
**Letter to the Central Executive Committee
of the Communist Party of America in New York
from Alfred Wagenknecht, Executive Secretary
of the United Communist Party in New York,
November 5, 1920**

Published in *United Communist Party to the Third International on Unity*. [New York]:
[United Communist Party], circa Nov. 20, 1920; pp. 3-4.

November 3, 1920.

TO THE CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
COMMUNIST PARTY

Comrades:—

The Central Executive Committee of the United Communist Party, after careful consideration of the proposal of the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party relative to the execution of the unity mandate of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, comes to the following conclusions:

1. Unity of the Federation group of the old Communist Party still outside the United Communist Party with the United Communist Party is not the subject for negotiations or agreements with this group, but simply a question of the execution of the imperative mandate imposed upon that group by the authority of the Executive Committee of the Communist International.

To the United Communist Party, as the body through which the Communist International functions in the United States, falls the task of executing this mandate.

In view of this fact, the Central Executive Committee of the United Communist Party considered the plan of an immediate merger without convention as the only proper form of carrying out the spirit and letter of the order of the Communist International. Only the inequities which might attend a merger without convention, because it would result in arbitrarily forcing the liquidation of

the Communist Party and its federations, makes a convention advisable. But even adopting the convention plan as necessary, the Central Executive Committee of the United Communist Party insists upon carrying through the principle of no negotiations or agreements as a prerequisite to unity.

The function of the convention in all matters relative to unity is merely to make the technical arrangements for unity and to facilitate the liquidation of the federated Communist Party.

2. After agreeing upon a convention the Central Executive Committee of the United Communist Party considered the basis for representation for this convention. Two methods were possible: proportional representation based upon dues paying membership or a fixed representation for each party.

The election of delegates by proportional representation would make a majority of Communist Party delegates possible only through manipulations. We understand perfectly that such manipulations are not entirely foreign to the practices of the leadership of the federations.

Such manipulations would readily be facilitated by the form of organization of the Communist Party federations. these federations count as members many elements that conform only nominally to the underground form of organization. many of their members hold membership chiefly for social and nationalistic reasons. Such legal social membership cares more for the federations as social and nationalistic expressions than for the building of a centralized communist organization. Over such legal federation membership the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party wishes to count them as bonafide members and base representation upon them.

The interest of the Communist movement in America imperatively demands of the United Communist party to guard even against the possibility of a manipulated convention majority because:

a) To permit the sectarian and dogmatic spirit of the leadership of the present federation group, known as the Communist Party, to predominate in the Communist movement in the United States would mean to condemn that movement to sterility.

b) The very form of the organization of the Communist Party takes real power out of the hands of the Central Executive Committee of this party, and any convention delegate the Communist Party might elect, and places this power in the hands of the various federa-

tions. The acts of such Communist Party delegates would be subject to ratification or rejection by each federation separately. In view of this, an apparent majority of the Communist Party delegates in any convention would, after the convention is over, simply resolve itself into an insignificant minority. Those whom these delegates nominally represented would not be bound in any way to carry out the convention decisions.

3. The membership figures published by both parties for the months of July, August, and September 1920 show that the United Communist Party has twice as many members as the Communist Party. The United Communist Party, therefore, has no reason whatever to dread a convention on the basis of proportional representation if actual membership figures constituted the basis of electing the delegates. The United Communist Party refuses proportional representation on the ground of principle. The question is not whether the Communist Party is numerically stronger or weaker than the United Communist Party, the fact is that the Communist Party does not represent a centralized party, but only federated factions which must submit themselves to the United Communist Party, since it is the only centralized expression in the United States of the Communist International.

Even though the ratio of 6 to 4 offered to the Communist Party by the United Communist Party is a larger representation than its actual membership would entitle the CP to, we stand on that basis. In demanding it we do not consider the numerical strength or weakness of the Communist Party federation organization, but only its relation to the Communist movement.

Because of the foregoing reasons, we must insist upon all the conditions as laid down in the resolution communicated to you by us. We are ready to unite any time upon the basis we presented.

The welfare of the communist movement in the United States requires that unity be consummated without further delay. The United Communist Party has already built a strong, centralized, and well-disciplined party. Its propaganda, agitation, and educational work is being carried forward upon a scale never approximated in the history of the American Communist movement. We can not be diverted from this constructive work in order to engage in useless negotiations with a faction whose sectarian leaders have talent only for mudslinging and controversy. therefore, unless these terms are complied with, we will call upon the Communist International to take

decisive steps to compel obedience to its mandate for unity and will demand the liquidation of the Communist Party federations and the unconditional affiliation of their groups with the United Communist Party.

Fraternally,

[Alfred Wagenknecht],
Executive Secretary.

**CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE,
UNITED COMMUNIST PARTY OF AMERICA.**

Edited by Tim Davenport

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