times this element would be incapable of uniting, cut up as they were by conflicting opinions. The Board of Directors elected by the association, by custom if not by rule, could in ordinary times be regarded as safe on the side of the Party and would be composed of Party members.

The next point is to bear in mind that THE PEOPLE was being published by this publishing association, as was also the German Party organ, the *Vorwaerts*, which had taken the place of the former German paper, *Der Sozialist*. The arrangement was based upon and protected by a contract between the Party and the publishing association which safeguarded the Party’s interests.

Trouble Starts Over the S.T. and L.A.

Following the endorsement by the 1896 national convention of the S.T. and L.A., the opposition to that policy gathered its forces and began to dig at its foundations. At first these efforts took shape in forcing propositions designed to question that policy before a referendum vote of Section Greater New York, the Party organization being then composed of assembly district branches located within the greater city. The opposition was beaten each time but succeeded in keeping the organization in a state of constant disturbance.

“The Seidenberg Specter.”

These actions within the Party organization did not as yet involve the *Volkszeitung*, but the paper soon came to a point of departure when the attack came from a trade union quarter. The S.T. and L.A. had among its local organizations a local of cigarmakers. There came about a strike at the Seidenberg cigar factory in which the Alliance men joined with the non-Alliance employees, some non-union and some belonging to the A.F. of L. A committee of the A.F. of L. cigarmakers' union made a back-door settlement with the firm and basely betrayed the Alliance men on strike, actually swindling them out of their jobs. THE PEOPLE mercilessly exposed this act of treachery and the cigarmaker labor fakers thereupon tried to get access to the columns of the Party organ for “their side” of the case, shoving ahead one of their local unions, Union No. 90, which had the rather undeserved reputation of being “socialistic.” Accordingly, Union No. 90 turned up in committee before the Party's National Executive Committee, demanding publication in THE PEOPLE of various statements designed to whitewash the ugly action of the International Cigarmakers' Union in the Seidenberg affair, but never admitting the plain fact that they had scabbed against the Alliance men.

One member of the N.E.C., a man named Henry Stahl, himself a former cigarmaker and still a member of the union, sided with Union No. 90 but could make no impression. Failing in this, he wrote a letter to his union taking sides against the N.E.C. decision, which letter was then published and circulated in the 16th Assembly District prior to the election of 1898, when De Leon was the Party's candidate for Assembly in that district. The matter was taken up in the N.E.C., a resolution of censure was introduced, but action thereon deferred until after the election. Section Alleghany County, Pa., in course of time moved for a general vote to remove Stahl from the N.E.C. as unworthy, but before that could take place Mr. Stahl removed himself by means of kangarooing.

The Volkszeitung's Hat in the Ring.

Meantime the Board of Directors of the Volkszeitung Association had begun to show its hands, making a demand upon the N.E.C. for joint jurisdiction in the matter of communications from the trade unions rejected by the Editor of THE PEOPLE. This was rejected on the ground that the N.E.C. had no power to delegate its control over the contents of the Party organ to some other body, least of all to a

body representing an organization composed in part of non-Party members. During these controversies the editorial management of the *Volkszeitung* had kept quiet. Although known to be out of joint with the Party, it did not yet dare to come out openly against it for reasons of what in a later day has been called “economic determinism.” Presently, however, an accident forced a somewhat premature showdown. During the absence of the then editor, Hermann Schlueter, one of his associates wrote and published in the *Volkszeitung* an article attacking the Party’s policy in the matter of the S.T. and L.A. and recommending to the Party the old policy of “boring from within” the trade unions. What is more, the attack was renewed two days later. In an atmosphere already tense to the breaking point, this attack unrolled the entire issue. THE PEOPLE replied vigorously and the Board of Directors of the publishing association, on which the Party then had a clear majority, passed a vote of censure on the ground that the constitution of the association distinctly called for the support of “the principles and tactics of the Socialist Labor Party,” and ordered the censure published in the *Volkszeitung*. The editor-in-chief, Mr. Schlueter, admitted that had he been at his post the break would not have occurred, but nevertheless he opposed the censure, fully upheld his assistant who had written the article in question, flatly refused to publish the censure, and threatened to resign rather than to submit.

