
The Burning Question of Unity:

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We must state right in the beginning that the Communist Party objected to unity with the leaders of the former CLP as well as with the LEADERS of the present so-called United Communist Party, for we consider these leaders to be centrists who intend to combine two incompatible teachings — Communism and Syndicalism (sometimes called in this country “industrialism”).

The program adopted at the 2nd Convention of the Communist Party of America [New York: July 13-18, 1920] in its attitude toward trade and industrial unions is fully in keeping with the position taken on this question by the 2nd World Congress of the Communist International [July 19-Aug. 7, 1920].

[The Question of Armed Insurrection.]

The United Communist Party at its first convention [Bridgman, MI: May 26-31, 1920] adopted a semi-syndicalist, semi-opportunist program. The attitude of the UCP toward the old reactionary trade unions was thoroughly discussed at the 2nd Congress of the CI. The Congress condemned this attitude of the UCP and declared that the policy of deliberately splitting the AF of L would endanger the Communist movement in America by isolating it from the organized labor movement as a whole.

This policy of the UCP was severely criticized by both Karl Radek and Zinoviev, who ridiculed these tactics, quoting directly from the UCP program, and refusing to make any compromise on the question.

There was another vital question upon which the Communist Party could not agree with the cen-

trist leaders of the UCP — the question of propagating to the masses the necessity of armed insurrection and civil war for the purpose of overthrowing the capitalist state. The centrist leaders of the UCP do not and did not deny the necessity for armed insurrection, but like other centrist parties, it gives its own interpretation to the meaning and content of armed insurrection. According to the written statement of the UCP theoreticians, the proletariat should only resort to force of arms in the case of self-defense or self-protection. This theory will not hold water and entirely contradicts the actual historical facts based upon the experience of at least two proletarian revolutions.

The use of armed force thus should be considered, not only as a means of defense — as proposed by the centrist leaders of the UCP — but also as a method of offense at the right moment — during an economic or political crisis — and in this tactic the working class in the United States must be constantly and consistently educated as a vital part of communist propaganda.

The leaders of the UCP go further in their effort to emasculate and to distort the meaning and to minimize the importance of this principle of communist tactics. The UCP declare in their program that: “...the working class must be prepared for armed insurrection as the final form of mass action by which the workers shall conquer the state power and establish the proletarian dictatorship.”

Thus the leaders of the UCP in both cases postpone the use of armed force indefinitely. Their policy, in this respect, reminds us of the action of the Mensheviks, the opportunists and centrists of all other coun-

tries, who use all their efforts to thwart the approach of the social revolution.

Let us now analyze the attitude of the centrist leaders of the UCP toward the question of mass action.

The following paragraph of the UCP program reveals their position on this question: "It is through revolutionary mass action of the working class that the power of the capitalist state will be destroyed and the proletarian government established."

The program of the UCP in its definition of mass action distorts the real meaning of this tactic; it is not in keeping with the actual facts. Mass action of the working class is a spontaneous act, usually provoked by the dissatisfaction of the proletarian masses with their economic conditions, or as a result of an economic crisis usually culminating in a sharpening of the class antagonism and class war. Spontaneous mass action of the working masses — even of a revolutionary character — as such is of no value, if it is not backed, directed, and controlled by the proletarian vanguard, the Communist Party. The Soviets in Russia, after the March revolution, were revolutionary in their character, BUT WHEN THEY WERE LED BY THE MENSHEVIKI AND THE SOCIAL REVOLUTIONISTS, i.e. BY THE YELLOW SOCIAL PATRIOTS AND CENTRISTS, THEY HAD NO INFLUENCE AND WERE DEVOID OF POWER. They attained this power and influence only when the leadership of the Soviets came into the hands of the Bolsheviks or Communists. The mighty power of the Soviets in Russia is due to the influence of the proletarian vanguard in their midst.

The destruction of the capitalist state and the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship in the form of Soviet government will be carried out by means of revolutionary mass action of the working class under the leadership and control of the proletarian vanguard, i.e. of a disciplined, mighty, Communist Party. Such a Communist Party can never be built up by the leaders of the UCP, with their non-communist misconceptions and their centrist tendencies.

These are briefly the essential points which have separated the Communist Party and the UCP up to the 2nd Congress of the Communist International. It is obvious that these differences are of vital importance.

[The Vanguard Party and the Trade Unions.]

