

# "At Last" The Centrists Unite!

("A CONVENTION OF REVOLUTIONISTS")

("A CONVENTION OF REVOLUTIONISTS") (1)  
 "At last" a copy of the Convention number of the United Centrist Party of America has reached us. Aside from the Program and Constitution of the new party ("minority" and C. L. P.), which we shall review in the next issue, the other two articles require attention. In order to analyze the program and constitution of a party it is necessary to know who drew it, how it was framed and under what circumstances. Therefore an analysis of the United Centrist Convention is both interesting and necessary as throwing light on the program and constitution of the new party.

There are two articles on the convention, dealing with it from two different angles. One, evidently written by Damon, the editor, bears the slogan "AT LAST"; the other bears the euphonious title of "A CONVENTION OF REVOLUTIONISTS," signed Y. F., the associate editor. Indeed it was unnecessary to sign his name, for it bears all the earmarks of the notorious author of "Has It Been Worth While?"

## "AT LAST"

Damon's article, as the title implies, is a sickening-sweet, sentimental sigh of relief that "unity" has "at last" been achieved. He shuts his eyes to everything but the accomplished fact of the "merger" of the two groups. And well he may. For no Communist can read the story of that convention without realizing that the only "unity" achieved has been one of name only. The groupings within the convention remain the same—neither side having given up an iota, either in principles or "control," of the new organization. A Central Executive Committee composed of ten members, five "minority" and five C. L. P., and ten alternates, five "minority" and five C. L. P.—"minority" alternate to take the place of "minority" C. E. C. vacancy and C. L. P. alternate to take the place of C. L. P. vacancy—gives a glowing illustration of the kind of "unity" achieved.

But Damon gives a sigh and sighs "at last." His mission in the Communist movement, he feels has been accomplished. "Unity," of a sort, has been achieved, praise the Lord and Damon! The torture of his seven month's sojourn with the Communist Party, especially with the "super-bolsheviks" and "great theorists" of the C. E. C.—his artificially prepared "split"—his stealing of party funds and property—his renunciation of Communist principles and tactics (as published in first two statements of the "minority" subsequent to the split)—everything "has been worth while" now that "unity" has been accomplished! Poor fellow! The mountain labored and brought forth a mouse.

The "minority" and C. L. P. leaders are politicians of a very low order; with the cunning of their type—having noticed how Hilquit and Berger had stamped the S. P. convention by mere device of unveiling a life-size portrait of Debs at the right time—they conceived of a similar scheme to whip up an artificial enthusiasm and stampede the delegates for "unity." What Debs was to the S. P. convention, "unity" was to the United Centrist convention. But let Damon describe this delicious scene himself: "When after meeting as separate groups for a day the delegates from the two organizations were united, there quickly appeared upon the breasts of most of the delegates the words 'AT LAST' in great black letters. A circular bearing that caption had been distributed among the delegates and the words had been torn from it to give expression to their sentiment."

Damon then goes to prove how many meanings these words "AT LAST" have, until one begins to feel that this "new slogan" has as many meanings, as "mass action" has to Damon in the course of his meteoric career in the Communist movement.

"The United Communist Party makes no pretense of legality. It has attempted to express the fundamental Communist principles in a way to make them pass the censorship of its bitter enemy," says our heroic "liquidator." Behind this apparently innocent remark—aside from the very obvious attempt to make a virtue of necessity—lies the clue to the manner in which they framed their program. On one side a number of delegates, conscious of the Centrist tendencies of their leaders and highly distrustful to them,—prodded by the merciless criticism of the "majority,"—were determined to make the program Communist to the best of their ability; on the other side, the leaders, who receded inch by inch from their own well-known positions under the threats of bolts and splits—and who only accepted the situation because, not to have accepted it would have meant political oblivion for them. Damon's guilty conscience speaks in that last-quoted paragraph.

## LIGHTNING-CHANGE ARTIST DAMON

That the program was framed by the leaders with the view of averting a split in their own ranks, and to ward off criticism by the "majority"—and not with a clear, sound knowledge of Communism, is forcefully illustrated in the following quotation from Damon's article—which proves that their chief theoretician—Editor-in-Chief of their national organs—and presumably the leading light in the Convention, is not clear on Communism himself.