Such an attitude carried the matter into the publishing association and there a running battle took place which extended over a period of several months. In view of the make-up of the association’s membership the final outcome was really never in doubt, because the anti-S.L.P. element composed of all kinds of ex-members of the Party, some dating their connection with the “party” ten or even more years before that time, promptly joined with the element still in the Party but now openly ranged against the Party’s trade union policy. The question before the house was whether or not to uphold the vote of censure passed by the association’s Board of Directors. When finally the vote was taken, it resulted in a repudiation of the vote of censure voted by the Board of Directors, which meant a repudiation of the association’s constitution calling for the support of the principles and tactics of the S.L.P. We had come to the parting of the roads. The loyal S.L.P. men on the Board of Directors resigned at that meeting, the vacancies were filled with an element representative of the winning side and the struggle was henceforth confined within the Party organization.

“Sign Posts.”

There was no immediate and complete break. The *Volkszeitung* could not as yet afford so desperate a step. It needed the support of the S.L.P., not only locally but nationally, and indeed, if it could not retain the support of the real S.L.P., would be compelled to set up a bogus one. And that is just what happened in due course of time.

THE PEOPLE, in an article captioned “Sign Posts,” had informed the Party membership of the outcome of the struggle within the publishing association, and, of course, of its implications. This article caused the new Board of Directors to appear in a body before the National Executive Committee with a demand for space to present their side of the controversy. Arguments pro and con led to no conclusion and the board was asked to present what it had to say in writing, so that the N.E.C. might have before it something definite to pass upon. A lengthy statement was then presented to a special meeting of the N.E.C. on Sunday, April 16, 1899. Since it was impossible to get around the plain language of the constitution of the publishing association, which called for the support of the “principles and tactics of the Socialist Labor Party,” the statement was forced to dodge, prevaricate, assume facts that had no existence. To publish it in THE PEOPLE as demanded would have compelled an answer even more lengthy in order to meet and tear to pieces all the false statements advanced. Stahl, then the only incipient Kangaroo¹ on the committee, moved to publish, and found a seconder in Charles H. Matchett, the latter claiming that he did so only to bring the motion before the house.

A debate, lasting for hours, followed. When the vote was taken, and taken in an atmosphere surcharged with tenseness, Stahl alone voted *Aye*, the other members of the committee, Alvan S. Brown, Lucien Sanial, Patrick Murphy, Arthur Keep, John J. Kinneally and Charles H. Matchett voted *No*. The N.E.C. at that same meeting then decided to issue to the membership a “Statement on the Situation in New York,” and Sanial, Matchett and Keep were elected to prepare the draft. This sub-committee reported on April 23 and its report was adopted and ordered published in the May Day issue of THE PEOPLE. Stahl was the only one voting *No*.

¹ Kangaroo—this nickname was applied to the deserters of the Party because, having been fired out, they put up the illegal claim of being the S.L.P. The term came out of the West, where before conditions had settled, fake lawyers and judges would jump from place to place setting up a court, holding trials, collecting fees and then departing. These fake courts were named “Kangaroo courts.”

Attempts to Capture the N.E.C.

The struggle was now getting hot. Prior to these incisive events the opposition had now and then made rather perfunctory efforts to elect its representatives to the N.E.C., but in the beginning of 1899, with lines more sharply drawn, and with a set of opposition leaders having been developed, a determined effort was put forth to capture the N.E.C. and the office of National Secretary. At that time these posts were filled from among the membership in Greater New York, which membership also made the nominations and voted on them in the assembly district branches. The aim of the opposition was to attain these offices before the national convention of 1900 came around, hoping against hope they might be able to transform the Party organization by that time and shape it according to their image.

The resulting contest revealed the line-up of the membership; only one of the opposition's candidates, the same Stahl, managed to slip in as a member of the N.E.C. with the smallest vote, 329, as against the largest vote cast for Sanial, which was 683. A clearer expression of the prevailing sentiment was perhaps to be found in the vote for the office of National Secretary, where just two candidates were presented: Henry Kuhn, who received 578 votes; and F.E. Kirchner, his Kangaroo opponent, who received 234 votes. There was no scattering of votes there; it was a clean-cut fight on a clean-cut issue.

As is usually the case in such struggles, the opposition harped much on democracy and declaimed much against bossism, yet some members of this local minority freely declared that, if their slate were elected and they were to control the N.E.C., the Alliance policy of the Party would promptly be abolished. The fact that this policy had been adopted in national convention and had subsequently been ratified by an overwhelming national referendum apparently did not impair their "democracy," nor were they unwilling to assume the burden of "bossism."

The Taxation Controversy.

The *Volkszeitung*, now more or less openly arrayed against the Party, started off on another tack. It raised the issue of taxation and the burden taxation imposes upon the working class. On the face of it this seemed rather silly, but was evidently undertaken for the purpose of starting a polemic against THE PEOPLE which had often opposed the Democratic party's angling for working class votes on the taxation

issue, showing that the contention of labor paying taxes out of wages flies straight in the face of the law of exchange value and is incompatible with the merchandise character of labor power.