These two parties disagreed in their attitude toward trade and industrial unions. At the conventions in Chicago [Sept. 1919] both the CP and the CLP suffered from the "infantile sickness of 'left' communism," as Lenin aptly called it. Both parties insisted that the AF of L and similar unions must be split up and that in their place should be organized brand new "revolutionary" unions built on an industrial basis. But the Communist Party of America at its 1st Convention in Chicago [Sept. 1-7, 1919] definitely and clearly explained the role and the importance of the vanguard of the proletariat — of a political party as distinct from the working class as a whole — it clearly presented the role of the Communist Party as the leading and directing force in the proletarian mass action. The Program, adopted by the Communist Party at its 1st Convention, pointed out with absolute clearness that the political party must be the guide of the working masses, that the Communist Party must not isolate itself from the masses if it does not wish to be more than a pitiful political sect.

In contradiction to this otherwise clear conception of its function as a political party of the working class, the Communist Party was inconsistent in its attitude toward the trade and industrial unions at its September 1st [1919] Convention.

The **Communist Labor Party** was launched under the direct influence of the syndicalist elements at its 1st Convention in Chicago [Aug. 31-Sept. 5, 1919], and had no clear understanding of the vital importance of a proletarian political party nor of its role in the proletarian revolution. All the leaders of the CLP laid more stress upon the purely economic movement of the working class. They upheld the IWW as against the AF of L. According to the leaders of the Communist Labor Party, a political party was of less importance than the economic organizations of the working class in their struggle against the capitalist class and the capitalist state.

In spite of the fact that the CLP formally and in words recognized the necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat, it had no clear conception of the importance of the role of the political party of the working class before and during the revolutionary period

— before the conquest of political power by the proletariat, and at the time of and after the seizure of state power by the workers.

At the 1st Convention of the Communist Party some few syndicalist elements joined it through misunderstanding; they exercised a slight influence in the shaping of our first program thus making our attitude toward the trade unions vague and indefinite. These syndicalist elements of the Damon [C.E. Ruthenberg] and Caxton [I.E. Ferguson] type showed themselves in their true colors at the time when differences first arose in the CEC of our party last year [1920]. The most essential differences between the [Ruthenberg-Ferguson] “minority” and majority of the CEC of the CP of A consisted in the misconception of the so-called minority of the distinction between the masses and the party. According to the opinions of the “minority,” PARTY and CLASS are identical.

Damon [Ruthenberg] and Caxton [Ferguson] and kindred elements in the Communist Party were imbued with opportunist and syndicalist ideas which obscured in their minds the importance of the role of the political party before, during, and after the conquest of state power by the proletariat. On the other hand, Damon [Ruthenberg], Caxton [Ferguson] & Co. had Menshevik and opportunist tendencies which appeared in their attitude toward mass action and the question of armed insurrection.

After **Damon, Caxton & Co.** left our party [they] united with their Siamese twin brothers, the **Communist Labor Party**, thereby artificially creating the **“United” Communist Party**.

The program of this “UNITED” party, which is composed of elements that never should have been separated, has been sufficiently criticized in this article. The syndicalist ideology prevails throughout it, while at the same time it is accompanied by opportunism of the worst kind.

Damon [Ruthenberg], Caxton [Ferguson] & Co. in spite of all their machinations did not succeed in their attempt to destroy the Communist Party, since only an insignificant number of our members followed in their footsteps. Disappointed in their attempt to destroy the only consistent and true proletarian party — the Communist Party of America — and aware that the “UNITED” Communist Party had miserably failed to unite the communist elements in this coun-

try upon their non-communist program, Damon [Ruthenberg], Caxton [Ferguson], Holt [Alfred Wagenknecht], & Co. began to scheme and to adopt other measures to break the CP of A.

[The Inter-Party Battle at the Second World Congress.]

The CEC of the United Communist Party sent its emissaries to Moscow in order to discredit our party in the eyes of the Executive Committee of the CI. On questions of principle the leaders of the UCP could not attack us, for we stood on solid ground on all questions of fundamental communist tactics and principles. Already, before the 2nd World Congress of the Communist International had convened, our party, delivered from its few centrist elements, took the correct stand in its attitude toward the trade and industrial unions, entirely giving up its old prejudices toward the AF of L. As we pointed out above, our former attitude toward participation in the reactionary unions contradicted our attitude toward mass action. The Communist Party of America, at its 2nd Convention, erased from its program the syndicalistic points as contradictory to the tenants of Marx and the experiences of the proletarian revolutionary movement.

