

# The SLP's Chronological Recapitulation of the Main Incidents of its Conflict with the *Volkszeitung*

First published in *The People*, August 20, 1899. Reprinted in *Proceedings of the Tenth National Convention of the Socialist Labor Party*. (New York: New York Labor News Co., 1901), pp. 307-315.  
Listings of multiple dates have been separated and entire list placed into full chronological order here.

**December 14 , 1898** — The *Volkszeitung* attacks editorially the Party's trade union policy.

**December 19, 1898** — The *Volkszeitung* again attacks editorially the Party's trade union policy.

**December 25, 1898** — The *Volkszeitung* is reprimanded by *The People*.

**December 28, 1898** — The editors of the *Volkszeitung* are censured by a unanimous vote of the Board of Directors of the *Volkszeitung* Publishing Association.

**Jan. 1, 1899** — The *Volkszeitung* is again reprimanded by *The People*.

**January 1899** — Meeting of the Socialistic Cooperative Publishing Association, where the Party's policy is denounced and a spirit of defiant disloyalty is exhibited.

**February 12, 1899** — The *Volkszeitung* publishes a falsified account of the criticisms uttered in the New York General Committee on Henry Stahl, Emil Kirchner, and other nominees for the National Executive Committee.

**February 25, 1899** — For thus misleading and prejudicing its readers in a matter affecting an important Party vote, the *Volkszeitung* is condemned by the General Committee.

**March 1899** — Another meeting of the Socialistic Cooperative Publishing Association, where the Party's policy is denounced and a spirit of defiant disloyalty is exhibited.

**March 1899** — During the voting for the National Executive Committee, the *Volkszeitung* element makes violent efforts to secure a majority on that committee. To accomplish this, house to house visits, the circulation of slanders, and even vote-packing are resorted to. The Liedertafel, eager to help along this plan of packing the Party's National Committee with enemies of the Party's policy, casts more votes than the number of its members in good standing.

**March 22, 1899** — Canvas of the returns of the election for the National Executive Committee. The result shows the following vote for the leading upholders of the Party's policy:

Kuhn .....	578 votes
Sanial .....	683 votes
Matchett .....	565 votes
Keep .....	426 votes
Brown .....	397 votes
Murphy .....	366 votes
Kinneally .....	364 votes

as against the following vote received by the seven leading candidates of the *Volkszeitung* element:

Kirchner .....	234 votes
Stahl .....	329 votes
Neppel .....	153 votes
Fahl .....	150 votes
Neuske .....	135 votes
Ey .....	88 votes
Woodruff .....	76 votes

**March 23, 1899** — The Socialistic Cooperative Publishing Association endorses the *Volkszeitung's* editorial attacks on the Party's policy. The majority of the Board of Directors (Peter Fiebiger, R. Glaser, Samuel Jacobson, M. Halder, and H. Vogt) resign, and a board is elected composed of opponents of the Party's policy.

**April 2, 1899** — *The People* publishes the article "Sign-Posts," reviewing the debates in the Socialistic Cooperative Publishing Association.

**April 11, 1899** — The Board of Directors of the Socialistic Cooperative Publishing Association appears before the National Executive Committee and demands that a reply for the "Sign-Posts" be inserted in *The People* of April 23rd or 30th (May 1st), such reply to be published without previous inspection either by the National Executive

Committee or by the editor of *The People*. The National Executive Committee resolves that it cannot act on the demand until the reply has been submitted.

**April 16, 1899** — The Board of Directors of the Socialistic Cooperative Publishing Association submits its reply to the National Executive Committee. Their attention is called to the many misstatements of facts contained therein; they are told that, if an end to the discussion is sincerely desired, nothing inaccurate should be said that would lead to further controversy and that, if they will revise their reply in accordance with the facts as pointed out to them and not denied, the reply will be inserted. The Board answers that they have no time to revise; the National Executive Committee consequently rejects the reply.

**April 29, 1899** — The *Volkszeitung* issues its “Monthly English Edition,” and uses the mailing list of *The People* for distributing it.

**May 1, 1899** — The National Executive Committee issues its statement on the “Situation in New York.”

**May 15, 1899** — The National Executive Committee demands an explanation.

**May 23, 1899** — The *Volkszeitung* smuggles a bogus “supplement” into the *Vorwaerts*.

**May 24, 1899** — The National Executive Committee again demands an explanation.

**May 27, 1899** — The New York General Committee adopts by a two-thirds majority a report showing the spirit of the Socialist Cooperative Publishing Association to be as characterized in the “Sign-Posts” article, and passes a motion demanding the subordination of the Association and of the editorial management of the *Volkszeitung* to the decisions of the Party.