"The program of the party declares that the final struggle between the workers and the capitalists, between the exploited and the exploiters, will take the form of civil war, and that it is the function of the United Communist Party systematically to familiarize the working class with the necessity of armed insurrection as the only means through which the capitalist government and the capitalist system can be overthrown." (Italics ours, Ed.)

In the first place compare the foregoing with Damon's own statement speaking for the "minority" just prior to the "unity convention."

"In carrying on the work of agitation and education on the question of armed insurrection the social and industrial conditions must be considered. To talk to the workers about arming themselves and armed insurrection at a time when the masses are still without any revolutionary consciousness is to make a farce of and discredit Communism and shows a fundamental lack of understanding of Communist principles."

"While the 'minority' will work for a clear expression on this point in the party program and in the literature explaining Communist principles, it will consider the circumstances in each given case and the general development of the revolutionary consciousness of the masses in deciding whether the propaganda for armed insurrection shall be spread among them."

How comes this sudden change in Damon & Co.? Is it possible for them to have changed overnight on so fundamental a question? If so, whom are we to believe? Damon of the "minority," or Damon of the United Centrist Party?

This was one of the important issues between the "majority" and the "minority" in the recent controversy within the Communist Party, and one of the causes behind the "split." We were accused of doing "agent-provocateur" work, of being "closest philosophers," "Big Bluff of Bolshevism," etc., just because we stated our position uncompromisingly on the question and nature of "force" in relation to the proletarian revolution and its propaganda

to the masses systematically and persistently, as one of the cardinal points of the Communist program. Yet these same opponents of ours—Centrists in character and tendency—have now apparently completely reversed themselves on this question. What does it mean? It means that when Centrists begin to use revolutionary phrases they are most dangerous. As Lenin says: "These men are apt to recognize anything and sign anything only in order to remain at the head of the working class movement. Kautzky already says that he is not opposed to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, French Social-patriots and 'Centrists' also sign under the resolution for Dictatorship of the Proletariat. They do not deserve any confidence."

Damon & Co. will betray the rank and file of the U. C. P. when the time comes just as they betrayed the rank and file of the Communist Party at the crucial moment of the organization. As a matter of fact, they have already betrayed that membership which followed them out of the Communist Party in the belief that these leaders would fight for the position enunciated in the statements issued by the "minority." Damon & Co., it has been amply proved, have no position of their own—they are ready to accept any position that will place the power of the organization in their hands.

While on this question we may mention that the fact that Damon, Isaacs & Co. and the old Centrist leaders of the C. L. P. are still in control of the new party is sufficient proof of the Centrist character of that organization. A real Communist party would never again TRUST men of such well-known opportunist tendencies, much less entrust the organization into their hands. These leaders are of the type of the MacDonalds, Longuets, Kautzkys, revolutionary in words and opportunist in deeds—leaders who possess the ideology of the Second International while mouthing the phrases of the Third International. Any party which consciously and deliberately elects them as their leaders is a party which has not yet cut the umbilical cord which still holds them to the ideology of the Second International their "revolutionary" program to the contrary notwithstanding.

Note how Damon (in the last quotation from "AT LAST") already distorts the concept of the final struggle: He says that the final struggle takes place "between the workers and the capitalists, between the exploited and the exploiters." How about the capitalist State? Will it be a private war between the workers and the capitalists leaving the capitalist State somewhere on the side—"neutral"? Will the capitalists arm themselves and go out and fight the armed workers, or will they employ the armed forces of the capitalist State—the police, the army, the navy, the bureaucracy, the stool-pigeons, the thugs and gunmen and the whole horde of mercenaries and supporters at their command?

The whole question of force in the revolution is related to and inseparable from the State. Damon does not know or pretends not to know. And in view of his previous accusation of "agent-provocateur" at the C. E. C. of the Communist Party on the question, we are inclined to believe he does know but is opposed to it.

In that same quotation is another glaring illustration of his lack of understanding of Communist principles; he speaks of the capitalist system also being overthrown by armed insurrection. The capitalist system is not overthrown by armed insurrection,—only the capitalist State can be thus overthrown. The capitalist system is abolished in and through the process of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, the suppression of the bourgeoisie as a class, the nationalizing of the banks and industries and building up of the workers' own economic administration of production. This process is long and arduous, including all that is known as the transitory period from capitalism to Communism.