To our great sorrow and regret, our delegates, [Louis] Fraina and [Alexander] Stoklitsky, did not and could not represent our position in the 2nd Congress of the CI as they defended in our name a policy which the Communist Party of America had repudiated at its 2nd Convention, and upon which the Communist International declared war — the splitting of the AF of L and kindred organizations. In this respect our delegates met the well-merited rebuke of Comrade Radek, who accused them of hypocrisy. That our party was to some extent discredited at the 2nd World Congress of the CI is not altogether our fault; our delegates were out of touch with the latest developments in our party and were elected by the September [1919] 1st Convention; our program...was adopted at our 2nd Convention, before the position taken by Fraina and Stoklitsky on the question of participation in the reactionary trade unions, was not the position of the CP of A, which was misrepresented by our delegates. The Communist International, judging us on our delegates, who misrepresented us, saw no difference between the

views of our delegates and the delegates of the UCP, [which] doubtless influenced the Communist International's decision to force immediate unity.

The outrageous and shameless lies, spread by the UCP delegates in Moscow — that the membership of our party was only about 1500, composed entirely of foreign language “groups,” while the membership of the UCP was over 10,000 and included all the “real” American communists — influenced the Executive Committee of the Communist International and caused them to make their hasty decision demanding the immediate and unconditional unity with the UCP. The Executive Committee of the Communist International, believing the lies of the UCP delegates, considered us a small and unimportant sect, who had no good reason for separate existence, and [which] was standing in the way of the unity of all communist forces in America.

With the arrival of our accredited delegate, Comrade Andrew [Nicholas Hourwich], the whole situation rapidly changed. The Executive Committee of the Com. Intern. has recognized the fact that the Communist Party of America is not a small, intransigent sect, but that on the contrary, is a strong, virile organization, maintaining itself without assistance from the CI, carrying on a consistent and powerful communist propaganda in 7 languages besides English — the only consistent Communist Party in America.

Before the arrival of Comrade Andrew [Hourwich], the Communist Party was not represented on the Ex. Com. of the CI. After his arrival they considered it necessary to appoint Comrade Andrew [Hourwich] as our representative on the EC of the CI. Thus our position became strong, due to the fact that we took the correct position on all questions of communist principles and tactics and because we were able to refute the miserable lies and expose the cheap claptrap of the UCP delegates.

[CPA Concurs with the Comintern's Unity Mandate.]

Upon receiving the information that the Communist International sent us a mandate for the unity of both parties, we immediately complied with this decision and were ready to unite with the UCP even before we had received an official communications

from Moscow to this effect. Our members are well posted on all the details of the negotiations on unity between the two parties, and there is therefore no necessity to repeat all the arguments and documents. The CEC has at all times during these negotiations kept our membership fully informed of every move and shall continue to do so.

Now we must untie the Gordian knot — to solve the following questions: Why is unity not yet achieved according to the mandate of the Communist International and within the time limit (Jan. 1, 1921)?

The Communist Party of America does not thwart unity; it has no reason whatsoever to prevent unity. We have already pointed out that on all questions of Communist principles and tactics our party has taken a correct stand, fulling in keeping with the decisions of the Com. Intern. Besides this, our party counts a much greater membership than the UCP. But even if our membership was actually smaller than the UCP, we would have no fear of uniting with the rank and file of the UCP, including their centrist leaders, for under the protection of the Communist International we would always have the right of appeal against any non-communist activities of the majority and on matters of principle and tactics. According to the Statutes of the Communist International, its Executive Committee is empowered to demand of all parties affiliated with them the expulsion of groups or individuals from its ranks. It must be obvious that under this provision there is no danger whatever to the communist movement in America in uniting with the centrist leaders of the UCP.

