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# Letter to the Central Executive Committee of the United Communist Party in New York from Max Bedacht [“James A. Marshall”], Representative of the UCP to ECCI in Moscow, April 25, 1921.

Document in the Comintern Archive, RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 39, ll. 28-30.

April 25, 1921.

Dear Friends:

Information has reached us which will make it doubtful whether the messenger we sent will reach you in time. We, therefore, once more take up the subject in letter, hoping that this will reach you in time and enable you to act in the best interests of our firm [party].

Wednesday, April 20th [1921], cablegrams arrived here from competing concerns [the two Communist parties], one demanding that powers of general agency [the “American Agency” of Janson, Fraina, and Katayama] be repealed, the other that it be confirmed. The agency itself demanded that its plan for consolidation be adopted and made mandatory. To judge the manner in which such demands are received here one has to consider the little esteem that the general office [ECCI] has for the American business [Communist movement] in general. Conditions, which I cannot describe in detail, but which are known to you [the ongoing factional war], have brought about this state of affairs. The accomplishments of the American Branch of our establishment are not acknowledged and, at best, underestimated. Matters have reached the point that the main office [the ECCI leadership] considers the American branch more as a nuisance than as a bona fide business institution [viable constituent Communist organization]. I know that you will say: “But why don’t you tell them and explain to them.” I will answer that nobody wants to listen to me, that most of the doors are closed to me, and that wherever



one of the doors is reluctantly opened, they do not leave me in doubt that they consider me but one of those more numerous “representatives,” each one of whom had a different story to tell. It is no use to go any further into this matter. It is sufficient to state the fact.

So stood matters at the time of the arrival of these cables. The general secretary of the board of directors [Grigorii Zinoviev] insisted that, as far as this body [the Comintern] is concerned, there will be no further action. Its last decision is final. He claims that a new change in this last decision would again take from it its finality and only reopen the question anew. In view of the state of affairs now existing for more

than a year [parallel Communist organizations despite a CI requirement of amalgamation], this would be criminal.

In order to clearly understand, I repeat here the decision: Amalgamation of both American branches of this concern [the UCP and the CPA] must be completed by June 1st [1921], the time of the general stockholders' meeting [World Congress of the CI]. If this order is not complied with, proxies for American stock [American delegates of the two parties] will not be admitted, and a new branch office [new Communist organization] will be established in America, disregarding entirely the existing offices.

The general secretary [Zinoviev] explains that its agency in American [Janson, Fraina, Katayama] had full power to settle this question once and for all. After this agency showed its inability for decisive action during the last few months, it became necessary for the board of directors [ECCI] to again take up this question. And now, so the general secretary [Zinoviev] claims, it would seem very peculiar indeed if this agency, so long unable to fulfill its mission, would again be instructed to do the thing which it proved itself unable to do. In view of this, and further in view of the finality of the last action of the board of directors [ECCI], the Secretary [Zinoviev] turned over these cablegrams to Mr. Nicol [Nicholas Hourwich] and myself, claiming that the matter now rests with us. Conferences were held between us two, and the following agreement was reached and signed: To send the following cable to both branches immediately:

Authorized by board of directors to state agency has no authority to press five conditions. Equal basis and chairman joint stock meeting with voice but no vote is enough and all is necessary. Other conditions are not pertaining to preliminary arrangements and are subject to decision of joint stock meeting. (Signatures).

The scope of our negotiations was naturally limited by the aforementioned statements of the general secretary [Zinoviev]. As far as some of the conditions are concerned, I did not think it advisable or necessary to press them in these negotiations, because all of them will practically be decided at the next general stockholders meeting [World Congress] here. The

main point after all remains the question of advertisements in foreign languages [the Foreign Language Federations]. In this question it will be advisable not to take an irreconcilable position but agree to a wise compromise between your own people, so you can put up a united front. I wish I could see you just for a day or two to surprise you by explaining the point of view that I have been converted to.† should my messenger arrive there in time, do not be influenced by preconceived notions and sentiments but give a willing ear to our friend William Victor.‡ In the question of advertising in foreign languages [propaganda in sundry languages], the method employed by the branch office here may be taken as a good example.

An important point to be decided at the amalgamation conference [Joint Unity Convention] will be the question of proxies for the general stockholders meeting [credentials for delegates to the forthcoming CI World Congress], as well as that of candidates for the board of directors [membership on ECCI]. This of greater importance than you may imagine. Mr. Nicol [Hourwich], who very probably will be the most important candidate, should be defeated, not only as a candidate for the board of directors [ECCI] but even as a candidate to the general stockholders meeting [delegate to the CI World Congress] here. He must be ostracized from our American branch, so he should have no voice in the future management of our American branch. By that method we will be able to prove to the main office [the ECCI leadership] that, in spite of the low opinion in which they hold our American business methods, these methods have nothing in common with the ones employed by Mr. Nicol [Hourwich]. In this respect my messenger will be of great help to you, and you must by all means accept his aid. In the selection of a candidate for the board of directors [ECCI], the greatest care must be exercised. I was told by the general office [the ECCI apparatus] that their old hometown friends and companions [Russian emigrés] are not desirable, that it is not necessary to be able to speak the language spoken here. Mandates for the proxies [delegates], etc., for the consolidated American groups of stockholders [unified CPA] must be cabled here by June 1st [1921].

†- An allusion to Bedacht's belief in the necessity of an overground party in America, it would seem.

‡- While the identity of this individual is not definitely known, it bears notice that "William Victor" were the first and middle names of William Gropper, a radical cartoonist on the staff of the communist monthly magazine published in New York, *The Liberator*.

All newspapers, books, and statistical material sent by you to the main office [the CI] are lost somewhere in the universe. Nobody knows anything about it, nobody seems to know anything. This stuff is of great value here, but should be distributed intelligently to different bureaus. As it is the stuff seems to be held up and kept at the first station where it is received, irrespective of its usefulness there. I suggest that a change be made in these arrangements immediately. Notify at once the first addressee that all this stuff must be delivered to your representative at the seat of the home office [to the American party's rep in Moscow]. He then can distribute the material intelligently and also make use of it himself as far as necessary and possible. As it is, I don not receive anything.

*A settlement of all financial matters must be definitely postponed until consolidation is completed.*

Our friend, Mr. Ludwig [Martens], who seems to have ambitions to be appointed the sole American representative, has submitted to the general office [CI] a report that is detrimental to us. But as the only result was only an intensification of the confusion, you may let the matter rest until a more convenient time for a reckoning has arrived.

Your messenger, Mr. Frost [=???], arrived here a week ago, in company of several business representatives. However, I have not yet receive the papers he carried with him, on account of some delay in the baggage.

There are many other matters of importance, but as it is only a matter of a few weeks until some of us will meet here at the general stockholders meeting [CI World Congress], we may let them rest. The real important matter is that of consolidation. I hope that you have realized that and acted accordingly.

I remain,

Yours as ever,

*James A. Marshall [Max Bedacht].*

*Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.*

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