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# Minutes of the Central Executive Committee, WPA: Chicago, IL — February 15-16, 1924.

A document in the Comintern Archive, f. 515, op. 1, d. 276, ll. 4-12.

Comrade Dunne elected chairman.

Present — All members of the Committee.†

## Report of the Executive Secretary.

Executive Secretary reported that the Executive Council at its meeting on February 10th had received a report of a special committee of *The Daily Worker* consisting of Comrades [Moritz] Loeb, Tenhunen, and Ruthenberg, proposing the purchase of a four story building at 1113 W Washington Street for the purpose of housing the printing plant and the national offices of the Party and to establish in this building a plant for the purpose of printing *The Daily Worker* and all other Party work. The cost of the building would be \$35,000 and the cost of the printing establishment \$40,000. The building would be purchased in a payment of \$10,000 cash, the balance covered by mortgages and the plant paid for in cash, making a total investment of \$50,000, which would leave about \$20,000 fluid capital for the conduct of the business. Executive Council voted unanimously to approve the plant.

**Motion:** By Comrade Browder that the CEC endorse the action of the Executive Council.

*Carried unanimously.*

Comrade Ruthenberg reported further that the issuance of new charters indicate the continued growth of the Party. Fifty-eight new charters have been issued since the first of the year.

The Foreign Born Protection Campaign was getting under way and provisional Councils for the Protection of Foreign Born are now being organized in various cities. In Cleveland, for instance, the Jewish Branch was able to enlist 63 Jewish organizations in a United Front movement against the laws directed against foreign born workers. There is every indication that this campaign will soon show very good results for the Party.

## Conference for Progressive Political Action.

Comrade Ruthenberg reported on the Conference for Progressive Political Action held in St. Louis February 11th and 12th [1924], stating the maneuvers which had been carried out by the Party delegates in connection with the Minnesota delegation in an effort to strengthen the position of our Party in relation to the call issued by this conference for a convention [establishing a Labor Party] on July 4th. Comrade Ruthenberg stated as his opinion that the July 4th convention would unquestionably nominate candidates for President and Vice President on a Third Party ticket, and that our policy must be based on acceptance of this fact. He submitted in the names of Comrades Pepper and himself a thesis on the situation as developed through the St. Louis Conference (see attached copy).‡

Comrade Foster thereupon requested the floor and submitted a thesis on the present political situation and the immediate tasks of the Party (see attached copy).‡

†- The Central Executive Committee elected by the Third Convention of the Workers Party of America (Dec. 30, 1923 to Jan. 2, 1924) consisted of: Alexander Bittelman\*, Earl Browder\*, Fahle Burman\*, James P. Cannon\*, William F. Dunne\*, J. Louis Engdahl, William Z. Foster\*, Benjamin Gitlow, Ludwig Lore, Jay Lovestone, John Pepper, C.E. Ruthenberg, and Martin Abern\* as representative of the Young Workers League. Foster-Cannon faction are denoted by an asterisk here. *New Yorker Volkszeitung* editor Ludwig Lore was the leader of a third faction which was in alliance with the Foster group.

‡- Not included with the archival copy of these minutes.

After some discussion Comrade Foster moved to refer the two theses to a committee consisting of Comrades Dunne, Cannon, Ruthenberg, and Pepper for the purpose of combining the two theses.

**Motion on procedure:** That we debate the two theses for one hour.

During the debate it developed through a statement by Comrade Bittelman that the Foster thesis contained no definite statement pledging the Party to carry through the May 30th Convention [to establish a Federated Farmer-Labor Party] and Comrades Ruthenberg and Pepper stated that in view of this fact there was no possibility of an agreement on a combined thesis and Comrade Foster thereupon withdrew his motion.

**Motion:** Comrade Foster moved that the debate be limited to ten minutes, which was *carried*.

The two theses were debated until the close of the session at 1 am without a vote being taken.

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### **Saturday Morning (Feb. 16) Session.**

Present — All members of the Committee.  
Comrade Dunne continued as chairman.

Comrade Foster submitted the following amendments to the thesis he had presented on the previous day.

