
Minutes of the Second Annual Convention of the Communist Party of America: New York City — July 13 - 18, 1920

Document in the Comintern Archive, RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 30, ll. 5-11.

First day, July 13, 1920 — 7 pm.

Present:

District I [Boston] — Johnson [=???], Sullivan [A.S. Edwards], Sartoni [=???], Narrow [=???], and Bryan [=???].

District II [New York] — Allen [Max Cohen], Bain [Louis Shapiro], Leon [Lithuanian Federationist=???], Morris [J. Wilenkin], Ivanoff [=???], Klints [Jewish Federationist=???], Book [=???], and Kramer [=???].

District III [Philadelphia] — Wiley [=???], Steinberg [=???], and Kaunar [=???].

District IVab [Cleveland] — Goldsmith [=???] and Retap [=???].

District IVc [Detroit] — Rag [=???].

District V [Chicago] — Larin [=???], Peters [=???], Pavlow [=???], Kutziy [=???], Grinwald [=???], and 1 Fraternal Delegate.

CEC — not delegates — Sasha [Rose Pastor Stokes], Black [John Ballam?], Wilson [=???], Brown [=???], and Bunte [Charles Dirba].

Temporary Chairman — Allen [Cohen]; Temporary Secretary — Dobin [Dirba].

Motion: To elect a Credentials Committee of 5. Carried. Grinwald [=???], Bain [Shapiro], Goldsmith [=???], Sullivan [Edwards], and Dobin [Dirba] were elected.

Motion: To adjourn till 8 am of the following morning. *Carried.*

• • • • •

Second day, July 14, 1920 — 8 am.

All present as on the first day.

Allen [Cohen], Temporary Chairman.
Dobin [Dirba], Temporary Secretary.

Report of Credentials Committee:

District I [Boston] — 5 delegates, 5 present — OK — representing 1141 members.

District III [Philadelphia] — 3 delegates, 3 present — OK — representing 835 members.

District IVab [Cleveland] — 3 delegates, 2 present — OK — representing 749 members.

District IVc [Detroit] — 2 delegates, 1 present — OK — representing 415 members.

District V [Chicago] — 5 delegates, 5 present — OK — representing 1178 members.

District II [New York] — 8 delegates, 8 present — OK — representing 1938 members, out of which 1367 members paid their assessments, 139 are to pay their assessments, and 432 are exempt, due to many members from Connecticut who are out on strike, as well as from New Jersey who are out of work.

Majority of Credentials Committee recommends the seating of all delegates.

Minority of Credentials Committee is opposed.

Motion: To adopt recommendation and seat all.

Amendment: With exception of District II [New York], which is to have only 7 delegates.

For Amendment — 7; Against — 15. *Amendment lost.*

For Motion — 15; Against — 7. *Motion carried.*

Credentials Committee recommends the seating of a fraternal delegate from Chicago, with a voice but no vote; also, Convention to pay his expenses, with the understanding that his district (V) shall refund same.

Motion: To adopt recommendation. *Carried.*

Allen [Cohen] was then elected as permanent Chairman; Bain [Shapiro] and Kramer [=??] as permanent Secretaries.

Motion: To elect a Rules of Order Committee of 5 members.

Amendment: To elect a Rules of Order Committee of 3 members.

Amendment carried.

Goldsmith [=??], Bain [Shapiro], and Kuntzi [=??] were elected.

Report of Rules of Order Committee:

Motion: To take up the report seriatim. *Carried.*

Credentials Committee recommends the seating of fraternal delegates from Russian and Ukrainian Federations. *Carried.*

Motion: To adopt first paragraph of Rules of Order, which reads:

1. Convention to elect permanent Chairman and Vice Chairman for duration of convention. *Carried.*

2. Election of 2 permanent Secretaries for convention. *Carried.*

3. Sessions of convention are to be held from 7 am to 1 pm; from 2 pm to 6 pm; and from 7 pm to 9 pm. *Carried.*

4. Permanent committees:

a. Credentials Committee.

b. Rules of Order Committee.

c. Program and Resolutions Committee.

d. Constitution and Organization Comm.

e. Finance Committee.

5. Credentials Committee shall report upon the

arrival of new delegates.

