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# Outline for a History of the Communist Party in America. [circa 1923]

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## I. The Importance of History.

There are two important reasons for study of the history of our movement: (a) You can not well understand the present of our movement without knowing its past. (b) A thorough understanding of our mistakes in the past is the best guarantee for the avoidance of mistakes in the future.

## II. The Relative Value of Historic Dates.

Any number of dates could be fixed for the beginning of our party, depending on the approach of the subject. If we approach our party as part of the American labor movement as a whole, we would have to go back to the origin of the American proletariat and its first organized struggles. If we approach it as a party of clear-cut and conscious class struggle, its beginning would date back to the origin of a socialist movement in the United States. If we approach it as a communist movement proper, we shall have to start from the origin and definite crystallization of a modern left wing in the American socialist movement. We shall start from the latter, because our party is clearly a recent development of the modern left wing.

## III. The Left Wing in the Socialist Movement.

It assumed definite ideological form between the years 1910-1912. Its main characteristics were: (a) It was chiefly negative. Its strongest points were its criti-

cisms of the other tendencies in the socialist movement. It had little positive to propose. (b) It was a reaction against Bergerism (the Wisconsin idea) on the one hand and DeLeonism on the other hand. (c) It was strongly influenced by the left wing in the Second International, chiefly by the German and Dutch. It knew very little of the Bolshevik movement.

## IV. An Analysis of the Left Wing of 1910-1912.

*The International Socialist Review* is a good indicator of the mind of the left wing. Its main problem was: The relation between the socialist movement and the trade union movement. It was a real problem of how to make the Socialist Party the mass party of the American proletariat. It was (and is) the specific problem of the American class struggle because of the dominating position of the trade unions in the labor movement.

Three solutions of the problem:

(a) The Wisconsin idea: Two independent aims, economic and political. One must not interfere with the other. The Socialist Party as the political aim, a purely parliamentary organization. The trade unions as the economic arm, a purely craft and bread-and-butter organization. Quote Berger from *International Socialist Review*, on a labor party, page 598.

(b) DeLeonism: Correct general idea that Socialist Party must lead the trade unions in the class struggle. Wrong conception of how this leadership should be won and exercised. The idea of socialist unions.

(c) The Left Wing idea: Revolutionary unions on the 1905 IWW style. Shop demands leading step by step to control of the shop. The party preaches and emphasizes the ideal. The party is an auxiliary to the revolutionary union and a propaganda instrument of socialism. Quote Frank Bohn (former Socialist Labor Party), *International Socialist Review*, page 1120. This is a position in between Bergerism and DeLeonism.

(d) The theory of the Left Wing idea: The industrial state and the political state. The reformer believes in the supremacy of the political state, the revolutionist believes in the supremacy of the industrial state. The correct idea: Political state is an auxiliary to industrial state; hence political party is auxiliary to industrial organization. Quote William Bohn, "Reformer and Revolutionist," *International Socialist Review*, pages 206 and 211.

#### **V. A Criticism of the Left Wing Idea from the Point of View of Lenin.**

The fallacy of the conception of the industrial state is a result of a nondialectical, non-Marxian conception of society. The relation between the economic structure of society and its political structure. What is the modern state? "Politics are concentrated economics." (Lenin.) The party as the center and leader of the class struggle. The communist conception of the relation between party and unions.

#### **VI. The Economic Background of the Left Wing of 1910-1912.**

Wage cuts and "open shop" in the steel industry. Great strikes in 1909 (July to September) in Western Pennsylvania, McKees Rocks, Butler, and New Castle steel industry. Effective interference in these steel strikes of IWW. General strike in November 1909 of 40,000 shirtwaist makers in New York City. Homestake lock-out and strike in November 1909. Homestake Mining Co. at Lead, South Dakota, declares war against the Western Federation of Miners. The strike of the streetcar men in Philadelphia in January 1910, and the subsequent general strike (the first of its kind in America) in Philadelphia in February 1910.

#### **VII. Revival of Class Struggle and Opportunism in the Socialist Party.**

The Left Wing of 1910-1912 was prompted into crystallization and action by two factors: The revival of the class struggle as evidenced by the strike movements of 1909-1910, involving interference of police and military, bloody street conflicts, etc. The election of Berger to Congress in 1910 raised the prestige of the "Wisconsin idea" in the Socialist Party. Both these factors concentrated the attention of the Left Wing on the industrial field. This explains in part the theory of the Left Wing that the political party is an auxiliary to the industrial struggles of the workers.

#### **VIII. The Socialist Party Conventions of 1910 and 1912.**

Platform of the Left Wing for 1910 Convention — its most characteristic features:

(a) Putting into the platform demands which are actual fighting issues in the immediate class struggle, thus marking a departure from the opportunist conception of immediate demands.

(b) Public ownership plank does not contain provision for workers' control (point 4).

(c) Belief in the possibility of capturing the state machinery "combining at the ballot box." (See concluding paragraph of platform.) Immigration and farmers on the platform of 1910. Left Wing makes a mistake in considering immigration a minor issue. Left Wing makes another mistake in opposing a program for the poor and middle farmers. The Convention of 1910 failed to promote the further crystallization of the Left Wing — main reason: Absence of conscious purpose and clear differentiation in a positive way from the Right Wing (Berger) and Center (Hillquit).

