
Report of the CEC of the United Communist Party on the Case of “Adams” and “Flat” [circa April 1, 1921]

Leaflet transcribed in report of Bureau of Investigation Special Agent H.J. Lenon, April 27, 1921. DoJ/BoI Investigative Files, NARA M-1085, reel 928, file 202600-391-200.

The Central Executive Committee of the UCP realizes that the expulsion of the 2 members of the CEC from the committee, and their suspension from all party activities for 3 months, is a matter of sufficient gravity to warrant a detailed account to the membership of the happening which compelled the CEC to take this disciplinary action. Threats, uttered by the suspended members, to implode the work of the Party by various machinations, have confirmed the CEC in its decision to issue the following report:

The first instance of the failure of these two members to abide by Communist discipline was manifest during the concluding sessions of the last Party convention [2nd: Kingston, NY: Dec. 24, 1920-Jan. 2, 1921]. When the names of those comrades who were elected to the new CEC by the Convention were read to the Assembly, it was discovered that Flat [=??] and Adams [=??] were among the successful candidates.¹ However, the Convention refused to accept their resignation.² The two comrades then refused to serve on the CEC. Their reason for so doing, it was understood, was that the full list of candidates, four in number, which their caucus desired to have

¹ The election was held the evening of Jan. 2, 1921. Nominations were taken from the floor and an election was held by secret ballot.

² Apparently Jay Lovestone, who had testified in the March 1920 “criminal anarchism” trial of Harry Winitsky after having been subpoenaed, did not receive the majority support of the convention in the election for a place on the Central Executive Committee. Two of Lovestone’s factional allies from the Chicago district, “Flat” and “Adams,” then immediately tendered their resignations in protest. These resignations were rejected by the explicit decision of the Convention.

elected to the CEC, had not secured the necessary majority of voters, only these two being elected. Communist discipline demands that caucus policies and desires be subordinated to the majority will of the convention, and these two comrades were committing a grave breach of discipline by refusing to serve, after having accepted nomination.

At the first meeting of the new CEC, immediately after the adjournment of the Convention, the CEC refused to accept the nomination. Following the example of the Convention, the CEC refused to accept their resignations. However, they refused to attend further CEC meetings, and returned [from New York] to District #7 [Chicago]. All through these extraordinary proceedings, they persisted in regarding themselves as representatives of D7 [Chicago], rather than as comrades elected by the party convention to serve in the interests of the whole party, and not any section thereof.

At a conference of D7, which was called in Chicago to hear the reports of the delegates who had returned from the Convention, it was voted that Adams [=??] and Flat [=??] should immediately return to the city where the CEC is located [New York] and resume their duties on that body. This they then consented to do, stating that they had first wished to know the desires of the District body. By this action, they showed that they considered the discipline of the District as higher than that of the Convention or of the CEC in which the Convention had vested the highest power of the Party. They insisted on considering themselves as representatives of a district, ignoring the fact that as soon as they were elected to the CEC they became representatives of the whole membership, and were responsible to the CEC and to the whole membership only.

At the above mentioned meeting, and on other occasions, these two comrades adopted the attitude of the sole guardians of pure Communism, implying that practically all the Party was Menshevik, or Centrist, with the exception of themselves. These old and threadbare tactics, reminiscent of the CP, were introduced often in order to win points. This is the attitude of those whom Comrade Lenin had so well characterized as suffering from the "infantile disease of Leftism." It must be remembered that among the CEC members thus accused of Centrist tendencies were comrades who were elected by an overwhelming majority of the Convention, including the votes of Adams [=??] and Flat [=??] themselves. In the case of one member the vote was unanimous, and in two others there were only one against them.

On the CEC, Adams [=??] and Flat [=??] served on the Editorial Board. It is the practice of the various departments of the CEC to report important matters to the CEC for ratification. They are left to use their own judgment in technical matters, but all affairs of importance and affecting policy are referred to the committee meetings. The Board decided to insert a notice regarding change of editorial policy in the various official organs. When this was brought up at a meeting of the CEC, from which 2 members were absent on Party business, the matter was considered important enough to be deferred until a full meeting. Adams [=??] and Flat [=??] refused to agree that the CEC has the right to control the actions of one of its sub-committees, and immediately resigned from the Editorial Board. Their resignations were not accepted. The other members, who served with Adams [=??] and Flat [=??] on the Editorial Board, and who also had been in favor of the insertion, agreed to abide by the decision of the CEC and await the full meeting.

After the CEC had refused to consider the childish act of these two comrades in resigning from the Editorial board, they then resigned from the C. [*The Communist*]. This made the third time they had resigned from the Committee, once at the Convention, and twice in Committee.

The refusal of Adams [=??] and Flat [=??] to serve on the Editorial Board, to do the work to which they had, with their own agreement, been assigned, was a direct violation of discipline; and the habit of resigning, whenever they failed to gain some small immediate point, was petty and un-Communistic conduct, showing their complete unfitness for service in the high capacity to which they had been elected.

