

Fortieth
National Convention
Socialist Labor Party

April 28–30, 1991

Minutes, Reports, Resolutions, Etc.



Published 1991
Socialist Labor Party
P.O. Box 218
Mountain View, CA 94042-0218

Online edition September 2006

*PROCEEDINGS OF THE
40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION
SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY*

April 28–30, 1991

Days Inn Hotel
Santa Clara, Calif.

MORNING SESSION, SUNDAY, APRIL 28, 1991

National Secretary Robert Bills called the 40th National Convention of the Socialist Labor Party to order at 9:02 a.m.

Temporary Organization

- K. Boettcher was elected temporary chairperson.
- A. Kleist was elected temporary recording secretary.
- L. Fisher was appointed temporary sergeant at arms.

Election of Credentials Committee

J. O'Neill and B. Bortnick were elected to constitute the committee.

A recess was declared at 9:10 a.m. to allow the committee to prepare its report. Reconvened at 9:34 a.m.

B. Bortnick rendered the following report for the Credentials Committee:

1. Your committee reports the following regular delegates have presented their credentials, and we recommend they be seated:

Section Los Angeles (1): Alan Bradshaw; Section Sacramento (1): Daniel Deneff; Section San Francisco Bay Area (2): Kenneth Boettcher and Nathan Karp; Section St. Petersburg (1): Constance Furdeck; Section Cook Co. (1): George Milonas; Section Wayne Co. (1): Archie Sim; Section Minneapolis (1): Karl Heck; Section New York City (1): Barbara Graymont; Section Akron (1): Katherine Kapitz; Section Cleveland (1): John O'Neill; Section Portland (1): Sid Fink; Section Philadelphia (1): George Taylor; Section Seattle

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

(1): Charles Turner; Section Milwaukee (1): Angeline Kleist; National Members-at-Large (7): James Barnes, Bernard Bortnick, William Braatz, Christian Camacho, James Cline, Rudolph Gustafson, and Jennie Seekford.

Since Sections Denver and Allegheny Co. are below strength, they are not entitled to representation at the National Convention.

Part I of the report was adopted.

2. National Member-at-Large Joseph Frank, who had been elected delegate, could not attend the National Convention and Rudolph Gustafson is serving in Frank's place. Gustafson was the first alternate.

Part II of the report was concurred in.

3. The NEC extended an invitation to the SLP of Canada to send a fraternal delegate. George Cameron was sent and is present. We recommend he be seated.

Motion to concur was made and seconded. An amendment was passed that Cameron be seated with a voice but no vote. On motion, Part III was concurred in as amended.

Fraternally submitted,

[signed] BERNARD BORTNICK, JOHN O'NEILL
Credentials Committee

On motion, the report as amended, was adopted.

Election of Agenda Committee (3)

N. Karp, A. Bradshaw and C. Furdeck were elected to constitute the committee.

The chair declared a recess at 9:40 a.m. to allow the committee to prepare its report. Reconvened at 9:55 a.m.

N. Karp submitted the following report for the Agenda Committee:

Sunday Morning Session, April 28

1. Permanent Organization
 - a) Election of Chairperson
 - b) Election of Vice Chairperson
 - c) Election of Recording Secretary
 - Appt. of Asst. to Recording Secretary
 - d) Appointment of Sergeant at Arms
 - e) Election of Mileage Committee (2)
2. Determination of Attendance Policy

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

3. Report of Sergeant at Arms
4. Report of the National Secretary (such sections as can be read)
5. Adjournment at 1 p.m. to Afternoon Session

Sunday Afternoon Session, April 28

1. Roll Call
2. Report of Sergeant at Arms
3. Report of the National Secretary (if necessary)
4. Introduction of Matters Referred by the NEC
5. Introduction of Resolutions:
 - 1st Priority: Resolutions endorsed by sections
 - 2nd Priority: Resolutions from delegates
 - 3rd Priority: Resolutions from nat'l mem-at-large
 - 4th Priority: Resolutions defeated at section level
6. Discussion of Sections of National Secretary's Report
7. Adjournment at 6 p.m. to Monday Morning Session, unless the convention decides an evening session is necessary

Monday Session, April 29

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Reading of Minutes of Previous Sessions
4. Report of Sergeant at Arms
5. Discussion of National Secretary's Report (if necessary)
6. Unfinished Business (if necessary)
7. New Business (including resolutions from delegates)
8. Determination of Committees
9. Referring Matters to Committees
10. Election of Committees
11. Adjournment to Next Session

Order of Business for All Subsequent Sessions

1. Call to Order
2. Election of Chairperson (if necessary)
3. Election of Vice Chairperson (if necessary)
4. Roll Call
5. Report of Sergeant at arms
6. Reading of Minutes of Previous Day's Sessions (Morning Session Only)
7. Unfinished Business (as needed)
8. Reports of Committees

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

9. New Business (Last Day—only matters that can be given immediate attention)
10. Last Day—Reading of Minutes
11. Adjournment

Fraternally submitted,
[signed] NATHAN KARP, ALAN R. BRADSHAW,
CONNIE FURDECK
Agenda Committee

On motion, the committee's report was approved.

Permanent Organization

- K. Boettcher was elected chairperson for the day.
- B. Bortnick was elected vice chairperson for the day.
- A. Kleist was elected permanent recording secretary.
- D. Bills was appointed assistant to the recording secretary.
- L. Fisher was appointed sergeant at arms for the day.

Election of Mileage Committee (2)

Delegate N. Karp and the Party's bookkeeper, G. Gunderson, were elected to constitute the Mileage Committee.

Determination of Attendance Policy

On motion, it was decided that until the convention ruled otherwise, this will be an open convention.

The sergeant at arms reported 16 members and two nonmembers in attendance.

On motion, Editor R. Whitney was seated at the convention with a voice but no vote.

Report of National Secretary

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

STATE OF ORGANIZATION

Party Membership

During the two-year period of 1989 and 1990, the Party admitted 22 new members, dropped 25 for nonpayment of dues, accepted three resignations, expelled one, and lost 28 through death. The net loss in membership was 36.

Sixteen of the new members added were admitted to

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

membership by the NEC. Two from that group were immediately transferred to sections. Five sections admitted a total of six new members.

A total of 18 transfers were processed during the two-year period, resulting in a net loss of six for the sections.

Sections

There were 17 sections at the time of the last National Convention, one of which has since been disbanded.

Section Eastern Massachusetts, the last survivor of a once formidable SLP organization in New England, was disbanded last April, and its members transferred over to the national organization. The end did not come easily. One member “wouldn’t recognize the vote [to disband],” as the organizer reported. “And later [he] refused to adjourn.” But the section had defied the lengthening odds against its survival for several difficult years, during which its members demonstrated their fighting spirit many times over. The odds proved to be overwhelming in the end, however, and without the new membership needed to salvage the section the NEC concurred in the decision for it to disband.

The loss of Section Eastern Massachusetts brings to a close a long and eventful chapter in SLP history. At one time there were 32 sections in Massachusetts alone, and many more throughout the New England region. But that was when the movement was still in its formative stages. It was the era when De Leon, who was frequently sent on speaking tours through the region, delivered some of his most powerful and enduring addresses before audiences of New England workingmen and women—addresses such as *Reform or Revolution, Plain Words to Boston Workingmen, What Means This Strike?* and *Socialism vs. Anarchism*—not to mention his debates on the union question with John Tobin of the Shoe Workers Union and Job Harriman of the Social Democratic Party, or his Rhode Island debate with representatives of several capitalist parties, a part of which is now published as, *Which Party Is Right?*

Much time, effort and patience will be needed to rebuild the SLP in New England. But if there is still sanity and reason enough left among the people of a region that gave birth to the American Revolution over 200 years ago, the Abolitionist Movement more than 150 years ago, and helped to establish the Socialist Movement 100

years ago, we can look forward to a time when a new chapter in SLP history will be opened in that important section of the country, and one that will be brought to a more successful conclusion.

New England is not the only region where the Party continues to face an uphill climb. The SLP has its work cut out for it at virtually every point along the chain of sections that make up the Party organization.

Section Sacramento, Calif., was the only section to record a net increase in membership during the last two years. Sections that suffered net losses were Los Angeles (4), San Francisco Bay Area (4), St. Petersburg (2), Cook County (2), Wayne County (6), Minneapolis (1), Akron (1), Cleveland (1), Portland (1), Allegheny County (2), Philadelphia (2), and Seattle (2). In terms of their numerical strength, there was no change for Sections Denver, New York City or Milwaukee. The net loss in membership for all sections combined was 33.

Two sections have fallen below the minimum number of members needed to retain their charters. Section Denver, Colo., no stranger to adversity, has never been large and has bounced back from the brink several times in recent years. The section continues to meet and keeps in touch with the national office. However, unless it can be brought up to strength, or unless the Constitution is amended in a way that will permit the members to carry on for awhile longer, it will become necessary to disband the section before the year is out.

Section Allegheny Co., Pa., the other section that has fallen below strength, presents a somewhat different problem. The section lost its organizer last September when Comrade Edna Barnes joined the national headquarters staff. Attempts at reestablishing contact with the section since then have failed to elicit any clear response. Inquiries have been written to the member who agreed to assume responsibility for the section's property when Comrade Barnes left the area to determine if business meetings are being held and if a new organizer has been elected. These inquiries have gone unanswered, however, and it seems likely that if the section meets at all it is rarely. Unless the section can reorganize itself to function well enough to meet its minimal obligations under the Constitution, and to reestablish communications with the national organization, it will simply disintegrate.

Several other sections barely meet the minimum membership provision of the Party's Constitution, and their prospects for long-

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

range survival are far from being certain. Only six sections—two less than two years ago—have 10 members or more, and it cannot be said that any one of the six stand on solid ground.

Most sections are centered around major cities such as Los Angeles, Detroit or New York. But many of their members live at widely scattered points over the much larger metropolitan areas that surround these major cities. Section members often travel considerable distances to attend business meetings and other Party functions, and this circumstance, among others, undoubtedly contributes to a variety of problems sections encounter in conducting their affairs. As the organizer of one of the sections affected in this way wrote to explain a few months ago: “We are spread out, as you well know. Currently, we are meeting at Comrade [Able’s] in [Baker] County. I drive over to the mainland via the...Bridge. Comrade [Charlie] has to negotiate a . . . ride of one and a half hours [via public transportation].”

To illustrate the extent to which this and similar problems are affecting the Party as a whole, it is enough to point out that a number of sections have had difficulties holding routine business meetings on a regular basis. Several have reported meeting with less than a quorum at various times during the last two years, and business meetings held with the minimum number of members allowable under the Constitution have become increasingly frequent occurrences. But occurrences of this kind only hint at the extent of the problem and the dangerous potential it holds for crippling the Party in its work.

The Constitution provides that every section shall hold at least one regular business meeting every month. In 1989, however, only 10 of the 17 sections met this obligation by holding 12 regular business meetings. The 17 sections, each meeting once a month, should have held a total of 204 business meetings during the year; but only 192 were actually held. While the majority of sections met this obligation, enough business meetings were missed to reduce the average to 11 business meetings per section for the year.

Sections that failed to hold one or more business meetings in 1989 were Denver (1), St. Petersburg (1), Eastern Massachusetts (2), New York City (2), Allegheny County (3), Seattle (1), and Milwaukee (3).

Last year, only seven—less than half of the 16 sections—met every month. The 16 sections should have held a total of 192 such meetings. Only 166 were actually held, however, which

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

reduced the average number of business meetings during the year to 10 per section.

The sections that failed to hold or to report holding one or more business meetings during the year were Los Angeles (1), Denver (1), St. Petersburg (1), Minneapolis (4), New York City (7), Akron (1), Cleveland (1), Allegheny County (7), and Milwaukee (3).

As the number and frequency of section business meetings has declined, overall attendance figures have naturally followed suit. Total attendance at all business meetings held in 1989 came to 936. Last year it slipped to 823. While average attendance at business meetings varied widely from section-to-section, attendance at the 358 business meetings held during that last two years remained steady, and on the whole averaged about five members at each of those 358 meetings.

Despite a constitutional prohibition against doing so, at least two sections each held one "illegal" business meeting during each of the last two years with less than the constitutionally required minimum number of members in attendance. In addition, at least one business meeting had to be canceled when less than that minimum number appeared at the appointed time and place. These sections were caught in a "Catch-22" situation where, on the one hand, they were expected to fulfill their constitutional obligation by holding their monthly meeting while, on the other hand, they were unable to assemble the number of members needed to do so in accordance with another constitutional requirement. The dilemma is one that could confront more sections more often during the next two years unless conditions change for the better in these and other hard-pressed units of the Party's organization.

Most of the facts and figures cited here are taken or derived from routine monthly and annual reports submitted to the national office by the sections. Several sections had failed to submit one or more of these routine reports for the 1990 calendar year by the time this was being written, which is one indication of conditions within those sections. In some cases it has appeared to me that section officers have been unmindful of their responsibilities, and I have written to remind them of their obligations and the importance of keeping them. As it was expressed in one of those letters:

"Wholly aside from the fact that it is extremely exasperating to have to request these routine reports time after time without result, the lack of them now takes on a very practical dimension

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

as preparations for the 1991 National Convention get under way.

“It has been my earnest desire to provide the membership with as complete and accurate a picture of the condition of the organization as possible by including much of the information these routine...reports contain in the relevant sections of my reports to National Conventions. However, I cannot do that if the reports are not received. The result is that the National Conventions are compelled to work with something less than a complete picture of the overall state of the organization, which handicaps the delegates in their work.”

On the whole, however, section organizers are conscientious in this regard, and in the particular instance just cited I can report that the letter had the desired effect.

*

With the preceding as background, some attention can now be paid to each of the 16 sections and their accomplishments of the last two years.

Los Angeles

In some respects, the level of SLP activity in the country's second largest city remained stable over the last two years, though in other respects it declined at an alarming rate. Leaflet distribution, for example, plunged from close to 23,000 in 1989 to less than 3,700 in 1990; yet the section managed to distribute about the same number of sample copies of *The People* in each of the two years. For several years, the section managed to stabilize the number of self-service newsstands it had on the streets at 16. By the end of last year, however, that number had been cut in half. Similarly, the section conducted five discussion group sessions in 1989, but no sessions were held in 1990. However, the section is one of only two in the country that continues to hold a fund-raising social affair every month, and one of only two that still has a functioning SLP Press Club. Five names were stricken from the section's membership roll—one temporarily after moving to another state for a brief time, but since returned—and one new member was admitted. More than 100 regular readers of *The People* live within the section's area of jurisdiction, which is Los Angeles County, and while this figure places it second in line in this category, it is far less than could be hoped for in such a populous urban center.

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

Sacramento

The smallest of the three SLP sections in California is one of its most active, and despite its lack in numbers it maintains a level of activity that compares favorably with any other section of the Party. The section distributed nearly 36,000 leaflets during the last two years and over 7,800 sample copies of *The People*, figures which are almost identical to the totals for the preceding two years. The section also has 16 self-service newsstands on the streets, and while it held no study class or discussion group sessions, it shared the lead spot in the number of public and school lectures, of which there were nine. As for fund-raising activities, the section holds only one a year; but, it co-sponsored three additional affairs with Section San Francisco Bay Area. The section admitted one new member, and one newly admitted national member-at-large residing outside the section's area of jurisdiction was transferred and added to the section's membership roll. There are about two dozen subscribers to *The People* in the greater Sacramento area.

San Francisco Bay Area

Though the section suffered a net loss of four members over the last two years, and was not among those that added any new members to its roll, it remains the largest section of the Party. The section more than doubled its leaflet distribution output, from less than 15,000 during the two years preceding the last convention to about 32,000 in the two years since. It also improved its efforts in distributing sample copies of *The People* from over 27,000 to nearly 48,000. This may be traced in large measure to the section's having taken part in a number of demonstrations built around certain "issues," such as the recent brief war in the Persian Gulf. The section services eight commercial newsstands at present, but its 28 self-service newsstands on the streets of several Bay Area communities is down sharply from the 58 stands it had in operation two years ago. No study class was held, but there were eight discussion group sessions and nine school and public lectures. A fund-raising social is held every other month, several held jointly with Section Sacramento, and most are well-attended. The section's fund-raising efforts are supplemented by those of the Bay Area SLP Press Club, which does excellent work in this regard. The section has jurisdiction over a five-county area that stretches from San Francisco in the north to Oakland in the east to San Jose in the south of the Bay Area. There are not quite 140 regular readers of *The People*

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

who live within that area, a number of whom are potential prospects for membership.

Denver

Section Denver, one of two sections mentioned as having fallen below strength, still manages a modest level of SLP activity in the “mile high” city. Severely limited as it is by lack of membership, however, its activities have not included any public meetings or social gatherings, and are restricted to an occasional distribution of leaflets and *The People*. In spite of these and other limitations, about 7,000 leaflets and copies of *The People* were distributed over the last two years. With less than 20 regular readers of *The People* in the Denver area, the prospects for attracting new membership to place the section on a more solid footing any time soon seem remote. Because the section lacks the required membership, it was not eligible to elect a delegate to this convention.

St. Petersburg

This section also suffered a net loss in membership during the last two years. By virtue of having admitted two new members, however, it had more success in reducing the effect of its loss than any other. It also succeeded in holding its own, or improving its efforts, in most other respects. By distributing just over 10,000 leaflets and about 8,000 sample copies of *The People*, for example, the section registered a 45 percent improvement over what was reported to the last convention. Though no study class or discussion group sessions were held in 1989 or 1990, eight lectures were delivered in 1990. Five fund-raising social affairs were held—two in 1989 and three last year—which was comparable to the number held during the preceding two years. There are no commercial outlets for *The People* or the Party’s literature in the area at present, but members operate four self-service newsstands. One area where progress will be needed if the section is to increase its strength is in the number of subscriptions to *The People*, which is less than two dozen for the entire Tampa-St. Petersburg area at the present time.

Cook County

Leaflet distribution in the Chicago area was down marginally from what was reported to the 1989 convention, as was the distribution of sample copies of *The People*. The section has not held a

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

fund-raising social in years, and there was no improvement on that score. Two discussion group sessions were held in each of the last two years, the same as for the preceding two years, and the four public lectures held also equaled the number held during the 1987-1989 period. Chicago and the surrounding area ranks fifth in terms of readership for *The People*. Though the number of readers is not large given the size of the city, it may hold some potential for adding new membership to the section.

Wayne County

The section lost six members over the last two years, three through death, two who were dropped and one who moved away. No new members were added. All the losses had their effect, of course, but the last mentioned probably had the most impact where distribution of leaflets and sample copies of *The People* is concerned. At any rate, there was a 44 percent decline in the number of leaflets distributed when compared to the 1987-1988 period, and an even sharper decline (68 percent) in passing out free copies of *The People*. The section, which once had a flourishing self-service newsstand operation, removed the last of them from the streets in 1989, primarily because of vandalism and the deteriorating social atmosphere in Detroit proper. Though the section has not conducted a study class or discussion group, or held any public lectures, in a number of years, it did step up its fund-raising activities by holding 12 social affairs in each of the last two years—one of only two sections to do so. The Detroit area ranks fourth in the number of subscribers to *The People*, but with less than 60 regular readers in the metropolitan area there is considerable room for growth.

Minneapolis

No new members were admitted by Section Minneapolis, and one was dropped for nonpayment of dues. Leaflet distribution was down, and the section discontinued one of the three self-service newsstands it had in operation last year. No public meetings were arranged for in 1989 or 1990, but a total of seven fund-raising affairs were held in cooperation with the Duluth area group of national members-at-large. The Minneapolis-St. Paul area, like most others, is one where a small core of dedicated SLP members are badly in need of reinforcements.

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

New York City

This small section composed of a few scattered members has many problems to contend with if it is to survive. There was virtually no SLP activity in New York City in either of the last two years, with the exception of four discussion group sessions held in 1989 and one held in 1990. The organizer has recently retired and has informed the national office that plans are being made to resume the discussion group sessions on a regular basis, which is encouraging. There are about 93 regular readers of *The People* in the five boroughs that make up the country's largest city, a number of whom are believed to be highly sympathetic and possibly membership material. The section elected a delegate to this convention, which it failed to do two years ago.

Akron

The section's principal activity in recent years has been the distribution of large numbers of *The People*, and well over 30,000 were distributed during the 1989-1990 period. Social affairs, of which there were 10 in each of the last two years, are held jointly with nearby Section Cleveland. However, no public meetings, such as lectures, discussion group or study class sessions, have been held in a number of years. Though *The People* is distributed in relatively large numbers, particularly among college students, very few subscription copies are mailed to regular readers in the Akron area.

Cleveland

Modest increases in the distribution of leaflets and *The People* were reported during the last two years, though the numbers remain small. No public meetings were held in either of those years, aside from the 10 fund-raising social affairs held jointly with Section Akron. The section, however, has the distinction of being the only section in a number of years to have had a fair booth, which it did last year. About two dozen subscription copies of *The People* are mailed to readers in the Cleveland area at the present time.

Portland

SLP activity in the Portland area has declined sharply in the two years since the last convention. The section conducted a total of three discussion group sessions in 1989 and 1990 combined, compared to the 39 sessions held during the preceding two years,

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

and nearly half of the 20 self-service newsstands that were on Portland streets at the end of 1988 have since been removed. The section has lost several members, primarily the result of transfers, but two new additions made this year may help to get things moving again.

Allegheny County

Conditions in the Pittsburgh area, which have already been discussed, leave small room for optimism about the prospects for this small section. Although nearly 4,000 copies of *The People* were distributed in 1989, compared to nothing in 1987 or 1988, there is not much else of a positive nature to report. There is no question that the few remaining members are dedicated to the SLP and concerned about its welfare, and it is known that at least one traveled to Washington, D.C., earlier this year to participate in distributing *War in the Gulf* leaflets at a large demonstration. However, this was learned indirectly. Efforts to reestablish communication with the section will continue, but that in itself will not be sufficient to keep the section afloat as a subdivision of the Party. According to the subscription department, there are 17 regular readers of *The People* in and around the City of Pittsburgh, which may be too small a pool of prospective members on which to draw in any effort made to salvage the situation.

Philadelphia

Section Philadelphia gained two new members during the 1989-1990 period, one of whom was transferred after being admitted by the NEC. However, four others were dropped for nonpayment of dues, resulting in a net loss of two. In spite of these disappointments, the section scores high in the department of perseverance, and remains one of the most active of all the Party's subdivisions. Though leaflet distribution fell off by nearly 25,000 over the last two years, it led all other sections by distributing nearly 44,000 during that same period. As a matter of fact, Section Philadelphia led the way in this important area of Party work for three consecutive years until falling into second place behind Section Wayne County in 1990. The section also had 18 self-service newsstands in operation at the end of last year, down slightly from the 22 it had at the start of 1989, but still enough to rank second. Section Philadelphia was the *only* section in either of the last two years to conduct a study class, holding a total of nine sessions. Furthermore,

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

the section continues to participate in important demonstrations and rallies. Earlier this year, for example, section members traveled to Washington, D.C., and distributed thousands of the Party's statement on *War in the Gulf*.

Seattle

In excess of 4,000 copies of *The People* were distributed in the Seattle area during the last two years, and about 30 regular readers of *The People* live within the section's area of jurisdiction. However, no social or other public gatherings to which some of those readers might have been attracted were held. No new members were admitted and two names were removed from the section's membership list. As with many other sections, Section Seattle's strength is diminished by the fact that some of its members live outside the metropolitan area, and those who live within it are faced with an enormous task.

Milwaukee

Although there were no public meetings in Milwaukee in either of the last two years, the section increased its distribution of leaflets and *The People* by 59 percent. The numbers themselves are small, but that is not the important thing at this stage. The important thing is that the section acknowledges the need to increase its activities, which, to me, is the same thing as confirming its commitment to the SLP and its willingness to do what it believes itself capable of doing in its behalf. That, however, is the point on which this section, and perhaps some other sections, seems to have snagged itself. The snag appears to be one of self-confidence, and in this there is a measure of irony because the conclusion is drawn from the articulateness of the organizer who has expressed it. The section lost one member through death, but added another so that its numerical strength did not change; that is, not until this year, when a second new member was admitted.