Convention of 1912. Right Wing is militant, as seen by speech of Berger. Center is terrorized by Right Wing as seen by speech of Hillquit. Left Wing is weak and confused. It fails to make Section 6 an issue of revolutionary versus opportunistic political action. Read speeches of Prevey, Ohio; Menick, Pa.; Bessemer, Ohio. In proceedings of convention, pages 127, 122, and 132. Left wing failed completely to establish its point of view on the relation of the party to the trade unions when it accepted the report of the Con-

vention Committee. Speech of Haywood on the subject shows great confusion of the Left Wing on this matter. (See proceedings, page 100 for Haywood's speech, and page 195 for committee report.)

Left Wing made serious blunder by failing to challenge the Right Wing on the platform adopted by the convention. Examine platform. (Page 196.) Typical petty bourgeois platform. Only Washington delegation voted against it upon instructions from its organization to vote against immediate demands. On report of committee on agrarian program, Left Wing (Ohsol and Ruthenberg) made ineffective fight for amendments to incorporate principle of collective ownership of land — agrarian views of Left Wing confused and inconsistent. (See speech and amendments of Ohsol in proceedings of convention, page 68, and amendment by Ruthenberg, page 82.)

#### **IX. Results of 1912 Convention.**

The Left Wing came out of the convention seriously broken and demoralized. The adoption of Section 6 led to an exodus of large masses from the Socialist Party, which then passed definitely under the control of the Right Wing and Center. The nomination of Debs for President by a vote of 165 as against 56 for Seidel, candidate of Right Wing, and 54 for Russell, candidate of Center, contributed in large measure toward maintaining the prestige of the Socialist Party in the eyes of the workers. The Left Wing took the nomination of Debs as its own victory, which it was only in a limited sense. In the long run it worked in the interests of the Right Wing and against the Left. Left Wing sentiment was quietly dying away in the Socialist Party, while developing in the trade unions. It was only with the beginning of the World War that a crystallized Left Wing in the Socialist Party again made its appearance.

#### **X. The World War Revives the Left Wing in the Socialist Party.**

Between the convention of 1912 and the beginning of the World War in 1914 the Left Wing in the Socialist Party was practically nonexistent. The 900,000 votes polled by Debs in 1912 was interpreted as proof of the correctness of the official policies. This

strengthened the ideological influence of Berger and Hillquit. The beginning of the war shook the complacency of the Socialist Party membership. There began at first a mild struggle within the party between its pro-German wing and pro-Allies wing. The voice of revolutionary opposition to imperialist wars was hardly audible. The beginning of 1915 sees a change. The Left Wing is making itself felt. *The New Review* reflects the revival of the Left Wing.

#### **XI. Left Wing Ideology During 1915-1917.**

Left Wing takes clear position against socialists supporting imperialist wars. It shows its revolutionary immaturity by failing to raise the slogan of civil war against the imperialist war. (See article of Louis C. Fraina, "The Future of Socialism," *New Review*, January 1915, page 20.) It realizes the collapse of the Second International, only dimly perceiving the reasons and demands the organization of a new International under the slogan: Drive Nationalism Out of the Socialist Movement. (Same article, pages 16 and 17.) It raises the question of colonial oppression and more centralization in the new International, but gives half-way solutions for these problems. (Same article, pages 17 and 18.) In its conception of the role of the party and its relations to the unions, the left wing of 1915 is the same as that of 1912. It believes that the party is an auxiliary to the revolutionary industrial union. (Same article, page 19.)

#### **XII. Zimmerwald and Kienthal Aiding Crystallization of Left Wing in America.**

Reflection of conference in Zimmerwald (September 1915) and second conference in Kienthal (April 1916) on the development of Left Wing in America. The issues of the Left Wing become more definite, its tone more militant and aggressive. The issues are: Opposition to war and "burgfrieden" (social peace), the demand for class struggle and the formation of a new International, excluding the social patriots.

### **XIII. Industrial and Political Situation in the United States in 1916.**

Great strike movements in practically every industry caused by intensified production and rise of cost of living. The strike of 15,000 miners on the Mesaba Iron Range in June 1916. The New York car strike and the subsequent sympathetic strikes. Strike of 8,000 workers on the Standard Oil plants at Bayonne, NJ. The deportation of 1,200 striking copper miners from Bisbee, Arizona. Passage by Congress of the Adamson 8-hour law for the railways under the threat of a railroad strike. (See *American Labor Year Book, 1917-18*.) These large and effective strike movements on the one hand and the drop of the Socialist Presidential vote in 1916 to 600,000 on the other hand, strengthened the belief of the Left Wing in the superiority of industrial versus political action. The Wilson myth of 1916 contributed toward disgusting the Left Wing with parliamentary action.

### **XIV. America's Entry into the War and the St. Louis Convention.**

The entry of the United States into the war emphasized and intensified the divisions in the socialist movement. The issues between the Left and Right became more actual and burning. Left Wing in the Socialist Party initiates and comes through a successful campaign for a special convention to settle the war problems. Convention is held in St. Louis in April 1917. The three reports of the Committee on War and Militarism. The majority report read by Hillquit received 141 votes out of 192. Boudin's report received 31 votes. Spargo's report received 5 votes. The St. Louis resolution (majority report) is a very ingenious mixture of social reformism and social pacifism. It declares emphatically against the war but raises illusion in the possibility of stopping the war without a revolutionary struggle for power by the working class. The Boudin resolution is free from all taint of pro-Germanism (which the majority resolution is not) but suffers from the same defect as the Hillquit report in the matter of raising pacifist illusions. The Left Wing expressed through the Boudin, still appears very immature from a revolutionary point of view.

