
Partial Minutes of the Meeting of the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of America [New York — April 15-19, 1920]

A document in the Comintern Archive, RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 31, ll. 20-21.

INTRODUCTION: The minutes of the first part of the meeting were kept by Executive Secretary Damon [C.E. Ruthenberg], and have not yet been turned over to the CEC. The following is just a brief statement of the outstanding facts made from memory.

The meeting was called to order in the evening, April 15 [1920].

Present: Damon [Ruthenberg], Bunte [Charles Dirba], Braun [Latvian Federationist], Sasha [Rose Pastor Stokes], Andrew [Nicholas Hourwich], Raphael [Alexander Bittelman], Bernstein [Max Cohen], Myers [Walter Karath], Alden [=???], Langley [Jay Lovestone], Ries [John Ballam], and Kasbeck [Alex Georgian] — CEC; Smith [Marion Sproule], Henry [George Ashkenuzi], Wood [Croatian Federationist], Davey [=???], and Fisher [Leonid Belsky] — District Organizers; Palmer [William Reynolds, Estonian Federation], Reivert [Fritz Friedman, German Federation], Cornell [=???], Baltic [Latvian Federationist], Burba [Lithuanian Federationist], Field [Russian Federationist], and [George] Legun [Ukrainian Federation] — Federations. †

As the first order of business, the minutes of the previous meeting of the CEC were extensively corrected and adopted. A written protest against the bias with which they had been written was made by 7 members of the CEC.

Then a representative of the Executive Council and the Executive Secretary [Ruthenberg] gave reports

to the crisis threatening the party with split.

“Minority” group submitted a statement presenting certain demands as an ultimatum, upon which it was decided to let each side hold conferences to try to settle the controversy by negotiations.

These negotiations lasted until Sunday afternoon, April 18 [1920], when the two sides came to a deadlock: “Minority” [Ruthenberg group] insisting upon abrogating the authority of the CEC as to removing District Organizers, and giving it only limited space in *The Communist*, while the “Majority” [Hourwich group] was willing to relinquish factional control of the Executive Council, but not to impair the authority of the central bodies, and demanded equal rights on *The Communist*.

Minutes of Meeting Beginning Sunday Afternoon, April 18 [1920].

Then Comrade Bunte [Dirba], who with Braun [=???] and Alden [=???] had not joined either side up till then (in order to act as conciliators), proposed that the CEC meeting should now be resumed to deal with situation.

At this point Comrade Damon [Ruthenberg], the Executive Secretary, refused to take part in the meeting of the CEC and refused to recognize the authority of the CEC.

Then Acting Secretary Bunte [Dirba] called the meeting to order and asked all those who recognized the CEC and wanted to take part in its meeting to

† — Dirba seems to accidentally omit the presence of “Tylny” [Joseph Kowalski] as representative of the Polish Federation, whose name appears below in the minutes.

remain, while those who did not should withdraw.

Remained — Bernstein [Cohen], Myers [Karath], Ries [Ballam], Bunte [Dirba], Braun [=???], Sasha [Stokes], Andrew [Hourwich], Raphael [Bittelman] of CEC (Absent members Black [=???] and Alden [=???] joining in the next session); and further — Field [=???], Russian; Burba [=???], Lithuanian; Baltic [=???], Lettish [Latvian]; Henry [Ashkenuzi], District III [Philadelphia]. CEC members Bernstein [Cohen] and Ries [Ballam] also represented Districts II [New York] and IVb [Pittsburgh], respectively.

Withdrew — Damon [Ruthenberg], Langley [Lovestone], and Kasbeck [Georgian] of CEC; Palmer [Reynolds], Estonian; Reivert [Friedman], German; Tylny [Kowalski], Polish; Smith [Sproule], District I [Boston], Wood [=???], District IVa [Cleveland]; Davey [=???], District IVc [Pittsburgh]; and Fisher [Belsky], District V [Chicago].

Ries [Ballam] was elected chairman.

Raphael [Bittelman] presented his resignation from the CEC, reserving submission of explanations either to the Executive Council or to the Secretary.

Motion: To refer the resignation to the Executive Council. *Carried.*

Raphael [Bittelman] stated that he will not participate in the deliberations.

Order of business was accepted as follows: (1) Statement to the membership and to the Federation and District officials; (2) Demand on the Executive Secretary [Ruthenberg]; (3) Press; (4) District Organizers; (5) Finance; (6) Convention; (7) International Relations; (8) New Business.

Motion: To elect committee of 3 to draw up the statement to the membership. *Carried.*

Nominations: Bunte [Dirba], Andrew [Hourwich], Bernstein [Cohen], and Sasha [Stokes].