During the discussion at the CEC meeting on the above question, both Adams [=??] and Flat [=??] deliberately threatened to go to various districts — D7 [Chicago] and D3 [Philadelphia] being specifically mentioned — to stir up trouble. Here again, their conduct was utterly unbecoming that of a member of the CEC, or in fact of any member of the Party who accepts Communist discipline. At this meeting they tried to convert the discussion into a noisy brawl; Flat [=??] strode up and down the room shouting at the top of his voice and throwing chairs around, in spite of the repeated warnings of the other members that we are an underground organization and that the CEC was meeting under conditions that demand the utmost precaution. The affair terminated by Adams [=??] and Flat [=??] stating

that they would return to Chicago, whether the CEC gave permission or not. In face of the refusal of the two comrades to perform their functions on the CEC, the CEC, at a subsequent meeting, decided to suspend them from the Committee and to decide upon their case at a full meeting of the CEC, which was to be called immediately.

At a meeting of the CEC, subsequent to their suspension, which was not a full meeting, two members absent on Party work not having been [able] to arrive, Adams [=???] requested that his case be heard immediately. The CEC, however, was governed by its previous decision to take the case only at a full meeting, and so informed him. Adams [=???] then asked for his fare to D7 [Chicago]. He was requested to remain in town [New York], being promised maintenance, until the full meeting.

As soon as possible the full meeting was held, Flat [=???] returning from D7 [Chicago] in answer to the summons of the CEC to attend it.

The two comrades were called in to the full CEC meeting. Owing to the fact that their previous refusals to abide by CEC decisions showed that it was practically impossible to work with them, the first question asked of them was the following: "Will you agree to abide by the decision of the CEC?" Both refused to answer this question.

The tone of both comrades was sullen and defiant; their whole attitude was thoroughly antagonistic. When direct questions as to whether they would resume duty on the Editorial Board, if so ordered, Adams [=???] refused to answer, but Flat [=???] said he would. Yet, both members just previously when asked whether they would obey the authority of the CEC had refused to answer. The two comrades were requested to retire while the CEC deliberated the matter.

For some hours the CEC threshed out the matter in all its details. The CEC was unanimous for the permanent removal of the two comrades from the CEC., Some comrades also advocated their complete expulsion from the Party, claiming that such severe violations of discipline, in men who had been chosen for the supreme organ of power in the Party, merited the fullest penalties. However, on this matter there was some difference of opinion, some CEC members maintaining that the two comrades erred only through lack of training and understanding of discipline. A final decision was reached to suspend them from the Party membership for 3 months.

The CEC believes that it is high time the Party membership realizes the necessity of maintaining strict discipline. There can be no of-

fense more culpable than a refusal to obey the mandate of the Convention to perform the important duties of a CEC member. If such action, such childish and irresponsible flouting of discipline, were permitted to pass unnoticed in the CEC, there could be no cause for complaint at violations of discipline by members of subordinate units of the Party. The result would be the complete breakdown of discipline, and the demoralization of the whole Party. If refusals of members to serve on the CEC were condoned, and if the CEC excused these comrades, who have shown, both at Convention and later, that they ignored the discipline of the highest power in the Party, the CEC would be discredited before the whole Communist world. In fact, too much leeway has already been granted to those comrades, and we believe that in many sections of the International, they would not be allowed to take their place on the CEC after their first refusal to serve, at the Convention; and would have been disciplined for their acts, then and there.

The CEC of the UCP takes this opportunity to remind the membership most emphatically that Communist discipline is not a matter of words, but of facts; the whole structure of our Party rests on its strict maintenance. We are fully conscious of the serious nature of the power entrusted to us by the Convention, and we are determined to enforce it, or the Party will disintegrate. So far as the CEC is concerned, it will be an enforced discipline. Before comrades join our party, the nature of the discipline is explained to them. If they agree to accept it, they are permitted to join, if otherwise fit. If, after accepting Party discipline, they refuse to abide by it, they must be punished. There can be no alternative to this. If comrades place the interest of any section of the Party above the interests of the Party as a whole, or if they seek to enforce their individual opinions into practice through disruptive tactics, they must pay the penalty.

The CEC of the UCP.

• • • • •

The following decision in Com. Beacon [Lovestone] case has been reported by CEC findings:—

1. That Comrade Beacon [Lovestone] was ordered to take the stand by the proper authorities, with instructions not to divulge any Party information, nor to hurt the defendant's [Harry Winitsky's] case. Comrade Beacon [Lovestone] complied with these instructions closely. The committee found no basis for charges.

2. As to the question of cowardice which was raised during the investigation, the comrades found that such charges would not hold water.

3. In the opinion of the committee, the testimony cannot be approved of in its entirety. The committee, recognizing that Comrade Beacon [Lovestone] is well-versed in communist theory and practice, accounts for the deviation from what is today regarded as a proper Communist stand, as being due to the particular circumstances under which the stand was taken, and the testimony rendered, namely:

- (a) The vague instructions given him.
- (b) The lack of policy regarding defense.

Edited by Tim Davenport

1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR · May 2012 · Non-commercial reproduction permitted.