In this taxation controversy the *Volkszeitung* went to such lengths of absurdity as to be almost incredible. It produced figures purporting to show that the burden of taxation resting upon the working class amounts to \$20 for every man, woman and child, so that a workingman with a wife and three children would, on an average, be mulcted to the tune of \$100 per annum, almost one-third of the average wages then paid. A position so preposterous and so flagrantly in opposition to the attitude of the Party could not, of course, be passed over in silence. Purely tactical reasons, if not a decent regard for Socialist economics, compelled THE PEOPLE vigorously to combat the *Volkszeitung* contentions, because if it were true that so grievous a taxation burden had been imposed upon the working class, the natural and obvious inference would have been for every workingman to vote the Democratic ticket rather than that of the S.L.P., in the hope that, in theory at least, he would be more quickly relieved of that burden.

Treason Stalking Abroad.

The *Volkszeitung* went a step further. Presently it published what it called the “Monthly Edition of the New Yorker *Volkszeitung*,” wherein a semi-lunatic by the name of B. Feigenbaum was permitted to spread himself and still more to “clownify” the taxation issue. But the *Volkszeitung* Board of Directors did more than that. It used the mailing list of THE PEOPLE to send out this alleged monthly production which came to be called the *Taxpayer*. Complaints began to pour in from all over the country accompanied with wrappers showing the subscription dates of THE PEOPLE and making clear that the corporation, because it happened to be in possession of the mailing list built up by the unceasing labor of the Party membership, had made surreptitious use of it to injure the Party. The National Secretary, under orders of the N.E.C., addressed a letter to the board demanding an explanation.

Before an answer could be received the board went still a step further. A so-called supplement to the *Vorwaerts*, the Party’s German organ, was issued and made to appear as an integral part of the paper, without the knowledge and consent of the Party Editor, of course. The “supplement” contained the same weird taxation argumentation. These open breaches of faith and of the contract made between the

Party and the publishing association brought things to a head, and when the Board of Directors, in reply to the letter of the National Secretary, in an insolent communication admitted they had authorized and ordered the use of THE PEOPLE's mailing list and the insertion of the "supplement" to the *Vorwaerts*, declaring they would do so again as often as occasion required, the National Executive Committee decided to submit the issue to the membership.

Party Ownership of the Press.

That was done on May 31, the question submitted for a general vote reading: "Shall the Party sever all connections between it and the Socialistic Cooperative Publishing Association; continue through its National Executive Committee the publication of its organs, THE PEOPLE and *Vorwaerts*, and demand from the said association the unconditional surrender of all property belonging to said organs, including their respective mailing lists and the amount of subscriptions paid in advance?" The vote on this question was made returnable on the following August 1.

The situation now approached a climax. The opposition and its head, the *Volkszeitung* Corporation, understood fully what the outcome of the general vote would be; that it meant repudiation locally and nationally. Moreover, Section New York was taking steps to look into the conduct of members of the publishing association who were members of the Party and had there betrayed the Party organization. At this juncture something else happened. Charles H. Matchett, candidate for President in 1896, resigned as a member of the N.E.C., probably under opposition influence for he kangarooed later, but at the time gave as a reason that he was about to leave the city. Two candidates were nominated by the opposing sides to fill the vacancy: Peter Fiebiger for the Party; Morris Hillquit against it.

Hillquit to the Front.

The natural history of Mr. Hillquit, today a shining light in the so-called Socialist party, would offer many interesting points, but since this is a historic sketch of the S.L.P., space and other considerations forbid. Suffice it to say that the gentleman had been active in the Jewish movement during the eighties, had then borne the name of Moses Hilkwitz, had subsequently vanished from the movement and now had come back, having undergone a metamorphosis from a button-hole

maker to a lawyer of the contract-writing type. When the resurrected Mr. Hillquit turned up again in the movement to take a hand in the fight, a member of Section New York, J. Wilenkin, a dentist, came forward and stated that in 1894 Hillquit had admitted to him that he had voted for Goff, a capitalist judge, on the ground that "Goff was a good man and his election would benefit the workingman." Mr. Hillquit, having become a candidate for the N.E.C., he was written to and asked what he had to say about the Goff matter. His answer was a blank denial.

The Conflict Opens.

