

STATEMENT TO THE MEMBERSHIP

ISSUED BY THE CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

COMRADES:

The Communist Party is in crisis. A grave danger confronts it from within, unless you stand firm against the disruptive tactics of a small group of "secessionists." The Executive Secretary and two members of the C. E. C. have organized a "revolt" against the Central Executive Committee elected by the Convention.

This dastardly crime has been committed at a time when all arrangements for a convention were about to be consummated. We never were, and are not now, for unity at any price, but in view of fundamental differences that do exist—the only place to settle such differences is at a convention—and not by attempting to create a split just before such convention.

At this critical time, while the party has not yet fully recovered from the blows rained upon it by the government—while we are still consolidating and solidifying our forces for propaganda and agitation—when our enemies from all sides are seeking our destruction—disruptive forces from within have organized a "secession" movement led by the Executive Secretary of the Communist Party.

The Central Executive Committee—handicapped by almost insurmountable difficulties—has been occupied with the task of reuniting the shattered fragments and building up a strong, effective underground organization—only to find that the forces of disruption and disorganization have raised their heads within the party itself.

There is not a particle of justification for this "secession" at the present time with a convention so near. A revolutionary organization, such as the Communist Party, aiming at the destruction of the highly centralized capitalist system must itself have a high degree of centralization and revolutionary discipline. Its Central Executive Committee must be highly centralized. Any attempt to weaken the Central Executive Committee is a blow at the party itself.

Nevertheless, your Central Executive Committee dealt with this "secession" in the most conciliatory spirit. Rather than precipitate a split in the rank, at this time, your Central Executive Committee did all in its power to avert this calamitous situation consistent with Communist principles and policies. But to no avail. The "secessionists" were determined upon forcing the issue. Their policy was rule or ruin.

What was the question upon which the "secessionists" could not wait until a convention and bolted the C. E. C.?

It was simply a question concerning the authority of the Central Executive Committee—which the "secessionists" themselves dare not challenge.

The Executive Council, elected by the C. E. C. to function during the sessions of the C. E. C. as governing and executive head of the Communist Party, had attempted to discipline one of its agents, the Chicago District Organizer, appointed by the C. E. C. for misrepresenting the views and working in opposition to the Central Executive Committee. The Executive Secretary threatened, that if this decision was carried out, he would withdraw from the Council, remain as Executive Secretary and Acting Party Editor and hold all funds, records and property in his possession.

Faced with this anomalous situation, the Council called for a special meeting of the Central Executive Committee to settle the controversy.

At the C. E. C. meeting—just as the discussion had begun—the Executive Secretary, now the spokesman for the "secessionists," handed down an ultimatum, that unless the C. E. C. abrogated its rights and authority until the convention—in other

words—unless the C. E. C. agreed to abolish itself in everything but name—he, together with his followers, would bolt the C. E. C.

To have accepted this ultimatum would have meant desertion of the posts to which the convention had elected us—treason to the rank and file—and a betrayal of Communist principles and policies which we had been elected to safeguard.

However, the C. E. C. did not refuse to negotiate with the "secessionists"—it did not refuse to take all the steps compatible with Communist principles and policies to avert the break at this time as the enclosed negotiations will show. But the "secessionists" were determined to split—leaving the C. E. C. but one course to pursue: To proceed with its Communist task entrusted to it by the First Convention of the Communist Party, ignoring entirely the "secessionists" and disrupters. This course the C. E. C. adopted.

It may be stated here that of the 13 members of the C. E. C. present at this meeting, only two members and the Executive Secretary bolted. (Langley, Kosbeck and Damon.) The others remained and immediately upon the departure of the bolters, the C. E. C. resumed its regular sessions with the following C. E. C. members participating: Raphael, Black, Andrew, Bernstein, Sascha, Alden, Dunte, Brown, Reiss and Meyers.

This body, together with the alternates elected at the last convention, who fill vacancies created by the withdrawal of those who had bolted is the only legal Central Executive Committee which can act and speak with authority in the name of the Communist Party of America, and around which should rally all comrades who have the interest and success of the Communist movement in this country at heart.

The above is, in brief, an outline of the controversy upon which the "secessionists" split away, as it appears on the surface.

But, of course, at the bottom of this question of authority of the C. E. C. lie more deep and fundamental differences on Communist policies and tactics. It is obvious that no group within the Communist Party would split away merely because they disagreed with some of the decisions of the C. E. C., or because of its legitimate attempt to enforce discipline upon one of its recalcitrant representatives. A full understanding of these fundamental differences is necessary for a proper conception of a crisis which the party has been facing for a considerable length of time, and which has come now to a climax.

We shall now proceed to analyze these fundamental differences in principles and tactics dividing the majority and minority on the Central Executive Committee.

The controversy dates back to the inception of the Communist Party at its first convention. It is a well-known fact that the "minority" were dragged into the convention much against their will. The revolutionary determination of the rank and file, which could not be denied, was the motive power that drove them into the convention. At the convention itself, many of the decisions were passed against the votes of those who now find themselves in the "minority." No wonder, now, seven months after the convention, this "minority" complains that the convention was "packed."

Among those decisions were two very important ones, which we shall proceed to elaborate as throwing light on the origin of the controversy.

One was the so-called question of "unity" and the other, the question of language federations.

