

Answer of the C. E. C. Communist Party of America

TO COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL APPEAL FOR UNITY.

Dear Comrades:

Your appeal for unity between the Communist Party and the Communist Labor Party, printed in the 9th issue of the "Communist International", has just reached us. Although the situation which existed at the time you formulated your appeal no longer obtains although an entirely new problem of uniting the Communist forces in America is on the order of business for the immediate future, we, the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of America feel it our duty to make reply and give an explanation of the events that prevented the consummation of organic unity of all Communist forces in this country.

In the main we fully agree with your appeal for unity—and as we shall prove—have done all in our power to effect organic unity long before your appeal was promulgated. We shall prove that these efforts were sabotaged by a small group of Contrists formerly in our midst, as well as by the trickery and intrigues of the leaders of the C. L. P., who, while loudly protesting for unity were at the same time attempting to "split" the Communist Party and unite only with the splitting-off faction.

Indeed, to present all the facts in detail would require a volume. Fortunately, a representative of the Communist Party is now on the way to you—he may be there by this time—who is thoroughly acquainted with all the facts and amply able to make the whole situation clear to you. However, we shall present the most salient features of the controversy as briefly as possible in this reply so as to clear up some misconceptions regarding the Communist movement in America which your committee holds as evidenced in your appeal.

You say there are "no serious differences" between the two programs (C. P. and C. L. P.). If by this statement, you simply mean that the difference were not great enough to warrant a split, we quite agree. The two programs were not the cause but the result of the split which had already been accomplished by the remnants of the Left Wing group who were opposed to the formation of a Communist Party altogether. However, it would be futile to discuss two programs which are now mere historic memories and obsolete as far as all practical purposes go.

You also state that "the split brings much harm to the Communist movement in America." While we recognize the value of Communist unity in every country, still, we feel that there are some things which are infinitely more important than unity in itself. At a particular stage of the Communist movement, especially in the propaganda stage of its existence, clarity of principles and tactics, organization problems, character of Contrist leadership, the propagation of real Communism to the masses, may and sometimes actually does overshadow the somewhat dubious advantage of a unity which might tend to obscure these fundamental issues.

This is exactly the situation in this country. The split has been beneficial rather than harmful for it helped to clear up a great many problems which would inevitably have demanded solution at some future time and created a division of forces which real organic unity was imperative. We need only cite the internal condition of the Italian Socialist Party which is entering upon a "revolutionary situation" in the near future, with many weighty party problems still unresolved, which can only tend to confusion and a break in the unity of the revolutionary ranks when such confusion will actually be "harmful".

The following paragraphs in your appeal is not a true index of the Communist movement in America at the present time. Were it so, the Communist Party would be the first to strain all its energies to effect immediate unity, even sacrificing some conditions which at present it considers important, and which, we are sure, you will agree with as soon as it comes to your attention. We quote:

"The necessity for immediate unity is dictated also by the fact that the two parties represent, so to say, difference sides of the Communist movement in America, which could well supplement each other, in one party. (C. P. A.) are mainly the language elements united in the so-called 'national federalists'. The other party (C. L. P.) represents mainly the American nor English-speaking elements. If the first are, on the one hand, often better trained theoretically and are more closely connected with the traditions of the revolutionary struggle of the working class in Russia, they are, on the other hand, much less connected with the mass movement and the mass organizations of the American workers, who are gradually entering the broad road of the class struggle."

If the elements of the C. L. P. have not as yet gone through a similar theoretical school, they have the advantage that through them the party can most easily, exert its influence on the great masses of the actual American workers, who, in the coming decisive battles, will play the most part.

"One of the one hand propaganda is best developed; on the other agitation."

"Thus the two parties naturally supplement each other and only by bringing them together will it be possible to create a strong Communist Party in America, which is to become the leader of the mass movement and the approaching Communist revolution."

We have quoted these paragraphs in full as they contain the gross misconceptions

of the relative component elements in the two parties, even today, when the C. L. P. has "merged" with a fraction of the Communist Party. Most probably these "facts" were given your committee in order to prejudice the Communist Party in your eyes, but it is so far from the actual facts that even the C. L. P. will not dare deny it. The relative strength of the American elements in both parties were, and are, the same. The overwhelming majority of the membership of both parties are the "foreign-speaking" elements. The English speaking elements in both parties are manifestly conspicuous for their absence. This is the deplorable truth unacknowledged by wish or fancy.

But this condition is not as alarming as appears at first glance, nor does it warrant the assumption that the Communist movement is lacking in American elements because of neglect to propagandize them. The ratio of American or English-speaking membership to "foreign" membership in the Communist movement is approximately parallel to the ratio of American or English-speaking workers to the "foreign" workers in the basic industries where most of unskilled or semi-skilled workers are employed. We cannot hope ever to change the preponderance of "foreign" membership in the Communist Party so long as the great mass of the working class in America engaged in the basic industries are themselves "foreigners".

Of course, it goes without saying that the American workers in the skilled or clerical trades are either hostile or indifferent to Communism at present. Therefore your assumption that the C. L. P. or the present U. C. P. represents mainly the American or English-speaking workers while the C. P. represents the "foreigners" is totally wrong and has no bearing on the question of unity.

In the next paragraph you lay down the method of bringing about unity in the shortest possible time—the calling of a joint convention and the election of a bureau consisting of an equal number of representatives from both parties for the purpose of co-ordinating their work until the joint convention.

THE C. E. C. OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY FORMULATED JUST THIS PLAN FOR UNITY LONG BEFORE YOUR APPEAL WAS PROMULGATED AS THE FOLLOWING C. E. C. MOTION WILL ATTEST:

New York, March 15th, 1929.
NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, COMMUNIST LABOR PARTY
Comrades:

Your reply to our proposal to hold a JOINT CONVENTION for the purpose of achieving unity of the Communist elements of this country has been received, and has had the careful consideration of our committee.

