
Call for the Third National Convention of the Communist Party of America, February 23, 1923. †

A document in the Comintern Archive, f. 515, op. 1, d. 97, l. 3.

One to Each Branch

February 23, 1923

Dear Comrades:—

Since the last Party Convention [Bridgman, MI: Aug. 17-22, 1922], conditions in the country have undergone changes which call for revision of the decision adopted at our last Convention on the question of an Open Party.

The CI, confirming the judgement of the CEC that an Open Party is possible at the present time, specifically instructs the CEC to proceed with transforming the LPP‡ into an open Communist Party as soon as possible, preparing at the same time a strong apparatus to enable the Party to meet emergency situations and to carry on the necessary underground activities.

The CEC feels itself bound by the last Convention to refer the instructions of the CI on the Open Party to the Party Convention, which is called for this purpose.

Agenda.

The Agenda of the Convention will consist of—

- 1) REPORT OF CEC
- 2) THE QUESTION OF THE OPEN PARTY

Resolution of the CEC on the Open Party.

The CEC proposes for the consideration of the membership, and for adoption at the coming Convention, the following resolution on the Open Party:

“In view of the Statement of the CI and the reply of the CEC, the Convention declares:—

(1) That the LPP become the American Section of the CI from now on.

(2) That the LPP must build a strong apparatus to serve as an emergency safety measure for defense of the whole LPP organization.

(3) That the LPP be so elastically organized that when the political situation in the country makes impossible the continuance of an open existence, it shall forthwith be prepared to function underground.

(4) The underground apparatus shall be organized of the best elements of the CP.

(5) The Convention fully empowers the CEC to carry out these decisions in the spirit and letter of the CI instructions.”

Representation.

Elections are to begin in the Branches.§ Each Branch shall elect delegates to the City Convention. The City Convention shall elect delegates to the District Convention. The District Convention shall elect

†- The archival original of this document has the illegible last date of the year erroneously written by hand as 1922. Filing is erroneously made with a group of pre-2nd Convention documents from 1922. The 3rd (and last) Convention of the underground Communist Party of America was held in one day, April 7, 1923, in New York City. The meeting was attended by 19 regular delegates (D1 [Boston] — 3; D2 [New York] — 5; D3 [Philadelphia] — 1; D4 [Cleveland] — 2; D5 [Chicago] — 3; D6 [Detroit] — 2; D7 [St. Louis] — 1; D11 [Pittsburgh] — 1; D12 [Minneapolis] — 1) as well as a delegate from the Young Communist League and 13 members and 2 alternates of the Central Executive Committee, for a total of 35 in all. The main report of the CEC was delivered by John Pepper [“Short”] and the Report on the Open Party was delivered by C.E. Ruthenberg [“Brenton”].

‡- LPP is jargon of the day for “Legal Political Party,” meaning the Workers Party of America.

§- The “branch” was not the primary unit of the underground CPA, but rather was a conglomeration of a number of smaller “groups” of ten members. The idea was to limit the damage that could be done by the penetration of spies by keeping the “groups” small.

delegates to the National Convention.

The question of representation to the City and District Conventions is to be decided by the DEC of each District in accordance with local conditions. Delegates to the National Convention are to be elected as follows:

One for each 250 members or major fraction thereof, provided that each District shall be allowed at least one delegate, based on the average dues paid for the months of November, December [1922], and January [1923].

The Districts shall be informed of the representation due them according to the records of the National Office, prepared from the Financial Statements rendered by the District Organizers.

Assessment.

In order to cover the expenses of the Convention, an assessment of 50 cents is levied on every member of the Party. This is to be paid by the member before he can participate in the election of delegates. The delegates are to bring the money raised from this assessment to the City and District Conventions and is to be finally turned over to the District Organizer, who is to forward it to the National Office not later than two days after the District Convention.

Expenses for District Conventions should be met in such ways as the DEC may decide. However, no special assessment of the membership for District Conventions should be made. The members should be urged to make voluntary contributions towards the District Convention expenses.

Discussion.

The Decision of the CI, the reply of the CEC to the CI, and the Resolution above, are to serve as a basis of discussion. Every member of the Party is urged to express her or his views on the matter during this pre-convention period through the Official Organ and at meetings arranged by the City and District Organizers for that purpose. The Official Organ is open to the comrades for the expression of their views. The CEC will participate in these discussions through its representatives in order to fully enlighten the membership of the significance of the CI Statement and the reply of the CEC.

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Comrades, the CEC is confident that every member of the Party will consider this question upon its merits and will not be guided in his judgment by past prejudices or former caucus affiliations.

The CEC is positive that the policy of the Open Party is best suited to meet the present political conditions and is for the best interests of the Party and the Communist Movement. The CEC calls upon the entire Party membership to lend its full support to the resolution of the Central Executive Committee and to the Decision of the Communist International.

Fraternally yours,

Central Executive Committee, CP of A,

J. Miller [Abram Jakira],
Executive Secretary.

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport.

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