**May 30, 1899** — The Board of Directors of the Socialistic Cooperative Publishing Association sends a letter to the National Executive Committee, not only claiming absolute property rights over the *Volkszeitung*, but also presuming to assert such rights over the national Party organs, *The People* and *Vorwaerts*.

**May 31, 1899** — The National Executive Committee decides to issue a call for a general vote on the question as to whether all connection with the Socialist Cooperative Publishing Association shall be severed, and the Party shall demand the unconditional surrender of all property belonging to the national Party organs.

**June 14, 1899** — The Board of Directors of the Socialistic Cooperative Publishing Association publishes in the *Volks-*

*zeitung* a notice asking the Party members to postpone voting until a full statement of the *Volkszeitung*'s side of the question has been laid before them. As a reason for this request, it is alleged that an affirmative vote on the proposition of the National Executive Committee would mean a judgment of condemnation of the *Volkszeitung*, “and at the same time the expulsion from the Party of hundreds of good Party members.” This falsehood about the threatened expulsion of hundreds of German members was circulated for the purpose of inflaming the German comrades against the majority of the Party.

**June 20, 1899** — The *Volkszeitung* announces editorially that a detailed reply to the statement of the National Executive Committee would be “quite useless,” as it “could hardly have any effect on the decision of the vote.”

**June 21, 1899** — The Socialistic Cooperative Publishing Association seeks to choke off the general vote by adopting a resolution that *The People* and the title of the *Vorwaerts* be immediately turned over to the Party. At this meeting L. Jablinowsky, a *Volkszeitung* reporter, foreshadowed subsequent events by declaring that “we” — the *Volkszeitung* element — “are the Party and can put the Party to rights in the same way we did in 1889.”

**June 23, 1899** — The Board of Appeals informs the National Executive Committee that it has entertained an appeal of Henry Stahl, who wants the general vote on severing connection with the *Volkszeitung* stopped as unconstitutional. This was the second attempt to stop this vote emanating from the Board of Appeals: the first one having been made by Ibsen, in his letter to H. Vogt.

**June 28, 1899** — The Board of Directors of the Socialistic Cooperative Publishing Association notifies the National Executive Committee that it has decided to terminate the contracts with the Party on July 15, 1899, and asks for the appointment of a committee to discuss details.

**July 5, 1899** — A special committee of the National Executive Committee meets a subcommittee of the Board of Directors of the Socialistic Cooperative Publishing Association. The former reminds the latter of the fact that the general vote will not close until August 1, and that it would be a defiance of the Party for the Board to insist on an earlier date. The committee of the Board agrees to consult the other Board members as to the date.

**July 7, 1899** — The committee of the *Volkszeitung* Board notifies the National Executive Committee that the contracts for the publication of the Party organs must come to an end on July 15, and asks for a new conference. The committee of the National Executive Committee appoints Monday, July 10th (mark the date), at 8 pm as the time

for another conference.

**July 8, 1899** — Meeting of the New York General Committee which the *Volkszeitung* element had planned to pack and, if necessary, to control by physical force. Physically “strong” delegates had been selected in the branches dominated by the *Volkszeitung* element. These delegates and other sympathizers were notified to be in the meeting room before 8 o’clock pm, and they were instructed to vote, whether they were properly admitted or not. When H. Vogt, Secretary of the Committee on Credentials, seeing that on the *Volkszeitung* side delegates whose credentials had not yet been passed upon and even non-delegates were voting (for instance, two members of the “Liedertafel,” which had been dissolved as a branch), tries to make a point of order against this illegal voting, a row which the *Volkszeitung* had evidently premeditated breaks out. A concerted attack is made on certain comrades. Sieburg shouts: “Kill Vogt!”

Waldinger, a suspended member, uses a club; Nagel, the President of the Socialistic Cooperative Publishing Association, grasps and uses the chairman’s gavel as a weapon.