Similar mistakes, discrepancies and omissions abound in the program of the U. C. P., and in which Damon undoubtedly, had a great hand in formulating. In general, it is an unbalanced, uncorrelated structure exposing in itself a lack of clarity and understanding of Communist principles. The United Centrists still do not fully understand Communist principles and tactics. They still play with revolutionary phrases—as Damon does in his article—still give "lip-service" to the revolution in words but in practice recede from it...

## "NOW SO BLIND..."

There is little more of interest in Damon's article except a few bragart phrases which mean nothing at all and have been placed there obviously for effect. For instance: "While there still remains outside of the united party a faction made up of part of the language groups, the logic of the situation will compel them to join the united party or bring about the disintegration of their organizations."

As if the Communist Party of America no longer exists just because Damon & Co. ignominiously split away! Damon has always proved himself a good business man—he computes Communism in terms of dollars and cents or membership—depending upon the occasion. When he was about to split away from the C. P., he bragged about the wonderful organizing capacity and what a good Communist Fisher was, because he collected more than five thousand dollars for the National Office. After the split, when he had stolen the party funds in his possession, the five thousand dollars collected by Fisher suddenly turned out to be nothing more than loans which had to be repaid to the Chicago District Committee. Similarly when he threatened to split in the C. E. C. he stated with magnificent gestures that it was morally certain that the overwhelming majority of the party membership would stand with him as against the C. E. C. (he had no way of proving it at the time, but we have since proved to him where the membership stood, to his very evident discomfiture). But now, that he has united with the C. L. P., and bargained for 32 delegates against the 25 of the C. L. P. he must need keep up the bluff, that he carried the major part of the membership of the C. P. with him into the united centrists. That it is a lie doesn't matter to Damon so long as he thinks it will help him crush the Communist Party—The "Big Bluff of Bolshevism"—which he so thoroughly hates and detests because it is usually right and has proved him wrong on all questions.

"THE CONVENTION OF REVOLUTIONISTS"  
 We now come to the more interesting of the two articles. Damon writes of the centrist convention like he who has "at last" found the land of the heart's desire—the Centrist swamp. Y. F. makes no such pretenses. He has no illusions about the still-born monstrosity he helped to create, but, like one who is compelled to acknowledge its authorship much against his will. Not being a Communist he dislikes it for the reason that it even pretends to be a Communist organization. His heart still yearns for the "Left Wing conquest of the Communist Party"—for a re-transformation of the Communist Party into the Left Wing of a year ago—with its delightfully hazy, utterly non-Communist conceits and atmosphere.

But, poor chap, he is in the grip of forces and currents too powerful to cope with and must needs go along. But he serves notice in his article—in the lines as well as between the lines—that Y. F. of "HAS IT BEEN WORTH WHILE?" fame is still the same old Y. F. In its frank attack upon the U. C. P. one is almost tempted to believe that an enemy of the U. C. P. had written it instead of one of its sacred founders. The old proverb, "preserve me from my friends, I will take care of my enemies" is aptly illustrated in the case of Y. F.

Indeed, Y. F. is an incorrigible Left Winger! Note the title of his article—"THE CONVENTION OF REVOLUTIONISTS." What kind of revolutionists? There are bourgeois revolutionists, anarchist who call themselves revolutionists, yellow Socialists who style themselves revolutionists and Centrists who think they are revolutionists. Y. F. in using this indefinite, entirely non-Communist term "revolutionists," permits the reader his own choice. And the reader, if he is a Communist, after going through his article, concludes that if it was a convention of "revolutionists"—it was a convention of Centrist "revolutionists."

## Y. F. GIVES SOME INSIDE STUFF

His introduction, giving a survey of the Communist movement in this country during the last year is a gem in itself. One wonders if he is in earnest—is he sarcastic—or, is he just "playful," a condition from which he states the "unity convention" suffered during its seven days when it was not engaged in "uniting" through the process of "splitting" every day, and every session.

Then a grandiloquent gesture—"Sometime recently, somewhere between the Atlantic and Pacific, between the Gulf and the Great Lakes, two groups of elected delegates assembled as the Unity Conference..." He then proceeds to dip into the convention. Its a cold plunge and reader shivers as he flops into the frigid atmosphere of the "unity convention." Let us follow him.