The question of unity, as it came before the convention, was the admission of delegates who had no direct mandate to the

Communist Convention. Again the bitter opposition of the "minority" it was decided not to admit them as full-fledged delegates, but only as fraternal delegates, with a voice but no vote.

The fight on the federation issue, at the convention, centered around the extent of their autonomy. The majority realizing that the language federations—especially the Russian Federations—were the carriers and—as Zinoviev recently expressed it, "the promulgators of the Communist movement in this country"—insisted upon full autonomy for them. The "minority," who came to the convention opposed to the very idea of the existence of language federations within the party, put forth many attempts to destroy this "foreign domination," as they termed it, by abolishing, and when this failed, by limiting their autonomy.

On both of these questions the "minority" were decisively defeated. But, as it is apparent now, they never forget the bitter taste of this defeat; they nursed their bitterness and opposition in silence within themselves, waiting a more propitious time to break out again on those questions.

All through the legal existence of the party no one of the minority raised their voices on either of these questions. The party, and especially the language federations, was too strong—the sentiment of the membership was manifestly against them—and they realized that to fight on those issues at that time meant sure defeat again.

But when the Iron Heel of the Capitalist Government came down upon the party, right after the raids upon its headquarters and meeting places—when the party units were scattered—when the federations themselves were struggling painfully to reunite again their shattered forces—during the transition period between our legal and underground existence—the "minority" saw their long-sought opportunity and grasped it.

Then, like typical Centrists, they raised again the old cry of "unity"—this time, unity with the C. L. P. They shouted it from the house-tops and began to obstruct and hamper the party work by injecting this cry of unity at every opportunity. The minutes of the C. E. C., beginning with January, will show that the first and "most important" order of business at every meeting was the question of "unity," always brought up by one of the "minority." As a matter of fact, all other party work, real constructive work—of which the "minority" boasts so much, was practically sabotaged by their constant injection of this question.

Unity With the C. L. P.

What has been the position, on this question, of the "minority" of the C. E. C., who are now leading the "secessionists"?

Up to the January raids, all of the "minority" voted with the majority of the C. E. C. at different times on this question. After the raids, the "minority" switched and began to carry on a feverish campaign for immediate amalgamation of the Central Executive Committees of both parties (C. P. and C. L. P.).

What was the position of the "majority" on Unity, which the "minority" knew and did not dare refute? Simply this.

Our—the "majority" position was, that mechanical unity, a mere merging of the two Central Executive Committees did not constitute organic, Communist unity. We contended, that the acceptance of our Manifesto and Program by the Executive Committee of the C. L. P. did not mean that their entire membership accepted it. Another prerequisite for the uniting or amalgamating of the two Executive Committees, something more than a professed acceptance of a program only, is necessary. There must be also, fundamental agreement on

organization problems and tactics as well. And since, neither of these prerequisites existed, the amalgamation of the two Executive Committees could only bring confusion and discord into our ranks. Two such differing elements, sitting on one Executive Committee, could only mean that each group would paralyze the other, making all propaganda and agitation impossible, if not worthless. Far better for each Committee to work separately, unhampered one by the other, thus clearly exposing the position of both on fundamental issues and gradually clarifying those issues in the light of conditions as they developed.

We maintain that organic unity of all real Communist elements within both parties could only be effected at a convention—a joint convention—where the delegates representing the rank and file could come together and thrash out the fundamental questions of principles, tactics and organization, and see, if real Communist unity could be achieved. And we further maintained, that prior to such a convention, the party organs on both sides must carry on a discussion and debate on the issues involved, in order to clarify them to the rank and file and aid them in selecting those delegates who agreed with their position.

Instead of amalgamation of the two Executive Committees, the "majority" insisted on a Joint Convention—while the "minority" wanted only to effect an immediate amalgamation, the convention with its discussion of principles and tactics was to them, only incidental.

So logical was our position of a joint convention, that when the "minority" resolution was decisively defeated by a vote of nine to four, the motion of the "majority" was adopted unanimously.

What becomes of the vicious slanders and vilification to which the "majority" were subjected by the "minority"? In their present attacks on the "majority," they are silent on this question; yet, it is a well-known fact, that a great deal of the animosity generated against the "majority" received its impetus from just this question of unity with the C. L. P.

International Relations.

Another fundamental issue which rose to the surface soon after the convention, and constantly grew up since, becoming a great factor in the present crisis in the party, was the question of International Relations and International Delegates.

The "minority" charges the "majority" that a "month after the convention, certain individuals of this 'majority' group became more concerned with the question of obtaining for themselves the opportunity to make a 'junketing trip' to Europe at the party expense than any interest of the party." Aided and abetted by the "majority" group, of course.

It is obvious, of course, that the above "sarcastic" paragraph refers to the sending of the International Secretary and International Delegates to the Communist Congress in Europe. Participation in the Communist International Congress or Conference is, in the opinion of the "internationalists" of the "minority," nothing but "junketing trips" of "international politicians" . . .

Apparently the "minority" agrees with Morris Hilquit that the 3d International is "scarcely more than an idea or a name." They go even further than that—they wish to keep it in that nebulous state, detached from the living, revolutionary world-proletarian movement. This point of view implies an entirely non-Communist conception of the 3d International contrary to the conception of its founders and of the Communist Party of America. This point of

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