

We Want An Open Communist Party

TO-DAY, to speak in favor of open propagation of Communist principles by means of a legal political organization, is like carrying coals to New Castle.

It is true, there is, in the Communist Party of America, still a strong sentiment against an open movement.

But in spite of this vehement dissension on the part of certain groups, the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party has found that its first attempt in New York City to organize a vehicle for public Communist propaganda, in response to the instructions issued by the Third (Communist) International, has met with such immediate response that there can be no doubt as to the success of such a move on a national scale.

NOR ARE THERE ANY SERIOUS DIFFERENCES OF OPINION CONCERNING THE THEORETICAL POSITION TO BE ADOPTED.

MUST PROPAGATE PUBLICLY

THE WORKERS' COUNCIL and the groups that it represents have always maintained that Communism can and must be publicly and legally propagated at the present stage of revolutionary development in the United States.

It has opposed going underground for the purpose of teaching insurrection and armed force, because such a course will ultimately make the propaganda of violence and insurrection the aim and object of the organization.

Now that the underground also admits the necessity of public propaganda and is prepared to assist in the establishment of an open party, there will be no difficulty in uniting all of these forces upon a theoretical program that will join under one banner all elements in the United States that support the Third International.

AS A MATTER OF FACT, THE ONLY QUESTION THAT STILL DIVIDES THESE GROUPS FROM COMPLETE AMALGAMATION IS THE QUESTION OF CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF A SECRET ORGANIZATION SIDE BY SIDE WITH THE OPEN PARTY.

MUST ALL WORK TOGETHER

This is by no means an unimportant consideration. The "secret" organization, as it is contemplated by its sponsors, is to act in the capacity of a controlling organ, directing the activities of the public party, representing it internationally, determining its tactics and its principles.

They insist on a system of parallel underground groups whose membership shall, in all important questions, act as a determined unit in the open organization.

In other words, the secret organization is to be the mind and the soul of the public body.

We do not deny that it is easier to maintain political purity in a body that is underground.

ITS VERY METHOD OF ORGANIZATION PRESUPPOSES BLIND FAITH IN ITS LEADERS AND UNQUESTIONED OBEDIENCE TO THEIR DICTATES.

BUT IT IS THE PURITY OF A SECT OF BELIEVERS, AT A TIME WHEN WE NEED THE UNITED THINKING POWER OF EVERY MAN AND WOMAN IN THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT TO STEER US CLEAR OF THE SNAGS AND THE ROCKS THAT HINDER OUR PROGRESS.

CONDITIONS RAPIDLY CHANGING

The greatest leaders have made mistakes.

We are living in a world of adjustments.

Conditions are changing almost hourly. New unforeseen situations are constantly arising.

The greatness of events of the last two years has distorted our vision, has often bereft us of our sense of proportion.

Humanity has changed, and it is often difficult to interpret its temper.

We cannot judge world-events by our old accustomed standards. Our new standard must be adjusted to new conditions.

The movement that is virile and alive will learn by mistakes, will live them down and be the greater for the fact that they have occurred.

But when we give into the hands of a few leaders the power to dictate the policy of an entire movement, these mistakes become dangerous.

They will become more numerous, for there is nothing more salutary than the knowledge that a thousand critical eyes are watching every move that is being undertaken, that a thousand intelligent minds are weighing the "pros" and "cons" of every contemplated action.

DANGERS OF SECRET CONTROL

Their effect is more deadly, for they become an integral part of the organism, poisoning its vitals, laming its effectiveness.

They cannot be so easily remedied, for it is human nature to persist in one's errors at all costs rather than to admit that one has been mistaken.

THE UNDERGROUND FORM OF ORGANIZATION PLACES A PREMIUM ON MEDIOCRITY.

THAT PART OF THE MEMBERSHIP THAT HAS THE DESTINIES OF THE MOVEMENT MOST AT HEART, AND FEELS ITS INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY MOST KEENLY, THAT CAN THINK FOR ITSELF AND SEES THE MISTAKES

THAT ARE BEING MADE, MUST STRUGGLE AGAINST ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE ODDS TO MAKE ITSELF HEARD AND TO MAKE ITS INFLUENCE FELT.