Meantime July 1 had come along. Returns on the general vote were coming in fast and were made known as they came. They showed an overwhelming trend in favor of the adoption of the question submitted. The opposition knew the fate in store for them and that only a *coup d'état* would offer a chance to escape that fate. If the real S.L.P. repudiated them, the only thing to do was to set up a bogus S.L.P. The election of delegates to the Central Committee of Section New York took place every six months and strenuous efforts were made by the opposition to capture that committee. They caucused, conspired, sought to steer new members of their caliber into the assembly districts. On July 8 the new committee was to convene and when that day came both sides were lined up in battle array. The meeting opened with the call for nomination of a temporary chairman; two nominations were made, Henry Kuhn, nominated by the Party supporters, and R. Bock nominated by the opposition. Kuhn was voted on first by a show of hands. When the vote on Bock was called for, the chairman of the credentials' committee, Hugo Vogt, noticed that Kangaroo delegates not yet seated were voting and he rose to protest. Then came pandemonium. The Kangaroos, a howling mass, tried to drown the objector's voice but he persisted. The Section organizer, L. Abelson, unable to restore order by the sound of the gavel, appointed several deputy sergeants-at-arms, and one of these, Arthur Keep, approached Mr. Hillquit, the leader of the chorus, with the intention of getting him to take his seat. At once a dozen or so fell upon Keep and in a thrice a hand-to-hand conflict was on. The hall suddenly filled with non-delegate German trade unionists who had evidently been kept in readiness; clubs had been stored in a corner, but the surprise attack failed.

The purpose had been to capture the General Committee and then to depose the Party's officers, local, state and national, to set up an S.L.P. of their own, to throw the Party organization into confusion. All that evening until late into the

night the two sides faced each other, the Kangaroos waiting for the loyal delegates to leave and then to meet as the General Committee, the loyal delegates remaining to prevent that very thing. They did prevent it.

Open Rebellion.

Next day, Sunday, July 9, the Kangaroos must have held a council of war, for on the following day, Monday, July 10, there appeared in the *Volkszeitung* a front-page call for a “special meeting of the General Committee” signed by a number of opposition delegates. A meeting of the General Committee called through the *Volkszeitung*, without the knowledge of the Section organizer or without the City Executive Committee having been informed or having signed the call, was illegal, of course, but legality had ceased to be of importance to the opposition. What they needed was speed. This bogus General Committee did meet, forty-seven strong, with several non-delegates and even non-members of Section New York among them, and proceeded to “depose” the N.E.C., the National Secretary, the Editors of the Party organs, the State Executive Committee, the City Executive Committee, the Section organizer, overlooking nothing and sparing nobody. The regular General Committee, with a membership of 115, would have had no power to do all these things, which illustrates the farcical nature of the proceedings of the bogus one.

Deposition proceedings over, the deponents, re-enforced by a mob, large enough for “direct action” proceedings, repaired to Party headquarters, then located in the *Volkszeitung* building. The newly-baked “national secretary,” an East Side lawyer by name of H. Slobodin, was sent ahead. He was met by our pickets at the head of the stairs and told that he could not come in. He then wanted to deliver a letter “to Comrade Kuhn,” but was told that nothing would be accepted from him. Slobodin retired.

The Battle at Headquarters.

When that call for the bogus General Committee had appeared in the *Volkszeitung* of the same day, a hurry call had been sent out to such loyal members as could be reached in so short a time. About twenty-five men and a few women responded. The other side outnumbered them about three or four to one. Right after the withdrawal of Slobodin came the rush to capture headquarters. Three

times the Kangaroos came on, and three times they were beaten back at the door in spite of superior armament and numbers. After the third rush police reserves appeared, guns in hand. De Leon then took matters in hand, explained to the sergeant in charge who were in lawful possession and asked that the invading Kangaroos be ejected. They went.

Next day the Party's belongings were removed to a new address. The fight was now in the open. The *Volkszeitung* had now a bogus party and it hastened to publish a bogus "The People," getting the start of the Party because the post office, not knowing which was which and what paper was entitled to the second class mailing privilege, held up THE PEOPLE for a number of days, so that the "Bogus" arrived first and at first bewildered the membership throughout the country. But the organization held firm. THE PEOPLE got through, clearing up matters, and the membership, now fully aroused, went to work with a vim so that the circulation of the paper began to leap upward.

The Immediate Effects.

There were here and there in the country some nests of Kangaroos but they were not formidable and could be dealt with. The most notable one was a body stationed in Cleveland and known as the Board of Appeals, a hangover from the old S.L.P. days. The Kangaroo national committee, in those days often referred to as the "Slob" committee—a sprightly play upon the name of the Kang national secretary, Slobodin—appealed to that Board of Appeals for recognition. That body, its membership composed of Kangaroo conspirators, had the impudence to endorse the "Slob" committee, an action entirely outside of its functions, and that action in turn led to the suspension and reorganization of Section Cleveland, its then membership honeycombed with Kangaroos and pure-and-simplers.