6. All committees shall consist of 5 delegates.

Amendment: With exception of Finance Committee, which is to consist of 3 delegates. *Carried as amended.*

7. All suggestions, resolutions, etc., shall be first submitted to proper committee. *Carried.*

8. Delegates may serve on more than one committee. *Carried.*

9. Only regular delegates shall be elected to serve on any committee. *Carried.*

10. Committees shall have rights of co-optation. Co-optated members shall not vote. *Carried.*

1 — Procedure:

a. Speakers may obtain the floor upon recognition by the chair. *[Carried.]*

b. Speakers may take the floor twice on each question: 7 minutes the first time and 5 minutes in the second time. *Carried.*

c. The chairman shall have a right to speak after previous question has been voted upon.

Motion: To table it. *Carried.*

d. Reporters of committees shall have a right to speak twice: 15 minutes and 10 minutes — exclusive of time consumed in reading report. Same rule applies to minority reporters. *Carried.*

e. Motions and amendments shall be made before discussion. *Carried.*

f. Not more than 2 amendments and a substitute shall be entertained. Substitute motions shall not negate the original motion. *Carried.*

g. A roll call may be had only upon demand of not less than 5 delegates. *Carried.*

h. Arguments upon appeal from the ruling of the chair shall be limited to 5 minutes, and only the appellant and appellee shall speak once. *Carried.*

i. Minutes of previous day's sessions shall be read at the beginning of each morning session. *Carried.*

j. Two-thirds of regular delegates shall constitute a quorum. All questions to be decided by a majority vote. *Carried.*

2 — Order of Business:

a. Selection of committees.

b. Report of Acting Secretary [Dirba], CEC,

Editor, and International Relations.

- c. Report of permanent committees:
 - i. Program and Resolutions.
 - ii. Constitution.
 - iii. Finance.
 - iv. Selection of CEC and Auditing Committee. *Carried.*

Motion: To adopt the report as altered. *Carried.*

Election of permanent Chairman was called for. Allen [Cohen] elected. Larin [=??] was elected permanent Vice Chairman. Bain [Shapiro] and Kramer [=??] were elected permanent Secretaries.

Motion: To make permanent the previous Credentials Committee. *Carried.*

Motion: To have Rules of Order Committee discharged. *Carried.*

Election for Program and Resolutions Committee was called for. Morris [Wilenskin], Johnson [=??], Allen [Cohen], Leon [=??], and Klints [=??] were elected.

Election for Constitution Committee was called for. Larin [=??], Goldsmith [=??], Wiley [=??], Retap [=??], and Grinwald [=??] were elected.

Election for Finance Committee was called for. Pavlow [=??], Ivanoff [=??], and Bain [Shapiro] were elected.

Report of Acting Secretary [Dirba]:

Motion: To accept report of acting Secretary.

Amendment: To publish same with an added addenda, based upon verified figures of Federation Organizers.

Motion as amended carried.

Report of CEC.

Motion: To accept report. *Carried.*

Motion: To grant the floor to Federation fraternal delegates. *Carried.*

Fraternal delegate from the Russian Federation [=??] was given the floor. Reported that in spite of the fact they went through two raids, at which their press was smashed, \$6000 worth of literature confiscated, their CEC was the first one to endorse the stand of the majority of the CEC and at the same time contributed \$400.

At their last convention held recently they have changed their attitude towards the IWW, in the sense that they consider that organization in the same light as any other economic organization, namely, as a field for our propaganda.

The [Federation] constitution adopted states that the highest authority is the CP Convention, next to it the CEC of the Party, then their own Convention, CEC, etc.

They had two weekly papers: a legal as well as an illegal one. For the time being the legal paper is to be discontinued.

In their constitution there is a clause to the effect that appointments shall be effected from the top down.

The approximate membership is 2500.

Greetings were read, expressing their loyalty to the Party and its principles.

Motion: To accept report. *Carried.*

Fraternal delegate from the Ukrainian Federation [=??] was then granted the floor. In the course of his remarks he stated that they have an approximate membership of 1700 to 1800.

At their last convention held recently they adopted a constitution with a clause to the effect that appointments shall be made from the top down.

On parliamentarism, they have taken the same stand as last year, with the exception: that in view of the fact that we are an illegal party, we shall boycott this year's elections.

They consider Revolutionary Industrial Unionism as a potential factor in reconstructing society. The IWW is to be considered in the same light as any other economic organization.

