
Report of the Executive Secretary to the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of America, Jan. 18, 1920.

by C.E. Ruthenberg

A handwritten document in the Comintern Archive, f. 515, op. 1, d. 33, ll. 1-18.

The attack upon our organization inaugurated by the national government, assisted in many places by state officials, has created an organization problem which overshadows all other questions now before the party. The government officials took possession of the party headquarters on Jan. 1 and maintained a guard of police and detectives there for a number of days. Warrants for the arrest of everyone connected with the national headquarters were known to have been issued and anyone who went near the headquarters faced the threat of arrest. We were thus cut off from receipt of our mail. At the same time the thousands of arrests in all parts of the country made it impractical to communicate with the party branches, as in most instances the secretary had been taken among those arrested and to write meant that our communications would fall in the hands of government officials.

With the branches cut off from the national office and the national office cut off from the branches, it will readily be seen that it is impossible for the party to function on a national scale until a new organization as nearly as possible beyond the reach of government is created. It is obviously impossible to continue the old lines of division in the new scheme as to meet the situation we face we must have the greatest possible concentration, and this we obviously cannot have as long as our organization is divided into ten federations and these branches function through ten different national executive officials. I do not mean

that the Federations must be entirely abolished, but they cannot any longer serve as the medium through which we reach our membership. Now can we depend upon circular letters mailed to a thousand different addresses as the medium through which to conduct our work? We must concentrate the work so as to reduce the use of the mails to a minimum and yet provide a quick method of reaching the membership. To accomplish this, I submit the following as a broad outline of our future organization plan:—

1. That all branches in given industrial centers shall be organized as an Organization Centre, with a paid secretary under the discipline and control of the national organization in charge. The secretary shall be paid by the Centre, with assistance from the national office where necessary. To illustrate what would constitute such a Centre, the Pittsburgh Centre would include all members in Pittsburgh and towns within a radius of 25 to 30 miles.

2. Branches included in such centres are to transact all their business with the secretary of the centre. Dues stamps would be purchased through the secretary. All literature and papers would be distributed through him.

3. In order to facilitate the transaction of business an executive committee in which each Federation group should have at least one representative shall be organized for each such centre.

4. The Organization Centres shall be com-

bined in district organizations, together with such branches as cannot be included in a Centre. Secretaries of Centres and branches not included in a Centre will transact all their business with the District Organization.

5. The secretaries of the District Organizations shall be employees of the National Organization and under its discipline and direction.

6. An Executive Committee in which each Federation shall have at least one representative shall be organized for each District.

7. Branches will be divided in groups in accordance with the plan previously approved, which was being sent out to the branches in circular form at the time the raids developed.

8. Translator-Secretaries as such will be abolished.

9. Federations will remain as at present organized, but will not handle dues but will receive from the national organization 10¢ from each stamp sold as heretofore. They will pay their own Sec.

10. Dues will remain the same as heretofore, branches paying 30¢ for stamps of which 5¢ remains in the Centre treasury; the balance to be transmitted to the national organization.

The immediate problem is to establish these organization centres and reestablish connections with the branches. Without this work being done neither the national organization nor the Federations can function. The committee has no problem before it which is of greater importance than this and all our effort and available finances should be directed toward establishing the party organization in this attack-proof basis.

The matter of shipping arrangements, district and national offices obviously should not be considered and decided upon by the committee as a whole but should be left in the hands of the Executive Council, or even to the Executive Secretary and such comrades as may be needed to aid in the work.

I might add that in my way here I visited a number of large cities and started the work of establishing Organization Centres as above outlined and established one District Office with a secretary in charge, which whom these centres are now in touch.

The CLP and Unity.

From a statement made by officials of the CLP, they have been approached by certain Federation officials on the question of unity. They preferred not to conduct such indirect negotiations and therefore suggested a meeting with the CEC. They are now waiting for word from us as to when we can meet with them.

