

LIBERAL PARTY

OF NEW YORK STATE



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Executive Director
BEN DAVIDSON

April 11th, 1946.

To the Officers and Pre-Convention
Committee Members of the Liberal Party.

Dear Friend:

Pearl Willen and I were designated as official observers of the party to the recent Conference held April 6th and 7th in Chicago to consider the question of a third party.

I herewith enclose for your information a brief report of what happened at the Conference and the important decisions that were made.

Sincerely yours,

Ben Davidson

BEN DAVIDSON
Executive Director

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NATIONAL THIRD PARTY CONFERENCE
Held in Chicago, April 6th and 7th, 1946.

I. COMPOSITION OF THE CONFERENCE:

A. 100 present as delegates, observers, and individuals (influential in organizations).

B. From the following States:

Michigan	6	Ohio	7
Indiana	5	Illinois	29
Minnesota	9	New York	17
Tennessee	4	Maryland and	
Kentucky	2	District of	
Pennsylvania	3	Columbia	2
Wisconsin	8	Washington	1
New Jersey	2	Iowa	3
Mass.	1	Texas	1

C. From the following Organizations:

<u>C.I.O.</u>	<u>UNIONS</u>	<u>A.F. of L.</u>	
United Auto Workers	6	Building Trades	1
Steel	1	Bro. of Sleeping Car Porters	3
United Office & Prof. Wkrs of A.	1	State, County & Mun. Emp.	2
American Newspaper Guild	1	Int'l Ladies Garment Workers	1
Textile Wkrs Union of America	5	American Federation of Teachers	1
Retail & Wholesale	5		
United Transport Serv. Emp.	1		
State & City Bodies	3		

INDEPENDENT UNIONS -	5	FARM ORGANIZATIONS	6	COOPERATIVES	6
RACIAL & RELIGIOUS -	15	VETERANS	3	MISCELLANEOUS	5

POLITICAL

Michigan Commonwealth Fed	3	Democratic Farm Labor of Minn.	3
Socialist Party	8	Ohio Commonwealth Fed.	4
Liberal Party	2	Social Democratic Fed.	4
Prohibition Party	2	Political Action Committee	3

D. Among those present were:

1. A. Philip Randolph, President, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters
2. H. L. Mitchell, President, National Farm-Labor Union
3. Arnold Zandar, President, AFL State County & Municipal Employees Union
4. Clayton Fountain, closely associated with Walter Reuther
5. Samuel Eubanks, Exec. Vice-Pres. of the American Newspaper Guild
6. C. J. McLanahan, Educational Director of the Cooperative League of America
7. Matthew Hammond, President of the Michigan Commonwealth Fed. and President of an Automobile Union Local
8. Powers Hapgood, Indiana Director of P.A.C.
9. Michael Mann, Secretary of the Chicago Ind. Union Council
10. Willoughby Abner, Vice-President of Chicago Ind. Union Council
11. Frank McCullough, leader of the Independent Voters League of Illinois
12. Mr. Rubin, editor of the "Progressive", organ of the LaFollette Progressive movement.

13. Mr. Naphtalan, leader in the Democratic Farm-Labor Federation of Minnesota
14. Miss Eugenie Anderson, leader in the Democratic Farm-Labor Fed. of Minn.
15. Israel Feinberg, Manager of the Cloak Joint Board, I.L.G.W.U.
16. Ernest Calloway, Editor of the United Transport Service Employees CIO paper
17. C.W. Burton, leader of the Chicago March-on-Washington Movement
18. Miss Pauline Meyers, important leader in the Negro church movement
19. Maynard Krueger, National Chairman of the Socialist Party
20. Leaders of the Retail, Wholesale Union from the Chicago and St. Louis areas
21. Several professors from the Social Science Department of the University of Chicago, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Antioch College
22. Pearl Willen and Ben Davidson, who were there as official observers of the Liberal Party.

Sponsors of the Conference were: Prof. John Dewey; A. Philip Randolph; Samuel Wolchok; James Patton, President of the National Farm Union; H. L. Mitchell; Simon Martin, President of the Michigan Farm Cooperative Union.

The individuals present represented a good cross-section of types and categories -- overwhelmingly non-Jewish and comprising trade unions, farmers, co-operatives, educational, church, Negro and youth elements. However, the composition of the conference from the standpoint of organizations and real strength was narrow, though to the sponsors it represented an advance over the forces with which they had contact in the first two preliminary meetings of the planning committee.

II. ORIENTATION: The conference realized that they were just in the beginning of the process of laying the basis for a broad third party movement. There was general agreement, without any challenge, that any attempt to form a nationwide third party, or even to set up a committee to establish the same, would be entirely premature and would defeat the main purpose.

The conference looked toward the presidential year of 1948, or even the early 1950's, when it was thought that the country might be faced with a serious economic crisis, as the time when the forces might be great enough for getting a third party under way.

The name chosen was "National Educational Committee for a New Party".

The job of the National Educational Committee for a New Party would be to act as a clearing house and coordinating center of the forces that believe in the need of a third party; to carry on educational work for independent political action; to establish contacts with organizations and groups throughout the country; to encourage local and regional conferences and to prepare a study of the picture and possibilities for the next national conference that is to take place in December 1946, after the 1946 elections.