National Members-at-Large

National members-at-large now make up 41 percent of the entire membership of the Party, compared to 37 percent two years ago. Individual members reside in 32 states and the District of Columbia.

There are several areas in which more than one member main-

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

tains permanent residence and where small groups of from two to four members work together as local agitation committees. The most active of these SLP Groups are centered around Miami, Fla., Duluth, Minn., and Houston, Tex.

Five national members-at-large also live in or near Dallas, Tex., and it is hoped that they will soon come together and apply for a charter to organize a new section of the Party. A similar situation exists north of Milwaukee, Wis., where five out-of-town members of that section live in Marinette Co. As of this writing, however, no concrete steps toward organizing new sections have been taken by the members in either of these locations.

A number of individual national members-at-large are active in spite of their isolation, and keep the national office informed of their efforts. That number is far from being the majority, however, and considerably less than the number who are physically and otherwise capable of doing Party work.

*

For ease of reference, a chart highlighting the changes in membership has been appended to this section of the report.

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES (1989–1990)

<u>Sections</u>	<u>Admit</u>	<u>Died</u>	<u>Drop</u>	<u>Resign</u>	<u>Expel</u>	<u>In</u>	<u>Transfers</u>	
							<u>Out</u>	<u>Net</u>
1. Los Angeles	1	4	0	0	0	1	2	- 4
2. Sacramento	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	+ 1
3. S.F. Bay Area	0	4	0	1	0	2	1	- 4
4. Denver	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
5. St. Petersburg	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	- 2
6. Cook Co.	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	- 2
7. Eastern Mass.	0	0	0	1	0	0	5	- 6
8. Wayne Co.	0	3	2	0	0	1	2	- 6
9. Minneapolis	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	- 1
10. New York City	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11. Akron	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	- 1
12. Cleveland	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	- 1
13. Portland	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	- 1
14. Allegheny Co.	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	- 2
15. Philadelphia	1	0	4	0	0	1	0	- 2
16. Seattle	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	- 2
17. Milwaukee	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotals	6	21	10	2	0	8	14	-33
18. Mbrs-at-Large	16	8	15	1	1	10	4	- 3
TOTALS	22	29	25	3	1	18	18	-36

On motion, the report was accepted and referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

Personnel Changes

Certain changes in the composition of the headquarters staff have taken place since the 1989 convention, which it might be well to sum up before reporting on the situation as it now stands.

For one, the long-expected departure of Paul Lawrence from the editorial department finally came about last June, nearly two years after he informed me in July 1988 that he was looking for another job and would be leaving the staff "within six weeks." Since leaving last June he has also left the Party and written at least two letters attacking the SLP and *The People*. The two years between his giving me "six weeks" notice and his final departure were ones during which he was absent from the office for such long periods at a stretch that it finally became necessary to take him off salary and put him on an hourly wage to be paid only when he showed up for work. There were other occurrences during that period which would have led me to discharge him if our situation had been different. However, the consensus, at least in the editorial department, was that regardless of how unreliable he had become he should be retained as long as possible.

A few months after the 1989 convention, a national member-at-large informed me that he would be moving to the San Francisco Bay Area within a short time. There had been some correspondence between us, and it occurred to me that he might be interested in joining the headquarters staff. After discussing the possibility with Comrade Whitney and others, I took the initiative and wrote to broach the subject with him. After receiving a favorable reply, all the necessary arrangements were made and the member joined the editorial staff. However, as I explained when writing to him, the editorial department was not (and is not) the only department where additional staffing is sorely needed.

"At present we are in need of additional staffing in all three headquarters departments, i.e., the editorial, business and national offices. It is difficult to say where the need is greatest; but I think all here would agree that the Party's interests dictate that the editorial department takes priority at the present time.

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

“For that reason I consulted with Comrade Whitney before writing to you..., and I have also discussed your reply with him. He and I are agreed that if you are willing, and assuming that you and I can reach a mutually satisfactory agreement in other respects, we would like to invite you to join the writing staff of *The People* on a trial basis of from three to six months to begin immediately after all the other necessary arrangements have been made.

“I hasten to add, however, that if you would prefer to consider work in another department I am prepared to pursue that with you. While we need at least one, and preferably two, additions to the writing staff, we need help in the other departments also. For example, we are in need of a shipping/ mailing clerk who, in times past, has also acted as a general handyman, messenger, janitor, purchasing agent, in short, as a jack-of-all-trades. The national office is also in need of additional staff to help in letter writing, stimulating activity among the membership, nurturing contacts and prospective members, planning and executing efforts to promote *The People* and raising the visibility of the SLP generally, and to become proficient in an infinite variety and number of tasks ranging from the most routine to the most complex affecting the overall conduct of the Party’s business.

“It might also be well to add that there is no fixed number that would constitute a full national headquarters staff. We work as best we can with who and what we have by setting our priorities and knowing that there is no way on earth that we can give full attention to everything that should be done. There is always more to do, and it has been rightfully said that the job is pretty much what we make of it.”

Soon after this member had joined the staff, it became apparent that we had over-estimated his command of the language skills needed to make a contribution in the editorial department. He was offered the position as New York Labor News clerk, which he accepted, and for a time it seemed that this arrangement would work out nicely. I was so confident of that, in fact, that his addition to the staff as the Labor News clerk was mentioned in a general letter. As time went by, however, a number of problems arose which made it clear that this arrangement also was not working out, and it became necessary to let him go.

On a happier note, Comrade Edna Barnes has been with the headquarters staff since last September. In this instance, however, it was she who approached me. That was two years ago, during the 1989 National Convention, where she offered to join the staff for a

period of four or five years if it was felt that she could make a contribution.

Initially, we discussed the possibility of adding Comrade Barnes to the business office staff. By the time she was prepared to make the move, however, developments at national headquarters had shifted the focus onto the needs of the editorial department. Accordingly, I felt obliged to explain these developments in detail before asking Comrade Barnes to make the commitment to cross the country in the event those changes might affect her decision. That explanation is still relevant, and it may be useful to insert a part of it here:

“ . . . The main reason I have held back [in responding to a letter from Comrade Barnes] is that I wanted an opportunity to discuss your interest in joining the headquarters staff with Comrade Whitney and other key members of the staff. By ‘key members’ I mean those who bear the most responsibility in the three main departments, i.e., Comrade Donna Bills in the national office, Comrade Genevieve Gunderson in the business office, and, of course, Comrade Whitney in the editorial department. Unfortunately, there have been too many demands on the time of some or all of us in recent weeks for such a discussion to conveniently take place. However, the opportunity presented itself several days ago and we took advantage of it to discuss your letter, and to simultaneously review the overall situation that prevails here at the present time.

“ . . . When you and I first talked about the possibility of you joining the headquarters staff at last year’s National Convention, I believe the emphasis was on the problems that then existed in the business office. Since then, certain changes have taken place in the overall situation that have shifted the main focus of concern from that department to other areas. The most important of these developments are the improved health of Comrades Genevieve Gunderson and Diane Secor, and Paul Lawrence’s imminent departure from Party employment. . . .

“In addition, the workload in the business office is not as great as it was in the past. This follows from the fact that leaflet, literature and bundle orders are down, and the number of sections holding fund-raising affairs on a regular basis has also fallen off steadily in recent years. No doubt, there are other factors, but these are sufficient to convey the essence of the matter.

“This decline, coupled with the improved health of Comrades Gunderson and [Diane] Secor, and the addition of . . . the NYLN clerk, have left the editorial and national office staffing problems to deal with. However, where the national office is concerned, so much of our time and energy has been diverted to as-

sisting the editorial department that we cannot really assess the nature of our staffing needs. This follows from the fact that, aside from normal administrative and organizational matters that must be attended to, we have not been able to make a realistic determination of what can and should be done with regard to promoting *The People*, stimulating the membership to greater activity, actively and aggressively pursuing promising contacts, evaluating our literature and propaganda needs, etc., etc. Furthermore, we will not be able to make such an assessment until we have succeeded in stabilizing the situation in the editorial department so that we can devote more time and attention to the things I have just mentioned.

“Taking all these factors into consideration, our top priority now is to add to the editorial writing staff. The urgency here is very great because, as mentioned, one of Comrade Whitney’s two editorial assistants will be leaving the staff permanently at the end of this month, and a large portion of his other assistant’s time is necessarily devoted to certain indispensable mechanical chores without which *The People* could not be published. Accordingly, what we have in mind for you, at least for the foreseeable future, is adding you to the editorial staff.”

Comrade Barnes readily agreed to try her hand on the writing staff, and was assigned to that department. However, her assignment also was with the understanding that if it did not work out, or if conditions changed again and a shift seemed warranted, she might be reassigned to the business or national office where the need for additional help is still great.

What I wrote to Comrade Barnes on that occasion should not be misconstrued. Everyone on the headquarters staff is plenty busy and every department is strained to the breaking point. It was simply a different way of conveying what I reported two years ago when I stated that “there are limits to what can be done to fill gaps that exist in one department by creating gaps in other departments that are already understaffed.” As I noted then:

“Under the circumstances that currently prevail at national headquarters, any serious illness or other development affecting any member of the staff could have a devastating effect on our ability to hold things together. . . .”

Or, to put it another way, looking for new ways in which to add to the workload of a small group of dedicated people who have been stretched to the limit for a period of years would not be a wise course of action, at least not in my estimation.

Editorial Department

The editorial department, of course, operates under the direct supervision of Comrade Richard Whitney. As Editor of *The People*, he is responsible for the contents and appearance of the Party's official organ, for its being published regularly on schedule, and for supervising the time and developing the skills of his editorial assistants. He obviously has a large share of the writing to do, in addition to editing the products of the staff and what is submitted from the field.

Comrade Whitney is handicapped in all these areas, in part and understandably by his lack of experience in a position of such high responsibility, and in part by his staff being wholly inadequate in size for the tasks expected of them. Comrade Barnes, being new, is less experienced and undoubtedly requires more individualized attention than would be the case with a more experienced writer. Comrade Kenneth Boettcher, his other assistant, spends much of his time on the various procedures involved in the electronic production of the paper, which also necessitate his being out of the office at least one full day during the production process. While Comrade Boettcher has become increasingly proficient in this area, he is still the only member of the staff who is familiar with these procedures. The need for an alternative plan to get out *The People* in emergency situations is obvious. After the problems that caused 24-hour delays in the printing and mailing of two issues of *The People* last December and January, preliminary steps toward developing that alternative have been taken.

The national and business offices continue to provide the editorial department with various kinds of assistance by doing virtually all the proofreading, selecting De Leon editorials, typing reprints, letters and articles from the field, and by an occasional article for publication. One area in which the department's need for assistance has declined is retyping the copy produced by the staff, for the reason that the editorial offices have now been equipped with computers.

It was, of course, the chronic absenteeism of a former member of the staff already mentioned that prompted the national office to send out the general letter of February 26, 1990, regarding the editorial situation. Among other things, that letter referred to a similar appeal made in February 1989, to which "the response was

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

minimal and has not resulted in any additions to the editorial staff or in an appreciable increase in publishable material from the membership.” After “noting that what was an imminent prospect a year ago is now a practical reality,” and that, “For all intents and purposes, the editorial staff has been reduced from three to two members,” I went on to briefly explain what the consequences had been.

“Accordingly, only your Editor and his one-man staff can be counted on to produce articles and other publishable matter, and to attend to most of the other tasks and procedures essential to the publication of *The People*. In the circumstances, the editorial department has again come to rely almost entirely on the national office for assistance in proofreading and other essential tasks. While this has helped somewhat in relieving certain day-to-day pressures in the editorial department it has also contributed to increasing those in the national office. The situation, in short, is critical and its effects reach far beyond the immediate confines of the editorial department itself.

“There are no mysterious or unthought of solutions to the problems that threaten to overwhelm your overburdened Editor and his one surviving assistant. The relief and support needed to stabilize this unhappy situation can only come from one source—the sections and members of the Socialist Labor Party.”

Although several sections responded to the appeal, none could offer any immediate practical relief.

The general letter was followed by letters of appeal to 53 members who Comrade Whitney and I believed could provide some of the help needed. Those letters were tailored as much as possible to the members who received them. Some of those members had written articles in the past that were published, others had submitted articles that were not published, and others still had not made the effort but were thought to have the ability. One of those letters read as follows:

“March 15, 1990

“Dear Comrade . . .

“By now you should have received the general letter of February 26 re editorial situation. I hope you have had an opportunity to read that letter and reflect on its contents. If so, you will have noted that the circumstances under which the editorial office is struggling are substantially worse than a year ago when two letters of appeal were sent out—one to the membership as a whole and one aimed directly at a number of members who we believed

could provide some badly needed assistance.

“Although you failed to respond to those earlier appeals, Comrade Whitney and I still share the opinion that you could make an important contribution if you could be prevailed upon to submit articles on a regular basis during the difficult period that lies ahead for us and the rest of the headquarters staff.

“The problems confronting the editorial office at present truly are critical in nature. Comrade Whitney and his one editorial assistant simply cannot be expected to bear the entire burden by themselves. The national office, of course, is helping out in several ways: by proofreading, selecting reprints, attending to some correspondence, etc. Chances are that we will have to do more in the months ahead, which can only have an adverse effect on other essential headquarters operations.

“Efforts to locate members willing to consider employment by the Party will be stepped up. However, the few responses to the efforts made last year did not pan out as we had hoped. For the time being, at least, we will have to make do with the staff we have with whatever help and assistance we can get from members such as yourself.

“Make no mistake about this: if we cannot count on a steady stream of articles from the field the Party will pay a heavy price. The only question will be where to cut back and what to neglect to protect *The People* and ensure its uninterrupted publication.

“With all this in mind, I am sending you this personal appeal to request that you commit yourself to submitting future articles on a regular basis. I am asking specifically that you submit at least one article a month for the next several months until we can adjust to or make other arrangements to stabilize the situation.

“I realize that if you do make such a commitment occasions may arise when you might not be able to keep it. The important thing, however, is that you make that commitment and follow through with an earnest effort to keep it. If capable members will do that they will provide the cushion of support needed to weather this crisis while allowing for the occasional ‘miss’ without serious repercussions.

“Please respond to this letter to let me know what you are prepared to do to help.

“With best wishes,

“Fraternally yours,
“ROBERT BILLS
“National Secretary”

The response to this appeal was extremely gratifying in comparison to some previous efforts in the same direction. I do not have a figure on precisely how many replies were received, or on

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

how many members made specific commitments, but it was a sizable number. I also know that it resulted in publication of at least 100 articles submitted from the field over the past 12 months. Hopefully, members will continue to support *The People* in this way. However, while contributions from the field are important, they cannot substitute for an adequate on-site editorial staff to plan, coordinate and produce a sound official organ for the SLP.

Business Office

The Business Office staff is composed of Comrades Genevieve Gunderson, who has been with the staff since 1974, and Diane Secor, who joined the staff in 1987 following Comrade Gunderson's heart surgery.

Comrade Gunderson, of course, is the Party's bookkeeper. She also attends to the banking, makes out the payroll, pays the bills, does the billing, provides the National Secretary with a monthly financial report and sees to it that the books are audited every year. She makes one and often two daily trips to the post office, runs errands, helps with most national office mailings, assists with proofreading copy for *The People*, places ads with other publications, and lately she has been reviewing newspapers submitted by the sections and selecting those with which to place additional ads. Furthermore, she acts as the New York Labor News clerk by putting up and packing orders for leaflets and pamphlets, and by shipping bundles of *The People* every two weeks.

Comrade Secor is the subscription clerk. Her normal duties are to process all subscriptions, renewals and address changes, see to it that all this information is conveyed to the firm that maintains the mailing list, and to maintain the subscription records. They also include preparing the subscription renewal mailing each month, handling complaints from readers and registering ours with the mailing and mailing list firms. However, Comrade Secor has had health problems of her own for several years which have prevented her from working full time. Consequently, Comrade Gunderson has taken on the added responsibility for the subscription department as necessary with occasional assistance from Comrade Bills.

National Office

The national office, with overall responsibility for the national

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

headquarters, plus a host of administrative, agitational and organizational tasks to attend to, is staffed entirely by Comrade Donna Bills and your National Secretary.

Comrade Bills recently celebrated her 20th anniversary with the national headquarters, and in that sense is “senior” member of the headquarters staff. Her many and varied duties include receiving and routing all incoming mail to the three departments, processing all national office mail, and conducting most of the national office’s routine correspondence. She reviews and formats all the national office’s outgoing correspondence, and frequently does the same for other departments. With Comrade Gunderson’s cooperation and assistance, she conducts all general and special mailings. Comrades Bills and Gunderson also team up to do virtually all the proofreading for *The People*. Comrade Bills also types all general and special letters, in addition to reprints, De Leon editorials, letters, articles submitted from the field, and other matter intended for publication in *The People*. She orders supplies, does the filing, and in many ways acts as an assistant to the National Secretary.

*

From the preceding it can be seen that the entire staff consists of seven members spread over three main departments, all of which are vital components of the headquarters operation. Those three departments continue to perform their basic functions in spite of long-standing vacancies that have crippled each and made it impossible to transform the headquarters from a holding operation into an aggressive, Party-building instrument. Prolonged vacancies in each department have stretched most of the seven hard-working men and women who make up the staff so far for so long that we sometimes tend to lose sight of the fact that the situation is critical and unacceptable as a normal state of affairs.

As noted, there have been some changes in the composition of the staff since the last convention. However, the basic differences between the national headquarters as it was in 1989 and the national headquarters as it is today are that we are a little older, a little more worn down, and a little less certain about the future. We are not as confident as we once were about the reinforcements we need being found or voluntarily coming forward. With the exception of Comrade Barnes, the few leads we had to pursue after the 1989 convention led only to new disappointments. We need members to join the staff whose good character and reliability can

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

be vouched for. We have no time for chasing after will-o'-the-wisps, and cannot afford the luxury of squandering large sums on relocating and paying people who turn out to be lazy, unreliable or without character. We cannot afford to keep individuals who have become demoralized and take advantage of our situation to ease themselves out at our expense, financially and in other ways. Neither can we afford any longer to have our hopes and expectations raised only to experience more letdowns and disappointments. Experiences of this kind cannot help but have a cumulative effect in undermining the morale and the determination of a staff that has proven itself by sticking it out through thick and thin.

If from the good, honest, and dedicated body of men and women who make up the membership of the Party cannot be found the four or five good, honest and dedicated men and women needed to reinforce and stabilize the national headquarters, some alternative measures will be needed to relieve the pressure on the staff we have. For, with or without reinforcements to the present staff, the national headquarters will have to be transformed from the holding operation it has been into the aggressive Party-building instrument it must become if the SLP means to survive.

Headquarters Lease

The national headquarters lease expires on Dec. 31 of this year. Our landlord continues to speak indecisively of expanding his business further and taking over entirely that portion of the building the Party has occupied since 1974. (At one time we occupied a full half of the structure, but that was reduced to about one-quarter several years ago.) When the present lease was extended last year, the landlord proposed that it be for 12 months only, in which case it would have been due to expire at the end of May 1991. When approached, however, he readily agreed to extend it for the additional seven months needed to see us through the SLP Centennial and the 1991 National Convention, and still provide us with several months in which to locate new headquarters if he finally decided to occupy the entire building. We still don't know what his plans for the future are, and suspect that he is still undecided. However, if it becomes necessary to search for new headquarters and to move before the end of the year, we will be confronted with an sizable problem. A move and the preparations needed for it could have a disruptive effect on the headquarters

operation, which already suffers greatly from a shortage of personnel. To repeat, however, our landlord, who has proven to be fair-minded and considerate in the past, and ever uncertain of what the future may hold for his business, may continue to look on the income he derives from the lease as a valuable asset. It is safe to assume that if he does agree to extend the lease again it will involve an increase in rent. We will know for certain soon after this convention has adjourned, when it will become necessary to approach him for a decision.

* * * * *

On motion, the report was accepted and referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

PARTY FINANCES

It is regrettable that to date the Party's financial report for the year 1990 has not yet been printed and sent to the membership. The books have been audited and the accountant's report is at hand. However, the final steps for preparing the contents, printing and mailing the report have not been taken. In large measure, the pressures and circumstances at national headquarters are responsible for the delay.

But the primary reason for the delay in preparing the financial report and sending it to the membership this year is, as it was last year, the fact that the last convention of the Party was unable to find anyone willing and able to accept the post of Financial Secretary. Nor has the NEC been able to fill the resulting vacancy as required under the Party's Constitution.

Moreover, the Constitution makes no provision for anyone to assume the responsibilities of a financial secretary and for issuing the financial report in the event of a continued absence of a financial secretary. By default the burdens of that office (but not necessarily the responsibilities) have fallen upon the National Secretary. And to the extent that my primary duties as National Secretary permit, and have permitted, I have "accepted" and carried out the duties of the office of Financial Secretary. Accordingly if this convention again fails to fill the office of Financial Secretary, the national office will complete the financial report for 1990 and send it out as soon after this convention as circumstances in the national office will permit.

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

However, preparing and sending out that financial report will take some time because it should be accompanied with a detailed covering statement. Without such statement the impression could easily be left with the membership that the Party's financial condition is no cause for concern. In fact, I had hoped to send a detailed covering statement with the financial report for 1989. As I wrote in the brief covering letter that was part of that report:

“It should be stated that the report of the accountant was prepared and submitted [to the national office] in good time, as was this summary [by the Party's bookkeeper]. Ordinarily, the summary would have been submitted to the membership many months ago. It was delayed, initially, because it was my intention to prepare a detailed letter on the financial state of the organization to accompany it. For a number of reasons, however, that plan was repeatedly postponed, with the result that the delay has become far longer than anything I intended or anticipated. While a more detailed statement on the Party's financial condition is still desirable, it now seems impractical to devote time to it as I must soon turn my attention to preparation of the report to the 40th National Party Convention. However, such a detailed accounting of the Party's financial condition will be included in that report”

In truth, however, despite all my good intentions and plans, time and circumstances have not permitted me even to prepare as detailed a statement for this convention as I would have liked and as the situation really demands. Hopefully, what is reported in what follows will give you as delegates a fairly clear picture of the Party's financial reality and enable you to convey that reality to the membership through a resolution or statement drafted and adopted at this convention, supplemented with your suggestions and recommendations for dealing with the Party's financial future.

The Party's available cash balance on December 31, 1990, was more than \$14,390 *less* than it had been on December 31, 1989. That the difference was not greater was due primarily to the following two important facts:

1. During the year we received almost \$59,500 from six estates.
2. We received \$17,540 from Comrade Gordon Long as part of his 1987 pledge to pay one-half the Party's rent for four years. (The total amount of Comrade Long's generosity was \$52,000.)

Without the monies received from these two sources, the drop in the Party's cash reserves at the end of 1990 would have been

\$91,364. This despite the fact that the extraordinary response of both members and friends of the Party to its Centennial Fund appeals resulted in over \$80,000 being contributed to that fund.

If we go back a year to include the figures for 1989, the picture becomes even starker, even though the Party's financial report for 1989 showed a surplus of over \$42,000 on December 31 of that year. For in evaluating that surplus we must remember the following important details that made that surplus possible:

1. In 1989, the income from seven estates amounted to over \$110,888.

2. The rent subsidy from Comrade Gordon Long that year was \$12,511.

3. And we received three special gifts from L. Naglich (\$5,000), E. Rasmussen (\$4,100) and S. Emery (\$20,000) totaling \$29,100. (I shall have more to say about the gift from Comrade Emery later in this section of the report.)

The monies received from the above three sources amounted to \$152,499, without which the 1989 financial statement would have shown a deficit of \$109,967 instead of a surplus of \$42,532.