On this question I might add that there had come before the Executive Committee before the raids two resolutions initiating by referendum vote unity proposals and also a resolution from the CEC of the Estonian Federation of the party urging unification of the two parties. In consequence a unity proposal was placed before the Executive Council for its approval and submission to the CEC for action. When this proposal was up the Translator-Secretaries were requested to state the viewpoint of their federations as expressed in the communication and actions of their membership. This developed that the South Slavic Federation was decidedly for unity and the Polish Federation would very likely develop unity resolutions for referendum at a convention to be held early this year. The statements of other Translators indicated that unity would be welcomed in practically every instance.

There are two very strong reasons why unity should be achieved at this time. First, the effect of the consolidation of the two parties in the face of the autocratic attack would stimulate the entire membership and develop new courage and activity in the struggle against black reaction. Second, under the new form of organization suggested in

this report we will require the service of many branch organizers to carry through the work of reorganization and take charge of our organization centres. We had few enough such men before recent raids and arrests; we have less now. The CLP, on the other hand, has within its ranks a large number of the former organizers and agitators for the Left Wing and the Socialist Party. The services of these men will be invaluable in rebuilding our combined movement on a solid foundation.

From conversations with the members of the CLP Executive Committee I am under the impression that unity can be achieved on the following basis:—

1. Acceptance of the Manifesto, Program, and Constitution of the Communist Party, with such modifications in the constitution as are outlined in the organization plan above outlined.

2. Combination of the CLP Executive Committee of 5 with our committee of 15 as the Central Executive Committee of the combined organization.

3. All other problems to be worked out by the combined committee after unification.

Since our attitude on this question will affect the whole problem of our future organization I recommend that it be taken up and disposed of first.

The Communist.

An issue of *The Communist* was ready for the press at the time the raids took place. It was held up and a proclamation on the attack authorized by the Executive Committee inserted. This I understand was printed and probably sent out last week. It was intended to issue *The Communist* from here, if the necessary arrangements could be made, for a few issues. The first issue of *The Communist International* was ready to print at the same time. Whether it has actually been printed I am unable

to say.

Printing Plant.

The CEC authorized the purchase of a printing plant at its last meeting. This was done and the plant had just been got ready for operation when the raids occurred. So far as I am informed it was not discovered. Whether she shall continue our ownership is a matter for the decision of the committee.

International Relations.

The committee's action at the last meeting resulted in a disagreement between the Executive Council and Comrade Hourwich as to when he was to go to Europe. Comrade Hourwich on a number of occasions endeavored to convince the Executive Secretary that information sufficient to justify a departure had been received. The Executive Council, to which the matter was submitted, took the position that until some definite information was received it refused to advance any money.

In my opinion the events of the last few weeks make it necessary for us to concentrate all our energies on our work here, or otherwise there will be no party to represent in Europe or elsewhere. I believe that the action already taken sufficiently covers any need in that direction and that it would be criminal to waste our slender resources on another trip to Europe. I therefore recommend that the authorization to Comrade Hourwich and myself be rescinded.

The Convention.

The CEC should take action at this meeting in regard to the possibility and method of holding the convention set for next June.

Statement to Membership.

In view of the publicity given to Nuorteva to the charge of Department of Justice agents working in our convention [?], the CEC should make a statement on this point to the membership. In this connection I call attention to the fact that the Executive Committee refused to pay the expenses of the two members who came to C. in regard to this matter, this action being a protest against the arbitrary actions of certain members of the committee, twice repeated.

It also declined to allow the additional advance of \$200 guaranteed and authorized by the New York members.

These matters are now before the whole committee for its decision.

I recommend that the following order of business be adopted:

- I. CLP Unity.
- II. Future Organization and Reorganization.
- III. International Delegates.
- IV. Defense.
- V. Press.
- VI. Convention.

Defense.

Our policy in regard to Defense has *never* been definitely established and should be taken up and acted upon at this meeting.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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