Now followed a veritable flood of litigation. The first contest was for the Party emblem in New York State, the Kangaroos filing nominations under the Party name and emblem. They failed. Their mode of procedure had been too irregular to make it possible for the powers that be to uphold them. Other court actions followed, one an injunction to prevent the N.E.C. from publishing THE PEOPLE, another to get possession of the DAILY PEOPLE fund, a fund started by the 1896 national convention and since grown to some proportions. A temporary injunction had been obtained, which, in the nature of things, the N.E.C. had to disregard by calmly continuing to publish THE PEOPLE and at one time coming near to going to jail for

it. But in the end the Kangaroos were beaten all along the lines despite the horde of lawyers in their midst.

A good deal of space for a mere sketch has been devoted to this Kangaroo episode because it marks so important a turning point in the history of the Party. During that process the Party sloughed off all incongruous elements and emerged more firmly knit, more solidly united, the loss in membership being negligible, all things considered.

Came the time for the national convention held in New York from June 2 to June 8, 1900. Inevitably, that convention met under the shadow of the Kangaroo rising, and reacted accordingly. It enacted three outstanding measures, one to authorize the publication of a DAILY PEOPLE, leaving the time when publication was to begin to the N.E.C.; another forbidding members of the Party to hold office in pure and simple trade unions; and a third eliminating from the Party constitution the Board of Appeals. The abolition of that board never caused a ripple, the body having always been more or less superfluous at best, and often a decided nuisance at its worst.

The other two measures had a more far-reaching effect. The one prohibiting a member of the Party holding office in a pure and simple trade union was again rescinded by the 1908 national convention after it had done its work, the effect of which is difficult to estimate. What is not difficult to estimate is the effect the publication and maintenance of a daily paper had upon the Party organization and upon the S.L.P. movement. The DAILY PEOPLE was born on July 1, 1900, with funds on hand below the figure originally set, which was \$50,000. From that time on the life of the Party organization was dominated by the necessity of maintaining a daily paper, a terrible task nobody can properly visualize except those who have gone through the experience.

The Daily People Struggle.

In the light of the experience gained there can be no doubt that the venture was premature. The point that publication was started with funds below the mark set in the original plan is not decisive. What is decisive is the fact that the field was not then ripe for an S.L.P. daily paper any more than that field is ripe today. Although brilliantly edited by De Leon, its circulation never was what it should have been, and even if the circulation had been much larger, adding to the effectiveness of the paper, it would not have been possible to make ends meet with a

one-cent paper which, because of its uncompromising attitude, could not command the advertising patronage needed to carry it along. True, its influence reached much farther than its circulation; true, it had ardent supporters but not enough of them; true, the Party organization stood loyally back of it, carrying the paper along for almost fourteen years, only in the end to be forced to give up utterly exhausted.

From the time the funds originally in hand had been used up, it was a continuous heartbreaking struggle for funds, funds to meet the rent, the payroll, the installments due on the machinery, the paper bill and what not, a struggle incessant, nerve-racking, punctuated with emergencies and near-catastrophes. It drained the Party organization almost to the marrow and cost us dearly in membership, many members unable to keep the pace dropping out. It also gave rise to another internal fight, which occurred two years after the national convention, in 1902, when what became known as the Kanglet conspiracy was set afoot.

This grew directly out of the stressful financial conditions created by the publication of the DAILY PEOPLE. The 1900 national convention, because of the legal complications growing out of the Kangaroo rising, of which the injunction proceeding against the N.E.C. was one, had chosen a Board of Trustees to conduct the DAILY PEOPLE so that, in case the courts decided against the N.E.C., there would be no danger of the property of the paper being attached in contempt-of-court proceedings. That Board of Trustees was composed of three members—Hugo Vogt, Peter Fiebiger and Joseph H. Sauter. The arrangement proved a flat failure, the board had to be abolished by general vote and the N.E.C. was then charged with conducting the paper, the legal obstacles having in the meantime disappeared by reason of the Party's victories over the Kangaroos in the courts.

All this required considerable effort and gave rise to no end of controversy and friction, but when it had been accomplished and the N.E.C. had to take hold, the first thing was to find a competent manager for the paper. A member from Texas, Frank D. Lyon, a printer, had been slated for the position, but it was found that he could not come on in time because he had been involved in a "white-capping" affair in the sense that he had been assaulted in Beaumont, Texas, while on the road speaking for the Party, and that court action taken against his attackers necessitated his presence at their trial.