At this point, it is relevant to note that the financial records for the first three months of 1991 already show a deficit (as of March 31, 1991) of \$33,154. And the 1991 deficit is already that large despite the fact that during those first three months we received contributions of \$11,941 for *The People* Centennial Fund. In short, the deficit in 1991 is averaging \$11,051.50 per month.

Projecting that average over the year tells us that we may have a deficit for 1991 of \$132,619. And at this point there are reasons to fear that the 1991 deficit at year's end could be even greater. For one thing, we can hardly expect contributions to *The People* Centennial Fund during 1991 to reach anywhere near the \$80,000 contributed during 1990 to the SLP Centennial Fund. Moreover, we are no longer receiving the liberal rent subsidy that helped the financial situation so much during the past four years. We also face the possibility of having to move at the end of our current lease in December. In addition to the cost of moving, should that prove necessary, it is reasonable to expect that we may have to pay a higher monthly rent. More likely than not, we will have to pay a higher monthly rent even if we are lucky enough to be able to negotiate a new lease on our present headquarters.

It is true that during the last two years the national office was not as persistent as it had been in earlier years in bringing the

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

Party's financial situation to the attention of the members. This was due in part to other problems that were more immediately pressing. There was also the inhibiting factor of indecision on how to convey the problem in view of our experiences with past efforts, since we could hardly claim that those past efforts were really successful. What more could be said? How often could the same warnings and pleadings be repeated? Was there some way they could be conveyed more effectively? The more one thought, the more one delayed.

We were also lulled somewhat into a degree of inaction because there was no immediate financial crisis confronting us. However, the problem was not totally ignored. For example, in my report to the 1989 National Convention I wrote, in part, under the heading of Party Finances:

“I can here state frankly that the audit confirms that the Party's financial vulnerability is still a problem that we must view with concern. For though the immediate financial situation has eased, the manner in which that improvement came about not only confirms the general analysis of the Party's financial problem that the national office has made repeatedly, but also underscores and emphasizes the extent to which the Party is dependent on bequests and other special financial arrangements that have been repeatedly cited as the most effective way to ensure the SLP's ongoing financial security.”

In its report, which was unanimously adopted by the convention after extensive discussion, the Committee on Headquarters and Finances echoed the important points made in my report. A few weeks after the convention a summary of the convention's action and an appeal for a positive response to its recommendations went out to the membership. There was some response, but it was by no means overwhelming. However, one prompt and generous response that the national office and the NEC found both gratifying and unusual came from Comrade Stephen Emery. Under date of June 10 Comrade Emery wrote as follows:

“Dear Comrade Bills:

“The enclosed check is my response to the Party's appeal for bequests to help keep it solvent and financially able to expand its agitational activity. I have chosen this means in order to avoid the legal costs of having a will drawn up and eventually probated; also, to eliminate the delay caused by that route before a bequest reaches the Party.

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

“I realize that many Party members are not in a position to do what I am doing. At least a few are, however. They ought to consider how much they would aid the Party by doing likewise in this critical period.

“Fraternally yours,
“[Signed] STEPHEN EMERY”

With that letter Comrade Emery enclosed a check in the amount of \$20,000. In acknowledging this gift on behalf of the NEC and the national office, I asked Comrade Emery if he would object to the national office’s using his letter to convey his suggestion to the membership. Comrade Emery not only agreed, but he encouraged the national office to do so in the hope, as he expressed it, that it “could lead to further donations.”

Regrettably, the national office did not manage to work out a plan to use Comrade Emery’s letter as intended. It was about that time that we got deeply involved in preparations for the SLP Centennial Exhibit and Banquet, which soon became all-consuming as far as our time and energy were concerned. I hope and expect that the national office will make some effective use of Comrade Emery’s letter as soon as possible after this convention. Any suggestions the convention might have for doing so will be greatly appreciated.

About six weeks after the 1989 convention the membership received another reminder that the Party’s financial situation was not quite as positive as the bare figures in the financial report seemed to indicate. In her covering letter, which was part of the 1989 financial report, the then outgoing Financial Secretary, Comrade Genevieve Gunderson, cautioned that with respect to the “increase in the Party’s reserves” members should note “that this is due largely to the fact that during both 1987 and 1988 the Party received several substantial bequests, most of them from wholly unexpected—nonmember—sources.” She went on to warn that “The outlook for the current year is not promising despite the balance carried over from 1988.” And Comrade Gunderson concluded that it was “imperative that every member review carefully the sections on finances in the published proceedings of the 1987 and 1989 conventions, and the reports and recommendations adopted at those conventions.” To what extent Comrade Gunderson’s caution was noted and her warning taken to heart by the membership generally can be measured by the paucity of the response received. At any rate, I know of no other way to measure such things than by

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

the reaction they elicit from the field.

To sum up: During the past several years, and particularly during the last two years, the Party's financial condition has been relatively stable, thanks largely to a number of unexpected bequests from nonmembers and to some very special and very generous gifts from several members. We could hardly expect to be that fortunate indefinitely. In fact, as things are shaping up now, we can expect some rough times ahead. And we have to come up with plans to weather them.

Incidentally, in making reference to the unexpected bequests and the special gifts that have enabled the Party to keep afloat financially, I in no way minimize or denigrate the consistent, generous and decades-long financial support that the members and many friends of the SLP have rendered, not infrequently at great personal sacrifice. As was stated in an April 22, 1985 letter from the national office to all members of the Party and repeated in the report of the National Secretary to the 1987 National Convention:

“There is no denying that the members and friends of our Party have consistently made valiant efforts to support the Party. We do not minimize the sacrifices they have made [and continue to make] and the generosity they have displayed time and again. Nor are we oblivious to the fact that the very economic factors that have increased the Party's financial burdens have also increased the financial burdens of the Party's supporters.”

Having said that again, I must also emphasize that the Party's financial problems must be anticipated and steps taken to keep them under control. That cannot be done in a haphazard, catch-as-catch-can manner, and we certainly cannot wait until we are confronting some potential disaster to lay down our plans for averting or surmounting it. That must be done in advance, as all of us must surely have learned from the near-calamity that befell the Party several years ago. Accordingly, I repeat here the concluding note from the financial section of my report to the National Convention of two years ago:

“The Party's interests require that every possibility for filling the office of Financial Secretary be explored by this convention. . . .

“The financial affairs and concerns of the Party need to receive the complete and undivided attention that only a full-time

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

Financial Secretary would have to devote to them. It would be a misfortune if the duties and responsibilities of the office were to receive anything less than that full attention. The office of Financial Secretary was established in 1980 in recognition of this fact, and not enough emphasis can be placed on the importance of locating a suitable member to fill this essential post.”

* * * * *

On motion, the report was accepted and referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

At 11:22 a.m., a 10-minute recess was declared. Reconvened at 11:38 a.m.

On motion, the agenda was amended as follows: Under Sunday Afternoon Session, “Report of the Editor” was added after Item 3.

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

NEC AND NATIONAL OFFICERS

The Party’s Constitution charges the National Convention with the responsibility of electing a National Executive Committee of seven members for a two-year term, and with the further responsibility of electing three members to fill the offices of Editor of *The People*, Financial Secretary and National Secretary.

With regard to the election of an NEC, it is the responsibility of the national office to initiate the procedure whereby the names of members who are eligible and willing to serve on the committee can be determined, thereby enabling the convention to fulfill its constitutional obligation. That provision, which is Section 2(a) of Article V, reads, in the main, as follows:

“ . . . Two months prior to the National Convention the National Office shall canvass the Sections within a 150-mile radius of National Headquarters for the names of members eligible for and willing to serve on the NEC, those names to be submitted to the Convention. The Convention shall elect seven, each of those elected to be specifically approved by a general vote of the whole Party.”

The national office routinely discharged its responsibility in this regard under date of February 25, 1991, by issuing a call to the members of the two sections that fall within the 150-mile radius of national headquarters. In so doing, however, I also reminded the members that the Constitution “places a special burden of responsibility on the two sections, and makes it incumbent upon all mem-

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

bers of both sections who are concerned about the Party's welfare to seriously consider making themselves available for election to the NEC."

After more than a month had passed, during which only three responses had been received, a second letter was sent to the sections to "remind the members of how important it is that a full slate of names be submitted to the upcoming National Convention." That reminder elicited two additional replies. Hence, five names are available to the convention, which obviously is an insufficient number from which to elect a full NEC of seven members for the 1991-1993 term. The five members who came forward are all members of the present NEC, and all are members of Section San Francisco Bay Area. Four of the five are employed at national headquarters.

This problem of their being an insufficient number of members from the designated sections willing to make themselves available for election to the NEC, and in particular members who are not also employees of the Party, is not a new one. The present NEC, for example, was elected with only six members, of whom four are members of the headquarters staff, and an effort to fill the vacancy in 1989 was not successful. But the problem dates back even further. No NEC has been elected with seven members since 1982, and vacancies have never been easy to fill. What makes matters worse is that the responsibilities associated with membership on the NEC have devolved more and more onto the shoulders of a small national headquarters staff already stretched thin over a host of other duties and responsibilities, until virtually the entire burden has been shifted onto them. In my considered opinion the problem is worse than burdensome; it is intolerable, unworkable and verges on being dangerous.

Ever since the present executive structure of the Party was established in 1980, virtually every NEC elected has been made up in the majority by members of the headquarters staff. That fact brought certain problems of its own, but none that outweighed the disadvantages of the old regional setup, or that could not be managed, so long as a significant portion of the NEC was made up of members not employed by the Party. The national headquarters was woefully understaffed even then, though somewhat larger than it is at present.

When the first ballot to elect an NEC under the present executive structure was submitted to the referendum in December 1980,

it listed the names of 12 members from the two sections. A full NEC was elected, made up by five members of Section San Francisco Bay Area and two members of Section Sacramento. Three of the seven elected were also members of the headquarters staff.

Ten names were submitted to the 1982 National Convention, which also elected a seven-member NEC. That NEC was composed of six members from the Bay Area and one from Section Sacramento. Four of those elected were employed at national headquarters.

By the time of the 1984 convention, however, only six members responded to the canvass, all of them members in the Bay Area. Similarly, only six names—all from the Bay Area—were available to the 1987 National Convention. Although eight names went to the 1989 National Convention—again, all members of Section San Francisco Bay Area—one who was a member of the editorial staff was elected Editor of *The People*, and thereby became ineligible for the NEC. Another staff member placed certain conditions on his willingness to serve and was not elected. And a third became eligible when she decided not to make herself available for another term as the Party's Financial Secretary. Accordingly, four of the six members elected in 1989 were, and still are, members of the headquarters staff, and now it appears that the next NEC will consist of five members, of whom four are members of the staff.

The “built-in” vacancies that resulted in 1984 and 1987 were eventually filled. However, the effort to fill the vacancy on the present NEC following the 1989 convention failed.

The call for members to make themselves available as candidates to fill the present vacancy was issued in July 1989. When sending out the call, it was requested that the “sections each discuss this matter at a section meeting, and that the members who are qualified, but who may be reluctant to make their names available, be urged to step forward. It would be unfortunate if this canvass failed to elicit any response from either section, as was the case in similar circumstances following the 1987 National Convention, when a built-in vacancy occurred on a newly elected NEC.” At the same time, the following covering letter was sent to the two organizers:

“Dear Comrades:

“RE: NEC VACANCY CANVASS

“Enclosed please find a letter addressed to your sections regarding a vacancy that exists on the NEC, and a quantity of

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

‘verification slips.’

“You will note from the enclosed letter that I am requesting that your sections take a more active part in filling this particular vacancy on the NEC than in the past. Specifically, I am requesting that the matter be discussed at a section meeting, and that all verification slips be handed to you as the organizers of your respective sections for forwarding to the national office.

“The reason for taking this approach is, I believe, self-evident. For the past several years it has become increasingly difficult to fill vacancies that periodically occur on the NEC. I am certain that this has concerned your sections as much as it has concerned the national office, the NEC and the Party generally.

“I have inserted a space on the enclosed verification slips for you to write in the date by which members would have to return the form to you for forwarding to the national office by September 15. If you or your sections have any questions bearing on this matter please bring them to my attention.

“Fraternally yours,

“ROBERT BILLS

“National Secretary”

When it began to appear that no member of either section would respond to the canvass, I informed the NEC that, while I still held out hope that at least one member would step forward, I could not be certain of that, or of what the implications would be if that hope was not realized.

“The prospect of the current NEC continuing in office with a vacancy for the balance of its term raises certain questions,” I added. “It may be—though I don’t say this as a certainty—that we are coming to the point where some consideration will have to be given to the viability of the Party’s executive structure as it currently exists. While I am not prepared to open a discussion on that level at this time, it is a matter to which your committee should be giving some thought.”

I also wrote to the organizer of Section Sacramento to express the hope that “the section has had a frank and open discussion on the matter and will have something to report within the next few days.” He replied by informing me that the matter had been discussed at two section meetings, and added: “The fact that you did not receive a verification slip from Sacramento obviously means that no one from our Section was willing to serve on the committee.”

Obvious or not, there was nothing in this reply to suggest that the section had given any thought or consideration to what should

be done if it could not bear its share of responsibility in providing members for the NEC, as provided by the Party's Constitution, or if it even recognized that it might have some obligation beyond informing me of what I already knew. Hoping for something more to the point, I wrote again:

“What concerns me . . . is that it is becoming increasingly difficult for the two sections to produce the number of qualified members needed to elect a full NEC. The result is that the NEC is tending to become a committee composed in the majority of headquarters employees. While the barrier that formerly prevented Party employees from serving on the NEC has long since been eliminated, it was never intended that the headquarters staff should be the NEC.

“It seems to me that unless something can be done to reverse this trend we will eventually be confronting a problem that may require a constitutional solution. . . .”

That letter was never acknowledged.

I have given a considerable amount of thought to this problem during the last year or so, and have shared with the NEC some of the possible alternatives that have occurred to me, though only on an informal basis. One of those possibilities was to recommend a constitutional amendment that would simply reduce the size of the NEC from the present seven members to one composed of five members. However, even if an NEC of that small size was sufficient, it would almost certainly have to be made up entirely of Party employees, if not immediately, then soon. All the other alternatives involve a restructuring of the Party's executive setup that would spread the responsibility for composing the NEC over the Party as a whole.

That in my view is what is needed, and while I have not sought any official expression of opinion from the members of the present NEC, I believe that a majority of the committee, and perhaps all of it, agree that the present setup no longer serves the Party's interests and that some change is needed. Accordingly, I have prepared for the convention's consideration a number of constitutional amendments for implementing a change, which will be presented at the appropriate point. The main elements of the proposal which differ from the present structure follow:

First: That every member of the Party who has been a member for two years and is a citizen of the United States be eligible for election to the NEC. At present, only members of the sections lo-

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

cated within a 150-mile radius of national headquarters who meet the preceding requirements are eligible.

Second: That the NEC would meet in regular session at least once during its two-year term. The NEC's term of office would not be changed.

Third: That whenever a vacancy on the NEC occurs six months or more before a National Convention, the NEC would nominate the best qualified member to fill the vacancy permanently, and submit that member's name to the referendum. This procedure is similar to what the Constitution already provides for filling a vacancy in the office of National Secretary.

All other key elements of the Party's executive structure (duties and obligations of the NEC; terms of office; procedure for removing members of the NEC, etc.) would remain as they are. In effect, many features of the Party's pre-1980 executive structure would be restored, excepting those regarding the source of membership for the NEC and the procedure for their election. The source of membership would become the Party as a whole, but the method of electing the NEC would remain fundamentally the same as it is now.

One possible drawback to this proposal is that a change involving members from different parts of the country might lead to the same kind of unfortunate breakdown that was a key consideration when the regional structure was found to be unworkable and the present structure was adopted 11 years ago. That may be a risk the Party will have to take, however, since the advantages that once existed with the present structure no longer exist, or no longer exist to the same extent as in 1980, and the disadvantages that have arisen in the meantime cannot be ignored. However, by drawing on the membership as a whole, as distinct from the old regional setup, it should be possible to come up with seven capable and conscientious members to act responsibly as members of the NEC.

There is one element missing from this proposal for which I have no recommendation or solution; namely, what to do about an NEC Subcommittee, if anything. Since a large part of the problem with the present arrangement stems directly from the fact that Sections Sacramento and San Francisco Bay Area do not have a sufficient number of members (outside of those employed at headquarters) willing to serve on the NEC, there is little reason to believe that there is a sufficient number who would be willing to serve on an NEC Subcommittee. Furthermore, an NEC Subcommittee com-

posed primarily of headquarters staff would negate the entire point of any change made and compound, rather than lessen, the difficulty. Accordingly, seeing no real prospect for an NEC Subcommittee, no provision for one has been made among the constitutional amendments being submitted. This objectionable feature, if that is how it is perceived, might be less glaring if all three national offices were filled since, in addition to their separate responsibilities, the officers would be able to work and consult with each other on a daily basis. However, there is no Financial Secretary at present and I have no knowledge of any prospective candidates.

Regardless of what the convention may decide with regard to the present NEC structure, it must still elect an NEC in accordance with the present provisions of the Constitution from among the names available. The members who have indicated a willingness to serve are Comrades Donna Bills, Kenneth Boettcher, Genevieve Gunderson, Louis Lipcon and Diane Secor. As indicated, all are members of Section San Francisco Bay Area, all are NEC members at the present time, and all but Comrade Lipcon are members of the headquarters staff.

In addition, the convention is to elect members to the posts of Editor of the official organ, Financial Secretary and National Secretary.

* * * * *

On motion, the report was accepted and referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

PARTY PRESS AND LITERATURE

The People

The People is mailed to all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and to individual readers and libraries in 18 countries on four continents, as follows: India, South Korea and Turkey, in Asia; Australia; Bulgaria, Denmark, England, France, Italy, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Scotland, Sweden and Switzerland, in Europe; Canada, Costa Rica and Mexico, in North America.

Annual statements filed with the U.S. Postal Service on Oct. 1, 1989, and Oct. 1, 1990, gave the following averages for the 12 months covered by each of those reports, to which are added corre-

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

sponding figures for the first half of the current reporting period:

	<u>Subscribers</u>	<u>In Bundles</u>	<u>Paid Circulation</u>
1989	3,039	6,659	9,698
1990	2,996	6,911	9,907
1991	2,922	6,462	9,384

Press runs for each of the last two completed reporting periods averaged 10,157 and 10,469, respectively. The average press run for the first six months of the current period was 10,369.

These averages include the totals for several special issues published during the year. The numbers for each of the special issues printed in 1990 were: Paris Commune, 15,400; May Day, 17,400; Labor Day, 17,600, SLP Centennial, 18,000; Youth, 15,826; De Leon, 13,100.

Two of the special issues mentioned contained extra pages. The 1990 May Day issue, marking the 100th anniversary of the international workers' holiday, included a special four-page supplement on "The SLP and the First May Day." The SLP Centennial issue, published last September, contained 20 pages and was printed with color on a heavier stock of paper.

Another special issue—the issue of June 30, 1990—was published to correspond with the 90th anniversary of the *Daily People*. (The daily, of course, was launched on July 1, 1900, and was discontinued in February 1914.) That issue featured an eight-page supplement, half of which was devoted to a facsimile reproduction of the June 30, 1906, issue of the *Daily People*. (That particular issue was chosen for reproduction because it was the only daily ever published on a Saturday, June 30th.) However, we were not able to give this particular anniversary issue the same kind of advance publicity normally given to special issues, with the result that the extra circulation it received was small.

The latest issue for which figures were available as this was in preparation was the issue of April 6, 1991, which also happened to be *The People's* own 100th anniversary issue. That issue, like last year's SLP Centennial issue, contained 20 pages and was printed with color on the heavier paper. The press run was increased by 8,000 to fill orders for extra copies. Based on the April 6th issue, paid circulation of *The People* can be broken down as follows:

Domestic Subs	2,884
Foreign Subs	113
Domestic Bundles	11,411
<u>Foreign Bundles</u>	<u>440</u>

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

Total Paid 14,848

The press run for that issue, including the extra copies ordered and the usual allowance for office uses, was 15,700. Included with the subscriptions were 372 libraries. Two additional libraries currently receive bundles, which, when distributed to branches, brings the number of libraries receiving *The People* at present to 389.

The national office continues to place ads with a number of publications having a national circulation as a means of promoting *The People* and increasing the subscription list. Expenditures for 1989 and 1990 came to \$4,202.12. Classified ads were placed with *The Guardian*, *Harpers*, *In These Times*, *Mother Jones*, *National College Newspaper*, *The Nation*, *The Progressive*, *Saturday Evening Post* and *Utne Reader*. There were 217 placements in all, from which 372 subscriptions were received at an average cost of \$11.29 per subscription.

It should be noted that over 29 percent of subscriptions received as a result of advertising are renewed at least once, and that about 12 percent of all those who have taken out subscriptions after seeing ads placed since we began advertising a number of years ago are still regular readers of *The People*.

The overall subscription renewal rate during the last two years has been between 52 and 53 percent.

As the number of public meetings held by the sections has declined, concern over the number of readers living within the metropolitan areas where sections are organized has increased. Last year, the national office began to provide the sections with quarterly reports on the number of regular readers in their respective areas. The latest report, also based on the issue of April 6, shows the following:

Los Angeles, 118; Sacramento, 24; San Francisco Bay Area, 139; Denver, 19; St. Petersburg, 26; Cook County, 62; Wayne County, 67; Minneapolis, 33; New York City, 93; Akron, 16; Cleveland, 26; Portland, 15; Allegheny County, 17; Philadelphia, 35; Seattle, 31; Milwaukee, 31. The total (752), when allowance is made for libraries, exchanges, etc., represents about 30 percent of all domestic subscriptions. This compares to 38 percent reported to the last convention, though that report made no allowances for libraries and other subscriptions having no bearing on the potential for attracting new members to the sections.

An up-to-date account on the number of bundles shipped to sections and members, and on the average number of copies shipped

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

per bundle, will be found at the end of this section. The figures given are based on the issue of March 9, 1991, with comparative figures from the issue of March 11, 1989, from which it appears there has been a slight improvement.

New York Labor News

The number and variety of SLP leaflets printed in 1989-1990 were substantially less than during 1987-1988, when half a million in 10 titles—which included 50,000 of the brochure, “Socialist Labor Party: Position & Program”—were printed. Titles and quantities printed during 1989-1990 were: “The Abortion Issue: A Socialist View,” 25,000; “Capitalism: It Can’t Last Forever,” 50,000; “Politicians Promise and Things Get Worse! Why?” 25,000; Socialism: Its Meaning and Promise,” 50,000; “Strike!” 25,000; “You’ve heard the *lies* about SOCIALISM...now get the *facts*,” 25,000; “Why America Needs Industrial Democracy,” 25,000. The sum of these numbers is 225,000.

Two new “one-shot” leaflets or fliers also were issued by the national office with a view to their being printed locally by sections and national members-at-large, and a third was printed for Section New York City. The two “one-shot” leaflets and the quantities reported as distributed were, “Hands Off Panama!” (1,850 by six sections and 595 by six national members-at-large, for a total of 2,445) and “The Middle East Crisis: What Price Cheap Oil?” (5,800 reported by nine sections and 3,086 by 18 national-members-at-large, or 8,886 in all). The third leaflet referred to was an article reprinted from *The People*, “Take a Stand Against War and Its Economic Cause!” A thousand of these were printed and sent to New York for distribution at a demonstration last October.

No new pamphlets were published nor were any reprinted, though one new *Socialist Studies* was printed and a second was reissued. The first of these was, “Which Party is Right?” (3,000) and the other was, “The Role of a Socialist Party.”

There is, of course, a considerable amount of “routine printing” that goes on during the course of any given year, and though rarely mentioned in reports of this kind, all of it requires a certain amount of preparation. Various letterheads and envelopes, the five subscription renewal letters and renewal forms, shipping labels, promotional pieces done at the request of sections, and a host of other things fall into this category. Some of those other things dur-

ing the last two years included the *SLP Constitution* (as amended), the *Handbook on Intervention and Union Work, Organizational Norms & Procedures*, SLP fact sheets and New York Labor News catalogues and order forms, the 39th National Convention Proceedings, two annual financial statements and four issues of the *SLP Newsletter* that we managed to get out, to which many other “incidental” things no doubt could be added.