SUCH MEMBERS WILL BECOME DISCOURAGED, WILL BECOME INACTIVE, WILL EVENTUALLY RESIGN, WHERE THEY ARE NOT EXPELLED.

EXECUTIVE OFFICES WILL BE FILLED WITH MEN AND WOMEN WHO WILL TAKE DICTATION, WHO CAN BE RELIED UPON TO CARRY OUT EVERY ORDER THAT IS HANDED DOWN TO THEM.

TOO MUCH DISCIPLINE

"But you must have discipline!"

"Was it not because the Second International was afraid to impose its will upon the national Socialist movements that the great debacle took place in 1914?"

"Is it not the duty of the Third International to keep strict watch over its component parts?"

"Must it not guard against the disruptive influence of those who are anti-revolutionary in thought and action?"

MOST ASSUREDLY!

BUT THERE IS EVER PRESENT THE DANGER THAT DISCIPLINE BECOMES TYRANNY.

MORE THAN ONCE, IN RECENT YEARS, PARTY AUTOCRACIES HAVE USED THEIR POWER TO EXACT OBEDIENCE FROM THE MEMBERSHIP AS A WEAPON AGAINST ITS MOST REVOLUTIONARY MEMBERSHIP.

Karl Liebknecht failed to oppose war-credits in the Reichstag on August 4, 1914, because this fetish of party discipline was still too strongly imbedded in his nature.

Hugo Haase delivered the speech that justified the position of the German social-patriots in the Reichstag, against his own conscience, because he had been taught, for more than a generation, that party discipline must be maintained under all circumstances.

REVOLUTIONARY LABOR HELD BACK

Their failure to break these bonds held back the revolutionary proletariat for years, produced discouragement, while we needed courage, hopelessness where enthusiasm might have won the day.

The American Socialist Party used discipline as its weapon against its own refractory revolutionists. In the name of party discipline local after local was

expelled and delegates thrown out of the convention.

The comrades who are prepared to join the open Communist movement will have little patience with such methods.

Many of them are workers who went enthusiastically into one or the other of the Communist parties in 1919, only to leave, after they had united, because membership in the United Communist Party, as well as in the Communist Party, entailed a degree of self-abnegation and submission to authority that they were unwilling to tolerate.

"But you will lose control of your organization if you throw it open to the entire working class, unless you have beside it a secret body of tried Communists who will keep it politically sound."

"As the movement becomes larger you will have to deal with political demagogues, with would-be office-holders, who will destroy its revolutionary spirit with their opportunism."

LET US BE CALM

Be calm, comrades!

Our movement will not grow so rapidly that the education of its new members will not be able to keep pace with it.

Let us concentrate our effort upon our open organization, and there will be no need for outside control.

The party that must be controlled from without is not worth having.

THE MOVEMENT WHOSE MEMBERSHIP UNDERSTANDS SO LITTLE OF ITS IDEALS AND PURPOSES AS TO NEED THE WATCHFUL EYE OF A SECRET CAUCUS, IS A MENACE TO THE WORLD-REVOLUTION AND SHOULD BE ABANDONED.

A clear-cut program that places the party unequivocally among the world's revolutionary movements, political campaigns that are straight and do not subordinate the revolutionary purpose of the movement to the need of getting votes, a press that does not make concessions to its readers, these must be our safeguards.

DOOMED BY TOO MUCH CARE

Just as a child will not become self-reliant so long as it is kept under the watchful eye of its mother, so must our movement grow up free from the surveillance of the parent body, free from a guardianship that will doom it from the outset to ineffectiveness.

OUR UNDERGROUND BROTHERS ARE PLANNING A SORT OF RADICAL PARTY UNDER COMMUNIST DIRECTIONS.

WE WANT AN OPEN COMMUNIST PARTY.