Motion: To let the committee consist of all 4. *Carried.*

Motion: To let the same committee draw up the statement to the Federation and District officials. *Carried.*

Motion: To instruct the Acting Secretary [Dirba]

to send to the Executive Secretary [Ruthenberg] request to notify us in writing whether he will recognize the authority of the CEC; and, if not, that we demand of him to turn over all property of the Communist Party — records, funds, etc. — to the Acting Secretary for the CEC. *Carried.*

Motion: That committee of 2, Bunte [Dirba] and Sasha [Stokes], go to the Russian Federation Central Committee meeting to report on the situation. *Carried.*

Motion: That committee of 2, Bernstein [Cohen] and Ries [Ballam], go to Jewish Federation Central Committee meeting to report on the situation. *Carried.*

Motion: To adjourn to meet next day, Monday [April 19, 1920] at 12 o'clock. *Motion carried.*

• • • • •

Meeting April 19, 1920.

Chairman — Bernstein [Cohen].

Present — Myers [Karath], Andrew [Hourwich], Bernstein [Cohen], Braun [=???], Alden [=???], Bunte [Dirba], Black [=???], and Ries [Ballam] — CEC; and Burba [=???], Lithuanian; Baltic [=???], Lettish [Latvian]; Henry [Ashkenuzi], District III [Philadelphia].

Motion: To notify the next two alternates (there being no more left), Comrades B. [=???] and M. [=???], to come and take the vacancies on the CEC caused by the withdrawal of Damon [Ruthenberg], Langley [Lovestone], and Kasbeck [Georgian]. *Carried.*

Statement to Federation and District officials approved as drawn up by committee — with a few amendments.

Report of Bunte [Dirba] on Russian Federation Central Committee Meeting: Unanimously voted adherence to the CEC, and paid \$400 on account. *Accepted.*

Report of Bernstein [Cohen] on Jewish Federa-

tion Central Committee Meeting: One voted for the [Ruthenberg] "Minority," 3 for the CEC, and 5 for neutrality, withdrawing District Organizers and reserving final decision for the future. *Report accepted.*

Motion: To send a committee of 2, Bunte [Dirba] and Andrew [Hourwich], to the next meeting of the Jewish Federation Central Committee again, and also to the Lithuanian Federation Central Committee, to present fully the position of the CEC of the Party. *Carried.*

Motion: To instruct our District Organizers to attend membership meetings in their districts to present the position of the CEC. *Carried.*

Press.

Motion: Immediately to elect a temporary Editor and an Editorial Board of 3, to proceed to issue the next number of *The Communist* as soon as possible. *Carried.*

Elections — made after the appointment of District Organizers — resulted as follows: Editor — Bernstein [Cohen]; Editorial Board — Andrew [Hourwich], Sasha [Stokes], and Bunte [Dirba].

Motion (made after the elections): That one member of the Board be a paid member. *Carried.*

District Organizers.

Motion: To combine Districts IVa [Cleveland] and IVb [Pittsburgh], to make up Cleveland District, with Ries [Ballam] as organizer. *Carried.*

Final appointments resulted as follows: I [Boston] — MN [=???]; II [New York] — Bernstein [Cohen]; III [Philadelphia] — Henry [Ashkenuzi]; IVa&b [Cleveland] — Ries [Ballam]; IVc — Open (referred to Executive Council until after report from Myers [Walter Karath]); V [Chicago] — Myers [Karath].

Statement to membership — not ready yet.

Motion: To discuss the outline of the statement

and to refer its adoption in final form to the Executive Council. Carried. It was understood that it must go out not later than Wednesday [April 21, 1920].

Outline of statement — submitted, discussed, and approved.

Finance.

Motion: To appeal to the Lettish [Latvian] and Lithuanian Federations to contribute or pay on account as much as they can. *Carried.*

Motion: To send out a letter urging the raising of funds by any means possible. *Carried.*

Motion: Next meetings of groups to take up collections for the organization fund of the Party and to send them in right away. *Carried.*

Convention.

Motion: That we fill vacancies on the Joint Convention Committee to proceed with the arrangements with the CLP. *Carried.*

Election: Bunte [Dirba] and Andrew [Hourwich] (to replace Damon [Ruthenberg] and Raphael [Bittelman]), Bernstein [Cohen] (old member).

Motion: In case CLP refuses to continue, we instruct the Executive Council to proceed with all necessary arrangements for the Convention of the Communist Party, changing the basis of representation if necessary. *Motion carried.*

International Relations.

Motion: To instruct Executive Council, through the Committee on International Relations, to inform Amsterdam Bureau [of the Communist International] of the latest developments. *Carried.*

New Business.

Motion: To fill the two vacancies on the Executive Council. *Carried.*

Elected: Alden [=???] and Black [=???] (to replace

Damon [Ruthenberg] and Raphael [Bittelman]).

Marsoff [=??] — alternate.

Motion: That the next meeting of the CEC be held about the 20th of May. *Carried.*

Motion: To adjourn. *Carried.*

D. Bunte [Charles Dirba],
Acting Secretary.

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport.

Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2011. • Non-commercial reproduction permitted.