Here it may also be appropriate to note for the record that four souvenir items were printed in connection with the Party’s 100th anniversary celebration last year, including 1,000 SLP Centennial lapel pins, 25,000 SLP Centennial envelope seals, the program for last September’s SLP Centennial Celebration Exhibit and Banquet, and facsimile editions of two 1890s-era issues of *The People* in quantities of 500 each.

“The SLP at 100”

Special mention must be made of the video program, “The SLP at 100,” produced as part of the SLP Centennial Celebration and debuted at last September’s SLP Centennial Exhibit. That program was made possible by the many, many hours of work put into it by Comrades Ken Boettcher and Nathan Karp. I cannot say exactly how many hours they devoted to tracking down and reviewing old slides, photographs and films that had been stored away and all but forgotten for years, and I know next to nothing about the technical procedures that had to be followed in order to convert what was finally used onto videotape. But I do know that a considerable amount of leg work and hands-on effort was involved, and that the end result was something that gave great pleasure to everyone who saw it.

The video naturally aroused considerable interest within the Party, and the national office has received a number of requests for copies to be screened at locally sponsored SLP socials and other gatherings, as well as for personal use. For reasons which need not be delved into here, however, it was not deemed advisable to satisfy those requests until certain changes could be made in the video as originally produced. The NEC recently elected a special committee to deal with the problem in order that the program might be shown again in conjunction with *The People’s* Centennial Exhibit on Saturday, April 27, 1991. Those alterations had not been completed by the time this was being written. However, if all goes well,

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

the NEC should be able to make a final determination on making the program available some time shortly after this convention has adjourned.

*

<u>SECTION</u>	<u>BUNDLES</u>			<u>COPIES</u>		
	<u>1989</u>	<u>1991</u>	<u>Net</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1991</u>	<u>Net</u>
Los Angeles	5	6	+1	192	275	+83
Sacramento	1	1	0	135	135	0
S.F. Bay Area	9	7	-2	600	870	+270
Denver	1	2	+1	6	16	+10
St. Petersburg	2	2	0	76	76	0
Cook County	3	3	0	45	70	+25
Wayne County	1	0	-1	150	0	-150
Minneapolis	2	3	+1	130	230	+100
New York City	0	1	+1	0	15	+15
Akron	2	2	0	1,005	1,000	-5
Cleveland	2	4	+2	20	160	+140
Portland	2	2	0	155	160	+5
Allegheny County	1	1	0	5	20	+15
Philadelphia	4	4	0	215	245	+30
Seattle	2	2	0	150	150	0
Milwaukee	1	2	+1	25	40	+15
<u>Subtotals</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>+4</u>	<u>2,909</u>	<u>3,462</u>	<u>+553</u>
<u>M-A-L</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>+5</u>	<u>382</u>	<u>567</u>	<u>+185</u>
TOTALS	62	71	+9	3,291	4,029	+738
	*	*	*	*	*	

On motion, the report was accepted and referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

GENERAL ACTIVITIES

Leaflets and *The People*

There was a small increase in distribution of *The People* in 1990 when compared to 1989, and an increase of about 9,800 copies in the aggregate for those two years in comparison to the two years of

1987 and 1988. More than half the distribution of the last two years was by three sections, however, and another 23 percent was accounted for by a fourth section and the national members-at-large. The remaining 12 sections can be credited with only 25 percent of the total.

Free distribution of *The People* now accounts for 41 percent of all distribution, compared to 39 percent in 1989, 38 percent in 1988 and 35 percent in 1987. Generally speaking, any increase in the distribution of SLP literature is a good thing to be encouraged. However, small increases in free distribution of *The People* cannot compensate for much larger decreases in the distribution of SLP leaflets.

Leaflet distribution remains one of the most important sources of new contact inquiries received at the national office, as it has been for decades. If there has been a decline in its relative importance in recent years, it has not been the result of any loss in the effectiveness of the leaflets that are distributed. Dollar for dollar, and in most other respects, the distribution of leaflets remains the most effective and least expensive means at the Party's disposal for reaching large numbers of workers. The only other single source of new contacts that can be compared to this most important of all SLP activities in which every able-bodied member can participate is one in which the membership in general can take no directly active part, other than by their financial support, and that is paid advertising.

Yet, year after year there has been a continuous and unbroken decline in the number of leaflets put into circulation by the membership until it has reached a level where 15 or 20 determined members could easily have outperformed the entire Party during the last two years, had they been of a mind to do it.

Last year, for example, only 142,500 leaflets were reported distributed by the entire membership of the SLP, including all sections and national members-at-large. Had only one member from each of the 16 sections distributed a thousand leaflets a month during the year, the total distribution, discounting anything that might have been added by members-at-large, would have been 192,000. Had only two or three members from each of the sections done that much, between 384,000 and 576,000 leaflets could have been distributed, and there would have been a corresponding increase in the number of inquiries and subscriptions received.

As it was, however, the number of contacts from leaflet distribu-

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

tion during each of the last two years was 133 in 1989 and 110 in 1990, or about one contact for every 1,200 leaflets put into circulation. That result is not far below the usual expectation of about one inquiry received for every 1,000 leaflets distributed, and when the lack of newer and more timely leaflets is taken into account, the response our current leaflet titles continue to receive seems all the more remarkable.

There is or should be no doubt that the membership can do much better where leaflet distribution is concerned, even allowing for the fact that there are fewer members to take part in the work than ever before. One concrete indication of what the full potential still is can be supplied by the response to the leaflet, *War in the Gulf!*

During the limited period when that leaflet was available, the membership ordered and distributed nearly three-quarters as many as of all other leaflets combined during the preceding 12 months. Nearly 106,000 of that one title were ordered during the months of February and March 1991, and from the number of coupon returns received at the national office it is evident that most of those leaflets were handed out. Multiply those 106,000 leaflets by six, and add in the same measure of enthusiasm and determination shown in putting that particular title into circulation, and you come up with a potential distribution of 636,000 leaflets for any 12-month period and well over 500 new contacts.

No matter what else the membership devotes time and attention to in the next two years, leaflet distribution must be given a high priority. No able-bodied member should leave a section meeting without a bundle of leaflets, and every member should make it his or her goal to distribute that bundle before the next meeting is held. The delegates to this convention should be the ones to set the standard when they return to their homes, and to urge their comrades to emulate their example.

In addition, sections should get back into the habit of organizing regular distribution days on city streets. Working together as a team is the best way to get good results, and to cement the ties of comradeship among those who are determined to attract the new membership we need in order to build up the SLP.

Newsstands

The number of self-service newsstands in operation at the end of

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

1990 was less than 100, without question the lowest number on streets since the very first self-service *Weekly People* newsstands were set up by Section Los Angeles in the early 1950s. As recently as five years ago, the three California sections and a national member-at-large maintained 97 newsstands in the state, one less than all the stands on streets across the entire country at the end of 1990.

The main setback was in the San Francisco Bay Area, where the number fell from 58 at the start of 1989 to 28 at the end of 1990, though additional smaller losses in Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Portland and elsewhere contributed to the overall decline.

In spite of there being fewer newsstands still in operation today than at any time since the early 1950s, they remain an important outlet for *The People*, and every effort should be made to hold the line and to increase their number wherever feasible. Though it can be and most often is expensive and time-consuming to maintain their appearance and keep them in working order, the sections and members who persist in doing this work and absorbing most of the costs are performing an important service for the SLP.

The number of commercial newsstands serviced in 1990 was unchanged from 1989, and the national office rarely receives any report of efforts—successful or otherwise—to increase their number. More effort should be spent in locating commercial outlets for *The People*, particularly in areas where self-service newsstands cannot be set up or where the problems associated with keeping them on the streets have increased.

Contacts

The national office received 710 inquiries during the 24-month period of 1989-1990, compared to 1,020 during the preceding two years, which can be traced to the general decline in SLP activity of all kinds.

Student and teacher inquiries numbered 107 and made up 15 percent of the total, or about the same proportion as reported at our last convention. Deduct that number from the total and the remainder—603—provides a more accurate figure on the number of inquiries from which the Party might hope to derive some benefit.

Leaflet distribution retained its place as the single most productive source of contacts the last two years, and accounted for 40 per-

cent of the 603 nonstudent inquiries received. The numbers tell the tale, and from year to year they tell the same story over and over again: There isn't a single thing members can do to ignite that all-important initial spark of curiosity and interest in the SLP that can hold a candle to plain, old-fashioned leaflet distribution. And the more of it that is done the more contacts will respond, will purchase our literature, read our paper and eventually join our ranks.

When looking over the tables that have been inserted at the back of this section, please note that leaflet coupons also accounted for more than half of the new subscriptions to *The People* taken out by contacts. Leaflet distribution produces contacts, contacts yield subscriptions, and subscribers are still the main source of new membership.

Public Meetings

Sections and national members-at-large conducted 198 public meetings of various kinds during 1989-1990, including study class and discussion group sessions, lectures, and the social gatherings we generally think of as being fund-raising affairs. This figure represents a 20 percent decline from 248 similar gatherings conducted during the preceding two years.

More than half of all SLP meetings to which the public was invited in 1989-1990 fell into the social, or fund-raising, category. The balance, made up by 43 percent of all meetings held, was accounted for by 29 discussion group sessions sponsored by seven sections and 17 by the SLP Group of Miami, Fla.; 32 lectures conducted by five sections, including a number of high school appearances by SLP speakers; and nine study group sessions, all of which were held by Section Philadelphia, Pa.

This decline in the number and frequency of regularly scheduled public meetings is not of recent origin, of course, and delegates to previous conventions could generally anticipate being told that the trend must be reversed if the Party is to remain visible and accessible on the local level. No one can argue that SLP sections are apt to succeed in attracting new membership if they are not visible and accessible to the workers who respond to our leaflets and to our official organ.

However, if study classes, discussion groups and public lectures held to teach SLP principles or demonstrate their application cannot be conducted on a regular basis by a majority of sections, which

the evidence suggests to be the case, some substitute that a majority or significant number of sections can engage in on a regular basis must be devised or settled on. We cannot afford to simply let things drift, or stand by watching as members become discouraged after attempts to conduct study classes, discussion groups or public lectures that fail to attract the kind of attendance that would have the opposite effect.

Regular social affairs at which a brief talk of 20 to 30 minutes duration is delivered, and where some form of informal discussion can be carried on, would seem to combine most of the elements for such an alternative. But affairs of this kind require more in the way of preparation and involvement by members than a simple lecture or study class session, which may explain why nearly 72 percent of these most frequently held of all SLP meetings during the past two years were conducted by only five sections. Those sections were Los Angeles and Wayne County, the only two that held an affair every month; Akron and Cleveland, which combined to hold 20 joint affairs; and Section San Francisco Bay Area, which held a social every other month.

The important thing is that this convention adopt a carefully thought-out resolution or statement outlining some specific course of action that all or most sections can reasonably be expected to implement.

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

LEAFLET DISTRIBUTION (1989–1990)

<u>Sections</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Los Angeles, Calif.	22,840	3,660	26,500
Sacramento, Calif.	18,225	17,607	35,832
S.F. Bay Area, Calif.	19,424	12,507	31,931
Denver, Colo.	2,425	2,862	5,287
St. Petersburg, Fla.	2,300	7,776	10,076
Cook Co., Ill.	7,740	9,854	17,594
Eastern Mass.	500	0	500
Wayne Co., Mich.	17,317	19,602	36,919
Minneapolis, Minn.	1,000	300	1,300
New York City	0	900	900
Akron, Ohio	500	1,700	2,200
Cleveland, Ohio	1,061	3,810	4,871
Portland, Ore.	855	215	1,070
Allegheny Co., Pa.	214	0	214
Philadelphia, Pa.	25,485	18,340	43,825
Seattle, Wash.	0	577	577
Milwaukee, Wis.	385	2,256	2,641
<u>Members-At-Large</u>	<u>36,740</u>	<u>40,479</u>	<u>77,219</u>
Totals	157,011	142,445	299,456

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

DISTRIBUTION OF "THE PEOPLE" (1989 - 1990)

<u>Sections</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Los Angeles, Calif.	1,897	1,711	3,608
Sacramento, Calif.	3,890	3,930	7,820
S.F. Bay Area, Calif.	19,669	28,109	47,778
Denver, Colo.	574	1,064	1,638
St. Petersburg, Fla.	1,703	6,283	7,986
Cook Co., Ill.	12,309	13,047	25,356
Eastern Mass.	0	0	0
Wayne Co., Mich.	5,026	1,000	6,026
Minneapolis, Minn.	6,332	7,310	13,642
New York City	0	0	0
Akron, Ohio	12,995	17,440	30,435
Cleveland, Ohio	1,094	2,905	3,999
Portland, Ore.	1,678	1,955	3,633
Allegheny Co., Pa.	3,864	89	3,953
Philadelphia, Pa.	1,204	4,193	5,397
Seattle, Wash.	2,680	1,342	4,022
Milwaukee, Wis.	1,385	1,525	2,910
<u>Members-At-Large</u>	<u>23,126</u>	<u>8,852</u>	<u>31,978</u>
Totals	99,426	100,755	200,181

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

CONTACTS

<u>Sources</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Leaflets	133	110	243
Miscellaneous	117	119	236
Ads in <i>The People</i>	38	33	71
Ads in Other Publications	15	27	42
Requests for Campaign Literature	0	1	1
Students/Teachers	48	59	107
Sign-up Sheets (From SLP Literature Tables)	0	7	7
Radio/TV	0	0	0
<u>Local Fliers</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
TOTALS	352	358	710

SUBSCRIPTIONS FROM CONTACTS

	<u>1989</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Four months	118	97	215
One Year	21	44	65
Two Years	2	3	5
Three Years	1	2	3
<u>Bundle Subs</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>
TOTALS	143	146	289
Subs from Leaflet Coupons	84	76	160

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

STUDY CLASS SESSIONS (1989 - 1990)

<u>Sections</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Los Angeles, Calif.	0	0	0
Sacramento, Calif.	0	0	0
S.F. Bay Area	0	0	0
Denver, Colo.	0	0	0
St. Petersburg, Fla.	0	0	0
Cook Co., Ill.	0	0	0
Eastern Mass.	0	0	0
Wayne Co., Mich.	0	0	0
Minneapolis, Minn.	0	0	0
New York City	0	0	0
Akron, Ohio	0	0	0
Cleveland, Ohio	0	0	0
Portland, Ore.	0	0	0
Allegheny Co., Pa.	0	0	0
Philadelphia, Pa.	2	7	9
Seattle, Wash.	0	0	0
Milwaukee, Wis.	0	0	0
TOTAL	2	7	9

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

DISCUSSION GROUP SESSIONS (1989 - 1990)

<u>Sections</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Los Angeles, Calif.	5	0	5
Sacramento, Calif.	0	0	0
S.F. Bay Area, Calif.	3	5	8
Denver, Colo.	0	0	0
Miami SLP Group, Fla.	9	8	17
St. Petersburg, Fla.	0	0	0
Cook Co., Ill.	2	2	4
Eastern Mass.	0	0	0
Wayne Co., Mich.	0	0	0
Minneapolis, Minn.	0	0	0
New York City	4	1	5
Akron, Ohio	0	0	0
Cleveland, Ohio	0	0	0
Portland, Ore.	2	1	3
Allegheny Co., Pa.	1	0	1
Philadelphia, Pa.	3	0	3
Seattle, Wash.	0	0	0
<u>Milwaukee, Wis.</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
TOTAL	29	17	46

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

PUBLIC AND SCHOOL LECTURES (1989 - 1990)

<u>Sections</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Los Angeles, Calif.	0	0	0
Sacramento, Calif.	6	3	9
S.F. Bay Area	3	6	9
Denver, Colo.	0	0	0
St. Petersburg, Fla.	0	8	8
Cook Co., Ill.	2	2	4
Eastern Mass.	0	0	0
Wayne Co., Mich.	0	0	0
Minneapolis, Minn.	0	0	0
New York City	0	0	0
Akron, Ohio	0	0	0
Cleveland, Ohio	0	0	0
Portland, Ore.	2	0	2
Allegheny Co., Pa.	0	0	0
Philadelphia, Pa.	0	0	0
Seattle, Wash.	0	0	0
<u>Milwaukee, Wis.</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
TOTAL	13	19	32

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

FUND-RAISERS AND SOCIALS (1989 - 1990)

<u>Sections</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Los Angeles, Calif.	12	12	24
Sacramento, Calif.	1	1	2
S.F. Bay Area, Calif.	6	6	12
Sacramento & S.F. Bay Area (joint)	1	2	3
Denver, Colo.	0	0	0
Miami SLP Group, Fla.	2	1	3
St. Petersburg, Fla.	2	3	5
Cook Co., Ill.	0	0	
Eastern Mass.	0	0	0
Wayne Co., Mich.	12	12	24
Minneapolis, Minn. & Duluth SLP Group (joint)	3	4	7
New York City	0	0	
Akron & Cleveland, Ohio (joint)	10	10	20
Portland, Ore.	3	2	5
Allegheny Co., Pa.	1	0	1
Philadelphia, Pa.	3	3	6
Seattle, Wash.	0	0	0
<u>Milwaukee, Wis.</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
TOTAL	56	56	112

On motion, the report was accepted and referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

SPECIAL ITEMS

Pamphlets and Leaflets

Here I wish to report that the national and editorial offices have not forgotten that the 39th National Convention specifically referred the matter of producing leaflets on the environment and racism to them, or that the national office was supposed to take steps to prepare a small pamphlet on Daniel De Leon and De Leonism. Neither have we forgotten about the need for a new pamphlet on the Party's Socialist Industrial Union program. (I could easily add a dozen more topics for leaflets and pamphlets that are sorely needed to bring our aging and largely outworn body of SLP literature up to date.)

With regard to the leaflet on the environment: Comrade Whitney did submit an article from *The People* to the NEC for its consideration. However, the NEC found the article to be inadequate (a judgment in which I concurred), and nothing further has been done. In all fairness to Comrade Whitney, however, he has his hands full for reasons that have already been discussed.

The national office, which was given the primary responsibility for drafting a leaflet on racism, has also found it difficult to set aside the block of time that would be needed to do a satisfactory job. A slightly revised version of an older leaflet on the subject was presented to the NEC as a stopgap measure some time ago; but this too was found to be inadequate, and in spite of having submitted it for the committee's consideration I would have to agree. It has been languishing on my desk for several months and I will turn my attention back to it as soon as I can isolate that necessary block of time.

As for the De Leon pamphlet: there is much more to this than meets the eye. A number of would-be biographers have raised certain questions about De Leon's background, youth and education that cannot be easily resolved, and neither can they be totally ignored. To a certain extent this is due to the passage of time, the ravages of European wars, the passing of all of De Leon's contemporaries, possibly incomplete or faulty record-keeping, and a host of other problems. A few months after the 1989 National Conven-

tion, Comrade Karp, at my request, tracked down some old correspondence having to do with De Leon's background. Buried in the middle of these hundreds of pages I came across one document that shed a ray of light on one of the questions that have been raised about De Leon's youth, but there is much more to be done.

I recognize that the convention did not have a full-blown biography of De Leon in mind, and that its main interest was in providing the Party with something that would focus more on his contributions to the socialist movement than try to resolve questions that have no direct bearing on De Leon's work. It should be possible to prepare something along that line and to leave the final resolution of the other questions for a later time without ignoring them entirely. Here again, however, this is not the kind of thing you "knock off" in an afternoon. Even a brief but credible biography supplementing a small pamphlet on De Leonism will require some research and the time in which to do it. Dealing with De Leon's writings and other works is a simpler proposition since most are readily available, and as much or as little can be "bitten off" at any one time as circumstances will allow.

That brings me to the SIU pamphlet, which certainly ranks high among all the Party's needs for fresh literature. The NEC had taken this matter up prior to the 1989 convention, and had elected a special committee to review articles on the subject from the *Weekly People* and *The People*. The purpose was to select a number that might be combined into a pamphlet, or to report that the material did not lend itself to what the NEC had in mind. The committee compiled a list of about 35 such articles, but made no recommendation. Thereupon, the national office volunteered to review the articles to determine if the hoped-for combination was there. Our conclusion was that no such combination was possible from the articles selected, and that the only solution to the problem was to work toward an entirely new pamphlet. Concurring in that view, the NEC referred the entire question to the Editor, which is where the matter rests at the present time.

SLP and *The People's* Centennial Exhibits

Those who were fortunate enough to attend the SLP Centennial Celebration and Exhibit last September will have a much better appreciation of what a marvelous experience it was than anything I could ever hope to convey in writing. My descriptive powers are

much too poor to draw the kind of word picture that would be needed to do justice to it. Nor could I ever hope to verbalize the obvious pleasure it gave to all the members who were able to attend and witness it, or the pride they took in the history and the accomplishments of the SLP as these things were spread out before them. It was written all over their faces, as was the pride and satisfaction we all took in the fact that such a display could be assembled and so ably presented in behalf of our Party.

Fortunately for me it isn't necessary to attempt such a hopeless task for the reason that all of us had a very similar experience again yesterday afternoon at *The People's* 100th Anniversary Celebration and Exhibit. What I can do, however, is borrow the following passages from the final report of the NEC's special SLP Centennial Committee to supply the record of this convention with some indication of what effort went into last September's magnificent exhibit:

"Your committee believes special mention should be made of the indispensable contributions of time and effort made by several people, without whom the SLP Centennial Celebration could not have been held. Comrade Barbara Graymont of Lynbrook, N.Y., spent a total of six weeks at national headquarters working with Comrade Nathan Karp in preparing the exhibit, and Comrade Bernard Bortnick of Dallas, Texas, was able to provide technical assistance in lay-out, etc., of the exhibit itself. Comrade Bortnick worked directly with Comrades Karp and the National Secretary on two separate occasions, and otherwise kept in contact by phone and the mails. Comrades Graymont and Bortnick also were on the spot to direct and assist in setting up and disassembling the exhibit.

"In addition to these members' volunteer help, one nonmember, Marsha Barg-Karp, put in a long day at national headquarters assisting in mounting exhibit items. Her assistance was also voluntary.

"While the contributions made by those mentioned were important, and even essential, to the successful staging of the SLP Centennial Exhibit, no contribution was as important, as essential or as prolonged as that of Comrade Nathan Karp.

"Soon after the NEC made its decision to hold such an exhibit in connection with the Centennial Celebration, Comrade Karp readily agreed to make his services available to your committee. Any effort to sum up in brief form what those services consisted of would fall far short of the mark. But they entailed countless hours of work over many months' time.

"Starting last March [1990], Comrade Karp began the tedious

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

process of going through the numerous, large filing cabinets in which were stored the thousands of items that had first to be 'exhumed' from where they had been 'buried' undisturbed for decades. Each and every one of these items had to be handled, evaluated and itemized to distinguish between what was truly historic and what was simply stored. Many of the things he came across were in a delicate state and had to be handled with the utmost care and delicacy. Everything of historic importance or interest had then to be protected. All this and much more had to be accomplished before decisions on what should or could be used for the exhibit could be made.

"Numerous hours also had to be spent on investigating how the various items chosen for display could be displayed in a manner that would be both attractive and ensure that no harm would come to them, and many decisions had to be made on the suitability of display equipment and expense.

"Much, much more could be said to detail Comrade Karp's efforts in preparation of the SLP Centennial Exhibit. The point is, however, that he worked virtually every day for a period of six or seven months, mostly without aid or assistance, except for the periods cited, and that without his constant presence there would have been nothing toward which others could have contributed. There would not have been an exhibit. Accordingly, your committee believes that it is justified in expanding on Comrade Karp's contributions and in expressing our special thanks and appreciation to him for all he did."

