

---

# Memorandum to the Executive Committee of the Communist International in Moscow from the Communist Unity Committee in New York City, Jan. 21, 1921.

Document in the Comintern Archive, RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 43, ll. 6-9.  
Russian translation: RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 43, ll. 10-12. Handwritten at the top  
of the English original are the words "Volkszeitung, Lore" (the name in cyrillic).

Jan. 21, 1921

Dear Comrades:

This memorandum is prepared and submitted to you as a report of certain conditions in the Socialist and Labor movements in the United States and in the hope of getting your approval to a plan of organization of that part of the American proletariat which is fully Communist, or ready to accept the Communist position. The sponsors of this memorandum are a number of comrades in New York and vicinity, at present belonging to the UCP, SP, several language federations, as well as without party affiliation. These comrades feel that they represent the majority Socialist sentiment in the United States, those particularly who have broken away from the SP as well as from the several Communist parties. The number of these can be estimated at 75,000. The Socialist Party, which at one time had a membership of 110,000, has now considerably less than 20,000 members. The Communist parties have now hardly 15,000 members, from a former membership of 55,000. Hence there must be in the United States at the present time something like 75 to 85,000 Socialists who are outside of party organizations.

The state of mind of these Socialists, disgusted with the SP and disappointed with the Communist parties, may be summed up in approximately this fashion:

- (1) They are enthusiastic supporters of the November [Russian] Revolution.
- (2) They are anxious to join the Third Interna-

tional.

(3) They accept the conditions laid down by the Third International.

(4) They wish to organize into a strong and aggressive proletarian party.

(5) They will rally round a platform in conformity with the views of the Third International and suited to the conditions peculiar to the United States.

It is desirable to outline to you, very briefly, these conditions:—

The American Socialist movement and the American Labor movement are two separate things. The Socialist Party has never succeeded in becoming an integral part of the organized labor movement, never having enough strength to capture it, nor enough courage to fight it. Hence the organized labor movement, as represented by the AF of L, has always remained very conservative, ignorant of the class struggle and spurning every attempt to infuse in it consciousness of class. Its leaders have worked hand in hand with the capitalist class during the war, and are showing no revolutionary insight whatever at the present time. The labor organizations composing the AF of L count nearly 4 and a half million workers, but this is at most 20 percent of the working population subject to organization. In the basic industries of the United States such as iron and steel, food, textile, lumber, etc. the labor organizations are particularly weak and where they exist are very reactionary, such as the Railway Brotherhoods.

The IWW was never a strong organization, and today, after 15 years of effort and recent attempts

at secret organization, which failed, it counts about 58,000 members.

The needle trades form the most progressive trade unions in the United States, perhaps the only large body of workers supporting socialist and radical working class activity.

The farming population, as a whole, is still more backward than the urban workers. Some portions of them, especially in the West, occasionally show a spirit of discontent which finds expression in a political sense in the Populist Party (extinct), the Non-Partisan League, etc. Of Socialist sentiment among the 12 million farmers there is none.

Yet the work of the Socialists in the United States for a period of 30 years or more did produce a certain amount of Socialist sentiment among large masses of the population. There is a large amount of discontent generally, which is becoming more widespread as the conditions of employment become more severe. There are already (January 1921) nearly 2,500,000 unemployed in the country and it is predicted that the situation will grow worse in the next months. The incoming administration will undoubtedly continue to strengthen the reactionary and vicious methods employed against the working class by the Wilson-Palmer regime. The combined employers of the country demand the breaking down of labor organizations, of labor morale. Hence the discontent will become more intense and bitter. And all the while the glory of the Russian Revolution stirs the souls of large numbers of American workers. The soil is likely to become very fertile for communist agitation in the next year or two.

The Socialist Party is disintegrating rapidly. The Communist parties, what there is of them, are not in a position to carry on the work, since they are composed mainly of foreign speaking elements, and make no effort to reach the American workman in a manner that he can understand. The result is that today there is no single organized agency in the United States competent and daring enough to lead American workers to communist achievement.

The work is crying to be done. We feel that it

would be a comparatively simple task to organize a clear-cut Communist Party of the class-conscious elements here, numbering 50,000 or more, possessing a clear understanding of the history of the American labor movement, and the nature of American political and economic conditions. Only this work must be done openly, above ground, avoiding the legal restrictions of the 48 separate states, to as great an extent as may be found necessary. Secret agitation here will only invite spying, corruption, and eventual disintegration. No effective press can be maintained secretly. In the face of a powerfully organized capitalist press, which instills poison in the minds of the workmen 365 days of the year, what can occasional sheets or leaflets printed underground, unreadable, unintelligible, amount to? The communist press must be open and the agitation on the street, in the shop, in and outside of the unions, must be carried on openly, in terms that the average American workman, narrow-minded, with no revolutionary background, may understand.

We desire to proceed with this work in conformity with the spirit of the Third International, but in a manner that will bring together the scattered and idle Socialist and Communist forces here, and will appeal to the intelligence of the average workingman. In other words we feel that agitation must not be involved in abstruse terms and in technical inter-faction disputes which possess no meaning for the American workman. We propose to talk to the "man in the street" in his own language through the medium of an intelligently organized and revolutionary minded proletarian party. We ask you, therefore, to sanction this proposed form of organization. We ask your guidance, your support and encouragement in the task before us. We on our part express our complete adherence to the tenets of the Third International and unqualified support of the Communist state of Russia.

Long live the Russian Workers' and Peasants' Republic!

Long live the Third International, the leader in the worldwide movement for working class emancipation.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

*Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2012. • Non-commercial reproduction permitted.*