### **XV. Betrayal of the St. Louis Resolution.**

Officialdom of Socialist Party brazenly betrays anti-war resolution. Hillquit's mayoralty campaign in September 1917, in spite of his anti-war phraseology, is a complete reverse of the St. Louis position. His famous reply to William Hard in *The New Republic*. (See *Class Struggle*, vol. 2, no. 2, pg. 1261.) Also his article in the *American Labor Year Book, 1917-18*. But in spite of this, membership of Socialist Party keeps on growing tremendously. Left Wing, too, grows ideologically and numerically.

### **XVI. New Ideological Centers of Left Wing.**

Trotsky's arrival in the United States and his collaboration in the *Novyi Mir* makes the Russian socialist daily a new ideological center of Left Wing. Trotsky is also instrumental in the formation of the Socialist Publication Society, which published *The Class Struggle*. *Novyi Mir* (New World) is influential mainly among the language federations of Russian origin. *The Class Struggle* from the latter half of 1917 become the Left Wing center for the English-speaking elements. Up till October 1918, the *Novyi Mir* and *The Class Struggle* are the only two spokesmen and ideological leaders of the Left Wing.

### **XVII. The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the Beginning of an Organized Left Wing in the Socialist Party.**

The seizure of power by the workers and peasants of Russia in November 1917 places before the Left Wing in the Socialist Party the problem of capturing the party for revolutionary socialism. The idea of forming an organized Left Wing to struggle for power is becoming popular. Jewish branch, downtown New York, led by Harry Hillzig, initiates organized opposition against attempt of leadership of Jewish Federation and *Forward* to bring about the revision of the St. Louis Resolution in favor of supporting the war. This branch is expelled from the party. Begins publication of a Jewish Left Wing periodical, *Der Kampf* (The Struggle), which serves as a nucleus for Jewish Left Wing. The summer of 1918 sees the Russian Fed-

eration assuming leadership in the organizational struggles of the left Wing. Other federations of Russian origin (Lettish [Latvian], Ukrainian, Polish, Lithuanian, and Left Wing of Jewish Federation) are cooperating with the Russian Federation.

### **XVIII. The Appearance of *The Revolutionary Age.***

October 1918 marks the appearance of a new Left Wing periodical, *The Revolutionary Age*, formed chiefly by the efforts of the Lettish branches of the Socialist Party in Boston. *The Revolutionary Age*, edited by Louis C. Fraina, shows from the very start a close ideological affinity to the Bolsheviks and a determination to break organizationally with the social reformists. It calls for an organized struggle within the Socialist Party to seize control of the party. In comparison with *The Class Struggle*, *The Revolutionary Age* marks a more advanced stage on the road to a Communist Party.

### **XIX. Left Wing Programs.**

Two Left Wing programs were formulated in New York during the months of January-March 1919.

(1) Program of the Left Wing, Local New York, Socialist Party. Its characteristic features are: (a) a pretty high degree of theoretical clearness in the fundamentals of the class struggle; (b) opposition on principle to immediate demands; (c) overemphasis of value of industrial unions.

(2) Other program of Left Wing was formulated by the Committee for Propaganda of Revolutionary Socialism in the Jewish Federation of the Socialist party. It differs from first program by admitting the necessity of partial demands. These programs became the center of organized struggles in the Socialist Party. During the months of February to August 1919, every unity of the Socialist Party was discussing and acting upon the program of the Left Wing. *The Revolutionary Age* was the national fighting organ in the English language of the Left Wing during that period. The central issue between March-September 1919 was: Affiliation to Communist International.

### **XX. Expulsions.**

The Right and Center were preparing for a split. Famous Hillquit slogan in the New York Call: "Let's Clear the Deck." Early in May 1919 the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party expelled the state organization of Michigan, suspended the Russian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Lettish [Latvian], Polish, South Slavic [Yugoslav], and Hungarian Federations, comprising about 40,000 members. The National Executive Committee was also holding up and refusing to tabulate the vote on the referendum which was to decide the election of a new National Executive Committee and the calling of a national convention. By all signs the referendum promised to give a majority to the Left Wing.

### **XXI. First Split and Preparations for National Conference of Left Wing.**

First split took place at convention of Jewish Federation, Boston, Mass., May 1919. Left wing was preparing to hold its first national conference in June 1919 in New York City. Russian Federations are beginning to assert their leadership in the Left Wing. At this time there appears within the Left Wing the first serious differences of opinion. Issue is: When and how shall the Communist Party of America be formed? This was the dominant issue at the National Conference of the Left Wing.

### **XXII. The Michigan Group.**

The Michigan (Proletarian) group has occupied a peculiar position in the Left Wing of America. Until May 1919 the center of this group was in Michigan, where it controlled and led the Socialist Party organization. *The Proletarian*, periodical publication of the group, the Proletarian University. Its ideology can be characterized as follows: (a) It accepts the fundamentals of Marxism, but does not know how to apply them in the class struggle. (b) It is academic, not political. (c) It still lives in the prewar epoch. (d) It completely misses the everyday fighting nature of Leninism and communism. (e) Its conception of the role of the party was practically the same as that of the rest of the Left Wing, namely, a political auxiliary to revolutionary

trade unions and an instrument for the propaganda of socialism. (f) It has no conception of partial demands and struggles.

These characteristics of the Michigan group are evident in *The Proletarian* since its inception. They are typical of the programs of the Proletarian Party of 1920 and 1921. The Michigan group advocated affiliation to the Communist International.