Page 2, paragraph 2 the following addition:

“Only in case the forces now committed to the May 30th Convention are so reduced as to constitute merely the organization of the Communists and their close sympathizers into a separate body, isolated from the mass movement, can we contemplate its postponement or abandonment.”

And adding at the end of the thesis paragraph 4:

“In view of the critical and rapidly-developing political situation, the Political Committee is instructed to keep in the closest possible touch with developments, and is authorized to adopt such tactical steps as are required in conformity with the general policy laid down in this statement.”

Comrade Browder also moved the following resolution in regard to Presidential candidates:

“On the question of Presidential candidates the following shall be our procedure:

1. In the event that the WP itself places a candidate in the field or finds itself definitely in control of a mass United Front Labor Party, our candidate shall be William F. Dunne for President.

2. In the event that the WP finds itself in a nominating convention of a mass United Front LP, whether on May 30, July 4, or any other, not under our control, our first choice for President shall be E.V. Debs, provided he subscribes to one or the other of the two following provisions:

- (a) That he brings the SP into the United Front Labor Party and secures its adherence to the latter's program.
- (b) That he refuses to accept nomination from the SP if it fails to come into the United Front LP.

3. Our second choice for President in a United Front convention not under our control is Tom Mooney.

4. Our choice for Vice President is William Bouck.”

Comrade Pepper submitted the following motions:

**Motion 1:** That we negotiate with the Minnesota Farmer-Labor group on the basis of the Ruthenberg-Pepper thesis in regard to the questions at the March 10 conference [of the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party] in reference to the question of nominations being made by the May 30th convention [of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party].

**Motion 2:** That our representatives are instructed to conduct a fight without permission to abandon the May 30 convention.

**Motion 3:** That if the committee of arrangements in charge of the May 30th convention does not call the convention, that the Federated and the state parties associated with it shall issue a call for the May 30th convention.

**Motion 4:** That the CEC accepts as the basis of its policies the information presented by Comrades Ruthenberg, Hathaway, Tallentire, and Manley, which presents a correct analysis of the existing situation.

**Motion 5:** That the CEC considers as a violation of the November thesis adopted by the national convention any policy which does not provide for the separate organization and ideological independence of the class Farmer-Labor Party from the Third Party, and

considers participation in the July convention of the CPPA without such previous separate organization of the Farmer-Labor forces the organizational unity prohibited by the thesis adopted by the National Convention.

After further debate on the two theses and resolutions, the vote was taken as follows:

**Ruthenberg-Pepper Thesis** — Voting in favor: Engdahl, Gitlow, Lovestone, Pepper, Ruthenberg.

Voting against: Browder, Cannon, Dunne, Foster, Abern, Burman, Lore, Bittelman.

*[Motion failed.]*

**Foster Thesis** — *Adopted* by the same vote, 8 in favor, 5 opposed.

**Browder Resolution on Presidential Nominations** — *Adopted* by the same vote, 8 in favor, 5 against.

**Pepper Motions** — *Defeated* by the same vote, 5 in favor and 8 opposed.

**Motion (by Comrade Cannon):** That concrete proposals for the basis of negotiations in the Ruthenberg-Pepper thesis be referred to the Political Committee for consideration.

*Adopted unanimously.*

**Motion (by Comrade Lore):** That the CEC meeting be held after the March 10th conference.

*Carried unanimously.*

Meeting then recessed.

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**[Feb. 16] Afternoon Session.**

**Cable — CI Anniversary.**

Comrade Ruthenberg read a cable from Comrade Amter [in Moscow] regarding meetings and special issues of Party papers on the anniversary of the CI and it was *moved* and *carried* to carry out celebration.

### **International Farmers Council.**

Letter was read from the Secretary of the Executive Committee of the CI in reference to the work of the Farmers Council, urging the Party to appoint a representative to go ahead with the work of the International Farmers Council in the United States. The following motions were *adopted unanimously*:

**Motion 1:** That Comrade Manley be appointed the Party representative and carry on the policies in this country recommended by the International Farmers Council.

**Motion 2:** That the Research Department furnish the information requested.

### **YCI Letter to YWL.**

Letter from the YCI [Young Communist International] to the YWL [Young Workers League] in reference to the controversy between the two organizations in the Albright case and in reference to certain articles written by Comrade Bammater, was read.