At this juncture Julian Pierce, also a printer and then manager of the Labor News Company, the Party's literature agency, came forward to offer himself as manager of the DAILY PEOPLE and was accepted. The first thing the new

manager did was to recommend to the N.E.C. that publication of the DAILY PEOPLE be suspended. It is, however, a thoroughly established fact in the labor movement that it is easier by far to start a paper than to stop it. Moreover, the N.E.C. had just been charged by a general vote of the Party to manage not to suspend the paper, and the recommendation of the new manager sounded rather naive. It was rejected in short order.

“The Little Kangaroos.”

By this time the Kanglet conspiracy had taken shape in New York City and had established some connections elsewhere as was soon to be found out. A series of lampoons were its most conspicuous manifestation. Julian Pierce led off, to be followed soon by one from Rhode Island, where a self-appointed “committee of three” issued another and showered the Sections with it. Then came still another proceeding from New York, where a “committee of thirty-one” indulged in the same pastime. Hugo Vogt, Peter Fiebiger and Lucien Sanial, to mention only a few of many, were among the conspirators, the latter formally resigning from the Party before showing his hand plainly enough to merit expulsion, and then also taking to lampooning.

In Pittsburg, Pa., Philadelphia, Pa., and Chicago, Ill., trouble started, but the chief nest of the conspirators was located in Pittsburg. There they carried off Section Allegheny County and with it the State Executive Committee, after they had sent a snooping committee to New York to “investigate.” But the Kanglet conspiracy did not prosper and for that reason did not last. In point of numbers it did not begin to approach the more formidable Kangaroo affair, and, moreover, it had no common cause to hold it together—unless the desire to kill the DAILY PEOPLE be considered a “cause,” and even that added but little to cohesion.

What it finally did was to involve the Party in no end of litigation, mostly about back wage claims, not a few of the former employees of the plant discovering Kanglet sympathies in their bosoms as soon as the real Kanglets began to start their suits. Most of these wage claims came about in this way: When the DAILY PEOPLE was started in 1900 it began as a rather large paper. After the election of that year it became obvious that we could not continue on that scale and a reduction in size was decided upon. The force was reduced, some of the employees not being paid in full because of shortage of funds. While all was yet serene, these wage claims were looked upon as unimportant, hardly ever to be pressed, though De Leon

had repeatedly urged upon Vogt, the manager, to call the claimants together and effect some sort of settlement. Had that been done many of these claims would have been renounced, others reduced, and a definite basis adopted that would have obviated many of the later lawsuits. But Vogt did nothing in the matter—the Party subsequently footing the bill in costs and judgments.

The Hickey Case.

One of the incidents that preceded and led up to the Kanglest affair was what was then known as the “Hickey case.” Thomas A. Hickey, employed at one time as a Party organizer and speaker, during a tour in Pennsylvania had run up an account with the Labor News Company. Julian Pierce, manager of that Party institution, urged payment but failed to get satisfaction. Things came to a point where charges were preferred against Hickey in Section New York. He refused to appear before the grievance committee and was expelled. He then tried to appeal his case to the State Executive Committee, where the Hickeyites had a majority of one, but a ruling of the N.E.C. on the constitutional point that the first appeal, if any, from a decision of the General Committee lies with the general vote of the assembly district branches blocked that, the Hickey supporters having held that this constitutional provision was optional, not mandatory.

The Hickey supporters on the State Executive Committee—Vogt, the secretary, Max Forker, Patrick Murphy—were opposed by two loyal members, Alfred C. Kihn and Henry Kuhn. Hickey himself having been a member of the S.E.C. prior to his expulsion, nominations had been made to fill the vacancy thus created and had been referred to a general vote of the membership of the state. The Hickeyites on the committee now showed their hand and in point of brazen impudence went the limit. They declared that Hickey, although expelled by his Section, and therefore no longer a member of the Party, was still a member of the S.E.C. until specifically removed by a general vote of the membership of the state. They refused to count the vote of the membership filling the vacancy and, instead, adopted a resolution calling upon Section New York for its “side of the Hickey case,” Hickey to get the statement asked for, to answer it and both statement and answer were to be submitted to a general vote—all this in the case of a former member who had refused to stand trial in his Section.

When Section New York received this impudent communication, the matter was referred to the N.E.C. for a ruling on the question: “Whether it is correct or

incorrect to hold that a member loses all right to hold office after his expulsion from the Party?” By a vote of five to two (Peter Fiebiger, member of the Board of Trustees of which Hugo Vogt was the secretary, being one of the two) the N.E.C. ruled that it was correct so to hold and that ended the matter. At the next meeting of the State Executive Committee, the vote to fill the Hickey vacancy was counted and the new member seated.