### **XXIII. The National Conference of the Left Wing.**

It was held in New York City in June 1919. It was a large and representative gathering of the Left Wing in the Socialist Party. The main issue before the conference was the problem of how shall the Communist Party of America be formed — more concretely: Shall we make our last stand at the forthcoming convention of the Socialist Party and there attempt to secure control of the party, or shall we immediately provide for the calling of our own convention and there form the Communist Party? Russian Federations and the Michigan group opposed going to Socialist Party convention on following grounds: (a) The largest part of the Left Wing is already expelled and will not be admitted to Socialist Party convention. (b) If we succeed in capturing the convention, the result will be a Left Wing party and not a Communist Party. (c) The attempt to capture the Socialist Party will only confuse the issues and weaken the Left Wing. These two groups therefore were in favor of the immediate formation of an organization committee to call a convention to form the Communist Party of America.

The English speaking delegates from the North Coast to the Middle West, centering around *The Revolutionary Age*, favored the policy of attempting to capture the Socialist Party and transforming it into a Communist Party. Failing in this attempt, the above group were willing to leave the Socialist Party convention and open a convention of their own to form a Communist Party. The group of *The Revolutionary Age* argued on the following grounds: (a) The partial returns of the referendum show widespread sentiment for the Left Wing in states which will surely have representation at the convention. (b) The chances for capturing the convention are good. (c) A large portion of the Left Wing will not follow us in splitting the Socialist Party

before it is established at the next convention that it is impossible to change the Socialist Party into a revolutionary party. (d) The mere going to the convention of the Socialist Party, even if we should have a split afterward, is good tactics to win the sympathies of the immature rank and file for the Left wing.

There was a third group at the conference, most of them English-speaking delegates from the Western States, that favored going to the Socialist Party because they were totally unprepared for a break with the social reformists. The majority of the conference decided in favor of going to the Socialist Party convention.

### **XXIV. Ultimatum of Federation-Michigan Group and Split in Left Wing.**

Opponents of going to the Socialist Party convention hold caucus on second day of conference and organize themselves as Minority of Left Wing Conference. They then elect a committee consisting of Keegan of Buffalo, A. Stoklitsky of Chicago, Kopnagel of Milwaukee, with Dennis E. Batt of Detroit as Chairman and Oakley C. Johnson of Ann Arbor, Michigan, as Secretary. This presents the combination of the Russian Federations with the Michigan group. This caucus of the minority formulated an ultimatum to the rest of the conference demanding the calling of a convention to form a Communist Party, to be held in Chicago, September 1, 1919. The ultimatum (see *The Communist*, July 19, 1919) was presented to the conference on June 29. Conference rejects ultimatum by laying it on the table. Split of Left Wing is complete. Minority holds another meeting and elects an Organization Committee of the Communist Party of America, consisting of John Keracher, Dennis Batt, and O.C. Johnson of the Michigan groups; Alexander Stoklitsky and S. Kopnagel of the Russian Federation; D. Elbaum of the Polish Federation; and J.V. Stilson of the Lithuanian Federation. This committee is authorized to call convention in Chicago September 1 to form Communist Party. Majority of Left Wing conference decides to go to Socialist Party convention and elects National Council to carry on work of preparation and direction of Left Wing. *Revolutionary Age* moves from Boston to New York and appears as official national organ of Left Wing.

### **XXV. General Situation in the United States on the Eve of the Formation of the Communist Parties.**

The general strikes in Seattle and in Butte. The great strike in Lawrence. The mass movement for the release of Tom Mooney and other political prisoners. The shop delegates movement in the east. Left wing revolutionary optimism and determination much influenced by these events. The rank and file and workers' councils movements in the west. Class struggle during spring and summer of 1919 very intense. (See *Class Struggle*, May 1919, p. 223, and *Revolutionary Age*, June 14, 1919.)

### **XXVI. Further Developments in the Left Wing.**

Organization Committee of Communist Party begins publication in Chicago of a weekly, *The Communist*. First issue dated July 19 [1919]. Committee issues convention call. Bitter fight carried on by Organization Committee against the "centrists" of the Left Wing National Council. See Stoklitsky article in *The Communist*, July 19. Also Novyi Mir. Opponents of immediate formation of Communist Party fought as centrists. Split in National Council of Left Wing after unsuccessful attempt to declare as the real National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party the Left Wing candidates on the referendum ballot. Majority of Left Wing National Council joins Organization Committee in preparing convention for September 1. September 1 in Chicago sees the opening of the first convention of the Communist Party of America.

### **XXVII. Formation of the First Communist Party.**

Party was formed at a convention held in Chicago, September 1-5, 1919. Russian Federations dominated convention. Well centralized, conscious, and purposeful leading group. Its ideology was clearly revolutionary, only strongly tinged with sectarianism and anti-parliamentarism. The latter had nothing to do with syndicalism but was rather determined by the foreign-born psychology of the membership of these federations. The overwhelming majority of this mem-

bership were not citizens, nor were they in any way participating in the political struggles of the country. A small number of these federationists were members of unions. Parliamentary struggles and trade union struggles were abstract academic matters to most of the federations. The things closest to the heart of this convention and to the federations were the following: (a) Break with the reformists and social patriots. (b) No immediate demands except the dictatorship of the proletariat. (c) Affiliation to the Communist International. (d) Support Soviet Russia.

Convention manifested open hostility to the "centrists" who went to the Socialist Party convention. Leadership of federation caucus knew that it must have the services and support of an English-speaking group in order to form and lead the party. Two English-speaking groups to choose from: the Michigan group or the group of *The Revolutionary Age*. Each of the two groups presents its program to the federation caucus. Program of Michigan group is well written, is consistent in its Marxian phraseology, but is hopelessly academic and totally out of date. Program of group of *Revolutionary Age* is poorly written, suffers from many inconsistencies, but is a fighting program, alive to all fundamental problems of postwar conditions and sees the role of the party as the leader of all phases of struggle. Both programs accept the Russian Revolution and the Communist International. Both programs contained only one immediate demand: the dictatorship of the proletariat. After long struggle, federation caucus accepts program of the group of *Revolutionary Age*. Michigan group is sore and resentful. Convention adopts program and constitution. Elects Central Executive Committee. Headquarters in Chicago. First meeting of Central Executive Committee shows rift between federation group and English-speaking group.