At this point Comrade Foster arrived.

Comrade Ruthenberg submitted the following statement:

“In the name of the five members voting in the minority on the question of our policy in relation to the May 30th convention, I wish to state that we consider the decision made and the future policy involved of such character as to endanger the future of the Party, that it is our purpose to make an immediate appeal to the Communist International against the decision of the majority of the Committee.

We consider this appeal of additional importance in view of the factional spirit shown by the majority in removing certain party workers and the threats of even more far-reaching actions of this character, which are certain to create a factional struggle in the Party as already indicated in the protests received from certain districts, which factional struggle must be avoided at all costs. We therefore request that a representative delegation be sent to the CI to take up the question of our policy in relation to the May 30th and July 4th conventions, the Third Party question, and the organizational situation in the Party.”

**Amendment (by Comrade Cannon):** That Comrades Foster, Pepper, and a representative of the Anti-Third Party position be sent to the Enlarged Executive Committee.

**Amendment (by Comrade Gitlow):** That we send Comrades Foster, Pepper, Lore, and Ruthenberg to the EC of the CI.

**Amendment (by Comrade Foster):** That Comrades Foster, Pepper, Cannon, and Ruthenberg, and a representative of the Anti-Third Party tendency be sent.

**Amendment (by Comrade Lovestone):** That the Foster amendment be amended to designate Comrade Lore as the representative of the Anti-Third Party tendency.

*Lovestone amendment ruled out of order.*

Upon protest of Comrade Lovestone, the motion of Comrade Foster was divided so that the **motion stated:** That Foster, Pepper, Cannon, and Ruthenberg go to Moscow.

With a **separate motion:** That a representative of the Anti-Third Party tendency go also.

Comrade Lovestone thereupon **amended** that Comrade Lore be the representative of the Anti-Third Party tendency. The vote taken resulted as follows:

Voting for the Lovestone amendment: Engdahl, Gitlow, Lovestone, Pepper, Ruthenberg.

Voting against: Dunne, Browder, Foster, Cannon, Bittelman, Burman, Lore, Abern.

*[Amendment failed.]*

Voting in favor of the Foster motion that a representative of the Anti-Third Party tendency go: Browder, Foster, Dunne, Cannon, Bittelman, Burman, Lore, Abern.

Voting against: Engdahl, Gitlow, Lovestone, Pepper, Ruthenberg.

*[Motion carried.]*

Voting in favor of Comrades Foster, Pepper, Cannon, and Ruthenberg going: All members of the committee.

*[Motion carried.]*

Comrade Foster made the following statement:

“The reason the majority voted against Comrade Lore’s going was because it would have a disastrous effect on his work and was impossible in the present situation according to Comrade Lore’s statement.”

**Motion (by Comrade Foster):** That the delegation leave after the next CEC meeting and attend the meeting of the Enlarged Executive Committee of the CI.†

**Amendment (by Comrade Lovestone):** That the delegation leave immediately.

After discussion, Comrade Foster withdrew his motion and *the amendment by Comrade Lovestone was unanimously adopted.*

### Reorganization of the CEC.

**Motion (by Comrade Pepper):** That the two highest alternates elected to the CEC from the majority and two from the minority take the places of the comrades leaving at such time as they leave the work of the Committee.

*Adopted unanimously.*

Comrades Hathaway and Halonen were designated as the members of the Committee to alternate for Comrades Cannon and Foster, and Comrades Bedacht and Manley to alternate for Ruthenberg and Pepper.

**Motion (by Comrade Cannon):** That the Political Committee consist of the following members: Bittelman, Dunne, Browder, Hathaway, Abern, Manley, Lovestone.

That the Organization Committee consist of Comrades Bittelman, Burman, Abern, Browder, and Engdahl, Bedacht.

Comrade Lovestone nominated Comrades Engdahl, Bedacht, Burman for the Political Committee and Comrade Manley for the Organization Committee.

†- The 4th Enlarged Plenum of ECCI began June 12, 1924. Immediate departure made attendance essentially impossible. On the other hand, delayed departure would make it impossible for ECCI to rule on the political issues at hand in a timely manner.