Their constitution emphasizes the fact that the highest body is the CP Convention; next to it, the CEC of the Party, then their own Convention, etc.

They have a legal as well as an illegal paper.

A \$500 contribution was made for the building

of the party.

Greetings were read.

Motion: To accept report. *Carried.*

Meeting adjourned at 4 pm.

• • • • •

Third day, July 15, 1920 — 7 am.

Comrade Allen [Cohen], the chairman, opened the convention.

On roll call all were present as on previous day in addition to fraternal delegates from Russian as well as Ukrainian Federations.

Minutes from previous session read and approved.

Motion: That all delegates shall have their names changed.

Amendment: That all delegates shall put on slips of paper their old as well as new names and hand same in to secretary, who is to enter it in the record; but at the convention the delegates shall be called by their old names. *Carried.*

Report of Program and Resolutions Committee.

Motion: To read Program. *Carried.*

Program read.

Motion: To take up the Program seriatim. *Carried.*

Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, and 4 were adopted.

Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, and 4 on political and mass action were adopted. Paragraph 5 was amended to read: "one of its initial forms." *Adopted.*

Paragraphs on unionism were adopted.

Fraternal delegate from Lithuanian Federation presented credentials.

Credentials Committee recommends the seating of the fraternal delegate.

Motion: To adopt recommendation of Credentials Committee. *Carried.*

Paragraphs on bourgeois and political democracy were read and adopted.

Paragraphs A, B, C, and D1 were read and adopted.

Paragraph D2 was amended to read that we shall make no exceptions in nominations.

Second Amendment: We are not to participate in parliamentarism.

Second Amendment was defeated.

Motion: To suspend the rules of order and take up the discussion on the principle of parliamentarism. *Carried.*

After considerable discussion the following motion was made:

Motion: We endorse the stand of the Third International on parliamentarism.

Roll call was demanded. Demand sustained by 5 delegates and consequently granted.

All delegates voted yes; fraternal delegates recorded yes, except from Chicago, who recorded himself as present.

Program Committee introduced the following resolution on Parliamentarism:

Taking as basis the position of the Third International, of which the Communist Party of America is an integral part, we consider the use of the bourgeois parliament as of secondary importance and for revolutionary propaganda and agitation only. At the same time, due to specific political circumstances in the United States — the outlawing of our party and the prevailing reaction in this country — we are forced to boycott the coming elections.

Amendment:

We endorse the stand of the Third International on parliamentarism and adopt it (as the 3rd International indicates) to the present political situation in the United States.

The Communist Party of America sees no possibility of utilizing the parliamentary weapon either for the present or in the near future. If at any time conditions should warrant participation in parliamentary elections, we shall participate for revolutionary propaganda and agitation only. The Communist Party, however, will propagandize the masses (through its literature, etc.) in every parliamentary campaign, to destroy their illusion on parliamentarism and the bourgeois state.

After a considerable discussion on both resolutions, a roll call on both resolutions was demanded.

Demand was sustained by 5 delegates and consequently granted.

Amendment was defeated by 16 to 4, with 4 voting present.

Yes: Johnson [=???], Sullivan [Edwards], Bryan [=???], Retap [=???].

No: Norrow [=???], Allen [Cohen], Bain [Shapiro], Leon [=???], Morris [Wilenskin], Ivanoff [=???], Klints [=???], Book [=???], Kramer [=???], Wiley [=???], Steinberg [=???], Kaunar [=???], Rag [=???], Larin [=???], Pavlow [=???], and Grinwald [=???].

Present: Sartoni [=???], Kutziy [=???], Peters [=???], and Goldsmith [=???].

CEC: Sasha [Stokes], Yes; Wilson [=???], Present; Bunte [Dirba], No; Brown [Ballam?], No; Black [=???], No.

Fraternal delegates, with the exception of Chicago, No; Chicago, Present.

Motion was carried by 16 to 4, same as above, except Sasha [Stokes], who refrained for the following reason: "I refrain from voting against the motion because I consider the difference between motion and amendment to be too slight to vote against it."

Meeting adjourned at 9 pm.

• • • • •

Fourth day, July 16, 1920 — 7:30 am.

Convention was opened by the chairman, Comrade Allen [Cohen].

On roll call all were present as on previous day, in addition to fraternal delegate from Lithuanian Federation.