### **XXVIII. Split in Socialist Party Convention and Formation of the Communist Labor Party.**

Expulsions prior to and at convention secure control for Right Wing. Socialist Party convention cannot be captured for Left Wing; delegates leave Socialist Party convention and open their own, where they form Communist Labor Party. Makeup of Communist Labor Party convention heterogeneous. Large bloc

of Left Wing, but merely opposed to arbitrary methods of Socialist Party officialdom. Only small group of communists. Predominating ideology is to lay stress on industrial and shop struggles. Pronounced tendency to support the IWW as against the American Federation of Labor. Strong hostility to federations. Program adopted by convention shows signs of many tendencies but is revolutionary in substance. Suffers from defects of sectarianism, no partial demands as program. Unity negotiations between the two conventions initiated by the Communist Labor Party and supported by English-speaking wing of Communist Party result in failure. The end of the first week of September 1919 finds the existence of two communist parties.

### **XXIX. The Communist Party and the Communist Labor Party.**

Both parties start organization campaign to solidify their forces. Communist Labor Party opens unity offensive against Communist Party. Sends proposal to first meeting of Central Executive Committee of Communist Party for conference of representatives of both committees to discuss unity. Communist Party refuses to deal with Communist Labor Party as a party and proposes that branches of Communist Labor Party accepting program and constitution of party shall affiliate with the Communist Party. (See Declaration on Communist Unity, by Communist Party in *Communist* of November 8 [1919].) Both parties fight for exclusive recognition of Communist International. Communist Labor Party steals a march on Communist Party but without avail. Unity is main issue in relations between the two parties. Socialist Party is fast declining.

### **XXX. The Steel Strike and the Miners' Strike.**

The steel strike passed almost unnoticed by the two communist parties. Only a few articles in the press. None of the parties had any immediate program for the strike. No organization work. Same is true of local mining situation. Characteristic proclamation of Communist Party. No immediate program of partial demands for the coal miners. Only two slogans to all workers: Make the Strike General and Seize the State

Power. (See proclamation in *Communist*, November 8, 1919; also *Proletarian*, January 1920.)

### **XXXI. Passing Underground.**

The Palmer raids of January 1920 drove both parties underground. Central Committees of both parties indicted under the criminal syndicalist law of Illinois. Deportations. For a short while the raids completely paralyzed the activities of both parties. Both parties decide to reorganize on the basis of underground existence. Both parties reject the utilization of legal means for open political activities. Rank and file dissatisfied. Communist Labor Party loses many of its immature, non-communist elements. Communist Party suffers loss of membership but to a much lesser degree than Communist Labor Party. Both parties get ready for an indefinite period of underground existence.

### **XXXII. Force and Violence as an Issue in Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party.**

The persecutions against the communists raised in the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party the issue of force and violence. Proposal is made at meeting of committee in February 1920 to issue leaflet proclaiming and defending our right to advocate armed insurrection. Minority of Central Executive Committee, consisting of two prominent members of English-speaking group, Comrades Damon [Ruthenberg] and Isaacs [I.E. Ferguson], object violently to such a source on the ground that it helps the prosecution to prove its case against the imprisoned comrades. Damon [Ruthenberg] finally agrees with the majority to frankly state our position on armed insurrection. Relations are becoming strained between federation group and Damon-Isaacs [Ruthenberg-Ferguson] group.

The issues between the two are: (a) The question of federations, Damon-Isaacs [Ruthenberg-Ferguson] taking the position that the federations must be gradually abolished; (b) unity, Damon-Isaacs [Ruthenberg-Ferguson] pressing for unity with the Communist Labor Party.



**XXXIII. Michigan Group Leaves Party.**

Defeat at Communist Party convention left Michigan group dissatisfied and in a mood of opposition. Central Executive Committee decides in January [1920] that the Proletarian University must become a party institution. Central Executive Committee wants to supervise and lead educational activities of the university. Michigan group refuses to accept decision and goes out of the party.

**XXXIV. Split in Communist Party and Formation of United Communist Party.**

Frequent and intensive unity negotiations between Communist Party and Communist Labor Party during February and March, 1920. Agreement nearly reached. Simultaneously the relations between the federation group and the Damon-Isaacs [Ruthenberg-Ferguson] group in the Communist Party are becoming worse. Internal struggles in Chicago district aggravates situation. Damon-Isaacs [Ruthenberg-Ferguson] group in Central Executive Committee of Communist Party forces the issue of immediately curbing influence of federations. This results in bitter struggle and later in split in Communist Party, Damon-Isaacs [Ruthenberg-Ferguson] group going with Communist Labor Party in unity convention in the summer of 1920 which forms the United Communist Party.

**XXXV. Sectarianism Reigns Supreme.**

The year of 1920 must be considered the worst year in the history of our movement. Both parties lived thousands of miles underground, removed and isolated from the class struggle. "Force and violence" and the "Rights of the Federations" were the only issues that agitated the two parties. In the midst of tremendous strike movements and in the face of the struggle between the Republicans and Democrats in the Presidential campaign of 1920, both parties had nothing more to propose than the proletarian dictatorship and to boycott the elections. Study "Boycott the Elections" proclamation of the United Communist Party (See *Communist*, No. 9.) It is a mixture of syndicalism, social reformism, and left sick communism. The only relieving feature of those months was the beginning

made by both parties in building communist nuclei in the shops. The United Communist Party was then making its first steps in establishing connections with the unions. The Communist International is beginning to consider seriously the question of uniting the Communist Party with the United Communist Party. The year 1921 brings great changes to the better.

