The SLP’s Chronological Recapitulation of the Main Incidents of its Conflict with the Volkszeitung


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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

April 11, 1899 — The Board of Directors of the Socialistic Cooperative Publishing Association appears before the National Executive Committee and demands that a reply for the “Sign-Posts” be inserted in The People of April 23rd or 30th (May 1st), such reply to be published without previous inspection either by the National Executive
Committee or by the editor of The People. The National Executive Committee resolves that it cannot act on the demand until the reply has been submitted.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

June 14, 1899 — The Board of Directors of the Socialist Cooperative Publishing Association publishes in the Volkszeitung a notice asking the Party members to postpone voting until a full statement of the Volkszeitung’s side of the question has been laid before them. As a reason for this request, it is alleged that an affirmative vote on the proposition of the National Executive Committee would mean a judgment of condemnation of the Volkszeitung, “and at the same time the expulsion from the Party of hundreds of good Party members.” This falsehood about the threatened expulsion of hundreds of German members was circulated for the purpose of inflaming the German comrades against the majority of the Party.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This illegal call was issued without an effort hav-
As the Volkszeitung two days later, on July 12th, cynically confessed, “to think under existing circumstances of the regular remedies, would have meant to entirely misconceive the demand of the situation.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

First, Denouncing the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance;

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

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

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

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

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

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

These proceedings, through which the Volkszeitung seeks to forever exclude the Party from any title to The People, bring out most strongly how much the coup of July 10 was “a demand of the situation” for the Volks-
The party outfit that the Volkszeitung set up on that night claims no rights against the Volkszeitung; on the contrary, it comes into court, and by an affidavit of its figurehead, H. Slobodin, backs up the exclusive property claims of the Volkszeitung over The People.

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

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

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

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

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

The committee “found,” among other things, that the Volkszeitung was supported by 750 members of Section New York out of a total of 1,186. The official reports, which are not in the possession of the Volkszeitung, show about the reverse proportion. This fact was demonstrated to the Philadelphia committee. But the majority of that committee preferred to accept the arbitrary claims of the Volkszeitung mannequins, which have since been denounced as fraudulent by one of the Volkszeitung's own organizations (the 21st Assembly District, Manhattan).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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