Minutes from previous day's session were read and with a few slight corrections adopted.

Amendment to Article D2 was then taken up, namely, that we nominate all officers.

Previous question was called for. *Carried.*

On roll call the amendment was defeated by 16 to 5, as follows:

No: Norrow [=???], Allen [Cohen], Bain [Shapiro], Leon [=???], Morris [Wilenskin], Ivanoff [=???], Book [=???], Kramer [=???], Wiley [=???], Steinberg

[=???], Kaunar [=???], Rag [=???], Larin [=???], Kutziy [=???], Pavlow [=???], and Grinwald [=???].

Yes: Johnson [=???], Sullivan [Edwards], Sartoni [=???], Bryan [=???], and Klints [=???].

Present: Peters [=???], Retap [=???], and Goldsmith [=???].

Original motion was then carried by 15 to [9?].

Paragraphs, E, F, G, H, I, and J were adopted.

Paragraph K was referred back to committee.

Paragraphs L, M, N, and O were adopted.

Paragraph P was amended to read that we are to have CP committees to carry on our propaganda among the soldiers and sailors. *Carried.*

Fraternal delegate delivered the following message:

To the 2nd Annual Convention of
the Communist Party of America:—

The Central Executive Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Federation, in the name of 3200 members of the Federation, sends its warmest greetings and revolutionary wishes to the 2nd Annual Convention of the Communist Party of America.

May the present Convention prove a source of new strength to the Communist Party and the cause of <illeg.> communism in America!

May our party withstand the combined forces of reaction, opportunism, and centrism and, braving all obstacles, uncompromisingly and unflinchingly lead the American working class to our nearest goal — social revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat in America.

Long live the Communist Party of America!

Long live the Third International!

Motion: To accept the report of the fraternal delegate from the Lithuanian Federation. *Carried.*

Report of Committee on Constitution.

Motion: To take up the question of appointments from top to bottom.

Previous question was called for and carried. *Motion was carried.*

Motion: All officers of the party shall be appointed from top to bottom.

Amendment: All party officials and committees below the District Organizer should be elected from bottom up.

Amendment to Amendment: All party officers shall be appointed from top [down to] group captains, who shall be elected.

After a lengthy discussion, previous question was called for. *Carried.*

Roll call on Motion, Amendment, and Amendment to Amendment was requested. Request sustained by 5 delegates, hence, granted.

Amendment to Amendment was defeated by 21 to 3. All delegates voted No except Wiley [=???], Steinberg [=???], and Kaunar [=???], who voted Yes. All CEC recorded No. All fraternal delegates — except Lithuanian — recorded No. Lithuanian recorded Present.

Amendment was defeated by 15 to 9, as follows:

Yes: Johnson [=???], Sullivan [Edwards], Sartoni [=???], Bryan [=???], Norrow [=???], Klints [=???], Rag [=???], Larin [=???], and Peters [=???].

No: Allen [Cohen], Bain [Shapiro], Leon [=???], Morris [Wilenskin], Ivanoff [=???], Book [=???], Kramer [=???], Wiley [=???], Steinberg [=???], Kaunar [=???], Goldsmith [=???], Retap [=???], Kuntziy [=???], and Grinwald [=???].

CEC recorded: Black [Ballam?], No; Sasha [Stokes], No; Brown [=???], Yes; Bunte [Dirba], Yes; Wilson [=???], Yes.

Fraternal: Russian, No; Ukrainian, No; Lithuanian, Present; Chicago, Yes.

Motion was defeated by 12 to 12, in the following manner;

Yes: Allen [Cohen], Bain [Shapiro], Leon [=???], Morris [Wilenskin], Ivanoff [=???], Book [=???], Kramer [=???], Goldsmith [=???], Retap [=???], Kuntziy [=???], Pavlow [=???], and Grinwald [=???].

No: Johnson [=???], Sullivan [Edwards], Sartoni [=???], Bryan [=???], , Norrow [=???], Klints [=???], , Wiley [=???], Steinberg [=???], Kaunar [=???], Rag [=???], Larin [=???], and Peters [=???].

CEC recorded: Sasha [Stokes], Yes; Black [Ballam?], Yes; Brown [=???], No; Bunte [Dirba], No; Wilson [=???], No.