**XXXVI. The Trade Union Militants Approach the Communist Position.**

The year 1921 marks a turning point in the history of our movement. The group of trade union militants that was centering around William Z. Foster and Browder go to Moscow to attend the first Congress of the Red International of Labor Unions, which was held in July 1921. They come back in September and soon find their places as active, leading members of the Communist movement. A new and real opportunity is thereby given to the communist movement of America to establish contact with the masses in their daily struggles. At last the communist movement of America is beginning to root itself in the organized labor movement. Sectarianism is coming to an end.

**XXXVII. The Role of the Foster Group in the Labor Movement of the United States.**

In 1912 Foster, Johnson, Browder, and J. Fox form the Syndicalist League of North America. The general philosophy of the league is strongly syndicalist. It is opposed to political action. It believes in direct action, chiefly the general strike. It considers the union as an inherently revolutionary organ of proletarian class struggle, which will eventually destroy capitalism and emancipate the working class. It attaches tremendous importance to the role of an organized, conscious, revolutionary minority in the large, economic mass organizations of the worker. It differs from the IWW in two fundamentals: (a) The Syndicalist League believes in the revolutionary potentialities of the American Federation of labor. The IWW condemns the American Federation of Labor as hopelessly reactionary. (b) The Syndicalist League advocates the policy of militants staying in the reactionary unions of the American Federation of Labor and carrying on an organized campaign for making these unions revo-

lutionary. The IWW advocates and practices the policy of forming new unions. The Syndicalist League believed in the power of an organized revolutionary minority working within the American Federation of Labor to transform that organization into an organ of revolutionary struggle. The Syndicalist League was a syndicalist organization. Its outstanding piece of literature is the book entitled *Syndicalism*, by Foster and Ford. This book became very prominent during the steel strike of 1919 due to the efforts of the steel trust to discredit the strike, by injecting into it the book on syndicalism written by Foster. The press of the Syndicalist League consisted of *The Syndicalist*, a monthly published in Chicago in 1912-13 by J. Fox; the *St. Louis Unionist*, a weekly, published in St. Louis by Labille; *The Toiler*, a monthly, published in Kansas City by Max Dezettel in close cooperation with Earl R. Browder; and *The Internationalist*, a monthly published in San Diego. The most influential in the local trade union movement was *The Toiler*, of Kansas City.

### **XXXVIII. The Foster Group in the American Federation of Labor.**

The Syndicalist League went out of existence by the end of 1913. It was practically killed by the revived prestige of the methods of the IWW due to its effective participation in the great textile strikes of 1913. The founders of the Syndicalist League concentrate within the American Federation of Labor as practical organizers. William Z. Foster becomes very active in the Chicago local trade union movement, building the Railway Carmen's Council. Jack Johnston and Hammersmark are also very active in the Chicago trade union movement. They advocate and practice modern industrial methods of organizations and the principles of the class struggle. Thus the Foster group is gaining prestige and a following in the trade unions.

### **XXXIX. The International Trade Union Educational League.**

The success of the methods employed by the Foster group during 1913-16 produces the International Trade Union Educational League. It was formed in the fall of 1916 by Foster, Johnston, Hammersmark, Browder, and Jack Carney. Its philosophy and main

keynote was militant trade unionism. The league ignored political action completely. It was neither in favor of it or against it. Its main object was to revolutionize the American Federation of Labor from within. Its practices were the same as those of the Syndicalist League without the syndicalist phraseology of the latter.

### **XL. The Great Organization Campaigns in the Stockyards and in the Steel Industry.**

The International Trade Union Education League made the American Federation of Labor the main center of its activities. Between 1917 and 1919, Foster, Johnston, and their collaborators were carrying out the great organization campaigns in the stockyards of Chicago and in the steel industry. The historic significance of the two campaigns. The Steel Strike. The Foster group is following closely and is taking in the lessons of the Bolshevik revolution and of the American communist movement.

### **XLI. The Formation of the Trade Union Educational League.**

Three factors are directly responsible for the formation of the Trade Union Educational League in October 1920: (a) The conclusion reached by the Foster group, from its experiences in the American Federation of Labor between 1917 and 1920, that you can not revolutionize the American Federation of Labor on the basis of militant trade unionism alone; (b) the Bolshevik revolution in Russia; (c) the development of a communist movement in America, which was slowly becoming the center of working class militants. Foster's series of lectures in Chicago in December 1920 and January 1921 on trade unionism and the Left Wing. In the postwar period, Foster bases many of his conclusions on Lenin's Left Sickness of Communism. The lectures are a plea for a revolutionary Left Wing in the American Federation of Labor. The Foster group is moving closer to the Communist movement.

### **XLII. The American Bureau of the International Council of Trade and Industrial Unions.**

The International Council of Trade and Industrial Unions is that body of revolutionary unions which called the first international congress of revolutionary unions and organized the Red International of Labor Unions in July 1921. The American bureau of the council was formed in January 1921. The American bureau establishes contact with the Foster group, some of whom were members of the Communist Labor Party. In March of 1921, Foster, Browder, Haywood, Cosgrove, Bloor, and Joe Knight leave for the first congress of the Red International of Labor Unions. Foster and Browder return in September 1921. Foster group exercises tremendous influence indirectly upon the trade union work of the Communist Party. Browder and Johnston delegates to the first convention of Workers Party. Foster writes *The Bankruptcy of the American Labor Movement* and *The Russian Revolution*. Foster joins the party. The Trade Union Educational League begins to develop its campaign for amalgamation in the State Federations of Labor and in the railroad industry. The beginning of a real Left Wing in the trade unions. The communist movement of America is establishing itself as an important factor in the organized labor movement.