This affair, hardly of much importance so far as the personality of a rather worthless character was involved, assumed great importance by virtue of the standing still enjoyed by not a few of the Hickey supporters; also by virtue of the fact that it was a sort of prelude to the Kanglet affair. The role played by Hugo Vogt led to a complete breach between De Leon and Vogt, close collaborators for so many years, all relations being severed during the short time Vogt remained with the Party. It may here be added that Vogt subsequently became a lawyer and in that capacity the leading spirit in the many lawsuits for back wages brought against the Party.

The Agonizing Struggle.

It does not require a violent stretch of the imagination to envision the financial tribulations and difficulties the Party membership and management had to pass through in those days. Indeed, it was often said that no organization but the S.L.P. could have gone through it and survived. However, little by little, step by step, one obstacle after another was surmounted and by the time the 1904 national convention came around the Kanglet affair had been quite thoroughly liquidated. But the DAILY PEOPLE still labored under a heavy deficit, the WEEKLY PEOPLE circulation, despite all efforts, did not grow enough to be of financial aid, the notes on the plant fell due with religious regularity at the rate of \$500 a month. Part of the membership worked like Trojans and almost bled themselves white to give support but, as is always the case, a goodly portion just sat back willing “to let George do it.” Not a few of the militants broke down under the strain and withdrew from the fray. The S.L.P. of those days used up a good deal of human material.

The S.P. and the East Side.

Developments on the East Side of New York, among the Jewish workers, should also be recorded. With the rise of the so-called Socialist party, following the union

of the Kangaroo element with the Debs Social Democracy of the West, there was a swing on the part of the Jewish workers toward that movement, which, petty-bourgeois in streaks, tolerant toward the labor faker and in that respect unlike the S.L.P., apparently appealed to them. A Jewish daily leaning in that direction, the *Forward*, was in the field even before the S.P. appeared. The United Hebrew Trades central body, formerly part of the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, had developed into a pure and simple, faker-led concern.

The S.L.P. still had on the East Side a Jewish press, a daily afternoon paper called the *Abendblatt*, and a weekly called the *Arbeiter Zeitung*. In the light of present-day experience and in the light of all that has happened since, it is clear that a party like the S.L.P., unwilling to cater to the many unclean interests that sway working class organizations on the East Side, a party that holds so rigidly to a clean-cut revolutionary position, cannot now and could not then hope to hold the allegiance of these masses. Moreover, it is too sober and does not appeal to the dramatic instinct.

***Abendblatt* Expires.**

Under the circumstances prevailing, an attack upon the *Abendblatt* on the part of the United Hebrew Trades fakers was sure to come sooner or later. When it did come it took this shape: the U.H.T. demanded of the *Abendblatt* the removal of an advertisement carried by the paper, an advertisement which all the other Jewish papers carried unmolested by the fakers, and when that was refused they levied a boycott. The boycott did not affect circulation but scared the life out of the small business advertisers who almost fell over one another trying to withdraw their ads from the paper. To carry a one-cent paper on circulation only being clearly impossible, the end was never in doubt. An opportunity to sell the plant presented itself and it was sold. That was the end of the *Abendblatt*. The weekly *Arbeiter Zeitung* was continued for a time, printed in the DAILY PEOPLE plant, but even with expenses thus reduced could not hold out. What funds were left from the sale of the *Abendblatt* plant after satisfying claims against the same were soon used up, and the *Arbeiter Zeitung* became an added burden to the Party. It too had to be discontinued. There was no field for a Jewish S.L.P. press.

Important Measures.

At the 1904 national convention dissatisfaction with the reformist and politicalist tendencies of the so-called Second International manifested itself in the form of a resolution which left it to the discretion of the S.L.P. delegation to withdraw from the congress of the International in case that congress should take action favoring “Kangarooism, Millerandism and Hyndmandism,” the resolution being the outcome of the Kautsky resolution adopted by a previous congress to smooth over the entrance of Millerand into the French Government.

Another important action taken by the national convention was the change made in the Party constitution relative to the manner of electing the National Executive Committee. Thus far this committee had been elected from among the membership at the seat of the committee, but now this was changed so that the N.E.C. was composed of one delegate from every state having a State Executive Committee, the delegate to be chosen by a general vote of the state, and the term of office was made one year, instead of from national convention to national convention as had been the case.