Fraternal: Russian and Ukrainian, Yes; Lithu-

anian, Present.

On account of a 12 to 12 disagreement, the convention automatically adjourned at 6 pm.

• • • • •

Fifth day, July 17, 1920 — 8 am.

Both factions came to an agreement and the convention was opened by Comrade Allen [Cohen], the chairman.

All present as on previous day.

Minutes from previous day's session read and approved.

Motion: To take up Article 3 of constitution. *Carried.*

Article 3, Section 2 carried. Section 3 amended to read: "in towns where there is only one group of the same language speaking members, said group shall be considered a branch." *Carried.*

Section 4 amended to read that not less than 2 nor more than 10 branches shall form a local. *Carried.*

Article 4, Section 1 and 2 were adopted. Section 3 was amended to read that 4 alternates shall be elected to fill vacancies.

Amendment to Amendment: After alternates are exhausted, the CEC has a right to fill vacancies.

Amendment to Amendment was included in Amendment.

Amendment carried.

Section 4 and 5 carried; 6 referred back; 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 carried; 15b amendment: that District Organizers of federations shall be members of <illeg.>. *Carried as amended.*

15b and c, carried; 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21 carried.

Motion: To strike out 21a. *Carried.*

22 carried. All sections in Article 7 carried.

Dues and Finance: All sections carried.

Article 9 — Conventions:

Sections 1 to 8 inclusive — adopted.

Section 9 amended: no paid party officials shall be eligible as delegates to convention.

Amendment to Amendment: No member shall be eligible to act in the capacity of a delegate unless he has been elected from his group up.

Amendment to Amendment — *defeated*.

Amendment — *defeated*.

Motion — *carried*.

Party Press: Article 9, Sections 1 to 5 carried; 6 amended: that it shall not apply to the CECs of Federations. *Carried as amended*.

CP Shop Committees: All sections adopted.

Motion: To strike out Article 11 about General Defense and substitute that each district organization of the party shall take care of it. *Carried*.

Article 12, Section 1 — *carried*.

Motion: All party officials without dependents shall be paid not more than \$30.00 per week; those with dependents, not more than \$40.00.

Amendment: All party officials without dependents are to receive \$35.00 per week; those with dependents \$45.00 per week.

Amendment carried.

[Finance Committee Report.]

Finance Committee recommends the following:

1. That all elected delegates to the convention as well as members of the CEC who are not on the payroll of the party shall be paid, outside of their RR expenses, \$5.00 per day, that \$3.00 per day shall be subtracted for room and board provided by party during convention. *Carried*.

2. Those who are in the pay of the party, an equal sum — \$3.00 per day — shall be deducted from their pay. *Carried*.

3. Fraternal delegates are required to pay \$5.00 per day. *Defeated*.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm.

• • • • •

Sixth day, July 18, 1920 — 7:30 am.

The chairman, Comrade Allen [Cohen], opened

the meeting.

All present as on previous day.

Minutes from previous day's session read and approved.

Motion: To adopt Program as a whole, as read.

Carried.

Corrected Constitution was read.

Motion: To adopt Constitution as a whole.

Carried.

Motion: Delegates to the next convention shall be paid outside that of RR fare, in proportion to that of party officials. *Carried*.

Election of party officials is the next thing in the order of business.

The following 9 members were elected to serve as members of the CEC: Leon [=???], Grinwald [=???], Baldwin [Oscar Tyverovsky], Bain [Shapiro], Johnson [=???], Sullivan [Edwards], Allen [Cohen], Morris [Wilenskin], and Thompson [=???].

The following are the 4 alternates: Adrian [=???], Iarin [=???], Wiley [=???], and Klints [=???].

Motion: To allow the CEC to select the alternates. *Carried*.

An Auditing Committee of the following 5 members was elected: Book [=???], Steinberg [=???], Pavlow [=???], Norrow [=???], and Retap [=???].

Motion: Our delegate to the Third International shall be instructed to protest against the admission of the UCP as a centrist party. *Carried*.

Motion: To adjourn the 2nd Annual Convention of the Communist Party of America. *Carried*.
Convention adjourned at 1:30 pm.

*Lawrence Bain [Louis Shapiro],
Secretary of the 2nd Annual Convention
of the CP of A.*

Edited by Tim Davenport.

Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2011. • Non-commercial reproduction permitted.