To this may now be added *The People's* 100th Anniversary Exhibit, and much of what has been cited from the SLP Centennial Planning Committee's report could be duplicated to provide the record of this convention with a summary of what went into its preparation. Once again, there were many contributions that could be cited. Not the least of these was Comrade Graymont's, who spent three weeks at national headquarters assisting Comrade Karp in the final stages of preparation.

Here, however, I wish primarily to take advantage of what is still fresh and clear in your memory and to express again, in your behalf and in behalf of the entire membership, our heartfelt thanks to Comrade Nathan Karp, without whose dedication neither exhibit would have been possible.

* * * * *

On motion, the report was accepted and referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

The following amendments to the Party's Constitution are being submitted in connection with the proposal for restructuring the National Executive Committee on a national basis. They are being submitted in the same order that they would appear in the Constitution, if adopted. However, none of the amendments being proposed would have any application unless that affecting Section 2(a) of Article V is adopted, or unless some alternate proposal for restructuring the NEC on a broader basis is adopted instead.

*

1. It is recommended that the following be inserted as Section 2 of Article V:

Section 2. (a) The members of the first NEC to take office under the proposal adopted by the 40th National Convention and approved by the membership referendum shall be elected in the following manner:

(b) The National Office shall call upon the Sections to each nominate one of their own members for the NEC, those names to be submitted to the entire membership of the Party for a general vote. The seven members receiving the highest number of votes shall constitute the NEC, provided each has received a majority of the votes cast.

(c) The newly elected NEC shall assume office replacing the existing NEC immediately following the official tabulation of the general vote.

(d) The term of the new NEC shall terminate with the 41st National Convention, and all future NEC's shall be elected as hereinafter provided.

Comment: These amendments are intended to facilitate a transition from the NEC as presently constituted to that which is being proposed. They are closely patterned after the transitional measures that were adopted in 1980 to expedite the change from the old NEC based on regions to the NEC structure now in existence.

2. Article V, Section 2. (a): It is recommended that this provision be renumbered to become Section 3 (a), and that the present Sections 3-16 be renumbered accordingly. It is also recommended that this provision be amended to read as follows:

Section 3. (a) The NEC shall be elected for a two-year term by

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

the National Convention, each of those elected to be specifically approved by a general vote of the whole Party.

Comment: This amendment, of course, is central to the proposal for restructuring the NEC, as discussed in the “NEC and National Officers” section of this report.

3. Article V, Section 5: It is recommended that this provision be amended to read as follows:

Section 6. If for any reason a vacancy on the NEC should occur six months or more before the National Convention, the NEC shall at once proceed to nominate the best qualified member available to fill the post permanently, and submit the same to a general vote of the whole Party, the vote to close within six weeks from the date of submission for such general vote.

Comment: This amendment would bring the procedure for filling vacancies on the NEC into conformity with the procedure already provided by the Constitution for filling vacancies in the offices of National Secretary, Financial Secretary and Editor of the official organ.

4. Article V, Section 6 (a): It is recommended that this provision be amended to read as follows:

Section 7. (a) The NEC shall meet once in regular session between National Conventions, the exact date to be determined by the NEC. The NEC can meet in special session upon motion made by any NEC member, without the need for a second, or upon recommendation made by the National Secretary, such motion or recommendation to be promptly submitted to the entire NEC for action.

Comment: This amendment is consistent with what was provided by the Constitution while the NEC was organized on a regional basis, and would be equally appropriate for an NEC organized on a national basis.

5. Article V, Section 6 (c): It is recommended that this provision (which would become Section 7 [c]) be amended to read as follows:

(c) The site of the NEC Session, regular or special, shall be determined by the NEC.

Comment: This amendment also would restore a former provision of the Constitution that existed while the NEC was regionally organized.

6. It is recommended that the following be adopted as Section 18 of Article V:

Section 18. The expense of the NEC members while attending sessions shall be covered through a special assessment of \$5.00 to be imposed once every year in conjunction with the Mileage Assessment, the total assessment thus to be levied once a year to be \$10.00.

Comment: This assessment is already provided for by Article X, Section 2(a), and was formerly identified as the National Convention-NEC Mileage Fund. The amendment would restore a provision of the Constitution that became unnecessary when the NEC was reorganized in 1980, but would become necessary again if the proposal for restructuring the NEC is adopted. If the amendment is adopted, the convention may also find it advisable to make minor amendments to Article VII, Section 7, and Article X, Section 2(a), for the sake of consistency in language.

* * * * *

On motion, the report was accepted and referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

WORKS OF DANIEL DE LEON

What can be reported under this heading is that the extraction of Daniel De Leon's writings, speeches, debates, and other works from the microfilmed editions of the *Workmen's Advocate*, *The People*, and the *Daily People* has been completed, and that preparations are now being made to move on to the next stage of reading, identifying, editing and otherwise preparing De Leon's works for publication.

Since our last convention two years ago, I have carefully examined the contents of 3,920 issues of the *Daily People* in bound volumes and extracted enough material from the microfilm to fill 93 binders with 18,600 pages of printed matter. The issues reviewed since the 1989 convention cover the period of July 1903 through

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

suspension of the daily in February 1914. Previously, I had examined and copied from every issue of the *Workmen's Advocate*, *The People* and the *Daily People* printed between May 1888 and June 1903, from which 14,800 pages of material were extracted and assembled chronologically into 74 binders. Accordingly, since this effort to locate and convert De Leon's works into an accessible and workable form began in March 1987, until it was completed last October, I have gone over 5,619 newspapers, made 33,400 photocopies, assembled 167 binders, and prepared tables of contents for each.

Incidentally, most of this was Saturday and evening work spread out over a period of 44 months, and each of the 167 binders took from eight to 10 hours of labor to complete. If someone had been available to do the same thing on a full-time basis, the whole job could have been completed in less than 44 weeks.

Some of the articles and editorials I came across were damaged before they were microfilmed. Many of these can be salvaged from the bound volumes of *The People* and the *Daily People* we have at national headquarters, and where the daily is concerned we also have the *Weekly People* as a back-up. However, several of the earlier volume years of *The People*, 1891-1895, are no longer available to us, and there is a real danger that it will not be possible to reconstruct a number of articles from that period in their entirety. Some others were so badly damaged before microfilming that they cannot be salvaged, even in part, unless another set of bound volumes from the 1891-1895 period can be located, or unless another microfilmed edition shot off other bound volumes exists with some library or historical society. A few bound volumes from the earlier period may still be around, but probably not many, and those that may have survived most likely are brittle with age and would easily crumble or tear when handled. That certainly is the case with the oldest volumes at national headquarters, the oldest dating back to April 1896, and with the one complete set I know of, which is deposited at the public library of a major eastern city. I wrote to that library two or three years ago after I came across a brief item in an old issue of *The People* reporting that the local section had donated a complete set that it planned to have bound in red leather. In response to that inquiry, the library's Curator of Microtexts and Newspapers confirmed that they had every issue of *The People* from April 5, 1891, onward, but that the papers were "in very brittle condition, the issues having been folded into quarters

at some time before being bound, so that the pages break into four parts along the weakened fibers on the folds when handled.”

I also asked if it might be possible to have those old volumes microfilmed, but in light of their condition he replied that it “would be a time-consuming and trying task...”

Incidentally, he also informed me that the library’s “file is not bound in red calf, which raises the intriguing question; might the set mentioned in the article you sent still be in existence somewhere else?” The more likely explanation, however, is that our 19th century comrades came to the conclusion that red calf was too rich for their pocketbooks.

If bound volumes of those early issues still survive, some of the most likely places to look to for assistance are the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Tamiment, and similar institutions. I postponed making inquiries in order to finish what I was doing with the microfilm at hand, and now that I am finished with it an investigation will be made.

One of the earliest decisions I made about how to proceed in making my way through the microfilm was that I would photocopy every editorial, provided it had a title, and every Letter Box and Uncle Sam & Brother Jonathan column without any consideration being given to who may have written them. By approaching the papers in this way I was free to devote my full attention to the news and activities columns to search for articles, speeches, reports and other matter by and about De Leon, in addition to material containing useful information about the SLP, the Central Labor Federation, the ST&LA, the IWW, the SP, etc., and a host of individuals such as Alexander Jonas, Benjamin Gretsches, Henry Kuhn, Hugo Vogt, Eugene Debs, Morris Hillquit, James Connolly, Frank Bohn, William D. Haywood, and Olive M. Johnson, to name just a few (good and bad) at random.

One result of having taking this approach is that much of what was copied and included in the binders was not written by De Leon, but by Lucien Sanial, who was editor-in-chief of *The People* for one year before De Leon succeeded him, and by various editorial assistants that came and went, such as Sanial after he resigned the editorship, Frank Gessner, Justus Ebert, John Hossack, Charles Chase, Solon De Leon, Edmund Seidel, and possibly others. All of this material will have to be identified and set aside, of course, but a positive by-product from having included it is that we now have a complete, chronological index of every editorial pub-

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

lished in *The People*, the *Daily People* and the *Weekly People* between 1891 and February 1914, including cross-references for all the daily editorials used in the weekly between July 1900 and suspension of the daily. This table of contents, which is a more accurate description, contains much more than the titles of all the editorials, of course, and to the best of my knowledge it is the closest thing to a reference catalogue for these three SLP newspapers ever compiled.

The more important result, however, is that we now have ready access to a vast number of De Leon's other writings, such as replies to letters printed in the correspondence column, which was the source for *As to Politics*, major front-page articles written during the nine-year period when he was the only full-time worker on *The People*, his report as SLP delegate to the International Socialist Congress in 1893, important debates, speeches, speech fragments and reports of speeches not printed but given extensive coverage in other newspapers.

There is much more that could be added to this list, as, for example, references to speeches that were stenographically recorded but never printed. These references lead directly into the question of what efforts should be made to locate those stenographic records on the chance they still exist, and if such efforts should be made how extensive should they be? The question is not an easy one to answer, especially when it is understood that at least one major piece of SLP literature is taken from a similar report that never found its way into *The People*, namely *Socialism vs. Anarchism*. How many of these lost speeches were of a similar caliber is something we will never know unless we decide to track them down and succeed in doing so, at which point we could just as easily find that they were not of the same caliber or are largely repetitious of speeches we already have.

Then there is the question of what to do about De Leon's writings and speeches from his earlier political career as a "mugwump," with the United Labor Party and with the Nationalist Movement. What makes this question difficult to answer is that De Leon's transition from "reform to revolution" was not as abrupt as depicted in some of our literature. The socialist influence on Daniel De Leon the Nationalist is clear from his articles and speeches in the *Workmen's Advocate*, and his article "The Voice of James Madison" from the *Nationalist* magazine. However, the Nationalist influence on Daniel De Leon during his pioneering days as socialist

editor is equally apparent to anyone familiar with his early work on *The People*.

Another set of questions can be raised around De Leon's personal letters, official correspondence, and certain documents and statements that were meant only for internal SLP consumption at the time they were written or made.

I mention these questions without any suggestion that they can or should be answered now or any time soon; but as a reminder of who and what we have to deal with. De Leon was a giant figure in the history of the socialist movement; but his work and reputation as a publicist and speaker, and his growth and development as a Marxist, did not begin on the day he decided to join the SLP. There are many lesser lights whose works are better known because they have been collected and published to a much greater extent than De Leon's, and it is galling. De Leon's influence was great and has been lasting. Who knows how much greater that influence might have been, and how it might have affected the development of the socialist movement after his death, had it been based on more than the handful of pamphlets the SLP has published in the past?

All that is speculation, of course, and for now there is enough concrete work to do with what has been uncovered. How much time will be needed before it will be possible to provide the Party with a specific breakdown of what has been copied, and develop a plan for publication, is difficult to say.

Since last October, when I finished with the photocopying, work on this project has been slowed by other demands on my time and attention, but it has not been entirely neglected. One thing I have been able to do since then is to complete a first-line index of Uncle Sam & Brother Jonathan columns. From this I was able to prepare a second index showing when each of these columns was printed for the first time and when and if they were repeated, in part or in their entirety. With this index it is possible to distinguish between original articles and their rewritten, re-edited or simply repeated versions. The net result of that step was to discover that the majority of the Uncle Sam & Brother Jonathan dialogues were published in *The People* and that less than half were written for the *Daily People*. The importance of this lies in the fact that "repeaters," as Henry Kuhn referred to them, can now be readily identified and eliminated so that the overall bulk of De Leon's *Collected Works* can be reduced—a prime consideration for when the time comes to prepare them for publication and to gather up the funds that will

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

be required.

Depending on how much time and attention can be paid to this work, it should be possible to develop a specific plan on how to proceed with publishing De Leon's works by the time the 1993 convention convenes. At any rate, I hope to have made enough progress by or before then to suggest and comment on a number of possibilities

*

It should be noted that the national office now has possession of copies of the tables of contents for all but one of the volumes of De Leon editorials Henry Kuhn worked on during the 1920s. These were sent by a former Party member who spends time at the Wisconsin State Historical Society, where most of the Party's archives are deposited and where I suspected the missing manuscripts might be found.

What these tables of contents tell us is that Kuhn had finished typing 1,030 editorials, including the 150 on industrial unionism previously known to us. These he had organized under six topic headings, with each topic comprising a volume of the "Collected Works" as he envisioned them. A seventh topic was also completed, but the contents are still unknown to us, and some work was done on an eighth. Most of the editorials Kuhn assigned to the volumes he finished are included in the index of 3,650 editorials and articles he had compiled. This serves to confirm that he completed work on less than half the number of topics he planned to divide these editorials into before he died in 1930.

* * * * *

On motion, the report was accepted and referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

At 1 p.m., a motion was passed to recess until 2:30 p.m.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION, APRIL 28, 1991

The session was called to order at 2:35 p.m.

On roll call, all present except K. Heck.

The sergeant at arms reported nine members and two nonmembers present.

Socialist Labor Party of Canada

The National Secretary announced that a report from the SLP of Canada was available for presentation to the convention. On mo-

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

tion, it was ordered that the report be read.

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY
OF CANADA

168 Charlotte St., Rm. 500
Ottawa, Ont. K1N 8K6

April 18, 1991

Robert Bills

Socialist Labor Party

Dear Comrade Bills:

As far as I can determine from the published reports of your National Convention proceedings in recent years, our last official statement on Canadian SLP activities, submitted to your organization in convention, appeared in the Report of Proceedings of your 37th National Convention, July 16-21, 1984.

Since I now expect to attend your 40th National Convention as our fraternal delegate—at your kind invitation, for which we are grateful—Comrade Doug Irving has requested me to submit to you a statement, not comprehensive, on our current Party situation here. So here goes.

Section Vancouver. This area is presently the only location in Canada having enough members to form a section. Consequently, this is where most of our current work is concentrated, of course.

In 1989, Section Vancouver had six members, of whom five were old-age pensioners. Nevertheless, the section was able to continue doing its excellent work for the Party.

On February 5, 1989, Comrade J. Fedoruk—then the section organizer—submitted the following report to our national office.

“Here is a list of activities of Section Vancouver for 1988.

“Leaflet and *People* distribution, 24,450 copies...door to door in residential areas.

“*Peoples* sold in stores, 241 copies.

“Letters to the press by J. Minal, 100. Some of these are known to have been printed. Just how many, we do not know, since Comrade Minal writes to newspapers across Canada.

“Number of new contacts, 17. One has expressed his desire to join the SLP.”

Incidentally, Comrade Minal, in a letter dated April 14, 1989, mentioned that a Mr. Morris Carrell, a former schoolteacher, had been accepted as a member of Section Vancouver at a recent meet-

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

ing. Minal added that Comrade Carrell had previously bought about \$50 worth of SLP pamphlets, and is greatly impressed by De Leon's works.

In the same letter, Minal advised us that a sympathizer from Ayer's Cliff, Quebec—after having read one of his letters published in the *Sherbrooke Record*, some months earlier, had sent him a cheque for \$100 "to help pay postage for letter-writing to the press." Furthermore, shortly before April 14, this sympathizer mailed Comrade Minal *another* \$100 cheque, after reading copies of three other letters he had sent to the press, earlier.

General. The overall membership of the Party stands presently at 16. Virtually all of these members continue to support the SLP financially with donations, and some participate in outside activities such as literature distribution, as far as their health permits.

It should be noted here that many of our comrades, such as E. Rasmussen, E.A. Irving and V. Patterson, suffer or have suffered from health problems, which limit their activities to some degree, of course.

Presumably most, or all of your members will be aware of the death of our late Comrade Rowbottom, in Newmarket, in December, 1988, at the age of 90. This veteran SLP worker was indeed a great asset to the Party. He is sorely missed by all our members and by those sympathizers who knew him.

Mention should be made here of the financial contributions made to us every year by sympathizers across Canada—many of them former members, or relatives of same. These supporters, who thus help to keep the SLP going, live in Nanaimo, B.C.; St. Paul, Alta.; Kamsack, Sask.; and Ontario towns such as Jarvis, Lindsay and Rexdale, and other localities.

National Headquarters. The SLP of Canada is currently in good financial shape, as Comrade Irving has substantiated in his last financial statement to the membership, for 1990.

Before closing, the National Secretary, personally and on behalf of the National Executive Committee, desires to thank you and the staff of your national office and that of *The People*, for your regular mailings of that journal and other SLP literature. Especially *The Middle East Crisis: What Price Cheap Oil?* and *War in the Gulf*, etc.

Finally, we send most cordial greetings to our American comrades on the occasion of your 40th National Convention, Santa Clara.

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

With kindest regards,

Fraternally yours,
[signed] G.E. CAMERON
for the National Secretary

On motion, the report of the SLP of Canada was accepted.
R. Whitney presented the following:

Report of the Editor

To the 40th National Convention
of the Socialist Labor Party

Dear Comrades:

It gives me great pleasure to present this report as Editor of *The People*, the first such report since the Party's 28th National Convention. I regard it as a high privilege indeed to occupy this office, particularly during the year in which we have reached the century mark in uninterrupted publication.

As was the case with Editors past, I will not be rendering a report on the contents of the paper as such. Everyone of you receives a "report" on that score every two weeks.

Instead, I intend to focus this report on realistic steps that the membership can and must take to make *The People* the best propaganda weapon it can be, and to get the best and most productive use out of its editorial staff.

The present, biweekly eight-page version of *The People* is about the maximum that the present staff can produce for the Party under present conditions. And we are operating on very thin ice indeed. Only sporadically—when we receive a "hot streak" of material from the field and gain a little breathing space—can we produce a more in-depth feature, tackle a more difficult subject, or squeeze in a little time for planning, becoming better organized, catching up on badly neglected correspondence, etc. For the most part, even *with* considerable assistance from the national office (assistance on a regular basis, beyond what we would normally have a right to expect; assistance that contributes to the overburdening of that department), and even *with* more historical and other "filler" than we ought to have, we are struggling just to keep our heads above water.

Before proceeding, I would like to dispel any possible illusions members may have about our circumstances. Yes, we did gain an

additional member to the editorial staff recently when Comrade Edna Barnes came to work at Party headquarters. However, for one thing, it takes some time to learn all that is involved in writing acceptable copy for *The People* on a regular basis, particularly for a member who has had little prior experience submitting articles from the field. We are only now just getting to the point where we can begin to fairly evaluate her abilities as a member of the editorial staff, and it would be premature to draw any conclusions here.

Secondly, even if Comrade Barnes had been an experienced writer at the outset of her employment here, it would be unfair to all concerned to view her addition to the staff as the solution to our problems—considering that we were hard pressed even during the period when Paul Lawrence was on the staff and reasonably productive. (To further put the matter in perspective, consider that, in 1979, when the decision to turn to biweekly publication was made, the editorial staff consisted of *five* members.)

Another possible illusion may lie in the perception that, since the present editorial staff was able to put out some extra-large special issues in the last year—the 12-page issue for May Day, 1990, the 16-page 90th anniversary salute to the *Daily People* (June 30, 1990), the 20-page Special SLP Centennial Issue (Sept. 22, 1990) and the 20-page Centennial Issue of *The People* (April 6, 1991)—we therefore should have no trouble putting out the eight-page paper on a regular basis.

On this score, the word “illusion” is highly appropriate. The fact is, the editorial staff did not put out any of these special issues on its own. In the case of the May Day and *Daily People* specials, Comrade Robert Bills wrote and/or selected and prepared all the material for the supplements. In the case of the two centennial issues, we had considerable outside help, with a number of articles from the field (and from Comrade Bills) in the SLP Centennial Issue, and with a number of articles from our own past, most of which required national office assistance to prepare, in *The People's* Centennial Issue.

Even at that, the editorial staff pushed itself to the limit to prepare the two centennial issues, setting all else aside and putting in an extraordinary number of hours that we could not reasonably be expected to sustain over an extended period. This is not a complaint; it is simply to make clear that the combination of factors that permitted us to put out these special issues has no real bearing on our continuing difficulty in producing the usual eight-page

editions. And for all that, there was much more that we had initially planned or hoped to include in these issues than actually appeared.

The fact that we are operating very near the limits of our abilities just to fill the eight pages every two weeks adversely affects the Party in a number of ways. Our margin for error, or for coping with unforeseeable sudden problems, is dangerously slim—and as you will recall, we did, in fact, miss two mailing deadlines in December 1989 and January 1990.

A serious illness or injury in our present circumstances could prove disastrous. Arranging for holidays and vacations is a vexing problem that further narrows our margin of safety during the period concerned.

The paper and the Party suffer long-term consequences as well. There are any number of subjects requiring in-depth treatment that we have had to repeatedly bypass because of our circumstances—for example, the effects of debt on capitalist crises, the latest, deepening global trade conflicts, the “national health care issue,” the changes and conflicts sweeping across Eastern Europe, etc.

When so much of our labor time must be constantly focused on the immediate, here-and-now demands of filling up the eight pages, many of the articles that we produce are researched, written and edited under such pressure that we cannot do real justice to the subject. Time for study, discussion and critical review, so essential if we are to improve over the long haul, is reduced to occasional minutes snatched here and there on a piecemeal basis. Time for getting our files, our library, and our subscriptions organized, and for monitoring and indexing source materials—all of which is essential to our long-term productivity—is likewise reduced to a catch-as-catch-can basis.

We are as acutely aware as anyone of the Party’s dire need for new leaflets and basic educational pamphlets, especially a pamphlet on the socialist industrial union program. But that extra block of time needed to draft a quality manuscript appropriate for an SLP leaflet, or to work on planning a series on socialist industrial unionism that could provide the basis for a pamphlet, continues to elude us.

As many Party members are no doubt aware, I also have little time to devote to correspondence. Ironically, even correspondence pertaining to manuscripts and materials for *The People*, that could

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

prove helpful to us in the long run, often has to be set aside for the sake of the short run. And as correspondence is set aside for the sake of the short run *repeatedly*, it naturally piles up, to the point where I now believe I truly understand the concept of infinity. This is another source of frustration, both for myself and for those who have taken the time to write in.

The solution to these and other problems afflicting the editorial department is no mystery: We need help. Specifically, we need help in the form of a Party member or two, capable of writing acceptable copy for *The People*, stepping forward to make themselves available for work in the editorial department. And we need help in the form of a *sustained, regular* flow of articles from the field—not only to help us get by, but also to help *develop* writing talent and assess future prospects for the staff.

As the National Secretary has mentioned in the section of his report pertaining to the national headquarters, we did receive what was in many respects an encouraging response to his general appeal for help, sent to the membership on Feb. 26, 1990, and to the 53 individual appeals that were sent out in March. However, although the response did give us a boost, we did not receive the kind of *consistent* response that we were hoping for.

In the individual appeals that Comrade Bills made, he sought a specific commitment of one article a month from each prospective contributor. Quite a few begged off for one reason or another, but 11 members did make explicit commitments to write one article a month, and a number of others responded positively, though without explicitly committing themselves.

All told, we received a very heartening flurry of articles in the first two months following the appeals, and in many cases we were encouraged by the quality as well as the quantity of material.

