
Letter to C.E. Ruthenberg and the WPA Organization Committee in Chicago from John J. Ballam, DO4 [Buffalo], April 14, 1924.

A document in the Comintern Archive, RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 318, l. 73.

April 14, 1924.

Attention Organization Committee CEC

C.E. Ruthenberg
1009 N State St.
Chicago, Ill.

Dear Comrades:

Conditions over which I have no control arising out of the needs of my immediate family make it impossible for me to continue as your District Organizer in District 4 [Buffalo]. † I must therefore ask your committee to accept my resignation to take effect May 18th, 1924. I realize that in accepting your appointment that I incurred responsibilities toward the party that I am duty-bound as a communist to discharge; but I call your attention to the date of my resignation (May 18th) by which time I shall have established a working basis for a state Labor Party and also laid the foundation for a fair representation from my district to the June 17th [Farmer-Labor Party] Convention. I wish to nominate in my place Comrade James Campbell, who needs no commendation from me as you all know him. He has signified his readiness to accept and I do not think you could find a better man for this position. In finding

an able successor and carrying the work through to a definite conclusion in District 4 [Buffalo] I feel that I am in no way neglecting my duty or evading my responsibility to the party.

The needs of my family make it imperative that I live in Boston for at least the next 6 months. I have asked the CEC for the appointment as District Organizer for District 1 [Boston]. There is no good reason why I should not be appointed for party work in that district. I now formally ask for this appointment. The TUEL has no real existence there — the district is far behind in the work on the Labor Party united front action — the district is torn by petty and futile dissension based entirely upon personalities and opposition to your present DO [William Simons] — the headquarters city is my “home town” where I have a wide acquaintance among local labor leaders, liberals, etc., and where I have been active in the Central Labor Union, the local of my union, the SLP, the SP, the IWW. I have a good war record there and a reputation for uncompromising revolutionary activity. ‡ You have not a better comrade for the job and you KNOW it. I have been accused of “factionalism” but you cannot point out a single instance wherein I have acted against the discipline and interests of our party when I accepted its general policy. § When I disagree with the party’s tactics the CEC will be the FIRST to know of

†- Ballam replaced the DO pro tem” in District 4, Peter Hansen, on March 10, 1924. District 4 included all of upstate New York.

‡- By “good war record,” Ballam means consistent opposition to the imperialist slaughter in Europe.

§- This is a comical spinning by Ballam of his arch-factional machinations, including his breaking of discipline and resignation from the CEC of the unified CPA in the fall of 1921 and subsequent leading role in the Central Caucus split of 1921-22. Ballam went to Moscow in January 1922 to argue the merits of his faction and the “Communist Party of America” (as which it styled itself) before the Executive Committee of the Communist International. After several protests and much noise, he only grudgingly came to accept ECCI’s ruling against his faction’s claim of legitimacy. In light of past behavior, Ballam’s claim screams for italicization: “you cannot point out a single instance wherein I have acted against the discipline and interests of our party *when I accepted its general policy.*”

it.

But whether the CEC finds it expedient to appoint me to District 1 or not, I will have to live there and of course will be among the most active comrades.

I trust that you will accept my resignation as DO of Dist. 4 [Buffalo] in the spirit in which it is offered. In this matter and also in reference to work in District 1 [Boston] I request an early decision.

Fraternally yours,

John J. Ballam.

Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.

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