We will not concern ourselves with the various charges and insinuations in your statement. These are evidently not intended to be taken seriously, but are included merely for the purpose of propaganda, since they do not affect the issues at stake. Our committee has however, again considered your proposal for immediate unity between our committee and yours, and has rejected this proposal by the decisive vote of nine to four. The reason for this rejection is that our committee does not believe that unity attained through such committee action, would attain the permanent Communist unity which we earnestly desire.

As evidence of its desire to achieve such permanent Communist unity, our committee has adopted the following statement:

1. We accept the basis of Communist unity proposed by the Third International, inasmuch as it relates to the rank and file, but we maintain that the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party must be in agreement also on questions of tactics and organization, and since such would not be the case if we merged the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party and the Communist Labor Party, we reject such a merger.

2. We confirm our desire to have unity of both parties achieved through a joint convention.

3. We are ready to set the date for the joint convention at the earliest possible date, and not later than June 15th.

4. The Constitutional relations of the Federations to the party must enter as a part of the call for the joint convention, subject of course to change by the convention.

5. In the meantime we favor co-operation between the two parties whenever desirable and practicable through the Central, District and Local Committees of both parties, subject to the control and approval of the respective Central Executive Committees.

We have elected a joint convention committee of three members with instructions to meet with a similar committee of your organization and to arrange a convention on the following basis:

1. The joint call for the convention must include our Manifesto, Program and Constitutional relations of the federations to the Party.

2. Apportionment of delegates on the basis of dues stamps sold by each organization for the months of October, November and December, the total number of delegates from both organizations not to exceed 25; books of both organizations to be open to the opposite committee members.

3. The election of delegates to be by membership action and to be conducted secretly, and to be nearly as possible alike for both organizations.

4. The quorum to call the convention to order to consist of two-thirds of the delegates elected by each organization.

For ourselves we have adopted the following plan for the election of delegates:

1. We will apportion delegates to our districts on the basis of dues stamps purchased during October, November and December.

2. A convention of each district shall be called in which sub-districts shall be represented by one delegate for each 200 members on the basis of dues stamps purchased for October, November and December. This convention shall elect our delegates and alternates.

3. Nominations for delegates to the district conventions shall be secured from the members by the group organizers. Nominees must be members in the districts in which they are nominated. The names of all nominees shall be represented to the members for vote by the group organizers. The district convention may elect any party member irrespective of the districts.

If your committee really desires unity between the Communists of the United States and is not merely using the plea for unity as a convenient method of propaganda against the Communist Party of America, we trust you will take immediate favorable action on this proposal, and elect your convention committee. Fraternally submitted.

C. E. C. Communist Party of America.

This motion proves that the Communist Party really desired organic Communist unity, and in fact, formulated a similar proposal back in January, which the C. L. P. rejected in favor of a "merger" of both C. E. C.'s.

This proposal is not to be considered as incapable of revision. As matter of fact, during the course of negotiations many of the proposals were changed to meet obstacles that arose in the path of unity.

This proposition fell through because the former Executive Secretary Damon and two members of the C. E. C. of the Communist Party essentially took exception to the Central Executive Committee exercising its power to discipline one of its agents—the Chicago District Organizer—who had been constantly flouting the authority of the C. E. C., who had been lying and spreading false rumors of their misappropriating party funds, and who had been deliberately acting against the decisions and instructions of the C. E. C. on all questions, thus causing distrust, confusion and the breaking of the party discipline in that district. Instead of abiding by the decision of the C. E. C. on this question and waiting for the convention to settle any legitimate differences, if there were any, the former Executive Secretary Damon and the two members of the C. E. C. made common cause with the Chicago District Organizer and threatened to split the party if this decision was carried out.

The majority of the C. E. C. (ten members) faced with this ultimatum a few weeks before the convention, and while unity negotiations were about to be consummated did all in its power to avert the threatened split and offered a compromise basis binding upon the majority and minority of the C. E. C. until the convention.

The majority of the C. E. C. withdrew its decision to expel the Chicago District Organizer, and laid down the following plan which was summarily rejected by the "minority":

STATEMENT OF THE C. E. C. OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY TO THE "MINORITY" GROUP.

Confronted with your determination to split the party if the C. E. C. proceeds with exercising its rights to discipline the Chicago District Committee for attempting secession and to remove the Chicago District Organizer for misrepresenting the views and opposing the policies of the C. E. C., whose representative he is supposed to be, and in view of your opposition, backed by a threat to split the party immediately before a convention, if the C. E. C. remove the present Acting Party Editor, who is an active partisan of the "minority" and cannot therefore be entrusted with editing the organ of the present C. E. C., and

In order to preserve the unity of the party by all means compatible with Communist principles and policies, we propose the following: (1) That the C. E. C. send a special representative to Chicago and other parts of the country if necessary, to investigate conditions and report back to the Executive Council. On the question of appointment and dismissal of District Organizers a majority vote of 5/9 will be necessary in the Executive Council. (2) That the party organ be edited by two editors for the "majority" group and one editor for the "minority" any dispute between the two to be settled by the Executive Council.

Comrade Bunte, who was neutral in this controversy, who sought to reconcile both factions, proposed that on the question of appointment and dismissal of District Organizers a majority of two-thirds (5 out of 7) will be necessary in the Ex. Council, thus assuring a non-factional character of the decision. The majority agreed to this and incorporated it in its statement.

* The regular majority in the Executive Council was 4 (Addrow, Bernstein, Raphael and Saucsa) against 3 with Ex. Sec'y Damon in the minority and two (Bunte and Brown), who did not definitely align themselves with either side.