But then the response began to tail off. Some of those who made commitments never came through; some came through once or twice and then mysteriously quit, even though they had articles published; some responded periodically but at intervals much longer than a month; only one member has come fairly close to meeting the steady commitment. Here and there, members who weren't approached and even a nonmember or two have submitted articles, but these have not been sufficient to stem the overall trend, as the chart below illustrates.

The chart shows the number of field contributors, the number of articles they submitted, and the number published—beginning in

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

January 1990, in order to indicate the impact that the National Secretary's appeals had. These figures do not include a number of articles submitted by Comrade Bills himself and a number of short promotional items for the Party Centennial submitted by Comrade Nathan Karp.

<u>Month</u>	<u>Number of Field Contributors</u>	<u>Number of Articles Submitted</u>	<u>Number of Articles Published</u>
1/90	3	3	3
2/90	2	2	1
3/90	11	17	14
4/90	10	14	13
5/90	6	7	6
6/90	5	5	3
7/90	7	8	
8/90	9	11	10
9/90	6	8	6
10/90	3	5	4
11/90	4	7	4
12/90	5	8	6
1/91	3	3	2
2/91	2	6	3
3/91	6	9	5
Totals	40 ¹	113	86

These figures tell us a number of things. Obviously, a number of members did rise to the occasion and responded to Comrade Bills' appeals. Yet it is also obvious that many of them didn't sustain the effort, despite the fact that field contributions overall had a rather impressive "batting average" in terms of being published (.761, or 76 percent).

In fact, there were 13 members who submitted articles during

¹ Accounting for duplication.

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

the initial “rush” of articles in March and April of 1990 who haven’t submitted a single article since then—even though eight of those members did have their articles published.

On the other hand, despite the significant “tailing off” effect in evidence here, the overall record on field contributions has shown significant improvement over that of recent years past. The membership in the field has *demonstrated* that it *can* make a major contribution toward the stabilization and improvement of the editorial operation. But what we need to work on, if that potential is to be realized, is *consistency of effort*.

What we are asking for is not unrealistic. There were 27 members in the field who had at least one of their articles published in the period surveyed above. If just 10 of these members were to *consistently* send us *one* article a month, supplemented by occasional contributions from the other 17, and from others, the editorial department would have a little breathing space, and would be able to turn its attention to improving the paper, cultivating and improving contributors’ writing skills as well as its own, working on leaflets and an SIU pamphlet, and doing all the other things that it *should* be doing.

As Comrade Bills has emphasized in his appeals for contributions and related correspondence, we are not looking to the field for lengthy or complex articles on subjects that are national or international in scope. It’s the editorial department’s job to handle the “big news.” For the most part, we are asking field contributors to send in one-to-two-page (double-spaced) articles on local or regional events, showing the connection of the event to the class struggle (be it on the political, economic or industrial fields), and conveying a single and simple socialist lesson.

Is there a strike going on in your town? Was “organized scabbery” involved? Then write an article on how the strike illustrates that procapitalist unionism divides the workers. Did the labor faker deceive or cajole the workers into a crummy settlement? Then write an article on how the strike’s outcome illustrates the treacherous role of capitalism’s labor lieutenants. Did the company use the threat of closing down the plant to extort concessions from workers? Then write an article on how the power of the capitalists to use their capital as they see fit undercuts the strike weapon.

Was a toxic waste dump recently found to be poisoning the water in your town? Did the company responsible close up shop and move to Costa Rica? Then write an article about how the profit motive

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

and competition prompts capitalist firms to regard the planet as their sewer, with no concern for the social and environmental consequences. Did the Environmental Protection Agency help cover it up, or did it fine the firm \$200? Then write an article using this example to show how reforms and regulatory agencies of the political state are incapable of coping with the environmental menace. Did the company gain permission to continue polluting the environment by threatening to eliminate workers' jobs? Then write an article pointing out that it is the capitalist system that permits and encourages such economic blackmail.

The daily papers of the capitalist press are filled with such class-struggle news, though, of course, the class aspect is camouflaged. By thinking carefully about the stakes involved for each class, a "news item" for *them* can be transformed into a brief but effective socialist article for *us*, often with just one or two news clippings for sources.

If we had just 10 of such one-or-two-page items from the field every month, or about five per issue, it would make a significant difference for the staff; it would lend color and variety to the paper; and it would, hopefully, lead to the development of writers who could and would eventually join the staff.

It all boils down to what the membership is collectively willing to do for its principal voice. If those members who *know* that they are capable of writing copy for the paper will vow to keep a commitment of one article a month; if those members who have written only one or two articles will but try again; if those members capable of explaining socialist principles and lessons to others, but who haven't yet attempted to do so on paper, will but *try* to do so, *The People* will improve and the Party, sooner or later, will gain from it.

Fraternally submitted,
[signed] RICHARD WHITNEY
Editor, *The People*

K. Heck arrived at 2:50 p.m.

On motion, the report was accepted and referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

The National Secretary presented:

Matter Referred By NEC

In compliance with Article V, Section 12 (a), of the Party's Con-

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

stitution, the NEC reports the suspension of Comrade Joseph Hollon Sr., a national member-at-large, for a 30-day period. The suspension was imposed by the NEC acting at its meeting of July 11, 1990, and was decided unanimously by roll call vote. The immediate reason for this action was Comrade Hollon's disregard for an explicit instruction by the NEC that he discontinue misrepresenting himself as an official of the SLP. His failure to comply with that instruction was grounds for expulsion under Section 14 of Article V. However, Comrade Hollon's having acknowledged that there was "no excuse" for his conduct in this regard, the NEC opted to suspend him for the minimum period. The NEC lifted the suspension at its regular monthly meeting held August 8, 1990, and is satisfied that there is no cause for any further disciplinary action. All correspondence and other documentation needed for the convention to review the matter, if it so chooses, are available.

* * * * *

On motion, the convention concurred in the NEC's action with abstention by one delegate, B. Graymont.

Introduction of Resolutions

On motion, Resolution #1-A from Section Sacramento, Calif., submitted through the national office, was referred to an appropriate committee when elected. [See Appendix.]

On motion, Resolution 1-B from Section Akron, Ohio, submitted through the national office, was referred to an appropriate committee when elected. [See Appendix.]

A motion was made and seconded that Resolution 1-C from Section St. Petersburg, Fla., be referred to an appropriate committee when elected. The chair, uncertain of the voice vote, called for division by a show of hands. The motion passed by a vote of 12 in favor, 8 against. [See Appendix.]

A motion that Resolution 1-D from Section St. Petersburg, Fla., be read was not concurred in. On motion, the resolution was referred to an appropriate committee when elected. [See Appendix.]

On motion, Resolution 1-E from Section St. Petersburg, Fla., was referred to an appropriate committee when elected. [See Appendix.]

On motion, Resolution 1-F from Section St. Petersburg, Fla., was referred to an appropriate committee when elected. [See Appendix.]

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

Discussion of Sections of National Secretary's Report

Discussion of the section on "State of Organization" began at 3:21 p.m. A motion was passed that each section delegate, in sequence, be called upon for comment on this section of the National Secretary's report. Discussion ended at 4:55 p.m.

Discussion of the section on "National Headquarters" began at 4:56 p.m. and ended at 5:05 p.m.

Discussion of the section on "Party Finances" began at 5:06 p.m. and ended at 5:15 p.m.

Discussion of the section on "NEC and National Officers" began at 5:16 p.m. and closed at 5:45 p.m.

Discussion of the section on "Party Press and Literature" began at 5:46 p.m. and closed at 5:50 p.m.

Discussion of the section on "General Activities" began at 5:51 p.m. and closed at 5:58 p.m.

There was no discussion of the section on "Special Items."

There was no discussion of the section on "Constitutional Amendments."

Discussion of the section on "Works of Daniel De Leon" began at 6 p.m. Discussion ended at 6:20 p.m.

N. Karp indicated he may be late to Monday morning's session and requested to be excused, if necessary. N. Karp's request was granted.

At 6:21 p.m., a motion to adjourn until 9:30 a.m., Monday, April 29, was passed.

MONDAY MORNING SESSION, APRIL 29, 1991

The session was called to order at 9:34 a.m.

The chair called attention to the fact that Monday's agenda does not provide for elections of chairperson and vice chairperson for the day.

On motion, that agenda was amended to include election of chairperson for the day.

On motion, that agenda was further amended to include election of vice chairperson for the day.

K. Boettcher was elected chairperson for the day.

C. Furdeck was elected vice chairperson for the day.

On roll call, all present.

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

J. Morris was appointed sergeant at arms.

On motion, the minutes of Sunday's sessions were approved as read.

New Business

A motion was passed to open discussion on the Report of the Editor. Discussion began at 9:48 a.m. and closed at 10:04 a.m.

Determination of Committees

At 10:05 a.m. a half-hour recess was declared for the purpose of allowing the delegates to consider the matter. Reconvened at 10:35 a.m.

A motion was passed to elect the following five committees: Finances and Headquarters, Constitution and Bylaws, Party Press and Literature, NEC and National Officers, Agitation and Organization.

A motion was passed that the first two committees consist of five members each and the last three of three members each.

Referral of Matters to Committees

On motion, the National Secretary's report on State of Organization was referred to the Committee on Agitation and Organization.

On motion, the National Secretary's report on National Headquarters was referred to the Committee on Finances and Headquarters.

On motion, the National Secretary's report on Party Finances was referred to the Committee on Finances and Headquarters.

On motion, the National Secretary's report on NEC and National Officers was referred to the Committee on NEC and National Officers.

On motion, the National Secretary's report on Party Press and Literature was referred to the Committee on Party Press and Literature.

On motion, the National Secretary's report on General Activities was referred to the Committee on Agitation and Organization.

On motion, the National Secretary's report on Special Items was referred to the Committee on Party Press and Literature.

On motion, the National Secretary's report on Constitutional Amendments was referred to the Committee on Constitution and Bylaws.

On motion, the National Secretary's report on Works of Daniel

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

De Leon was referred to the Committee on Party Press and Literature.

On motion, the Report of the Editor was referred to the Committee on Party Press and Literature.

On motion, Resolution 1-A from Section Sacramento was referred to the Committee on Constitution and Bylaws.

On motion, Resolution 1-B from Section Akron was referred to the Committee on Party Press and Literature.

On motion, Resolution 1-C from Section St. Petersburg was referred to the Committee on Finances and Headquarters.

On motion, Resolution 1-D from Section St. Petersburg was referred to the Committee on Constitution and Bylaws.

On motion, Resolution 1-E from Section St. Petersburg was referred to the Committee on Constitution and Bylaws.

On motion, Resolution 1-F from Section St. Petersburg was referred to the Committee on NEC and National Officers.

Election of Committees

The chair called for the nominations and election of committees with the following results:

Committee on Finances and Headquarters (5): N. Karp, C. Furdeck, J. Seekford, A. Bradshaw, and C. Camacho were nominated. A motion was passed that these five members constitute the committee.

Committee on Constitution and Bylaws (5): J. O'Neill, G. Taylor, B. Graymont, K. Kapitz, and G. Milonas were nominated. On motion, these five members were elected to constitute the committee.

Committee on Party Press and Literature (3): R. Gustafson, B. Bortnick and S. Fink were nominated. On motion, these three members were elected to constitute the committee.

Committee on NEC and National Officers (3): K. Heck, D. Deneff and A. Kleist were nominated. A motion was passed that these three members constitute the committee.

Committee on Agitation and Organization (3): A. Sim, K. Boettcher and C. Turner were nominated. A motion was passed that these three members constitute the committee.

The sergeant at arms reported five members and two nonmembers present.

At 11:10 a.m. a motion to recess until 7 p.m. was adopted.

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

MONDAY EVENING SESSION, APRIL 29, 1991

The convention reconvened at 7:08 p.m.

On roll call, all members present.

The sergeant at arms reported six members present.

Reports of Committees

Committee on Finances and Headquarters: No report.

Committee on Constitution and Bylaws

J. O'Neill presented the following reports:

Re Resolution 1-A from Section Sacramento:

The committee recommends nonconcurrency in this resolution for the following reasons: The resolution calls for the elimination of Article IV, Section 1, of the Party's Constitution without putting anything in its place. The elimination of the first sentence of that section, which reads, "The Section shall be the unit of organization," is particularly inadvisable. Furthermore, the committee feels that the NEC, under the present provisions of the Constitution, may expand the jurisdiction of a section as it feels will be in the best interest of the Party and the agitational activities of any particular section.

Fraternally submitted,

[signed] JOHN O'NEILL

GEORGE S. TAYLOR, KATHERINE KAPITZ,

GEORGE MILONAS, BARBARA GRAYMONT

Committee on Constitution and Bylaws

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report. On motion, the report was referred back to committee.

Re Resolution 1-E from Section St. Petersburg:

Your committee recommends nonconcurrency with Part I of this resolution because the members feel that there is already adequate protection for disciplined members in Article II, Section A, of *Organizational Norms and Procedures*. This section does permit a member under suspension, if he or she has abided by the terms of the suspension, to make an appeal of this suspension to the next

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

National Convention if he or she so wishes.

If the convention rejects Part I of this resolution, most of the reasoning submitted by Section St. Petersburg for Part II of the resolution becomes inapplicable. Your committee, however, feels that Part II of the proposed resolution has merit in that it further clarifies proper organizational procedures as set forth in the said Article II and describes proper attitude and action for Party members in reaction to an NEC disciplinary action. We, therefore, recommend adoption of this resolution:

“It is not proper for Party members to write and ask for details or copies of correspondence from the national office and/or the NEC following the expulsion [or suspension] of a member or section. Such material will only be made available at the next National Convention, should the convention decide to review it or hear from the expelled [or suspended] member(s) in question.”

Fraternally submitted,

[signed] JOHN O'NEILL

GEORGE S. TAYLOR ,KATHERINE KAPITZ,
GEORGE MILONAS, BARBARA GRAYMONT
Committee on Constitution and Bylaws

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report. The chair being uncertain of the voice vote, called for a show of hands. The motion to adopt the report lost by a vote of 3 in favor, 16 opposed. On motion, the report was referred back to committee.

Committee on Party Press and Literature

R. Gustafson presented the following reports:

Re Special Items

Your committee recommends concurrence with this report, which begins by recognizing the necessity to produce new leaflets on “racism” and the “environmental issue” and also pamphlets on De Leon and the “SIU.” On the matter of creating new pamphlets the committee would recommend priority be given to an “SIU” pamphlet, as defining the very essence of our Party program.

Above all, it is apparent that what is badly needed is extra help to the national office and editorial staffs and a decreased load to enable them to be more effective.

Another part of the report deals with the SLP and *The People's* Centennial exhibits. This committee, like all those who were able

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

to attend the exhibit, was impressed with the very tough job extremely well done. No one who has seen these exhibits will forget them. The comrades who worked on these projects brought SLP history vividly before us.

Fraternally submitted,
[signed] RUDOLPH GUSTAFSON
BERNARD BORTNICK, SID FINK
Committee on Party Press and Literature

On motion, the report was adopted.

Re Resolution 1-B from Section Akron

The committee agrees with the desirability of an updated pamphlet dealing with the kind of questions and answers found in the “Question Period” column of *The People*. Workers becoming interested in the SLP will have such questions on their mind. The committee also knows that many other important leaflets that need to be published remain on the “back-burner” but still considers this type of pamphlet very necessary. Your committee recommends concurrence with the resolution.

Fraternally submitted,
[signed] RUDOLPH GUSTAFSON
BERNARD BORTNICK, SID FINK
Committee on Party Press and Literature

A motion to adopt the report was lost.

Re Works of Daniel De Leon

Your committee has reviewed the report of the National Secretary on his ongoing efforts to assemble a comprehensive file on the works of Daniel De Leon and the eventual publication of such work.

First, we highly commend the work and effort that has gone into the project, particularly since it has been accomplished outside of normal working hours with considerable sacrifice of the National Secretary’s personal and family time.

Second, we recognize the urgency of this long-neglected project that was started in the twenties by Henry Kuhn and subsequently shelved. It is long overdue.

Many world events have unfolded largely without the additional perspective and insight that would have been derived from De

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

Leon's commentary and writings had they been retrieved and made accessible to our movement earlier. The socialist analysis of specific issues such as imperialism, concentration of capital, war, unemployment, unionism, racism, etc., could well have been enhanced or given a new light by the commentary and thought of De Leon had this body of work, which is now being made available, been present.

This work is far past due, particularly for our Party now bearing its 100th year.

As for the questions the National Secretary raises in his report, these must be left to editorial and research judgment.

Fraternally submitted,

[signed] RUDOLPH GUSTAFSON

BERNARD BORTNICK, SID FINK

Committee on Party Press and Literature

On motion, the report was adopted.

The Committee on NEC and National Officers reported progress.

The Committee on Agitation and Organization reported progress.

At 7:57 p.m., a motion to adjourn until 12 noon on Tuesday, April 30, was adopted.

TUESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION, APRIL 30, 1991

The session was called to order at 12:07 p.m.

K. Boettcher was elected chairperson for the day.

G. Taylor was elected vice chairperson for the day.

On roll call, all present.

H. Coretz was appointed sergeant at arms for the day, and subsequently reported two members present.

On motion, the minutes of Monday's sessions were approved as read.

J. Seekford requested permission to leave the convention at 2 p.m. to attend to personal business. On motion, the request was granted.

J. O'Neill also requested permission to leave the convention at 2 p.m. On motion, the request was granted.

Reports of Committees

Committee on Finances and Headquarters

C. Camacho presented the following reports:

Re Resolution 1-C from Sect. St. Petersburg

This resolution proposes that the salaries (wages) of the National Secretary, Editor and “all the national office [presumably national headquarters] staff” be printed in the Party’s annual financial report. Why the wage of the Financial Secretary is not mentioned, we do not know. The resolution contends that the present method of reporting the amounts that go toward wages in the various departments is “secretive” and implies that it is undemocratic and does an injustice to the membership’s “right to know.”

We resist the temptation to make a detailed response to the above contentions. But we state unequivocally that we find them baseless and wholly unwarranted.

The national office practice with regard to the wages of Party employees is not the result of the Party’s having become “secretive” “sometime back in the remote past.” Rather, the Party’s practice in this respect is the product of sound administrative principles and is a perfectly logical, reasonable policy that serves the Party’s best interests. It enables the National Secretary, the Party’s executive officer and administrator, to deal with Party employees in a manner that meets each Party employee’s needs as closely as possible within Party budget limits and yet maintain a harmonious working environment and employee relationship at national headquarters.

But that does not mean that the Party’s members are left without important financial information and dependent upon “word-of-mouth gossip” (to use a phrase from the resolution) about the wages paid at national headquarters. The annual financial reports clearly state the amount of wages paid in each department and members are periodically informed of the number of employees in those departments, and it takes no particular mathematical genius to ascertain that the employees at national headquarters are receiving what we may designate working-class wages.

Incidentally, to our knowledge no Party renders financial reports to its members that are as detailed, easy to read and understand as our Party does. In short, the members’ right to be kept informed of the Party’s financial operations and condition is, and always has been, a high priority in the SLP.

Accordingly, we recommend nonconcurrency in Resolution 1-C.

Fraternally submitted,
[signed] NATHAN KARP

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

JENNIE SEEKFORD, CHRIS CAMACHO
CONNIE FURDECK, ALAN BRADSHAW
Committee on Finances and Headquarters

On motion, the report was adopted.

Re Section of National Secretary's Report on Headquarters

This committee has carefully studied and discussed that portion of the National Secretary's report dealing with conditions at national headquarters.

That report is powerful testimony to the heroic task a small staff of seven members has accomplished for a number of years—particularly the last two—in the face of formidable and seemingly overwhelming obstacles. Members should be gratified that there has been no interruption in the publication of *The People* and in the transaction of the maximum Party business possible, something many of us may have taken for granted. In addition, the magnificent Party Centennial and *The People* Centennial Celebrations went beyond what anyone should have expected considering the circumstances under which our staff labored.

On the other hand, it must be emphasized that as great as their efforts have been, many things had to be neglected to the detriment of building our organization because there hasn't been sufficient personnel to do many of the tasks.

We thoroughly concur with the National Secretary's report of the facts and his conclusion that if something positive isn't done to remedy the situation the results will be disastrous.

The National Secretary's report forces us to soberly recognize that the very existence of our Party could be threatened by the loss of just one staff member.

We realize that our committee cannot produce any new recommendations which have not already been considered by previous conventions.

However, we wish to emphasize the following:

If, as we believe, the fate of our class is inseparably tied to the fate of the Socialist Labor Party and its ability to effectively communicate its principles and program to the mass of the working class, it cannot be overemphasized that any member, who feels s/he may have some capability to help alleviate the situation at national headquarters, ought to objectively assess their personal situation

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

as to the possibility of considering employment there. The need is for at least three or four members to fill positions covering a wide variety of tasks and responsibilities, the details of which are spelled out clearly in the first letter that appears in the National Secretary's report titled "National Headquarters," subsection "Personnel Changes." In addition, we recommend because of the time lag between the conventions and the publication of its proceedings, that every delegate present go back to his/her section and use every means possible to urge the membership to make consideration of this matter top priority.

From the National Secretary's section of the same report dealing with the "Headquarters Lease," it is abundantly clear that we shall face substantial added expense if we have to move the headquarters to new premises or pay higher rent on our present premises if the landlord should decide to renew our lease on the present premises.

In this connection, we recommend that this convention establish a one-year special "moving fund" beginning June 1st to meet the anticipated expense of a possible move to a more costly headquarters premises or a higher rent on our present headquarters premises if the landlord decides to continue to rent us the space we presently occupy. To augment this fund-raising effort we propose that the NEC print up stamps and booklets and urge members to make monthly pledges much the same as is done for the SLP Sustainer Fund. We also recommend the publication of special moving fund lists that may be circulated among sympathizers and other Party contacts. Finally, we recommend that the subdivisions be urged to conduct picnics, socials and other local fund-raising efforts to raise monies for this fund.

Fraternally submitted,

[signed] NATHAN KARP

JENNIE SEEKFORD, CHRIS CAMACHO
CONNIE FURDECK, ALAN BRADSHAW
Committee on Finances and Headquarters

On motion, the report was adopted.

Re Section of the National Secretary's Report on Party Finances

Your Committee on Finances and Headquarters has carefully reviewed the section of the National Secretary's report on "Party

Finances.” We understand the National Secretary’s explanation with regard to the delays in preparing and sending out the annual financial report, and we agree that the primary cause of those delays must be attributed to the failure of our 1989 National Convention to fill the office of Financial Secretary in accordance with Article VII, Section 1 (a), of the Party’s Constitution. Furthermore, it is to the credit of the National Secretary and his limited staff that those reports are finally prepared and provided to the membership.

With regard to the office of Financial Secretary, we deeply regret that we have not been able to come up with a solution to the problem of filling that important office. In our efforts to find some solution, we reviewed and discussed every possibility we could think of. We explored the matter further with the National Secretary, which further clarified the serious problems the vacancy in the office of Financial Secretary creates; but that brought us no closer to finding an answer to the problem. As members of the committee we probed each other in hopes of eliciting information about the potential of members in our respective areas who might be approached about the possibility of coming up with someone who might hold out hope for solving or at least alleviating the problem. Despite all that, we found no promising angle that we could explore or that we could recommend the national office explore following this convention.

We are, regrettably, reduced to the somewhat lame recommendation that the delegates to this convention, particularly those representing sections, emphasize to their section members the seriousness of the problems created by the lack of a Financial Secretary and urge any member who believes he or she has the potential for filling that office to contact the National Secretary.

With regard to the Party’s general financial condition, we urge every delegate at every opportunity to call attention to the fact that the figures in the annual financial report do not justify any illusion that the Party’s financial condition is no cause for concern. Whatever detailed statement the national office may find time to prepare and send with the financial report for the year ended December 31, 1990, delegates upon their return home should use every opportunity to remind members that the Party’s financial condition could quickly become critical, if members of the Party continue to ignore the important role that bequests have played in keeping the Party from financial disaster.

