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# Letter to the Executive Committee of the Communist International in Moscow from the Central Executive Committee of the United Communist Party in New York, October 27, 1920.

DoJ/FBI Investigative Files, NARA M-1085, reel 940, doc. 884.

New York, Oct. 27, 1920.

The Executive Committee  
of the Communist International.

Comrades:—

Your mandate to the United Communist Party and the Communist Party to unite has reached us through a copy of *Izvestiia* and through a statement covering the work of your committee, sent us in English. Negotiations toward this end have already begun between the two parties, but at the outset we have met a stumbling block which it is difficult to overcome if we are not to sacrifice the best interests of the movement in this country and give it a setback which it will require years to overcome.

The situation is the following: The only means of achieving unity which the CP will consider is a unity convention. It demands that representation at such a convention shall be on the basis of dues paid to each organization for a certain number of months. The UCP organization, on the other hand, demands that the position of the two parties in relation to the working class movement and other factors shall also be considered in agreeing upon representation, and insists upon securing a majority of the delegates, irrespective of what the dues payments may show as to membership. The grounds for this demand are:

1) The UCP, as proven by its constitution, is a centralized party. In the short period in which it has been functioning it has already proven that the party

machinery is such as to enable it to do effective work. Every member of the party comes into the organization with the understanding that he is to work to build up the American Communist movement and dues payment in our party means an active Communist, represented by each payment of monthly dues. The CP, on the other hand, is merely a federation of parts of the former language groups. Its membership is segregated in separate federations, having no centralized cohesion. Dues payments in the CP are made, not to the party, but to the federations, and these dues payments may or may not represent an active Communist membership. For the UCP to yield control of the unity convention to the CP would be to destroy the centralized party it has built up and reestablish the autonomous language federations for the entire party. This would be a step backward that would greatly handicap the movement in this country.

2) The contrast in the work of the two parties emphasizes the difference between the two organizations. The UCP carries on a campaign of widespread agitation through periodic proclamations. It has developed and is carrying out a program of shop committee organizations. It is penetrating the IWW, having one of its groups organized in the national headquarters of that organization. It has created legal organizations, under the control of the party, through which it is carrying on agitation by mass meetings throughout the country. It has a legal press in several languages in addition to its illegal official organs. Through its constructive work it is becoming an influence in the daily life of the American proletariat which must be

counted with. As against this, the CP pursues a narrow, sectarian policy. Its official slogans consist largely of articles trying to prove that the program of the UCP is “centrist” through calling some of its officials names. It has not attempted to carry on any work of importance among the masses. Its program of shop organization consists of the organization of CP shop branches and nothing more, ignoring the organization of shop committees of Communists and non-Communists.

3) The leadership of the UCP through its CEC is made up of a majority of American comrades; that of the CP overwhelmingly of members of the Federation groups. Because of the character of its leadership and because it has not pursued a narrow, sectarian policy, the UCP has been able to bring into the party some of the active leaders of the IWW who support the fundamental principles of Communism. To yield control of the united party to the present CP leadership would mean the destruction of the work already accomplished in this respect.

The issues between the two groups are, as indicated in the above, the character of party organization — a centralized party or a federation of federations — and organization control and leadership. The differences which exist in regard to shop organizations and legal and illegal work would not be difficult to overcome, as on these questions the theses of the Second Congress [of the CI] confirm the position of the UCP and the CP would be obliged to yield to us.

WE have proposed to the CP that we will enter into a unity convention on the basis of an apportionment of delegates in a ratio which is the same as that in which votes were apportioned to the two organizations in the Congress of the International [2nd: July 19-Aug. 7, 1920]; that is, 6 votes for the UCP for each 4 votes for the CP. This proposal has been re-

jected.

We do not know whether the dues payments for any period would confirm this ratio in the membership of the two organizations. If representation is based upon dues payments for a particular period, it might be a majority of members in our favor, but there is also the possibility that through increase of dues payments by the federations over a certain period, which might not represent any membership, the figures could be made to show a majority for the CP.

We do not believe that we can risk the future of the American Movement on the chance question of the number of members of either organization which paid dues for a particular period. We therefore request that the Executive Committee of the International consider the situation further and make a definite recommendation. We urge that either the ratio of representation at a unity convention stated above be confirmed, or, that the CEC of the two parties be directed to combine and that a convention be held after the two organizations have been united to decide all organization questions and differences in tactics. The CEC of the UCP consists of 10 members, that of the CP of 9 members. WE would be willing to add 5 members from the CP to our committee or to reduce our committee to 7 members and add 6 from the CP for the purpose of immediately uniting the two parties.

With Communist greetings,

Central Executive Committee,  
United Communist Party.

[Alfred Wagenknecht]  
Executive Secretary.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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