### **XLIII. The Unity Struggle Between the Communist Party and the United Communist Party.**

The struggle between the Communist Party and the United Communist Party lasted for over a year, from May 1920 to May 1921. It was a year of rampaging sectarianism and tremendous waste of communist energy. The Communist Party branded the United Communist Party "centrists." The United Communist Party fought the Communist Party as a group of federation autonomists. There were sound, nonsectarian minorities in both parties. Under pressure from the American bureau of the Red International of Labor Unions and Communist International, formed in January 1921, both parties were compelled to adopt a more realistic policy for the trade unions. The coming into the United Communist Party of a

number of union militants enabled the communists to lay their first basis in the unions. The development of the Foster group laid the beginning for the broader Left Wing in the trade unions.

### **XLIV. Communist International Sends Mandate for Party.**

Both parties send delegates to Second Congress of the Communist International, Communist Party from its second convention, United Communist Party from its first conventional Communist International consults with both delegations and sends instructions for joint unity convention on the basis of proportional representation. Instruction received in America about November 1920. Prolonged negotiations for unity between the two parties. Stumbling block to unity is the real number of members in each party. See report of unity proceedings during December 1920. The Central Executive Committees are deadlocked. Second convention of United Communist Party and third convention of Communist Party.

### **XLV. Formation of Communist Unity Committee.**

Committee was formed in January 1921 by active members of both parties. It published a bulletin, *Communist Unity*, advocating the immediate unification of the communist movement. It was very effective in arousing among the ranks favorable sentiment for immediate unity. It liquidated itself after the unification of the two parties.

### **XLVI. American Bureau of Communist International is Vested with Full Power.**

On April 2 [1921], American bureau receives mandate to accomplish unity. Bureau is vested with full power. It formulates conditions for unity convention and submits them to both Central Executive Committees. (See *Communist Unity*, April 20, 1920.) Conditions on the basis of equal representation, with an impartial chairman for the convention. The agency also formulates solutions for the most controversial points in the dispute between the two parties: (a) On force and violence; (b) on federations; (c) on the ap-

pointment of functionaries; (d) on parliamentary elections. The ruling of the agency on these points is in complete agreement with the views of the more constructive elements in both parties. The hour of communist unity has struck.

### **XLVII. The United Communist Party and the Communist Party United.**

The joint unity convention took place in May 1921. No serious differences of opinion on program and tactics. Only difficulty in constitution of CEC. Question of federations is settled by compromise. CEC to consist of equal number of representatives of both former parties. Main positive feature of convention is resolution on relation to trade union militants. No indication as yet of wide political strategy. (See first issue of *Communist*, July 1921, of united party.)

### **XLVIII. First Big Issue in the United Party.**

The question of legal work becomes the big issue. How shall the communists utilize the legal means for approaching and organizing the masses? CEC at first divides equally on this proposition. Later on one of the former Communist Party joins the former United Communist Party and a majority is secured toward making the first step for open work. The formation of the American Labor Alliance — the forerunner of the Workers Party. The minority organizes an opposition and splits the party.

### **XLIX. The Legal Political Party.**

Party discusses the question of legal work. From the idea of many makeshift legal organizations to the idea of a legal political party. The minority opposition forms the United Toilers of America.

### **L. Workers' Council Group.**

Between the time of the first split in the Socialist Party (September 1919) and the middle of 1921, there developed within the Socialist Party a new Left Wing. It found its expression through the Committee for a Third International. This group advocated within the Socialist Party a program of more pronounced class

struggle and affiliation with the Communist International with certain reservations regarding the 21 points. The backbone of this committee was the Jewish Federation of the Socialist Party and Left Wing groups in New York, Illinois, and Ohio. The Detroit convention of the Socialist Party, held in June 1921, produced the second split in the Socialist Party. Soon afterward the Workers' Council is formed. It consists of the group that supported the Committee for the Third International plus the German Workers Educational Alliance. The Workers' Council publishes a periodical in New York of the same name. This group approaches the Communist Party for the purpose of forming jointly a legal party.

### **LI. Negotiations Between the Communist Party and the Workers' Council.**

Numerous conferences held between party and Workers' Council. Party proposes to units of the council to join underground organization and also merge with the American Labor Alliance. Workers' Council group flatly rejects proposal. Argues violently against underground organization. Demands liquidation of underground and formation of a legal political party jointly by American Labor Alliance and Workers' Council. No agreement in sight. Alliance and council proceed with preparations for two separate national conventions.

### **LII. Formation of Workers Party of America.**

In November 1921, agreement is reached between party and Workers' Council on the calling of a convention to form the Workers Party. Central Executive Committee of Communist Party formulates and submits to Workers' Council a statement on relations between underground and legal organizations according to which the legal party is considered the instrument of the underground party. Delegates of Workers' Council take note of statement but refuse to discuss it. They take the position that the underground is the business only of those affiliated to it and that the relations between the underground and the proposed legal party do not enter into the negotiations between the American Labor Alliance and the Workers' Council. Through negotiations agreement is reached on pro-

gram, constitution, and organizational procedure of merging the two negotiating bodies into one party. Workers Party officially launched last week in December 1921, at convention in New York City.