Finally, we believe with the National Secretary and the NEC

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

that the response of Comrade Stephen Emery to the Party's appeal for bequests following the 1989 convention, may very well stimulate a similar response from members who have been reluctant to go the bequest route. We know it will put still another burden on the National Secretary, but we urge that an appeal to the membership using the Emery letter as an important part of that appeal be made as soon as possible. And again, the delegates to this convention can constructively add to the effectiveness of the national office appeal by speaking up on the subject.

Fraternally submitted,

[signed] NATHAN KARP

JENNIE SEEKFORD, CHRIS CAMACHO

CONNIE FURDECK, ALAN BRADSHAW

Committee on Finances and Headquarters

On motion, the report was adopted.

Committee on Constitution and Bylaws

G.S. Taylor presented the following reports:

Re Resolution 1-A from Section Sacramento

The committee recommends rejection of this resolution for the following reasons: (a) The committee feels that the NEC, under the present terms of the Constitution, may expand the jurisdiction of a section whenever doing so would appear to be in the best interest of the Party and the agitational activities of any particular section. (b) The resolution as submitted has contradictory proposals. The first paragraph calls for the elimination of only the second sentence of Article IV, Section 1, of the Party's Constitution, while the final paragraph calls for the elimination of Article IV, Section 1 "in its entirety."

Fraternally submitted,

[signed] JOHN O'NEILL

GEORGE S. TAYLOR, KATHERINE KAPITZ,

GEORGE MILONAS, BARBARA GRAYMONT

Committee on Constitution and Bylaws

On motion, the report was adopted.

Re Resolution 1-D from Section St. Petersburg

Your committee does not find any convincing reason to believe

that adoption of this resolution would benefit the Party. Moreover, your committee finds fault with implications in the resolution that the Party does not now have *open* discussion on policy matters and that “limiting discussion to the newsletter is . . . undemocratic in that it favors those more capable. . . .”

The resolution refers to present rules governing policy matters as “restrictions” and that they “cannot be in our best interests.” We consider it improper to refer to these democratically adopted rules as “restrictions.”

The present provisions in *Organizational Norms and Procedures* were adopted also to serve as a guide on how to proceed in presenting policy proposals. They adequately serve this purpose.

We believe that the Party’s experience amply demonstrates that adoption of this resolution is likely to lead to much confusion and the possibility of promoting disruption in our ranks.

We therefore recommend rejection of this resolution.

Fraternally submitted,

[signed] JOHN O’NEILL

GEORGE S. TAYLOR, KATHERINE KAPITZ,

GEORGE MILONAS, BARBARA GRAYMONT

Committee on Constitution and Bylaws

On motion, the report was adopted.

Re Resolution 1-E from Section St. Petersburg

Your committee recommends rejection of Part I of this resolution because the committee believes that there is adequate protection for disciplined members in Article II, Section A, of *Organizational Norms and Procedures*. This section *does* permit a member suspended by the NEC to appeal this suspension to the next National Convention if he/she wishes, as long as the suspended member has abided by the terms of the suspension. In accordance with the provisions of this same section, a member under suspension by the NEC can be expelled by the NEC *only* when he/she has refused to accept the NEC’s disciplinary procedure ~~and has not been content to wait until the appeal is heard by the next National Convention.*~~

The committee also recommends rejection of Part II of Resolution 1-E which states that it is not appropriate for individual members to ask the national office for data on NEC disciplinary actions. Such a provision would only clutter the *Organizational Norms and Procedures* with unnecessary details. It is plain from the Party’s

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

Constitution that all disciplinary actions are held in executive session and that this procedure protects the privacy of the individuals in question. The proper procedure for conducting disciplinary matters and for the organizational response of members is dealt with in detail in the Constitution: Article V, Section 8 (c), and Sections 9-14, as well as in Article XI.

The second sentence of this proposed Resolution 1-E, noting that materials on expulsion will be made available to the next National Convention in case an expelled person should wish to appeal the expulsion, is also inappropriate. ~~Under the present Constitution, an expelled person has a right of appeal to the NEC but not to the convention; however, after a period of appropriate behavior, an expelled individual may apply for readmission to the Party. (See Article XI, Section 16)~~

Fraternally submitted,
[signed] JOHN O'NEILL
GEORGE S. TAYLOR, KATHERINE KAPITZ,
GEORGE MILONAS, BARBARA GRAYMONT
Committee on Constitution and Bylaws

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report. On motion, the matter was laid on the table.*

The committee indicated it had a report on the National Secretary's report on Constitutional Amendments. A motion was made and seconded that the committee's report be deferred until after the report of the Committee on NEC and National Officers. A substitute motion to suspend the rules and hear the report of the Committee on NEC and National Officers first was adopted.

Committee on NEC and National Officers

K. Heck presented the following reports:

Re NEC Structure

Upon review and consideration of the National Secretary's report which deals with the "NEC and National Officers," your committee is making the following recommendations to this convention:

Your committee is wholeheartedly in agreement with the proposal that a new NEC structure based on elections by the Party

* See page 98.

membership as a whole would better serve the Party's interests at the present time. It would not only eliminate the potential conflict of interest that exists in the present composition of national office employees' serving on the NEC but, more important, the proposed structure would be more representative and visible.

In addition, your committee recommends that to facilitate and legitimize this change, the portion of the National Secretary's report that offers proposals to amend the Constitution accordingly be adopted.

Fraternally submitted,
[signed] KARL H. HECK
DANIEL D. DENEFF, ANGELINE KLEIST
Committee on NEC and National Officers

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report. An amendment that the convention review seriatim each of the constitutional proposals made by the National Secretary was passed.

On motion, the entire matter was referred back to the Committees on NEC and National Officers and Constitution and Bylaws with instructions to confer and agree on one report.

Re Resolution 1-F

Your Committee on NEC and National Officers has reviewed this resolution and found it to be redundant. The committee found the recommendation of the National Secretary re restructuring the NEC more practical and more democratic since it involves the entire membership of the Party.

Your committee recommends nonconcurrence in this resolution.

Fraternally submitted,
[signed] KARL H. HECK
DANIEL D. DENEFF, ANGELINE KLEIST
Committee on NEC and National Officers

On motion, the report was concurred in.

Committee on Party Press and Literature

R. Gustafson presented the following reports:

Re Report of the Editor

Your committee concurs in the Report of the Editor of *The People*. His report focuses on several key issues that are critical to our

continued development.

First and foremost is the need for additional qualified staff members to assist in writing, getting the paper out, and otherwise assisting in editorial tasks. To this end we would like to amplify his appeal by urging members who have the inclination and ability to make their skills known and to contact the National Secretary as to their willingness to consider employment on the staff.

Second, it must be emphasized, that contributions from the field must continue on a regular and sustained basis. At the risk of repeating what might already be in place, we offer the following suggestion to assist in better implementing this process. Sustained communications between members in the field regarding their commitment to write and the editorial staff should be established on an ongoing basis. This is a two-way street. Members should contact the Editor for confirmation on their submission or advice on items they are contemplating, and the staff or Editor should attempt to set up phone or written communications on a scheduled basis. If those contributors, as local correspondents of a nationwide network reporting on local conditions, can be drawn into the process and engaged as an integral part of the staff, it could enhance the capabilities of our editorial staff substantially.

Perhaps what is required is a coordinator of field contributors who can function with the Editor as an editorial manager.

Whatever the arrangement that ultimately emerges, we believe that time must be taken to set up a more formalized network to attend to contributors.

Clippings sent to *The People* can be very useful, especially when accompanied with a brief commentary on the points the contributor of such clippings has in mind. Contributors at this level are important and can make their own special contribution in reducing the editorial workload.

Fraternally submitted,
[signed] RUDOLPH GUSTAFSON
BERNARD BORTNICK, SID FINK
Committee on Party Press and Literature

A motion to adopt the report was not concurred in. On motion, the report was referred back to committee.

Re National Secretary's Report Headed *The People*

The committee takes note of the considerable research which

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

gives us the facts about *The People's* subscriptions and circulation. We also recognize the considerable effort which went into getting out the special issues, such as the SLP Centennial Issue and *The People's* own 100th Anniversary Issue.

The use of color on these issues proved attractive and most likely attracted additional attention to the papers placed in our news-stands. The committee would like to see color used more often, providing the extra costs are not prohibitive. We urge concurrence with the National Secretary's report.

Fraternally submitted,
[signed] RUDOLPH GUSTAFSON
BERNARD BORTNICK, SID FINK
Committee on Party Press and Literature

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report. On motion, the report was referred back to committee.

The Committee on Agitation and Organization reported progress.

Report of Mileage Committee

N. Karp rendered the following report:

Your committee reports that the delegates listed below have reported that their mileage in attending the convention is as follows:

<u>Section</u>	<u>Delegates</u>	
Los Angeles (1)	Alan Bradshaw	\$ 60.00
Sacramento (1)	Daniel Deneff	20.00
S.F. Bay Area (2)	Kenneth Boettcher	-0-
	Nathan Karp	-0-
St. Petersburg (1)	Constance Furdeck	334.00
Cook Co. (1)	George Milonas	268.00
Wayne Co. (1)	Archie Sim	300.00
Minneapolis (1)	Karl Heck	259.00
New York City (1)	Barbara Graymont	326.21
Akron (1)	Katherine Kapitz	488.70
Cleveland (1)	John O'Neill	-0-
Portland (1)	Sid Fink	178.20
Philadelphia (1)	George Taylor	328.00
Seattle (1)	Charles Turner	603.00
Milwaukee (1)	Angeline Kleist	359.06

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

Nat'l. Mbrs.-at-Lge. (7)	James Barnes	431.00
	Bernard Bortnick	-0-
	William C. Braatz	207.45
	Chris Camacho	338.00
	James Cline	399.50
	Rudolph Gustafson	520.20
	Jennie Seekford	79.20
SLP of Canada	George Cameron	525.49
Nat'l. Sec'y.	Robert Bills	-0-
Editor Richard Whitney		-0-

In keeping with this report, your committee recommends that the delegates be paid the amounts due them, the total being: \$6,025.01.

Fraternally submitted,
[signed] NATHAN KARP, GENEVIEVE GUNDERSON
Mileage Committee

On motion, the report was adopted.

New Business

A motion was passed that future calls for the nomination and election of delegates to a National Convention stress the fact in clear and emphatic terms that members who accept nomination as delegates to a National Convention are obligated to attend all sessions of the convention—that is, until the convention finishes its work and adjourns.

At 1:48 p.m. a motion was made to recess until 7 p.m. An amendment to recess until 6 p.m. was passed. The motion, as amended, was adopted.

TUESDAY EVENING SESSION, APRIL 30, 1991

The convention was called to order at 6:05 p.m.

On roll call, all present except J. O'Neill and J. Seekford, whose absences were excused.

The sergeant at arms reported four members present.

Unfinished Business

On motion, the Committee on Constitution and Bylaws' report on Resolution 1-E was taken from the table.*

* See pages 93–94.

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

An amendment was adopted to strike the words, “and has not been content to wait until the appeal is heard by the next National Convention” in the last sentence of the first paragraph.

An amendment was passed to strike the last sentence of the report.

On motion, the report as amended was adopted.

Reports of Committees

Committee on Constitution and Bylaws

G. Taylor presented the following report:

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS ON BEHALF OF ITSELF AND THE COMMITTEE ON NEC AND NATIONAL OFFICERS

~~REPORT OF JOINT COMMITTEE OF COMMITTEE ON NEC AND NATIONAL OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS~~

Upon review and consideration of the National Secretary’s report which deals with the NEC and national officers, your committee is making the following recommendations to this convention:

The committee is wholeheartedly in agreement with the proposal that a new NEC structure which would be based on elections by the Party membership as a whole is the setup which would better serve the Party’s interest at the present time. It would not only eliminate the potential conflict of interest that exists with the present composition of the national office employees’ serving on the NEC implies, but, more important, it would be more representative and visible.

We agree with the National Secretary’s proposed restructuring of the NEC and recommend adoption of the following:

1. It is recommended that the following be inserted as the new Section 2 of Article V:

Section 2. (a) The members of the first NEC to take office under the proposal adopted by the 40th National Convention and approved by the membership referendum shall be elected in the following manner:

(b) The national office shall call upon the sections to each nominate one of their own members for the NEC, those names to be submitted to the entire membership of the Party for a general vote. The seven members receiving the highest number of votes shall constitute the NEC, provided each has

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

received a majority of the votes cast.

(c) The newly elected NEC shall assume office replacing the existing NEC immediately following the official tabulation of the general vote.

(d) The term of the new NEC shall terminate with the 41st National Convention, and all future NECs shall be elected as hereinafter provided.

Comment: These amendments are intended to facilitate a transition from the NEC as presently constituted to that which is being proposed. They are closely patterned after the transitional measures that were adopted in 1980 to expedite the change from the old NEC based on regions to the NEC structure now in existence.

2. Re the present Article V, Section 2. (a): It is recommended that this provision be renumbered to become Section 3 (a), and that the present Sections 3-16 be renumbered accordingly. It is also recommended that this provision be amended to read as follows:

Section 3. (a) The NEC shall be elected for a two-year term by the National Convention, each of those elected to be specifically approved by a general vote of the whole Party.

Comment: This amendment, of course, is central to the proposal for restructuring the NEC, as discussed in the “NEC and National Officers” section of this report.

3. Re the present Article V, Section 5: It is recommended that this provision hereinafter to be Section 6 be amended to read as follows:

Section 6. If for any reason a vacancy on the NEC should occur six months or more before the National Convention, the NEC shall at once proceed to nominate the best qualified member available to fill the post permanently and submit the same to a general vote of the whole Party, the vote to close within six weeks from the date of submission for such general vote.

Comment: This amendment would bring the procedure for filling vacancies on the NEC into conformity with the procedure already provided by the Constitution for filling vacancies in the offices of National Secretary, Financial Secretary and Editor of the official organ.

4. Re the present Article V, Section 6 (a): It is recommended that this provision hereinafter to be Section 7 (a) be amended to read as follows:

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

Section 7 (a). The NEC shall meet once in regular session between National Conventions, the exact date to be determined by the NEC. The NEC can meet in special session upon motion made by any NEC member, without the need for a second, or upon recommendation made by the National Secretary, such motion or recommendation to be promptly submitted to the entire NEC for action.

Comment: This amendment is consistent with what was provided by the Constitution while the NEC was organized on a regional basis, and would be equally appropriate for an NEC organized on a national basis.

5. Article V, Section 6 (c): It is recommended that this provision (which would become Section 7 [c]) be amended to read as follows:

(c) The site of the NEC Session, regular or special, shall be determined by the NEC.

Comment: This amendment also would restore a former provision of the Constitution that existed while the NEC was regionally organized.

6. It is recommended that the following be adopted as Section 18 of Article V:

Section 18. The expense of the NEC members while attending sessions shall be paid out of the general fund. ~~covered through a special assessment of \$5.00 to be imposed once every year in conjunction with the Mileage Assessment, the total assessment thus to be levied once a year to be \$10.00.~~

~~Comment: This assessment is already provided for by Article X, Section 2 (a), and was formerly identified as the National Convention-NEC Mileage Fund. The amendment would restore a provision of the Constitution that became unnecessary when the NEC was reorganized in 1980, but would become necessary again if the proposal for restructuring the NEC is adopted.~~

~~7. We recommend that Article VII, Section 7 be amended to read as follows:~~

~~The expenses of the delegates shall be borne by the sections sending them, with the exception of their fare coming and going. The fare of the delegates and NEC members shall be defrayed from the Convention and NEC Mileage Fund, provided doing so does not conflict with federal or state laws.~~

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

8. We recommend that Article X, Section 2 (a) be amended to read as follows:

~~The NEC shall collect a National Convention and NEC Mileage Fund by means of a special annual assessment of \$10 on each member for which a stamp shall be issued. This mandatory assessment shall be paid by December 31 of each year.~~

Fraternally submitted,

[signed] GEORGE S. TAYLOR

KATHERINE KAPITZ, GEORGE MILONAS,
BARBARA GRAYMONT, ~~KARL H. HECK, ANGELINE KLEIST,~~
~~DANIEL D. DENEFF~~

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report.

An amendment to strike the last three signatures on the report was passed.

On motion, the title was amended to read, "Report of Committee on Constitution and Bylaws on Behalf of Itself and the Committee on NEC and National Officers."

On motion, the second paragraph on page 125 was amended by striking the words "the present composition of the" and the word "implies," and by inserting "exists with" in their place.

On motion, Section 18 under Item 6 was amended by striking the remainder of the sentence following "shall be" and inserting "paid out of the general fund" in its place.

On motion, the report was further amended by striking the last five paragraphs.

On motion, the national office was authorized to make whatever editorial changes in the Constitution are necessary to comply with these changes.

On motion, the report as amended was adopted.

Committee on Party Press and Literature

R. Gustafson presented the following reports:

Re Report of the Editor

Your committee has reviewed the Report of the Editor of *The People*. His report focuses on several key issues that are critical to our continued development.

First and foremost is the need for additional qualified staff members to assist in writing, getting the paper out, and otherwise assisting in editorial tasks. To this end, we would like to amplify

his appeal by urging members who have the inclination and ability to contact the National Secretary to make known their skills and willingness to consider employment on the staff.

Second, it must be emphasized that contributions from the field must continue on a regular and sustained basis. *The People* more than any other paper is a membership-owned and -controlled journal. Nothing can be more appropriate than that members in the field express this fact with editorial and reportorial contributions. Each contributor thereby joins a network of class-struggle correspondents.

The Editor has provided us with the statistics of the past year's contributions and has indicated the value in both regular and occasional articles from members; thus, sustained contributions could have a dramatic impact on the staff's capabilities to address other additional literature needs.

Clippings are another area of contributions that have potential. But rather than sending the clipping by itself a commentary on the contents can form a viable focused, socialist statement on a local event or issue.

Contributors at all levels can make vital contributions—the important thing is not to discuss it—but do it!

Fraternally submitted,
[signed] RUDOLPH GUSTAFSON
BERNARD BORTNICK, SID FINK
Committee on Party Press and Literature

On motion, the report was adopted.

**Re Section of the National Secretary's Report
on Party Press and Literature**

Re the National Secretary's Report Headed *The People*

The committee takes note of the considerable research which gives us the facts and figures about *The People's* subscriptions and circulation. We also recognize the considerable effort which went into getting out the special issues such as the SLP Centennial issue and *The People's* own 100th anniversary issue.

The facts contained in the report on the returns on advertising in various papers and magazines is encouraging and worthwhile continuing. The recent one-shot leaflets issued by the national office on the Gulf crisis also seem to have been effective in getting

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

new contacts.

~~As included in the National Secretary's report, the committee took note of the many hours of hard work by Comrades Boettcher and Karp and the resulting video, "The SLP at 100," was enjoyed by all those privileged to see it.~~

The National Secretary's figures indicate some decline of regular readers living within areas where sections are organized. Some years ago, comrades tried going from door to door to get new subs. The results were encouraging. Once again, section members should be encouraged to renew this activity.

Also, it goes without saying, that an increase in leaflet distribution will bring in new subscribers. These are tried and proven methods we hope individual members will act upon so that future figures given by the National Secretary will reflect a decided upturn.

Fraternally submitted,
[signed] RUDOLPH GUSTAFSON
BERNARD BORTNICK, SID FINK
Committee on Party Press and Literature

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report.

A motion was passed to strike the third paragraph.

An amendment was passed to change the title to read, "Re Section of the National Secretary's Report on Party Press and Literature."

On motion, the report as amended was adopted.

Committee on NEC and National Officers

K. Heck presented the following reports:

Re Election of NEC

We recommend that the five (5) members whom the National Secretary listed in the section of his report, entitled "NEC and National Officers," be elected to serve as the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Labor Party. ~~for the transition term.~~ They are, as follows: Donna Bills, Kenneth Boettcher, Genevieve Gunderson, Louis Lipcon and Diane Secor.

Fraternally submitted,
[signed] KARL H. HECK
DANIEL D. DENEFF, ANGELINE KLEIST
Committee on NEC and National Officers

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report.

An amendment was made and seconded to strike the word “transition” in the first sentence. A substitute amendment was adopted to strike the words “for the transition term” in the first sentence.

On motion, the report as amended was adopted.

Re Election of National Secretary

We have interviewed a member who is willing to serve as National Secretary of the Socialist Labor Party if nominated, and we are prepared to make such a nomination.

Fraternally submitted,
[signed] KARL H. HECK
DANIEL D. DENEFF, ANGELINE KLEIST
Committee on NEC and National Officers

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report. On motion, the report was referred back to committee.

Re Election of Editor of *The People*

We find that there is a member who is willing to serve as Editor of *The People* if nominated, and we are prepared to make such a nomination.

Fraternally submitted,
[signed] KARL H. HECK
DANIEL D. DENEFF, ANGELINE KLEIST
Committee on NEC and National Officers

On motion, the report was adopted.

Re Election of Financial Secretary

We find that there is a member who is willing to serve as Financial Secretary of the Socialist Labor Party if nominated, and we are prepared to make such a nomination.

Fraternally submitted,
[signed] KARL H. HECK
DANIEL D. DENEFF, ANGELINE KLEIST
Committee on NEC and National Officers

On motion, the report was adopted.

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

The Committee on Agitation and Organization reported progress.

At 7:18 p.m., the convention recessed, to reconvene at the call of the chair. The convention was called to order at 7:59 p.m.

K. Heck for the Committee on NEC and National Officers indicated the committee was prepared to render a report as follows:

Re Election of National Secretary

We have interviewed a member who was willing to serve as National Secretary of the Socialist Labor Party provided the Party has a full slate of national officers. Now that we have the probability of having a full slate, the member's name can be offered in nomination. Filling the positions of Editor and Financial Secretary will give him an opportunity to devote his full time to the National Secretary position and serve the Party more efficiently.

Fraternally submitted,
[signed] KARL H. HECK
DANIEL D. DENEFF, ANGELINE KLEIST
Committee on NEC and National Officers

On motion, the report was adopted.

Upon inquiry by the chair, the Committee on Agitation and Organization reported that it would be ready to present its report in approximately one-half hour.

At 8:03 p.m. the convention recessed, to reconvene at the call of the chair. The convention was called to order at 8:38 p.m.

On roll call, all present.

The sergeant at arms reported four members present.

The Committee on Agitation and Organization indicated it was ready to report.

K. Boettcher requested that the vice chairperson assume the chair so that he, Boettcher, could render the committee's report. G.S. Taylor then assumed the chair.

Committee on Agitation and Organization

K. Boettcher presented the following report:

Report of Committee On Agitation and Organization

Your committee has carefully reviewed and considered the sec-

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

tions of the National Secretary's report dealing with "State of Organization" and "General Activities" and the reports of the committees on agitation and organization to the past two conventions.

The state of the organization is integrally related to the overall downward trend in general activities noted by the National Secretary in the section of his report by the same name and in past convention reports. In view of that fact, we have chosen to limit the section of our report dealing with the state of the organization to reiterating, for the record, the overall parameters of the state of the organization and the dangers to the Party embodied in continuing the downward trend in general activities. The bulk of our report deals with our observations and recommendations concerning general activities.

STATE OF THE ORGANIZATION

Membership continues to slowly but surely decline, despite our obvious ability to attract new members. The biggest factors which act to counter that ability is the death of existing members and an inability to keep new members once we have them.

Section membership is increasingly scattered over distances which hamper their efficient and regular operation. A significant number of sections are having increased difficulty in meeting certain of ~~at risk of, or already are, violating~~ their constitutional responsibilities. Total membership organized in sections continues to decline, and conversely, total at-large membership continues to increase.

If this state of organization persists, if it is not positively turned around, the Party's days are surely numbered. And their number is not great. The passing of only a few years could find the Party well beyond the point of no return on the road to oblivion, regardless of its financial resources, which, while sufficient for the moment, remain marginal.

The trend toward decreasing membership in the sections is particularly dangerous. How is the revolutionary party of socialism to efficiently and effectively assist workers to organize politically and economically if it itself consists primarily of isolated individuals, the majority of whom have never experienced the discipline of organization?