The candidates nominated by the convention were Charles H. Corregan of New York, for President, and William W. Cox of Illinois, for Vice President, both workingmen, the first a printer and the other a miner.

The report of the N.E.C. to the convention and the convention itself were largely taken up with the Party press. It was the dominant issue overshadowing all else, just as the Kangaroo fight had been the issue in 1900.

The I.W.W. Casts Its Shadow Ahead.

From then on the steady daily grind to maintain the DAILY PEOPLE continued, but in the following year, 1905, there came along an event that was again deeply to affect the Party. At the 1904 convention there had been among the delegates from Michigan a young man named Frank Bohn, affable, slick, polished, a fluent talker, making quite an impression. In 1904–05 Bohn had been sent on the road by the Party as an organizer and agitator and while on the road fell in with a group in Chicago which was about to issue a manifesto calling for a convention to be held to establish an economic organization based on the principle of Industrial Unionism, the very principle so firmly upheld by the S.L.P. and so ably propagated by Daniel De Leon.

In this manner, an accident if you will, Bohn became one of the signers of the manifesto, the last one on the list as though he had just come in when all the others had signed up. The manifesto made quite a stir. The industrial convention called for was held in Chicago, the S.T. and L.A. being represented, with Daniel De Leon heading the delegation and taking a prominent, aye, the leading part in the deliberations which resulted in the formation of the organization of what was called the Industrial Workers of the World, the I.W.W.

In this manner the principle of Industrial Unionism, which had projected the S.T. and L.A. into the field in 1895, ten years later projected the I.W.W., a more ambitious attempt to apply the principle to the field of the American labor movement because backed this time by much larger numbers, the entire Western Federation of Miners with a reputed membership of over 30,000 becoming attached, to say nothing of the many other organizations seeking affiliation.

Moving by Trial and Error and Closing of Early Period.

It was the formation of the I.W.W. which inspired Daniel De Leon to deliver that same year in Minneapolis the famous speech on the “Preamble” of that organization, a speech which has since become a Socialist classic, reprinted again and again in a long number of editions, and now bearing the title “Socialist Reconstruction of Society.” De Leon threw himself with all the ardor of his strong personality into the agitation for the new industrial organization, but, just as in the case of the S.T. and L.A., subsequent events proved that conditions were not yet quite ripe in the United States for the successful maintenance and upbuilding of the industrial organization of the American working class. During the very first year of its existence friction developed, and later, in the course of the next three years, disintegration sapped the marrow of the organization so that, in 1908, an anarcho-syndicalist element was able by the employment of fraudulent methods to pack and to capture the convention held that year, and, by striking out the political clause of the preamble, transform the organization into a pure and simple physical force concern, with the result that, after a somewhat spectacular career, it has today lost what foothold it ever had and as a factor in the American labor movement has ceased to be.

However, be it noted, that the S.T. and L.A., and later the original I.W.W., did accomplish one profoundly important thing—they planted once and for all the seed of the industrial union principle so that, today, that principle is alive in millions of

minds and awaits but the ripeness of economic conditions to step forth and become a living and dominant fact. Given the economic conditions, the American working class cannot but form its militant battalions along the lines laid down by the development of our industries, for there is no other way to deal with capitalism and with the capitalist class. Nor is there any danger that the spark so kindled will ever die out; capitalism and its works, and the Socialist Labor Party and its work will see to that. Meantime we must labor and wait.

The year following the formation of the I.W.W., in 1906, there was a change at S.L.P. headquarters, the National Secretary, Henry Kuhn, resigning the office due to family considerations. He had been in office since 1891 and during that time had had a rather strenuous time of it struggling with the financial problems of the Party, which were always rather formidable, and which became more so after the establishment of the DAILY PEOPLE, and, on the other hand, fighting almost without let-up all these years, unquestionably during the formative period of the S.L.P. movement in America, a double occupation that required a fairly good constitution to see it through without breakdown.

Kuhn, before offering his resignation, prevailed upon the N.E.C. to make one last strenuous effort to urge upon the membership that the DAILY PEOPLE plant be freed of the debt on its machinery. That effort was made under the name of “The Homestretch Fund”—and it succeeded, the last note being paid before he left office.

When nominations were called for to fill the office of National Secretary, Frank Bohn was one of the candidates, and he was elected. Great hopes were at first entertained that the new National Secretary would so conduct the Party affairs as to maintain at least, if not to better, the record of his predecessor, hopes that were based upon his supposed ability and training. How these hopes were dashed to the ground, and how his ineptitude in office was later added to by downright treachery will be told in succeeding chapters.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

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