**July 9, 1899** — The *Volkszeitung* publishes a lying account of the meeting of July 8th. One of the falsehoods contained in this report was to the effect that the first act of violence had been committed by Arthur Keep, who had struck Hillquit. This falsehood was nailed by Comrade Kihn, of the Brooklyn American Branch, who interviewed Hillquit and obtained from him the admission that Keep had not touched him. In a letter from Hillquit, read at a Philadelphia Section meeting, the same admission was contained.

The fact that the row of July 8th was started by the *Volkszeitung* element, according to a prearranged plan, was confessed by C. Schneppe, one of the directors of the Socialistic Cooperative Publishing Association, in a conversation with Comrade Gleiforst of the 6th Assembly District, Brooklyn, which took place on the 9th of July in the Brooklyn Labor Lyceum. Schneppe referred to the row as a “lesson given to the young American element in the Party,” and said that that lesson had been prepared in a number of meetings held during the last few weeks.

**July 10, 1899** — A call appears in the *Volkszeitung* for a special meeting of the General Committee to be held that very night. This call is signed by 33 delegates (out of 115 delegates composing the General Committee), and by two representatives of the “Liedertafel,” which was no longer a branch.

This illegal call was issued without an effort hav-

ing been made to get the officers of the section to call a special meeting. Neither these officers nor the delegates were notified of the proposed meeting; only the organizer at about 7 o’clock pm on July 10th, that is, about an hour before the time named for the meeting, received a notice demanding that he be present with his books. This demand was, of course, ignored.

**July 10, 1899** — Forty-seven persons meet in the Bowery and declare themselves the General Committee of Section New York; aye, they presume to be the whole party of Greater New York. But few of these persons could produce credentials, their credentials having been on July 8th delivered to the regular Committee on Credentials; five of these persons, including two members of the “Liedertafel,” would have been rejected as delegates at a regular meeting of the General Committee; three of these persons acted against the will of their constituents in coming to this illegal meeting; one American comrade was present by mistake; he opposed by his vote all the proceedings that were taken and he came downtown afterwards to assist in the defense of the Party’s property. Of the 38 who could have been admitted as delegates at a regular meeting of the General Committee, 34 were present on July 8th, and of these only 22 were entitled to vote at the time the row was precipitated.

The Bowery meeting carries out a cut-and-dried program that had been agreed upon in the caucuses alluded to by schneppe, and the immediate mode of execution of which was arranged in secret meetings held in the *Volkszeitung* Building during the night following the meeting of July 8th and on Sunday, July 9th.

This program included the illegal suspension of the local, state, and national officers of the Party and an attempt to attain by force possession of all the Party’s property, documents, and archives, and thereby to make it impossible for the regular officers to communicate with the sections and members. The success of this attempt would indeed have created temporarily the situation which the *Volkszeitung* mannikin Slobodin endeavors to picture to Comrade Viewegh of Indianapolis, Indiana, in the following specimen of class *Volkszeitung* “literature”: “[...] your opinion of the wisdom of the act is of no weight, as it is done. You may vote and agitate against it when it is submitted to a general vote of the Party. *In the meanwhile you must submit.*” [Literally quoted from a letter of H. Slobodin, dated July 25, 1899.]

To create a situation where the Party could be told that it must submit to the *Volkszeitung* regime, because the regular officers had disappeared without leaving a trace; that was, indeed, the motive that dictated the attempt of July 10th and determined the method of carry-

ing it out.

As the *Volkszeitung* two days later, on July 12th, cynically confessed, “to think under existing circumstances of the regular remedies, would have meant to entirely misconceive the demand of the situation.”

The “regular remedies” against the officers of the Party would have necessitated:

*Firstly*, A general vote on a motion to suspend, taken not only by Section New York, but by the other eight sections in Greater New York, namely, Scandinavian Section, Richmond County Section, and Sections Woodhaven, Wyckoff Heights, Glendale, Long Island City, Corona, and College Point.

*Secondly*, A general vote of the same sections on the election of temporary successors to the suspended officers.

*Thirdly*, An immediate general vote on the suspension by the whole Party of the country. [See National Constitution, Art. IV, Sec. 1.]

During the taking of the first two votes the old officers would remain in office, as under the constitution the National Executive Committee can be legally in office that has not been elected by a general vote of the members of all the sections located in the territory selected as the seat of the Committee. Remaining in office, the old officers would continue to insist on the carrying out of the Party’s policy, would insist on maintaining the Party’s rights in its own organs against the *Volkszeitung*’s claims, and would insist on warning the Party of the treasonable purposes of the *Volkszeitung* element against the Party’s policy and against the Party’s rights in its own press.

