
Letter from James P. Cannon in Kansas City, MO to John Reed and Ben Gitlow in New York, August 16, 1919. †

A document in the Comintern Archive f. 515, op. 1, d. 4, l. 18.

Kansas City, Mo., August 16th, 1919.

John Reed and Ben Gitlow,
43 West 29th Street,
New York City.

Dear Comrades:

Your actions in deciding to proceed with the publication of the labor paper according to the directions of the national conference have my complete endorsement as a member of the labor committee. Your stand in the whole controversy with the Federations and the stand of Larkin and Gitlow on the Council are so much in accord with my own opinion — and with that of the great majority of the membership, without a doubt — as to entitle you to the gratitude of those who look upon the socialist movement as an instrument for revolutionary propaganda to the working masses and not as a football of power-seeking bosses and fixers.

The great majority of the membership must and will repudiate the unauthorized surrender of the majority of the National Council to the Federations for the very reasons you state: because their action gives complete control of the convention to those who cannot lead an American movement anywhere but into the ditch.

As you say, the rank and file IS sick of technical phraseology and party squabbles and welcomes the

opportunity to get to work at general, constructive propaganda for which the masses are more than ready. The first number of *The Voice of Labor* was a great piece of work — the biggest thing, in my opinion, that has come out of the national conference. When we get an organization built up to distribute that kind of propaganda to the masses the party will cease to be a joke in America and will become a real power. All the active workers feel this way and it is high time for us together at the work we know has to be done, and done quickly.

How can there be a doubt that the action you have taken will be endorsed by the left wing conference delegates, since you are complying with their explicit instructions, unanimously given. After the minority left the conference, there wasn't a sign of discord and the labor program brought out the best enthusiasm of the entire affair. It was the sentiment of the delegates, freely expressed, that the proper balance of theory and practice had at last been effected for the unification of the labor movement. It gets a ready response from the active men in the labor movement who haven't been able to make head or tail out of the many-syllabled words that have been dished out in such nauseating doses.

Last Sunday I was up to the Leavenworth County Jail to see about a dozen of the IWW men who have been sealed up in jail for the past 17 months on the Wichita indictment. They asked about the... ‡

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†- This document is a reply to the Aug. 11, 1919, letter by Reed and Gitlow to the members of the Labor Committee of the National Conference of the Left Wing. Cannon's response was typewritten on the letterhead of *The Workers' World*, Kansas City, MO with his own name typed in at the top above the printed name of Managing Editor Earl Browder.

‡The concluding page is missing from the archive and Cannon's letter ends abruptly here.

Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.
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