
Jewish Group in Party Will Convene Today: Federation, 500 Weak Now, Thought Certain to be Destroyed, No Matter What Action is Taken: Once Numbered 5,000: Organized as Autonomous Body in 1912, Its Officials Have Fought Party Since Albany Trial.

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With the opening of the convention of the Jewish Socialist Federation this morning in Forward Hall, an important chapter in the Socialist movement comes to a close.

The Federation, which has had a fine record of service in the Socialist movement, will certainly be destroyed at the 3 day convention, no matter what delegates the Credentials Committee seats. If a majority of the seated delegates favor the decision of the Executive Committee of the Federation to withdraw from the Socialist Party, the larger portion of the branches will withdraw from the Federation and remain in the party.

If the delegates elected by the branches, a majority of whom favor, and are instructed for, the part as against the Federation's executive plan of withdrawal are seated, the Executive Committee will endeavor to tear away as many members and branches as possible.

Whatever the result, the organization that once had between 5,000 and 6,000 members, with an influence on the life of the Jewish workers powerful out of all proportion to its membership, will be completely destroyed, the convention tomorrow setting the official seal upon a fact that has long been recognized.

The Federation is 9 years old, one of the oldest of the foreign language federations that have

made so much trouble in the party organization. Prior to 1912, however, it was known as the Jewish Agitation Bureau of the United States and Canada. It was organized in 1908 under that name.

Language Was Bar.

The idea of a Jewish Socialist organization arose from the fact that large masses of Jewish workers could not be reached by the ordinary agitation of the party, because of the language bar. A number of old-time Socialists, including Benjamin Feigenbaum, Meyer Gillis, M. Kaufman, and others, began an agitation within the party about 15 years ago for an organization affiliated with the party but without autonomy in the party. A convention was held in Rochester in 1908, at which the bureau was formed, with Max Kaufman of Rochester as its first Secretary.

The organizers of the Bureau were men and women with a Socialist psychology, who sought a way of building up party agitation and propaganda. Not one of them believed in an organization within the party having a voice on party tactics and methods, all of them believing that each member should have a voice and a vote through his own branch or local.

In that spirit the Bureau was formed, with headquarters at 141 Division Street, New York, and, with a series of efficient secretaries, it did excellent work in propagandizing for Socialism and turning the results of their work over to the party.

The Bureau was composed of affiliated branches of the party, each one of which was assessed up to \$10 a month for the upkeep of the central office. A number of extremely valuable books were published, including a history of the United States and a description of its government by B. Salzman; *Workingmen, Next!* by Feigenbaum, and others. Speakers, such as V.C. Vladeck, S.H. Sachs, B. Miller, A.I. Shiplacoff, Barnet Wolff, Feigenbaum, M. Kerman, and others were toured, some of them from coast to coast.

Federation Formed in 1912.

Among the secretaries were Shiplacoff and Wolff. Wolff and Meyer London were fraternal delegates, with voice but no vote, from the Bureau to the national party Congress held in 1910.

During the latter years of the existence of the Bureau there was an agitation for the organization of an autonomous federation within the party, on a par with the Finnish Federation. Its members were to be members of the Federation, and only members of the party through the Federation. That plan went through in 1912, and J.B. Salutsky was first Secretary of the organization in its new form.

For a while the office was in New York, but a decision of the national organization of the party provided that the office of the Jewish Federation had to be in the National Office in Chicago, together with all the other Federations. I.B. Bailin, now editor of the official paper of the Workmen's Circle, was Secretary at one time; later, an arrangement was made whereby the office was technically in Chicago, with a Secretary who merely made out reports and took care of correspondence, while the real office, with the direction of activi-

ties, was in New York.

Following Bailin, Max e. Lulow was made Secretary, followed by M. Salzman, with John Mill, a Chicago Socialist of high standing in the party, as "Translator-Secretary." Salutsky was editor of the official weekly of the Federation for years until his recent connection with the Amalgamated Clothing Workers.

During the first years of the existence of the Federation in that form, the work instituted under the Bureau was continued, men like Max Goldfarb ["A.J. Bennett"], now a member of the Soviet government, being toured.

Change After Albany Trial.

It was Goldfarb, who had been a member of the Bund in Russia, an organization with a nationalistic viewpoint, who helped give the Federation a slightly nationalistic tone here. From the time of the Russian revolution the Federation began to assume more and more of an attitude of dictation, telling the party what it should and what it should not do. Salutsky, as editor of the Federation's paper, was a supporter of the war against Germany.

In the "Left Wing scrap" Salutsky, who has been a leading spirit in the Federation for years, took the position of the party, strongly denouncing the Left Wingers, and later the Communists. But from the time of the Albany trial the *Naye Welt* and the officials of the organization took a distinctly hostile attitude toward the party, basing their attacks very largely upon garbled accounts in the non-Socialist press of what some of the Socialists were alleged to have said in defense of the Assemblymen.

At the New York convention of the party, a resolution written by Salutsky was presented to the Resolutions Committee bitterly attacking the defense of the Assemblymen, and quoting half-sentences torn from their context as a basis. The convention voted to expunge the resolution from

its records, after a defense of the Albany defense had been made by Morris Hillquit, chief counsel for the Assemblymen, and the delegates had given a demonstration of affection for Hillquit second only to the demonstration that had been given for Eugene Victor Debs upon his nomination.

From that moment the Federation officials declared open war against the party, passing a resolution at their last convention that unless the party took a stand for unconditional acceptance of the so-called "21 Points" [of the Comintern], they would pull the Federation out of the party.

There was no Federation delegate at the Detroit Convention [May 8-14, 1920], the only tangible sign of the existence of the organization being a printed document, passed out at the door to all delegates and visitors, alleging to come from the Federation, assailing practically every act of the party within the past few years.

Membership Now 500.

Following the Detroit Convention, the Federation's Executive Committee issued a call for a convention to be held September 3, 4, and 5 [1921], at which the organization would withdraw from the party.

That call aroused a number of branches to activity, many of them passing resolutions denouncing the Federation officials, expressing

confidence in the party, and electing delegates devoted to the party. *The Jewish Daily Forward* passed a resolution demanding that all its employees stand by the party, and B. Feigenbaum, one of the founders of the Jewish movement in America, came out of semi-retirement due to illness to write a series of articles calling upon all the Jewish workers to rally to the party.

The discussion within the Federation branches has been heated, making it impossible to carry on any agitation work, even when the majority of the members were anxious to go out with the Socialist message.

In proportion as the agitation for the Communist International and for immediate dictatorship of the proletariat has grown more heated, the membership has gone down, there being now less than 500 members altogether, in place of the 6,000 at the time of the greatest activity of the organization.

The Jewish Socialists seem to be decided upon organizing Jewish branches, directly affiliated with the party, with the possibility of an agitation bureau, when the convention is over. The heads of the Federation will in all probability go with the political party recently organized by the Communists [the American Labor Alliance], adopting the principle of "bourgeois legality" that they have been denouncing the Socialist Party for employing.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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