“Regular remedies” that would thus enable the party to be on guard and protect itself did not meet “the demand of the situation” as it existed for the *Volkszeitung*. The regular remedies were, therefore, discarded, and a plan of campaign adopted that was to relieve the *Volkszeitung* at once of any further annoyance or interference by the Socialist Labor Party.

The plan was carried out by the holding of the Bowery meeting, by setting up a choice outfit of *Volkszeitung* mannequins as “The Socialist Labor Party,” and by the midnight attempt to take forcible possession of the Party’s establishment and sweep the Party’s administration “off the face of the earth.”

It is significant that the armed thugs of the *Volkszeitung* were led in their assault on the Party’s office by John Nagel and F.W. Koenig, the President and Secretary of the Socialistic Cooperative Publishing Association, who also composed the subcommittee that had been conferring with the committee of the National Executive Committee about the turning over of *The People* to

the Party.

This subcommittee had been notified to meet the Party’s committee in a further conference on *that very Monday night*.

They did not come at the appointed hour; they were then engaged in the unlawful Bowery meeting, carrying out that plan of campaign that was to relieve them of the trouble of meeting any committee that might have the impudence to assert the Party’s rights against the property claims of the *Volkszeitung* corporation.

**July 12, 1899** — The *Volkszeitung*’s mannequins meet as National Executive Committee of the SLP and declare themselves in complete harmony with their maker, the *Volkszeitung*, by:

*First*, Denouncing the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance;

*Second*, By endorsing the reactionary taxation policy of the *Volkszeitung*;

*Third*, By lauding the *Volkszeitung* as the most loyal and meritorious Socialist organ;

*Fourth*, By cancelling the general vote which the Party was taking on the *Volkszeitung*;

*Fifth*, By stigmatizing the rank and file of the Party who had upheld the Party’s policy against the *Volkszeitung*, and who were upholding it in the general vote, as a lot of irresponsible nincompoops. [See statement of H. Slobodin in *Volkszeitung*’s *People* of July 16, and report of the *Volkszeitung*’s National Executive Committee in *Volkszeitung*’s *People* of July 23.]

**July 13, 1899** — The *Volkszeitung* presents to the Post Office authorities its claim of sole ownership of *The People*, and prevents the official organ of the Party from passing through the mails.

**July 14-19, 1899** — The *Volkszeitung* institutes proceedings to enjoin the Party from issuing its official organ, *The People*, claiming that the Party never had and has not now any right of ownership in *The People*; that the paper has been maintained entirely by “the efforts and capital” of the *Volkszeitung* Corporation; that the said corporation has incurred great losses in the publication of *The People*, amounting at the present time to a total of \$5,000, which the corporation expects and is entitled to make good from the profits which the paper, having become self-sustaining “through the efforts of the corporation,” may now yield.

These proceedings, through which the *Volkszeitung* seeks to forever exclude the Party from any title to *The People*, bring out most strongly how much the coup of July 10 was “a demand of the situation” for the *Volks-*

*zeitung*. The party outfit that the *Volkszeitung* set up on that night claims no rights against the *Volkszeitung*; on the contrary, it comes into court, and by an affidavit of its figurehead, H. Slobodin, backs up the exclusive property claims of the *Volkszeitung* over *The People*.

**July 15, 1899** — The regular General Committee of Section New York meets and suspends those branches and members of the section who, by assisting in the creation of the *Volkszeitung*'s dummy party, have virtually read themselves out of the Socialist Labor Party. This meeting is attended by 76 delegates and many visiting comrades. Great enthusiasm prevails; a collection for *The People* yields \$48; a mass meeting in Cooper Union is decided on.

**July 18, 1899** — The National Executive Committee brings legal proceedings to enjoin the *Volkszeitung* Corporation from publishing *The People*, from using its mailing list, and from appropriating the mail and moneys intended for *The People*.

In support of these proceedings the National Executive Committee shows that the *Volkszeitung* since it became the publisher of *The People* for the Party, received through donations of sections and comrades, through the Daily People Committee, and through festivals held for the benefit either of *The People* alone or of *The People* and *Volkszeitung* jointly, an aggregate sum of about \$9,800, which must be credited to *The People* as against the alleged deficits of \$5,000.