Your delegation played a very important part in establishing this approach and emphasizing the fact that we are in a preliminary and educational stage, that we have to view the development as a process, that a broad indigenous movement could not be established until there was real strength in terms of organizations (trade unions, farmers, cooperatives, etc.) and regional political forces that would be strong enough to make a good showing and to carry on.

I supported the name "The National Educational Committee for Independent Political Action" to show that we wish to carry on educational work in the direction of a certain principle. This was almost adopted except for the fact that a few individuals, including Louis P. Goldberg, felt that the name was too "wishy-washy". The name that was approved was "National Committee for a New Party."

I made a strong personal plea that it be changed to "National Educational Committee for a New Party" because the first name decided upon would give the impression that there was a definite setup and an established organization where-as we were not yet in that stage of development. The conference accepted my arguments and practically unanimously voted to insert the word "educational" into the title.

There was a critical attitude toward the basic anti-third party approach of P.A.C., but the April 6th-7th Conference cannot be summarized or described as a movement organized to fight P.A.C. as such.

III. PROGRAM: Professor Lewis Corey of Antioch College reported on program which included the domestic program, immediate and ultimate, and the international question. Some strong opinion was expressed that it would be wiser to have a declaration of principles rather than a program at this stage. There was a general agreement with the substance and spirit of the program except that it was necessary not to use such terms as "democratic socialism" or "socialist mixed economy" but to put the substance in American language that would be more understandable and acceptable to the American people.

It was also agreed that nothing definite be done about the program; that all suggestions from the floor be taken into consideration; that the draft then be sent to all delegates and organizations for their criticisms, suggestions and general reaction and that revised drafts be prepared for the December conference. There was appreciation in the fact that new forces, that might ally themselves with this movement, must have an opportunity to express themselves on the question of program.

IV. NATIONAL COMMITTEE: A large and representative National Committee of approximately 53 was established consisting of representatives of the organizations and the regional areas, as well as outstanding figures. It was recognized that the entire setup is provisional and tentative since the whole movement was in the very early formative stage. At the meeting of the National Committee that took place Sunday afternoon, there was agreement that it would be advisable not to have a chairman either from the AFofL or CIO, or a leader of the Farmers Union since other farm organizations might object; that it would be necessary to find an outstanding liberal. Since the committee was not prepared to name such an individual, it was decided to continue Mr. Randolph as temporary chairman until the May 4th meeting of the National Committee, when the entire question could be considered more carefully. All other officers were elected on a tentative basis. Pearl Willen was elected Treasurer, and Mr. Molanahan as Secretary.

A sub-committee of seven was appointed to look into the question of an executive director, a permanent chairman, location of headquarters (there was a consensus of opinion that it should be in the midwest) and plans for a financial drive.

There was insistence that both Pearl Willen and Ben Davidson be on the committee. It was understood that the National Committee setup should be such, that no false impression would be given that any old political force was dominating or coloring it; that from the start, the effort must be made to put it on as broad a base as possible.

Arrangements were worked out with the Democratic Farmer-Labor delegation that they should have fraternal and liason relationship with the group because of the particular circumstance that confronted them in their State. A similar arrangement was contemplated for Wisconsin Progressives who feel that after the election of LaFollette as Senator they will be in a freer position to act in the direction of independent progressive political action.

V. FUNDS: It was decided to raise \$25,000 to carry the movement through the December conference. I was asked to make an appeal at the Sunday morning session to the delegates for personal and individual contributions. Approximately 75-80 were present at the time and over \$1300 was collected with over \$700 in cash. This represented a good \$15 per individual with almost everyone participating.

VI. ROLE OF YOUR DELEGATION: Your delegation played a very important part in the proceedings of the conference, helping to orient it in a sound direction. I was placed on the committee to work out recommendations and plan of action, and the nominating committee, as well as the sub-committee of the National Committee, to go into the questions enumerated above. Pearl Willen was on the original planning committee and was elected as Treasurer and is also on the special committee elected by the National Committee.

Your delegation made a very favorable impression on the delegates and individuals and organizations from other parts of the country, and the Liberal Party was publicized quite effectively.

VII. The Socialist Party stayed in the background, Maynard Krueger speaking only at the Saturday evening session. The SDF played a very little role in the proceedings. The Michigan Commonwealth Federation delegation was quite active with its President, Mr. Hammond, acting as chairman of all sessions except the first when Mr. Mitchell, President of the National Farmer-Labor Union presided.

VIII. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS:

1. The composition of the conference was narrow.
2. The orientation and approach taken were healthy and sound.
3. There is realization that a long road still has to be traveled and that future economic and political development would play a major part.
4. There was genuine enthusiasm and determination on the part of those present that work for independent political action was necessary and had to be carried on.
5. There was a looking beyond 1946 to 1948 and the early 1950's as the decisive period for which preparation had to be made.
6. There was a recognition that trade unions and farm organizations, as well as indigenous regional political groupings, would be decisive factors in the establishment of such a movement.
7. There was agreement on the need of an American approach and formulation.
8. A great deal of interest has been manifest in our own ranks with regard to possibilities of third party developments.

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