### **LIII. Landmark in the History of Our Movement.**

Formation of the Workers Party meant wide contact with organized labor movement. The party is beginning to live with the real issues of the American class struggle. Program of the Workers Party is not merely statement of principles but a guide to militant everyday struggles on economic and political field. Partial demands and well considered program for the building of a Left Wing movement in the unions. Mildly and cautiously formulated revolutionary aims.

### **LIV. Minority Opposition Fights the Workers Party.**

United Toilers carry on bitter struggle against Workers Party. Minority opposition sends delegates to Communist International. Communist International confirms previous instructions on legal party and instructs minority to go back to party and accept decision. Agreement in Moscow between Moscow representative (Carr [Katterfeld]) and minority representative (Moore [Ballam]) reached in March 1922. Considerable portion of the opposition joins the party. Remainder continues to function in opposition to Communist International decision.

### **LV. Problems of Relations Between Legal Party and Underground Party.**

The existence of two parties, one within the other, gives rise to numerous difficulties in problems of organizational adjustment. Friction between the communists and Workers Party members only. Demand for liquidation is growing. Central Executive Committee of Communist Party adopts the position: (a) That liquidation of underground is a question of practical expediency and not principle; (b) that the first prerequisite for such liquidation is the more firm establishment of the Workers Party as political factor in American class struggle; (c) that the liquidation of

the underground is a process of gradual transformation; (d) that the liquidation of the underground can mean only the transformation of it into an underground apparatus of and auxiliary to the legal party. Central Executive Committee insists upon combination of legal and illegal work. Former group of Workers' Council insistently demands immediate liquidation of underground party, particularly its control over legal party. This demand produces strong reaction against liquidation of underground on principle. Central Executive Committee attacks from two sides, namely, from believers and opponents of the underground on principle. The development of the "goose" caucus. The intervention of the Communist International and the Bridgman convention in the summer of 1922.

### **LVI. The Bridgman Convention.**

The convention considerably improved trade union program of party. Improvements based upon experiences and progress of Trade Union Educational League. Main question at issue is relation between underground and legal parties. On this point convention adopts compromise proposition which consists in the following; (a) Legal or underground existence of party is not question of principle; (b) whether legal or underground, center of gravity of party's work lies in the legal organization; (c) an underground Communist Party must fight its way back to open existence; (d) always combine legal with illegal work; (e) the Communist Party will have to continue underground for the present (Summer 1922) and for some time to come. Convention decides to make serious effort to bring back into party remainder of minority opposition.

### **LVII. The Second Convention of the Workers Party.**

Party registers considerable progress. Outstanding developments of the year are: (a) Formulation and the development of the Trade Union Educational League; (b) campaign for amalgamation; (c) Labor Defense Council and our Michigan defense; (d) agitation for a labor party based on the mass economic organization of the workers. Party initiates campaign for

protection of foreign born.

### **LVIII. Meeting of the Communist Party Council.**

Organizational difficulties and friction between underground and legal. Party begins to feel necessity of rapid adjustments. Party council is called into session in December 1922 to consider and act upon situation. Report of Central Executive Committee of Communist Party (see official organ of Communist Party No. 12, vol. 1) outlines situation and proposes in effect transformation of underground into illegal apparatus of legal party. Council adopts proposal of Central Executive Committee. Transformation is rapidly accomplished.

### **LIX. Remainder of Opposition Comes Into the Party.**

Former opposition holds convention in September 1922 to consider and act upon proposals of Communist International representative to join party. Principal conditions of proposal of Communist International Representative are: (a) Opposition joins immediately open and underground organizations; (b) opposition receives representation upon all leading committees and organs of both organizations. Convention of opposition accepts proposals of Communist International representative. Central Executive Committee of Communist Party also accepts the proposals. Opposition joins party. Communist unity is achieved.

### **LX. Summary.**

1. The communist movement in America is the outgrowth and mature development of the Left Wing in the American labor movement.

2. This Left Wing had its origin in the socialist movement. It was strongly permeated with industrialism and revolutionary syndicalism. It was a reaction against pure and simple trade unionism, on the one hand, and pure parliamentarism on the other. It found

its expression in the IWW, in the group centering around William Z. Foster, and in the Left Wing of the Socialist Party and Socialist Labor Party.

3. The Russian Revolution and the Communist International clarified the ideology of the Left Wing, brought its various tendencies closer together, and later produced the Communist Party.

4. Formation of Communist Party and Communist Labor Party in September 1919 meant definite break between the revolutionists and reformists in the socialist movement in America.

5. The economic and political situation in the United States of the post-war period had strongly influenced the development of the communist movement, but failed in many instances to evoke from the communist parties a conscious expression of this situation and a realistic attitude toward it.

6. The predominate foreign language composition of our party plus the general weakness of theoretical socialist thought in the United States are mainly responsible for the difficulties encountered by our movement in crystallizing a correct and effective application of communist principles to the realities of the American class struggle.

7. The underground existence of our movement greatly accentuated the sectarian tendencies present within it from its inception. At the same time this underground existence proved an effective test of communist devotion and supplied good training in the method of illegal work.

8. The development of the recent Left Wing in the trade unions and the formation of the Workers Party must be considered the most important events in the life of our movement next to the formation of the two communist parties in September 1919.

9. Following the formation of the Workers Party and soon afterwards the formation of the Trade Union Educational League, the communist movement in the United States became a real factor in the American class struggle.

10. Henceforth our party finds itself on the right track to becoming the actual leader and guide of the toiling masses in the United States.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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