**July 24, 1899** — Section New York holds its mass meeting in Cooper Union. In spite of the rainy weather, the large hall is packed to the doors, many are turned away, and an overflow meeting which is started at 9 o'clock is attended by 2,000 sympathizers. This is the largest meeting ever held by the Party.

**July 26, 1899** — Meeting of Section Philadelphia to hear the report of a committee sent to New York by the Central Committee. The committee adopted the fraudulent claims of the *Volkszeitung* as its own "findings." The information received from H. Kuhn, P. Murphy, and H. Vogt was ignored or distorted.

The committee "found," among other things, that the *Volkszeitung* was supported by 750 members of Section New York out of a total of 1,186. The official reports, which are not in the possession of the *Volkszeitung*, show about the reverse proportion. This fact was demonstrated to the Philadelphia committee. But the majority of that committee preferred to accept the arbitrary claims of the *Volkszeitung* mannequins, which have since

been denounced as fraudulent by one of the *Volkszeitung*'s own organizations (the 21st Assembly District, Manhattan).

The committee also "found" in its report that Keep did strike Hillquit, although a letter to the contrary effect had been received from Hillquit.

Barnes, who had not been appointed on the committee, but who nevertheless went along, acted as its spokesman, and drew its report, was so anxious to fix things as to sign Comrade Clark's name to the report without first submitting it to him for approval. The exposure of this piece of manipulation greatly enraged Barnes, because it interfered with the scheme of getting Philadelphia to go solidly against the National Executive Committee under the pretext of "fairness" and "impartiality."

When this plan was further interfered with by the presence of Comrade Shulberg, he was, although a good-standing member of the Party, forcibly expelled from the meeting room, while Fred Schaefer, of Brooklyn, who is under charges of having spoken in favor of the Debs Party, was admitted on producing credentials from H. Slobodin.

The "impartiality" game was played to its prearranged finish, though not with the completeness of success planned for. Section Philadelphia demanded — as a matter of "fairness" and "impartiality" — that the National Executive Committee, not being approved of by the *Volkszeitung* and its heelers, be punished by immediate decapitation; that the Board of Appeals, being approved by the *Volkszeitung* and its heelers, be rewarded by its promotion to provisional dictatorship; that all funds be withheld from the National Executive by the Sections in the state of Pennsylvania.

**July 28, 1899** — The *Volkszeitung* assembles its followers in Cooper Union. Although the numerous sick and death benefit societies, cremation societies, singing societies, trade organizations, and social clubs that constitute the *Volkszeitung*'s movement have been called upon loudly and daily to each come in a body, the response is not sufficient to fill more than two-thirds of the Cooper Union hall. About one-third of the seats are occupied by loyal comrades who make their presence felt in unmistakable fashion. Even including this portion of the audience, the meeting is not one-half as large as the Party's meeting of July 24.

This meeting throws further light on the Philadelphia "impartiality" game by the appearance of Barnes and Fred Long as champions of the *Volkszeitung*'s dummy party.

**July 30, 1899** — The “impartiality” game receives further illumination by the appearance of Barnes in company with Franz Seubert, one of the directors of the *Volkszeitung* Corporation, at the Cleveland Section meeting, and, by the effort of the two make to have the members endorse resolutions of the Board of Appeals, passed on Friday, July 28. In these resolutions the board so far acts along the lines of the Philadelphia scheme as it assumes provisional dictatorship, and in the exercise thereof decrees the decapitation of the National Executive Committee; but it deviates from the Philadelphia plan in that it does not follow up its self-ordained omnipotence to an attempt at managing the executive business of the Party itself, as the Philadelphians suggested. The Board of Appeals leaves the glories and tries of such an attempt to the *Volkszeitung* Kangaroos.

Partly influenced by Barnes, the ally of the Philadelphia *Tageblatt*, and Seubert, the representative of the *Volkszeitung*, and partly by the influence of Hayes and Bandlow, the representatives of the Cleveland *Citizen*, the majority of the Cleveland Section decided to endorse the action of the Board of Appeals to recognize the Kangaroos and to order the sections of the state, through the State Committee, to follow the same course.

**August 1, 1899** — The National Executive Committee suspends Sections Philadelphia and Cleveland, appoints Providence as the seat of the provisional Board of Appeals, and orders a general vote on the latter acts as well as on the general issue between the Party and the *Volkszeitung*.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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