Vote resulted as follows:

**Political Committee:** Bittelman 8, Dunne 8, Browder 8, Hathaway 8, Abern 8, Manley 4, Lovestone 10, Engdahl 12, Burman none, Bedacht none.

*Members of the Political Committee elected are* Bittelman, Dunne, Browder, Hathaway, Abern, Lovestone, Engdahl.

**Organization Committee:** Bittelman 8, Burman 8, Abern 8, Browder 8, Bedacht 12, Manley 12, Engdahl none. *The six receiving the highest vote constitute the committee.*

Comrade Cannon submitted his resignation as Party Chairman and **Comrade Pepper moved:** That we abolish the position of Party Chairman.

*Comrade Dunne ruled the motion out of order* in view of the fact that the constitution provides for such an office.

Comrade Foster was nominated for the position of Party Chairman and was elected by a vote of nine — Dunne, Browder, Foster, Bittelman, Lore, Abern, Cannon, Burman, Ruthenberg, for; and four — Gitlow, Lovestone, Pepper, Engdahl, against.†

*[Foster elected.]*

The question of Acting Secretary during the absence of Comrade Ruthenberg was next taken up and Comrades Bittelman and Bedacht nominated. The vote resulted in Browder, Dunne, Foster, Cannon, Bittelman, Lore, Abern, Burman voting for Comrade Bittelman and Comrades Ruthenberg, Pepper, Gitlow, Engdahl, Lovestone voting for Comrade Bedacht.

*[Bittelman elected.]*

### **Daily Worker Reorganization.**

**Motion (by Comrade Cannon):** Comrade Cannon moved that Comrades Engdahl and Dunne be made joint editors with equal powers on the *Daily Worker* and that they also have charge of the issuance of the magazine section of the *Daily*.

Motion was adopted by a vote as follows:

In favor: Dunne, Browder, Foster, Cannon, Lore, Bittelman, Burman, Abern. Opposed: Ruthenberg, Pepper, Lovestone, Gitlow, Engdahl.

*[Motion carried.]*

### **Freiheit.**

The question of placing the *Freiheit* on the agenda of the Jewish Convention, which was appeal from the decision of the Political Committee was taken up.

**Motion (by Comrade Gitlow):** That the *Freiheit* remain an organ under the direct ownership and direct editorial control of the CEC.

**Motion (by Comrade Pepper):** That the CEC express confidence in Comrade Gitlow and will maintain him in editorial charge of the *Freiheit*.

**Motion (by Comrade Bittelman):** That the motions be tabled until after the Jewish Convention.

Vote on the motion to table resulted in Dunne, Browder, Foster, Cannon, Lore, Bittelman, Burman, Abern voting in favor and Ruthenberg, Pepper, Lovestone, Gitlow, and Engdahl opposed.

*[Gitlow and Pepper motions tabled.]*

**Motion (by Comrade Lovestone):** Comrade Lovestone thereupon moved that the CEC inform the convention of the Jewish Federation that it is the policy of the CEC:

(a) That the *Freiheit* remain an organ of the Party under the direct ownership and direct editorial control of the CEC.

(b) That the CEC express its confidence in Comrade Gitlow and will maintain him in editorial charge of the *Freiheit*.

*The motion was ruled out of order.*

### **Protest Against Organizational Changes.**

Letters were read from Comrade [Benjamin] Lifshitz inquiring as to why he had been removed as

†- Note that Ruthenberg broke factional ranks in this instance to vote for Foster for the (largely ceremonial) post of Party Chairman.

DO [District 2, New York City] without any charges being preferred against him or any complaint in regard to his work; and from the District Executive Committee of District 3 [Philadelphia] protesting against organizational changes on a factional basis, mentioning both the removal of Comrades Lifshitz and Powell in that district.

Following *motions* were adopted:

**[Motion 1:]** That Comrade Cannon draft a letter in reply to the Lifshitz communication to be approved by the Political Committee and send it in the name of the Executive Secretary.

**[Motion 2:]** That the Executive Secretary draft a letter in reply to the District 3 protest, to be approved by the Political Committee.

