
Statement on the Present Situation to the Boston District Organization of the CPA, May 14, 1920.

by C.E. Ruthenberg

A document in the Hoover Institution Archives, Jay Lovestone Papers, box 203, folder 3.

May 14, 1920.

The Convention.

The National Convention of the party called by the “minority” group will be held on the date given to the District Organizer. This convention has the practically unanimous support of the Chicago District (including Detroit and Pittsburgh), a majority of the members of the Philadelphia District, and about half the members of the New York District. As to the Boston District you know the situation better than I. There is no question, however, that from 60 to 75% of the entire membership of the party will be represented in this convention.

In addition to being a convention of the Communist Party the convention will take the form of a unity conference with the CLP. If after discussing the question of principle and program the two groups of delegates find that they are in agreement, they will be combined with such proportional representation as may be agreed upon, as a unity convention to adopt the program, manifesto, and constitution for the united parties, and to elect officials of the party.

The Majority Group of the CEC.

The majority group of the CEC refused to enter into negotiations for a joint call for a convention until after the “minority” call had been withdrawn. Our answer was that we were ready to enter negotiations on all questions, including that of the date of the convention, but refused to withdraw our call and stop the work of preparation until after a joint call had been

agreed upon. The reply of the “majority” was obviously intended to stop our preparations for a convention and thus delay the possibility of holding a convention, even though negotiations for a joint call were unsuccessful. We refused to walk into this trap.

The “majority” group, with the support of possibly from 25 to 40% of the membership, will not participate in our convention. It is proposed that the convention shall lay down the terms on which the CEC of the united party — if unity is achieved — will authorize to deal with this “group.”

What Is To Be Done.

Under the existing conditions and in view of the impossibility of the two groups into which the party has been split coming to any agreement, the only course of action for each unit of the party is to decide which group it will support and to align itself accordingly. It is unfortunate that no other course of action is open, but the internal struggle has reached a stage that makes a decision necessary by every unit of the organization, and action in accordance with its decision.

If the Boston District Committee does not as a unit support the call for a convention, there is no other course to pursue than that those who favor the convention shall proceed at once to hold the district convention and elect the four delegates from the district, leaving those who are in the opposition to decide upon their own course of action.

The Controversy.

As I am unable to be present at your meeting, I

request the reading of the attached statements, presenting the “minority” view. To these I wish to add the following:

Underground Organization.

Misrepresentation of facts seems to have become a weapon of the “majority” group. Thus for instance the representative of the Lettish [Latvian] Federation, Baltic [=???], is using as an argument that the Executive Secretary [Ruthenberg] opposed underground organization. Coming from a representative of the Lettish [Latvian] Federation, which was the only party organization which tried to establish a legal organization, this statement is particularly amusing. The statement in itself is a downright falsehood. The facts are that I laid the foundation for form of the organization the party has adopted in Cleveland before the Communist Party was organized. The Cleveland organization met the full force of just such an attack as was made on the party in January [1920] during last May and June [1919], after the great May Day demonstration, and the group plan of organization was being worked out in Cleveland, through my initiative, as early as last August.

After the November raids I prepared a circular advocating this plan, which was sent out, or at least ready to be sent out, at the time the January raids took place.

At the January meeting of the CEC I brought in a plan of reorganization on an underground basis, which was adopted with the exception that the centralization of dues collection, which I advocated at that time, was not included.

To argue before the membership that the Executive Secretary opposes underground organization is to indulge in misrepresentation, which proves nothing but the poverty of argument in favor of the “majority” group.

As To Principles.

The attitude of the “minority” on the question

of principles is covered by the attached statement. The “minority” group believes that our statement of principles must be strengthened and not weakened. The question of force and armed insurrection will be dealt with frankly, not in the vague phrases of our present program. If there is unity with the CLP it will be unity on a statement of principles that will be a clearer statement of the Communist program than is contained in the present party declaration of principles, which was written under the handicap of an attempted legality.

In General.

The convention and unity conference means a regrouping and realigning of the Communist elements. It means the uniting of these elements in a party that will have the leadership and organizing ability to build up a strong party organization and at the same time reach the working class of this country with Communist propaganda that they will be able to understand and assimilate. If the Lettish [Latvian], Lithuanian, and that small part of the Russian Federation which is not supporting the “minority” want to have a party consisting of a Federation of two or three Federations, in opposition to the Communist Party, let them try it. While such a division will be regrettable, it will not take long for such a Federation of these Federations to learn that so far as functioning as a Communist organization that will mean anything in the life of the workers of this country is concerned, they are doomed to sterility and impotence. They are doubly doomed under the leadership of the Andrews [Nicholas Hourwiches] and Bernsteins [Maximilian Cohens]. The virile, functioning, fighting Communist Party of America will come out of the convention called by the “minority” group, and those who desire to see a real Communist Party of action and achievement organized should support this convention call.

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