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# Letter to the Executive Committee of the Communist International in Moscow from C.E. Ruthenberg in Chicago, January 8, 1924.

A document in the Comintern Archive, f. 515, op. 1, d. 297, ll. 1-3.

January 8, 1924  
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Executive Committee  
Communist International  
Moscow, Russia

Dear Comrades:

You will find enclosed herewith a complete report of the proceedings of the Third National Convention of the Workers Party of America [Dec. 30, 1923-Jan. 2, 1924] including the report of the Central Executive Committee and the resolutions adopted by the Convention.†

The report of the Central Executive Committee, which contains all the data of membership and finances for the entire year, will serve as the report of our Party for the fourth quarter of 1924.

The documents attached hereto in themselves do not fully explain the issues in our convention as these issues did not come out clearly in the resolutions adopted by the convention and it is necessary therefore to add a statement of the issues on which there was a division in the convention itself. These issues were three in number, as follows:

1. The question of our relation with a petty bourgeois Third Party and the proposal of the Central Executive Committee that we must carry on a campaign to promote a split of the petty bourgeoisie from the

old capitalist parties and under certain definite conditions make an alliance with it against the capitalist parties.

2. The question of the United Front of the city of Chicago.

3. The question of the majority of the incoming CEC.

On the first issue, that of our relationship with a third petty bourgeois party, the CEC had presented its view in the thesis proposed for adoption by the convention. This thesis had been supported by practically all the district conventions and probably 2/3 of the delegates to the national convention would have voted for the thesis as presented by the CEC. There was, however, a minority of about 15 delegates out of the 53 in the convention, under the leadership of Comrade Lore, who strongly opposed the proposals of the CEC.

On the Chicago United Front, two resolutions were presented which clearly set forth the issues involved in the Chicago situation. There were in the convention about 20 delegates who supported the resolution of the Chicago District Committee on this question on its merits and about 15 delegates who supported the position of the majority of the Central Executive Committee presented in the resolution of the CEC. At the beginning of the convention it appeared that an agreement had been reached by the opposition of the Third Party proposal of the CEC [Lore group] and the supporters of the Chicago resolution

†- The report and resolutions mentioned do not appear in the same archival folder with the cover letter here. These documents were, however, published in *The Second Year of the Workers Party of America: Report of the Central Executive Committee to the Third National Convention, Held in Chicago, Illinois, Dec. 30, 31, 1923, and Jan. 1, 2, 1924: Theses, Program, Resolutions*. (Chicago: Literature Department, Workers Party of America, [1924]).

on the United Front [Foster group], which gave this group about 35 votes in the convention for the Chicago resolution and against the CEC resolution [Pepper group]. The agreement between these two groups also extended to the Third Party issue and was to the effect that the convention should vote on the question of supporting the CEC position on the Third Party issue and after its adoption by the convention (the Chicago group was in favor of the Third Party position of the CEC, although some of them for other reasons than those advanced by the CEC), the Third Party section of the thesis was to be referred to the Executive Committee of the Communist International for final decision as to its correctness before being put into effect.

At the opening of the session of the convention at which the Third Party question was to be discussed, Comrade Pepper, as secretary of the Political Committee, announced that in view of the fact that the membership of the Party had not been educated to an understanding of the Third Party policy proposed by the CEC, he proposed that this section of the thesis be withdrawn and referred to the Executive Committee of the Communist International for approval before being adopted by the Party. The motion to withdraw and refer to the EC of the CI was adopted by a vote of 43 out of 53, and 10 not voting.

On the Chicago United Front resolution, after debate lasting a number of hours, the vote was 37 for the Chicago resolution and 15 against with 1 delegate not voting. The resolution of the Chicago delegation was therefore adopted as the view of the convention.

The question of the election of the Central Executive Committee and the conflicting forces involved in this election is somewhat difficult to present in view of the fact that the issues were those of personality rather than issues of policy. In the old CEC John Pepper had been secretary of the Political Committee and to a large degree the initiator of many of the Party policies. After the July 3rd [1923] convention at which the Federated Farmer-Labor Party was created, a difference of viewpoint developed in the CEC with Com-

rades Foster and Cannon as the opposition to the policy of organizing and building up the Federated Farmer-Labor Party as a party, which was supported by Comrades Pepper and Ruthenberg with the majority of the Committee supporting the latter viewpoint. This difference of opinion was however settled in the November [1923] meeting of the CEC in which, after presenting an opposition thesis, Comrades Foster and Cannon withdrew their thesis on the basis of certain statements interpreting the Pepper-Ruthenberg thesis, which was adopted by the CEC. The struggle, however, over this issue left behind it certain antagonisms which manifested themselves in the national convention. These antagonisms were emphasized by the appearance of an article of Comrade Pepper's just prior to the Chicago District Convention attacking the United Front policy of the Chicago District Committee and, by implication, the attitude of Comrade Foster in relation to this United Front. The struggle for the election of the CEC revolved around the antagonisms created during the struggle over the question of the organization of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party, both the Chicago District group led by Comrades Foster and Cannon and the Anti-Third Party policy group led by Comrade Lore being determined to elect a CEC which would have a majority against Comrade Pepper, although at one time during the negotiations over the CEC, Comrade Foster proposed the CEC to consist of 6 members from the Foster-Cannon group and 6 members from the Pepper group, with Comrade Ruthenberg as the odd member of the Committee. The final decision of the two groups above mentioned was that there should be a clear majority on the CEC for the Foster-Cannon-Lore group and the Committee as elected consists of 9 members of the caucus of the convention which held the majority, 3 members of the old CEC majority, and Comrade Ruthenberg, who held the position between the two groups.†

The outcome of the convention is that although the policies of the majority of the old CEC were adopted by the convention in every instance except

†- This CEC elected by the 3rd Convention for the year 1924 was: *Majority group* — Martin Abern (YWL), Alexander Bittelman, Earl Browder, Fahle Burman, James P. Cannon, William F. Dunne, J. Louis Engdahl, William Z. Foster; *Anti-Third Party group* — Ludwig Lore; *Minority group* — Benjamin Gitlow, Jay Lovestone, John Pepper, C.E. Ruthenberg. While Ruthenberg represents himself as "between the two groups," in practice he voted almost exclusively with the Pepper Minority group. Ludwig Lore, an arch opponent of Pepper, voted almost exclusively with the Foster Majority group.

the Third Party policy, which is referred to the CI and which policy would have had the majority of the convention if it had come to a vote, the majority of the CEC is composed of the group <illeg.> in opposition to the policy of the majority of the old CEC on the Federated Farmer-Labor Party, although that opposition was withdrawn at the time of the November meeting of the CEC, and this majority is now pledged to the policy of the former majority of the CEC on this question.

The former majority of the CEC [Pepper group] declared in the convention that it will give loyal support to the new CEC and at the present moment it does not appear that there will be any struggle within the Party itself over the resolution of the convention; rather the whole party will accept the decisions of the convention and proceed with the constructive work of the movement. We believe that our Party can no longer be torn asunder as in the past when a factional issue arose and this fact is the best indication of the consolidation of the Party and a guarantee that our movement will go forward during the coming year to even greater achievements than those in the past year, during which we believe we have made the greatest progress during the history of our movement in this country.

Fraternally yours,

[C.E. Ruthenberg]  
Executive Secretary.

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OEA 12755

*Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.*

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