*Motions adopted unanimously.*

### **Seidel Credential.**

The question of the credential of Comrade Seidel, who desires to go to Russia, which had been refused by the Executive Secretary and later by the Organization Committee, referred to the CEC was taken up. Comrade Bittelman stated the conditions. Comrade Ruthenberg stated that the attitude of the Russian Government in the CI was that no individual should be granted credentials to go to Russia unless he is part of an organized group of workers or going to Russia on Party business.

**Motion:** That Comrade Ruthenberg communicate with the CI and endeavor to get permission through the CI for Comrade Seidel to go to Russia.

*Motion carried.*

### **Unemployment.**

Comrade Pepper read a resolution on the situation in regard to unemployment (as per attached).† After discussion

**Motion:** To make unemployment a feature of our propaganda and refer to the Political Committee the question of plans of action.

Motion was adopted by vote of — in favor: Foster, Cannon, Browder, Abern, Burman, Lore, Bittelman, and Dunne; opposed: Ruthenberg, Pepper,

Lovestone, Gitlow, and Engdahl.

*[Motion carried.]*

### **Party Manifesto.**

**Motion (by Comrade Cannon):** That the Party issue a manifesto to the workers and farmers of this country in relation to the May 30th convention and an appeal to the Party members for intensified work and that these manifestos be written by Comrades Foster and Ruthenberg and issued with the signatures of both Chairman and Executive Secretary.

**Motion (by Comrade Ruthenberg):** That a leaflet be prepared by him on the St. Louis CPPA convention to be used as part of our propaganda against the July 4th convention and for the May 30th.

*Motion was adopted unanimously.*

### **Industrial.**

Comrade Foster reported on the controversy arising in the RI Committee in regard to the thesis presented by Comrade Kutcher and himself and that the RI Committee had voted to refer the question to the Profintern.

*Motion carried* that the document in question be referred to the Political Committee for action and a recommendation to the Profintern.

### **Miners' Convention.**

The report of Comrade [Jack] Johnstone on the Miners' convention was before the Committee and it was voted that the report be duplicated for the members of the Committee and that other reports from organizers who were present at the convention be secured.

### **Needle Trades.**

Comrade Foster reported on the Needle Trades convention in New York City, outlining the general policy to be followed.

†- The resolution in question was not attached to the copy of the minutes in the archive.

**Motion (by Comrade Gitlow):** That the CEC request the National Committee of the Needle Trades to prepare programs for the International, Amalgamated, and Furrier's conventions and to refer these to the CEC for approval.

**Motion (by Comrade Foster):** That Comrade Zimmerman go on the road for the Needle Trades National Committee.

*Motions were adopted unanimously.*

### **Illinois Miners' Convention.**

The question of the representatives in the Illinois Miners' District arose at this point and it was voted that Comrades Watt and Tumulty meet with the Political Committee on Sunday afternoon.

### **Application from Former SP Leaders.**

Comrade Ruthenberg reported that Scott Nearing had designated his intention of joining the Workers Party and that he had written that Duncan McDonald had also considered joining the Party. Comrade Tallentire also stated that former Mayor Duncan of Butte and that Emme of St. Paul, who voted against Dunne in the Portland Convention [of the AF of L in 1923], also wished to join and it was necessary to formulate a policy in regard to such individuals who wished to join the Party.

**Motion (by Comrade Ruthenberg):** That individuals such as designated above be accepted as Party members should they make application but that they

be given no official position of the Party for one year and that each application be passed upon separately by the CEC of the Party.

**Motion (by Comrade Dunne):** That Emme and Nearing be required to make public statements of their views upon being accepted as members of the Party.

*Motions carried unanimously.*

### **Research Department.**

Comrades Dunne and Engdahl raised the question of the Research Department not being of service to the *Daily Worker* as it is located at present.

After discussion:

**Motion (by Comrade Dunne):** That the Research Department move to the *Daily Worker's* office.

Comrade Lovestone stated that it was impossible to work in the Daily Worker office owing to the lack of space and facilities there and protested against such action.

*Motion was adopted by a vote of 8-5.*

### **Letter from Mexican Party.**

Letter from Mexican Party in reference to holding of the Pan-American Congress was considered and the question referred to our delegation to the EC of the CI to be taken up and decided while there.

Meeting then adjourned.

C.E. Ruthenberg,  
Executive Secretary.

*Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.*

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