In spite of the fact that these delegates came together on a call for a "Unity Conference" in spite of the realization of the fearful blow it would be to the Communist movement in this country if unity were not at once achieved, it was not until noon of the seventh day that this issue was decided conclusively.

What? In spite of the placards "AT LAST" on the breasts of the delegates? Funny kind of "unity convention" this. What was the reason? Listen to Y. F.:

"Neither side was fully conscious of the undercurrent of sentiment on the other side. Factional controversies (he probably means the issue of principles—but Y. F. never talks of principles in controversies, controversies are always factional; this is a typical bourgeois intellectual viewpoint. Ed.) of nearly a year's standing surcharged the atmosphere with suspicion—suspicion not only across the lines but within each camp. (No wonder, with such recognized and well-known Centrist leaders as Damon Isaacs & Co. in their midst. Ed.) None of the delegates were willing to surrender their reservations (he means their suspicions of the leaders. Ed.) until after a long series of debates, some of little intrinsic importance, many on basic questions of Communist understanding—questions which had never before been really faced in the United States." (Italics ours, Ed.)

Really, that last remark is a crusher. They have evidently discovered or invented a new, American brand of Communism—"copyrighted, patent applied for—infringements will be punished to the full extent of the law."

## CAUCUSES

All the sessions of the delegates, both as separate bodies and as a "unity convention" developed into caucus action, despite the early decision of the "unity convention" to abolish caucuses and in spite of the "minority's" abhorrence of "caucuses" and "packed conventions," about which they raised such a loud wall against the "majority" in the Communist Party. How Damon, Isaacs, Fisher and Kasbeck used to thunder against "caucuses"! It was "treason" for the "majority" to "caucus" in a Communist Party—Kasbeck even went so far as to call it "counter-revolutionary." How about "caucuses," members of the United Centrist Party of America?

## FIRST SESSION.

As soon as the first joint session opened, a bolt of nine or ten delegates from the "minority" seemed imminent because the leaders wanted to proceed to the election of committees and these "irreconcilables" wanted to take up the program first. These nine or ten were evidently the "left elements" of the "minority" who had learnt from the criticism of the "majority" and were suspicious of the leaders of both sides. They wanted to see how the convention would act on the question of "mass action", etc., before they gave their consent to remain with the convention. They were defeated on the motion, but in order to avert a split with motion was reconsidered and the program was next taken up. By the way this business of re-introducing defeated motions was the constant "order of business" at the "unity convention" from the first day to the last in order to keep the various antagonistic factions from splitting away.

In the following paragraph Y. F. is at his best. His humor is infectious and his sarcasm keen as a blade.—we wonder if the members of the United Centrist Party also see the joke.

"The opening debates were sparring matches, with a strong undercurrent of nervousness. Three score persons, engaged in a criminal conspiracy, spent two hours to decide whether capitalism breaks down in that it fails to 'produce' the needs of life, or whether the collapse is due to the failure to 'provide.' After considerable uncertainty (italics ours, Ed.) the argument prevailed that capitalism, in spite of all its equipment, stultifies production; the wheels of industry turn only at the call of profit, regardless of all capabilities for production; crisis or no crisis, capitalism has never functioned to 'provide' the needs of the masses..."

In the playfulness of another premature relaxation and the forestalling of another pre-mature clash. This was the safe way of "getting acquainted"—the suppressed form of the struggle for unity."

After you have stopped laughing at this sally, you realize what Y. F. meant when he said that this convention discussed "questions which had never before been really faced in United States." Indeed, we make bold to say that this question was never before discussed in any convention in the Communist movement, not even by the Communist International!

There is just one little discordant note there however. Y. F. you must remember is a lawyer, with a bourgeois intellectual mind, so he naturally cannot free himself from bourgeois phraseology. His reference to a so-called Communist convention as a "criminal conspiracy" is not merely sarcasm. Y. F. still secretly holds to his old belief in "legality"—his formal acceptance of the U. C. P. apparently "illegal" position to the contrary notwithstanding. To have any organization functioning underground is a criminal conspiracy.

So ended the first day's session with "unity" six days off. Now let us read about the second day. It was as peaceful as a "unity convention" of Kilkenny cats.

## THE MAKING OF THE PROGRAM

"Restrained resentment and suspicion broke loose into a furious storm during the next session. At the first statement in the program (a typically

quoted on page 7.)