The state of the organization thus remains precarious. But the point of no return has not yet been reached. There is still time to

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

act to reverse the Party's current organizational trends. But, as has been pointed out before, every SLP member must find a way to become involved in the effort to do so, on whatever level they can be reasonably expected to contribute.

Beyond the specific recommendations which follow in the general activities section of this report, we urge every member to read and re-read the sections of the last two convention reports dealing with the sections of the National Secretary's report dealing with agitation and organization.

We also recommend that the National Secretary or the National Executive Committee consider developing an informational hand-out or videotape program on the imperative need for members-at-large and existing SLP groups to work toward organizing sections, as a means of promoting more efficient and expanded agitational and educational activities.

And we reaffirm the recommendation by the Committee on Organization and Agitation in the proceedings of the 39th National Convention (page 144) that the national office utilize ads in local and regional publications in areas where members-at-large and SLP groups reside, to build a contact list which can be used by members-at-large and SLP groups in their section-building efforts.

The alternative to building up a solidly organized, revolutionary party of labor is too horrible to contemplate. The decline of capitalism continues apace, and the possibilities for its total collapse due to any one of the many major crises it generates continue to multiply. If workers are not organized when that collapse comes, if they do not at the very least have an organized revolutionary party of their class to facilitate the rapid spread of classconsciousness and advocate the socialist goal and the strategy and tactics to reach it, then they will surely face greatly increased repression, oppression and exploitation as the capitalist class moves to preserve its position of power and privilege.

General Activities

The only way we can reasonably expect to reverse the Party's organizational circumstances is to *increase* the overall level of agitational and educational activity. The question is how to keep our efforts to do this in the face of the current *decrease* in such activity from being merely an exercise in rhetoric. There is no cure-all. It will take hard work, and lots of it.

Motivating members that are demoralized or inactive for some other reason will not be easy. To a certain extent, activity breeds

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

activity. So simply scheduling some activities and carrying them out may help get more comrades involved in future activities. It is possible that getting long inactive members to attend a screening of the videotape program shown at our recent centennial affairs, “The SLP at 100,” which should be available from the national office soon, may aid in motivating some long inactive members.

In any section activity, publicity is all-important. Recommendations for a step-by-step procedure in handling publicity for Party events are included later in this report. We cannot allow ourselves to become demoralized because workers do not attend our events when we have poorly handled publicity for those events. As patently obvious as it may seem, it bears repeating that we *must* make dead certain that publicity for all our events is well handled.

Past convention reports have urged or recommended many ways of spurring inactive members to action, and of best utilizing the human and other resources of the Party to increase its agitational and educational activities. This committee recognizes that what it has to say or propose with respect to such concerns can hardly be new. At best, it can be only another attempt to boil down the essence of a plan of action that remains largely unchanged from that urged by recent conventions.

LEAFLETS AND *THE PEOPLE*

The figures cited by the National Secretary in his report support figures presented at earlier conventions showing that, to the extent that our necessarily limited data can definitively demonstrate anything, leaflets are our most efficient, cost-effective means of getting contacts. They also show that leaflet distribution totals continued their downward trend over the past two years.

This committee recommends that SLP sections and members concentrate on leaflets in all their distribution efforts, except those in which distributing *The People* is a logical better choice—i.e., special sub drives, etc. Members needn’t worry that, in so doing, the effort to increase the circulation of *The People* may be shorted. The figures suggest that leaflets may get more first-time, trial subscribers than *The People* itself. And all our leaflets either have, or should have, a coupon for a trial sub to *The People*.

At the same time, figures on distribution of the *War in the Gulf!* leaflet show that our members *can* shift into high gear from the low gear many have been in when they are motivated by a crisis

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

situation and have a timely leaflet to distribute that addresses that crisis.

For that reason, this committee urges the national office to devote, to the degree possible, more time and resources to developing, printing and expediently distributing timely leaflets.

It appears that timely leaflets alone can do much to motivate our members to increase leaflet distribution. But there are other tools as well.

Routine reiteration of the importance of leafleting to section members at business meetings may eventually get some inactive members off their duffs.

Moreover, the planning and proper publicizing of regular, organized leaflet distribution days should be a priority in all sections. If a section's circumstances truly limit the frequency of such distribution days, then so be it. But some frequency should be agreed upon—even if it is only once or twice per year—and the agreed upon schedule should be adhered to during the period until the next convention, so that the results may be assessed.

In addition, we urge the national office to continue, and if possible expand, its overall national ad campaign for *The People*, wholly aside from any advertising undertaken for the specific purpose of building contact lists in specific local areas.

NEWSSTANDS

The trend toward reduced newsstand operations noted in the National Secretary's report is grim indeed. Newsstands offer the Party continuous exposure in "the public eye"—perhaps to a greater degree than, for example, leafleting activities and public meetings. They constitute an outpost of Party visibility that may be remembered by workers who become fed up with the present system—even if only by way of remembering an intriguing headline they once saw—enabling them to seek us out when they know no other way of contacting us.

Existing newsstand operations must be maintained, even if it requires asking the national office for financial assistance to do so. Sections and members whose "modern" coin-operated stands repeatedly suffer vandalism to their coin mechanisms may want to consider simply removing the coin-operated latches on these boxes—converting them to the older "honor system" method. Some of the old honor stands may still be stored away unused, and could

be refinished and used to replace the more expensive coin-operated boxes.

If vandalism continues to be a problem, move the stand to a new location. When it is absolutely impossible to find a new location, when all possible locations (i.e., public transit stations, rail and bus terminals, public library “newsstand rows,” and so on) have been researched and none can be found, look again.

If one member of a section or SLP group cannot handle the whole operation, split up the stands so that the chore of servicing them won’t be visited upon only one member. Almost everyone can handle at least one stand near their work or residence.

Consider placing, or expanding your placement of, *The People* at commercial newsstand operations. Let the newsstand operator have the money from sales. Ask the national office to assist in paying for the bundles you place. And check back occasionally to make sure that the papers are being properly displayed. Even members who have physical limitations can take care of these arrangements.

We must not let go of our newsstand operations without a fight, and we must fight to expand them wherever possible.

Contacts

“Leaflet distribution produces contacts, contacts yield subscriptions, and subscribers [to *The People*] are still the main source of new membership,” the National Secretary wrote in his report. The data show this to be true. Accordingly, our report has stressed recommendations concerning leaflet distribution.

But the job doesn’t stop when contacts are received. They must be followed up, nurtured and developed into workers who attend our socials, picnics, study classes, discussion groups and public lectures. Phone contact work and personal visits with contacts should be integral to our approach to bringing contacts closer to the SLP fold.

Such ideas are nothing new. But they have been proven effective time and again, and they should be a matter of policy with every section, especially when it comes to ensuring the success of our public meetings.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

The National Secretary’s report notes the continuing decline of the number of public meetings conducted by sections and members-at-large. He also notes that the trend is not of recent origin.

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

Once again, this committee has no magic solution to the trend. We know that the SLP *must* hold public meetings if it hopes to bring many workers into the Party.

We realize that some sections and members-at-large lack the required human resources to hold study classes or public lectures, or to offer speakers to public schools, colleges and universities. Discussion groups are alternatives for those so lacking. ~~Videotapes of the speeches of Party members proficient at public speaking offer another alternative, and may be available on a limited basis from the national office.~~ For too long, many sections have excluded themselves from such activities because they fail to consider all the alternatives.

Taking the plunge into public meetings of some type must be encouraged. As the National Secretary noted in his report, "if study classes, discussion groups and public lectures...cannot be conducted on a regular basis...some substitute that a majority or significant number of sections can engage in on a regular basis must be devised or settled on. We cannot afford to simply let things drift, or stand by watching as members become discouraged after attempts to conduct study classes, discussion groups or public lectures that fail to attract the kind of attendance that would have the opposite effect."

We recommend that every section and experienced member-at-large be urged to plan a public event as soon as possible after this convention, and to conduct as many as possible between now and the next convention, when the results of their efforts can be assessed.

Regardless of the type of public meeting or event, including literature distributions, intervention activities, and so on, they *require* a planned approach if they are to be well attended. We feel that it may be helpful to outline, in one place, many of the suggestions of the past for executing a *successful* public meeting, however obvious they may seem to us now. We urge every section and member-at-large to give serious consideration to adopting the following procedure in regard to planning an event, as insurance against demoralization and as a guarantee of the best possible success:

1. If you are unsure of the advisability of what you are planning, contact the national office for advice.
2. Set a date for your event far enough in the future so that proper promotion can be accomplished.

3. Make sure all the details of location, refreshments if any, staffing and so on are taken care of well in advance. If you need help in paying for hall or room rent, contact the national office.

4. Make sure that you have a publicity piece—a flyer—ready to mail to your contact list at least *three weeks* in advance of your event. If you lack a contact list, contact the national office for a list of contacts in your area. If you have no human resources to produce a flyer, ask the national office far enough in advance to allow for regular mail delivery of your request and return of the flyer in time for its scheduled mailing. The national office will not always be able to help, but it will help whenever possible. Have enough copies of the flyer made to leaflet in the immediate area around your chosen site about a week in advance of the event.

5. Avail yourself of as many free means of promotion as possible. Many newspapers or news weeklies offer free “community calendar”-type announcements. Some radio and television stations or cable companies offer similar free announcements. Seek them out and use them.

6. Phone or visit your contacts a few days before your planned event to ask if they received your mailing and plan to attend. Use the occasion to chat and get to know them a little better, even if they say they aren’t planning to come. Call the contacts who respond positively to your attendance queries once again about three days prior to the event to remind them of it.

7. Make sure your event plans include proper introductions of speakers, etc., and identification of the event’s SLP sponsor (a section, SLP group, or member-at-large).

Our committee report contains little that is new. It merely reiterates what it feels were some of the most useful ideas from the past. We have our work cut out for us in utilizing them to build our Party. And if we’re honest with ourselves, each and every member knows we must act now to implement them. We have no other choice as the conscious element of our exploited and oppressed class.

Fraternally submitted,
[signed] KEN BOETTCHER
ARCHIE SIM, CHARLES TURNER
Committee on Agitation and Organization

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report.

An amendment was passed to strike the words “at risk of, or al-

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

ready are, violating” and replace them with “having increased difficulty in meeting certain of” in the second full paragraph on page 135.

An amendment to add the words “if and when they are produced” to the third sentence, third paragraph, on page 141 was not concurred in.

On motion, the third sentence, third paragraph, on page 141 was struck.

An amendment to add the words “if given at least six weeks notice” at the end of the fourth sentence under No. 4 on page 142 was not concurred in.

On motion, the report as amended was adopted.

K. Boettcher resumed the chair.

The chair called upon the Committee on NEC and National Officers to make nominations for national officers.

Nomination for Financial Secretary

A. Kleist made the following nomination for the office of Financial Secretary:

Comrade Chairman, Comrades of the Socialist Labor Party:

It gives me great pleasure tonight to place into nomination for the office of Financial Secretary a comrade who has distinguished herself as an active member of the Party for 20 years. I consider this nomination a great step forward for our Party, it is truly a highlight of our convention. May I present to you and place into nomination Comrade Edna Barnes for the national office of Financial Secretary. (Applause)

E. Barnes accepted the nomination. On motion, Comrade Barnes was unanimously elected. (Applause)

Nomination for Editor

K. Heck made the following nomination for the office of Editor:

Comrades:

The single most important weapon in the arsenal of the Socialist Labor Party is its official journal, *The People*. Understandably, the task of editing that all-important journal requires an SLP member, who can not only meet the challenge of keeping its contents equal

40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

to the demands of the Marxist-De Leonist principles it advances, but must be an individual of high moral character, deep dedication and capable of intellectual growth. We have such an individual in the Editor's chair today. And it gives me great pleasure to place the name of Richard Whitney in nomination for another term as Editor of *The People*. (Applause)

R. Whitney accepted the nomination. On motion, Comrade Whitney was unanimously elected. (Applause)

Nomination for National Secretary

K. Heck proceeded to make the following nomination for the office of National Secretary:

Comrades:

The nominee for National Secretary came from the ranks of the SLP. He became a good organizer, statistician and even an artist. Additionally, he became a Party historian. But foremost of all, he has been a tireless worker in the interest of the Party. He has proven himself a very valuable asset to our organization over the last two decades. His guidance and his example of hard work and dedication to Marxist-De Leonist principles have inspired many of us in the Party. Therefore, it gives me great pleasure to place in nomination Comrade Robert Bills for another term for the office of National Secretary of the Socialist Labor Party. (Applause)

R. Bills accepted the nomination (applause), and briefly addressed the delegates.

On motion, Comrade Bills was unanimously elected. (Applause)

New Business

On motion, the national office was authorized to edit the minutes of the proceedings.

At 9:45 p.m., a 15-minute recess was declared to allow the recording secretary to prepare the minutes. Reconvened at 10:03 p.m.

On motion, the minutes of Tuesday's session were approved as read.

On motion, the minutes as a whole were approved.

On motion, the 40th National Convention of the Socialist Labor Party adjourned sine die at 10:17 p.m.

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

Fraternally submitted,
[Signed] ANGELINE KLEIST
Recording Secretary

[Signed] DONNA BILLS
Assistant to the Rec. Sec'y

APPENDIX

RESOLUTION #1-A FROM SECTION SACRAMENTO, CALIF.

Section Sacramento calls for the removal of the second sentence of Article IV, Section 1, of the Party's Constitution, namely: "Its [the Section's] area of jurisdiction shall be determined by the NEC."

The above-mentioned provision presents both difficulties and uncertainties on the part of sections and NEC members as well as to when a section is justified or not justified in demanding that certain additional areas of jurisdiction be granted to a section.

Because this provision currently requires numerous and needless time-consuming correspondence with the national office and in most cases cannot be satisfactorily resolved—it only presents a stumbling block in membership recruitment at a time when our Party is struggling to attract new members to its ranks.

REASONING:

(1) Most of Section Sacramento's members live in counties outside of the current section's jurisdictional area—now restricted to a single county, the county of Sacramento.

(2) Section Sacramento is active, more or less, in all of the four surrounding counties. For example, in Yolo County, seat of the large University of California, Davis campus, the section maintains three *People* newsstands and distributes over 6,000 leaflets each year.

(3) When a Stockton, Calif. (San Joaquin County) Party sympathizer—known to the national office for many years—accepted our invitation to join Section Sacramento as an out-of-town member, the area of jurisdiction came as a conflicting block for his admission to Section Sacramento. The section was required to write five or six time-consuming letters relative to his qualification for Party membership. Since we never met this applicant before, we used the information about him that was originally supplied to us by the national office—simply because Section Sacramento is the closest section to his city of residence, Stockton, Calif.

(4) When Section Sacramento requested that four adjacent coun-

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

ties be added to the section's area of jurisdiction, one NEC member moved to approve the section's request; then another NEC member moved to modify the request to three counties instead of four counties. But, finally when all the discussion was over, the NEC unanimously voted to deny the section's request for additional areas of jurisdiction!

(5) Finally, when Section Sacramento requested that the NEC explain the reasons why such a request was denied, no answer came forward from the NEC. No answer or explanation was given just under what conditions the NEC was to consider a justification for granting such areas of jurisdiction.

(6) To repeat—we of Section Sacramento believe that Article IV, Section 1, of the Party's Constitution serves no useful purpose and it should be removed in its entirety.

Fraternally submitted,
[signed] DANIEL D. DENEFF, Organizer
Section Sacramento, Calif.

RESOLUTION #1-B FROM SECTION AKRON, OHIO

PARTY PRESS AND LITERATURE

Within the past few years, of special note is the "Question Period" column appearing regularly in *The People*. The questions and answers are invaluable not only to regular readers and contacts but also to the entire membership.

The Party has in the past published pamphlets re questions and answers and it served a useful purpose in attracting newcomers to our program who were in need of more detailed explanation.

Therefore, Be It Resolved, That the NEC extract or condense material most generally asked, from the "Question Period" column for possible inclusion in an SLP pamphlet.

Fraternally submitted,
Section Akron,

March 30, 1991

**RESOLUTION #1-C FROM SECTION ST. PETERSBURG,
FLA.**

***RESOLUTION ON A DETAILED ACCOUNTING OF THE
SALARY STRUCTURE AT THE NATIONAL OFFICE OF THE
SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY***

Whereas, nothing appears in the SLP Constitution or the *Organizational Norms and Procedures* about the manner of determining the wage structure of Party employees, the membership of the SLP is left with word-of-mouth gossip that the National Secretary is in charge of setting the salaries for all employees (including himself) on an as-needed basis; whether these decisions are made by himself alone, in conjunction with the Financial Secretary, and/or the NEC, we have no way of knowing; no report on this activity has appeared in the NEC minutes;

Whereas, the membership of the SLP receives only a lumped-together accounting of salaries in the yearly financial report, and has no knowledge of the specific wages paid not only of staff employees, but also of our national officers;

Whereas, just because the Party became secretive about the salaries of its employees some time back in the remote past is no reason for our present national office to continue this practice;

Whereas, we believe that it is a reasonable requirement for any organization based on democratic principles that the membership have as much detailed knowledge as possible, particularly of the financial affairs of their organization;

Whereas, we the membership are certainly entitled to know as much about our employees' salaries as the government (IRS); and

Whereas, it should be understood that this resolution is meant as no reflection of the present management as it is obvious that salaries are not out of line based on number of employees divided by total outlay; still, we feel the membership is entitled to the specific information;

Therefore, we propose that the year-end financial report of the Party list the salary of the National Secretary.

We propose that the salary of the Editor of *The People* be printed in the year-end report.

We propose that the salaries of all the national office staff be printed in the year-end report.

We propose that the convention consider setting up a committee

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

to review and/or make recommendations on salaries.

**RESOLUTION #1-D FROM SECTION ST. PETERSBURG,
FLA.**

*RESOLUTION ON THE RIGHT OF SECTIONS AND/OR
MEMBERS-AT-LARGE TO MEET OR COMMUNICATE WITH
ONE ANOTHER ON PARTY POLICY*

Whereas, the only way SLP members presently have to discuss anything other than agitational matters is in their own sections or through the *SLP Newsletter*, while the majority, members-at-large, have only the right to use the newsletter or to correspond with our already overburdened national office;

Whereas, carrying on discussion through the newsletter must, of necessity, be drawn out and cumbersome because, regardless of the frequency of its printing, one still would wait weeks for the correspondence to go back and forth;

Whereas, it is our belief that limiting discussion to the newsletter is not only cumbersome, but undemocratic in that it favors those more capable of expressing views in writing as opposed to the bulk of members who find writing extremely difficult;

Whereas, the health of a political organization such as ours is greatly dependent on the level and extent of political discussion that takes place within it on a grassroots level, and restrictions on what may be discussed cannot be in our best interests;

Whereas, while we believe that restrictions on the content of discussion arise from a fear that open discussion of Party affairs beyond the section level might lead to disruption, we contend that open discussion clears the air, brings what could become festering problems to the surface, and allows clearer heads to counter the situations;

Whereas, we believe in the common sense and clear-headedness of the majority of our membership when it comes to discussing Party policies just as we believe in the grassroots management of the socialist industrial unions of the future; and we ask, "Would future citizens allow restrictions on their ability to discuss policy in the SIUs?"; and

Whereas, we have in place constitutional requirements that any discussion or correspondence between members-at-large and/or sections must be reported to the national office, and that no action

can be taken at any meetings; for participants still have to use the regular Party channels to bring about any proposed change;

Therefore, we would like to see lifted any restriction that limits either discussion or meetings on any Party matter between sections, as well as between members-at-large.

We propose the amendment of Article IV, Section D, *Organizational Norms and Procedures* to read: "Sections may communicate with other Sections. Copies of such material and related correspondence shall be supplied to the national office."

We further propose that

1. Section C be eliminated.
2. In Section E, the word, "shall," be changed to, "may also."
3. In Section F, first paragraph, the word, "specific," be dropped.

**RESOLUTION #1-E FROM SECTION ST. PETERSBURG,
FLA.**

***PART 1. RESOLUTION ON THE RIGHT OF APPEAL AND/OR
RIGHT TO REVIEW NEC EXPULSIONS***

Whereas, at the present time, the NEC may only expel members after they have refused to accept NEC decisions relating to their suspensions, according to Article II, Section A, *Organizational Norms and Procedures*;

Whereas, we agree with the 1983 National Convention Report (page 172) that "we cannot put it [NEC] in the position of not being able to impose the most severe sanction when it confronts a situation that is very grave or even life threatening to the Party," and that, therefore, the NEC should retain the right of expulsion;

Whereas, an expelled member, pending appeal, would be treated the same as a suspended member, having no rights including holding office or serving in any capacity;

Whereas, we believe that the forfeiture of the right of appeal on expulsion is a loss of what should be an inherent right for the member in question; and

Whereas, we believe that the right to review expulsions is not only the prerogative of the next following National Convention and in the Party's best interest, but should be spelled out in the *Organizational Norms and Procedures* so that there is no misunderstanding, and the materials relating to the expulsion are therefore available;

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

Therefore, we propose the amendment of Article II, Section A, of the *Organizational Norms and Procedures* to read: "...shall be grounds for immediate expulsion by the NEC but not forfeiture of the right of appeal by the member in question."

Further, we propose adding to Section A the following: "...and/or review by the next National Convention should it decide to investigate the expulsion."

PART 2. RESOLUTION ON THE RIGHTS OF MEMBERS TO QUERY THE NEC ABOUT ITS DECISIONS IN EXPELLING A MEMBER

(Follow-up on St. Petersburg's resolution on expelled members.)

Whereas, there is nothing in the Constitution stating whether it is the right of a Party member to question the decisions or ask for information of the national office and/or NEC in regard to their reasons for expelling another member;

Whereas, there is nothing in the Constitution stating there is a limit to the amount and kinds of information that the national office and/or NEC should be required to make available to the membership;

Whereas, we believe it would be to the benefit of the Party that the rights and limitations be spelled out in the *Organizational Norms and Procedures* because the rules would then be clear for everyone to understand, and would serve to help in avoiding potential problems;

Whereas, we believe the St. Petersburg resolution on the right of expelled members to appeal to the next National Convention and/or the right of National Conventions to review the acts leading up to expelling members gives our Constitution ample provision to insure that no member can be deprived of his/her rights; and

Whereas, we believe no member should have the right to question the NEC about its reasons for expelling another member, any more than he/she has the right to question one of the Party's sections on the reason it has expelled one of its members;

Therefore, Be It Resolved, That the following be added to Article II, Section A, *Organizational Norms and Procedures*:

"It is not proper for Party members to write and ask for details or copies of correspondence from the national office and/or the NEC following the expelling of a member or section. Such material will only be made available at the next National Convention, should the convention decide to review it or hear the appeal from the ex-

pelled member(s) in question.”

**RESOLUTION #1-F FROM SECTION ST. PETERSBURG,
FLA.**

RESOLUTION ON RESTRUCTURING THE NEC

Whereas, in 1976 the SLP recognized a need to examine its tactics, as well as democratize itself by involving more members in the decision-making process including instituting more frequent National Conventions, the situation vis-a-vis the restructuring of the NEC, has had the opposite effect, negating to a degree the good steps the Party has made;

Whereas, not enough members of the Party living in the geographic area of 150 miles of headquarters are available or willing to run for the NEC, members employed by the Party have been allowed to run for NEC and, at times, have made up its majority;

Whereas, Party employees sitting on the highest council between conventions with their employer, the National Secretary presiding, cannot be the healthiest condition for the Party, and could even, in some point, become a conflict of interest; and

Whereas, telecommunications have now advanced to the point that conference calls are now a regular part of doing business;

Therefore, Be It Resolved, That the convention set up a committee to investigate the feasibility of reinstituting a regional NEC which meets on some agreed frequency by means of conference calls.

Be It Further Resolved, That said committee study the practicality of making the present NEC into a Subcommittee of no more than five members, three of whom shall not be employed by the Party.