

The Party in Action

Negotiations Regarding Unity with the C. L. P.

Three months have passed since the government struck the blow which was intended to disrupt the Communist Party. In those three months the machinery of the party organization has been reconstructed on a new basis. While the work is not complete in every part of the country, it has gone forward far enough to enable the party to again undertake the work of propaganda which was temporarily interrupted.

The first work along this line was the distribution of Leaflet No. 7, "What Communism Means," which was printed in large quantities and sent to every district organization. The Communist has been re-established and unless unforeseen interruptions take place, will be issued twice a month. On account of the difficulties of distributing under the new conditions it is desirable that the paper remain a semi-monthly for the present, rather than return to the weekly issue.

The membership of the party has rallied to their organization with a new enthusiasm and a spirit that means much for the organization. Some members, who were in the party for the social intercourse which many of the branches provided in the past, have of course, dropped by the wayside. But those who remain are men and women who are in earnest in their support of the cause of Communism and the party will in the future be really made up of members who will participate actively in the work.

With a membership made up of active Communists only, with organization machinery that is more effective in its operation than ever before, the party organization is ready for action and stronger than it was during the period of its legal existence.

THE PARTY UNITS AND THEIR DUTIES

The new unit of the party organization is the group, which will be usually made up of about ten members. The existing branches have been divided into these groups, largely along territorial lines, but this is only a temporary arrangement. The future groups are to build wherever they can function for organization and propaganda work. The shop groups are most necessary and fundamental. They must be organized as quickly as possible. Groups may also be formed within unions when there are sufficient Communist members, or on any other basis that brings together a certain number of party members.

By becoming a member of a party group the person joining pledges himself to actively participate in the work assigned to his group. Every group member is expected to circulate leaflets and to sell the party papers and pamphlets. It is his duty to assist in raising funds through securing contributions from those who, while not ready to assume the obligations of party membership are still sympathetic and ready to give financial assistance.

The groups can easily hold meetings in the home of the members for the discussion of party problems and to plan their work. They should organize themselves as study classes and hold regular meetings to develop a clearer understanding of the party principles.

Each group elects one of its members as group organizer. The group organizer will keep the members of his group in touch with the party organization as a whole. His duties are to secure leaflets and papers and pamphlets from the branch organizer and deliver these to the members of his group for distribution. He collects the dues of the members each month and transmits all other funds collected for party purposes. When elections take place or matters are submitted to referendum of the membership he acts as the medium through which this work is conducted. It is his duty to see that every member of his group takes an active part in the party work. He is responsible for the performance of his duties to the branch organizer.

The group organizers of a branch or section elect the branch or section organizer. Where there is only one branch of a certain nationality the branch organizer is a member of the sub-district committee. If there are more than one branch sub-district organizer for the Federation or English branches is appointed and the branch organizers receive their instructions and literature through him.

A sub-district of the national organization consists of all the branches in a certain territory, usually a large city and its suburbs or a group of smaller cities closely connected industrially. Such sub-districts are in charge of a sub-district organizer of the National Organization, who works in co-operation and under the supervision of a sub-district committee. The sub-district committee consists of one representative of the English branches and the sub-district organizer of the National Organization. All the work of the National Organization is conducted through its sub-district organizer, who receives all literature and collects all funds for his sub-district.

The sub-districts are combined into district organizations. Each district is in charge of an organizer of the National Organization, who receives his instructions from the National Organization and is charged with the supervision and direction of the work of his district. Each district has a District Committee organized in the same manner as the sub-district committee.

THE secretary reported that the following executive motion had been submitted to be sent to the members of the committee by mail, but had been withheld because of the nearness of the C.E.C. meeting.

Motion: That the Communist Party and the Communist Labor Party shall at once be declared united by joint resolution of their executive committees, upon the following basis:

1. The name of the united party shall be the Communist Labor Party of America.

2. The principles and program of the united party shall be those set forth in the Manifesto and Program of the Communist Party.

3. The form of reorganization of the party shall be that adopted by the Central Executive Committee of the C.P. (which we understand to correspond with the reorganization plan already adopted by the executive committee of the C.L.P.).

4. In all respects not modified by the foregoing organization plans and by the emergency situation the Constitution of the Communist Party shall be that of the united party.

5. The two executive committees shall be at once merged into a single committee, each to retain its method of keeping its number complete, this merger to include all the administrative affairs of the two parties.

6. A convention shall be called not later than May 15, and shall be held not later than July, 1920.

Comment: 1. Circumstances have prevented adequate consideration of this question by our committee. Recent decisions adverse to immediate unity have been made by four to six votes. Meanwhile there has been considerable expression of unity sentiment from our membership, several referendum proposals favorable to unity, which could not be submitted on account of the arrests, and also some independent unity action by our members.

2. Unity is in line with the policy of the Third International, as made emphatic by the September 1st declaration of the Central Executive Committee of the International. The International aims to unite all communist elements, regardless of previous divisions, even extending to the non-political syndicalists. The test is adherence to the Soviet system and the proletarian dictatorship.

3. There never was any division between the C.P. and the C.L.P. on fundamental communist principles. The fact of the two parties is accounted for primarily by the inadequate Left Wing organization work within the Socialist Party, and particularly by the withdrawal from the Left Wing Conference of the Federations and the Michigan representatives. The split occurred only on the question of the method of starting a Communist Party, and of Federation control of the Left Wing Council.

The differences between the two party programs are differences merely in the form of expression. The C.L.P. members have always avowed themselves in agreement with our principles, and the acceptance of the C.P. program by the C.L.P. committee would be in conformity with all the declarations of their membership. It could not be honestly contended that the C.L.P. committee could not act for its members on this point.

5. Unity with the C.L.P. would aid in bringing the Communist movement into contact with the American workers. For instance, the C.P. has hardly any English-

speaking membership and no prospects of doing any organization work west of the Mississippi.

6. Unity at this time by action of the committees, instead of waiting for a convention, is warranted by the new problems of organization created by the government's attack upon both parties.

7. Immediate unity is important also because of the miserable provocateur attempts of the Socialist Party to take advantage of the hard situation of the Communists.

8. Failure to achieve quick and effective organization means future of C.P. as playing of a small group of hair-splitting doctrinaires and feverish talk-conspirators. It means a duplication of the S.L.P. history. Unity with the C.L.P. would constitute a measurable advance in actual Communist organization in the United States; it would be an assurance that the C.P. really means to build a functioning organization.

9. Unity of these two parties would be a splendid fighting response to the smashing government persecutions. Unity six months from now will be a dead issue unless there is effective offset to the demoralization accompanying the raids and arrests.

10. Unity will add prestige to the Communist Party in the eyes of the European parties belonging to the Third International. The European Communists have been prevented from putting proper trust in the Communist Party because of the existence of two parties, accepting affiliation and the principles and tactics of the Third International.

The following letter from the National Executive Committee of the C.L.P., in reply to our last proposal for a convention, was also submitted:

March 9.

Central Executive Committee—Communist Party of America.

Comrades:

The National Executive Committee of the Communist Labor Party learns with regret that the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party has again refused the opportunity to unite all Communist forces in the United States under one banner.

No other interpretation can be placed upon the proposal by the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party to hold a convention, in view of their insistence that "as a basis for the convention tentative acceptance of the Communist Party constitution setting forth the fundamental relationship of the Language Federations within the party is essential."

The form of language federations has been one of the essential points of difference between the two parties. The fact that a small clique through their control of the autonomous federation groups controlled the Communist Party Convention in Chicago prevented unity of all the Communist elements there. But now that the governmental persecution has forced both parties to ignore the constitutions that they adopted last fall, now that the Communist Party constitution regarding federations, it is senseless and silly to bring acceptance of these principles as an essential preliminary to unity of Communist forces. The assumption is justified that they are trotted out rather as an obstacle to unity, so as to perpetuate the small clique control of the Communist Party by the present majority of the Communist Party's Central Executive Committee.

(Continued on page 8)

In another few weeks this machinery will be working smoothly everywhere. Three or four districts are already thoroughly reorganized. Then the work of propaganda and the attack upon capitalism will go ahead full speed and the tools of capitalism will learn that rather than having destroyed the Communist Party they have merely made a stronger and a more dangerous enemy of the existing order.