On account of the internal dissensions which would inevitably arise as a result of conflicting points of view between the centrist leaders of the UCP and our party, makes cooperation with these centrist leaders undesirable and would obstruct and hamper the constructive work of the party. As a minority within a real unified communist party, the centrist leaders of the UCP would have no standing, and they know it; that is why they so desperately oppose the conditions made mandatory upon both parties by the Communist International. They would be repudiated by the entire membership of a united party, including their own deluded followers. On the question of principles and tactics the position of the UCP leaders is in contradiction to that adopted by the 2nd Congress of the

CI. At this Congress war was declared on the policy of attempting to split the old unions; the syndicalist policy of the UCP was condemned and rejected. But perhaps the leaders of the UCP have admitted their error and changed their anarcho-syndicalist-opportunist policies after the Congress of the CI? In vain we look for some manifestation of this change in the official organs of the UCP. We have burned the midnight oil, looking with a spyglass through the journals of the UCP to find some evidence of a change in the opportunist-syndicalist point of view of the UCP but the crowing of the cock reminded us that the search was in vain. On the contrary, the more we read the literature of the UCP after the Congress of the CI, the more convincing it becomes that the UCP leaders have not changed; that they are the same old anarcho-opportunists and centrists as before.

The leaders of the UCP had a good opportunity to show their real communist understanding when the question of the affiliation of the IWW with the Communist International was before the membership of the IWW in their recent referendum. The leaders of the UCP, openly, in their official organ, *The Communist*, came out against such affiliation, arguing that in case the IWW decided to join the CI it would force the IWW underground, and according to the opinion of the UCP it is not advisable for an economic organization to become an illegal organization. In this case the leaders of the UCP defied the decisions of the CI and [acted] against the will of the communists in the rank and file of the IWW, playing into the hands of the reactionary syndicalist leaders of the IWW and thereby supporting the counterrevolutionary editor Sandgren, since repudiated by his own membership.

The centrist leaders of the UCP criticized a leaflet issued by the Communist Party on the occasion of the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Car strike, in which it was pointed out that the workers could not emancipate themselves from wage slavery unless they overthrew the capitalist state and established the dictatorship of the proletariat and that in order to attain this aim the working class of America must prepare themselves for armed insurrection. In fact, all the facts go to prove that the leaders of the UCP did not change their anarcho-opportunist and centrist viewpoint.

[Lenin and Zinoviev Explain the UCP's Position.]

From all this we cannot escape the conclusion that the chasm which separated the Communist Party of America from the United Communist Party still exists. Someone may ask why do the leaders of the UCP remain in the CI if they do not agree with the principles and tactics of the Communist International? Why do they not leave it? The reply to this question is found in the theses and statutes of the Communist International. In the thesis "The Fundamental Tasks of the Communist International," Comrade Lenin states:

1) A characteristic feature of the present moment in the development of the international communist movement is the fact that in all the capitalist countries the best representatives of the revolutionary proletariat have completely understood the fundamental principles of the Communist International, namely, the dictatorship of the proletariat and the power of the Soviets; and with a loyal enthusiasm have placed themselves on the side of the Com. Intern. A still more important and great step forward is the unlimited sympathy with these principles manifested by the wider masses not only of the proletariat of the towns but also by the advanced portions of the agrarian workers.

On the other hand, two mistakes or weaknesses of the extraordinarily rapidly increasing international communist movement have shown themselves. One, very serious and presenting a great direct danger for the success of the cause of the liberation of the proletariat, consists in the fact that part of the old leaders and parties of the Second International, partly half unconsciously yielding to the wishes and the pressure of the masses, partly consciously deceiving them in order to preserve their former role of agents and supporters of the bourgeoisie inside the labor movement, are declaring their conditional and even unconditional affiliation to the Third International; while remaining in reality in the whole practice of their party and political work, on the level of the Second International. Such a state of things is absolutely inadmissible, because it demoralizes the masses, hinders the development of a strong communist party, and lowers their respect for the Third International by threatening repetition of such betrayals as that of the Hungarian Social Democrats, who had rapidly assumed the disguise of Communists. The second, much less important, mistake, which is for the most part a malady inherent in the party growth of the movement, is the tendency to be extremely "left," which leads to an erroneous evaluation of the role and duties of the party in respect to the class and to the mass, and the obligation of the revolutionary communists to work in the bourgeois parliaments and the reactionary unions.

In the thesis on "The Conditions of Admission to the Communist International," Comrade Zinoviev

writes:

The Com. Intern. more and more frequently receives applications from parties and groups but a short time ago belonging to the Second International, but not yet really communists. The Second International is completely broken. Seeing the complete helplessness of the Second International, the intermediary groups and factions of the "center" are trying to lean on the ever-strengthening Communist International, hoping at the same time, however, to preserve a certain "autonomy" which would enable them to carry on their former opportunist or "centrist" policy. The Communist International has become the fashion.

The desire of certain leading groups of the center to join the Third International now is an indirect confirmation of the majority of the conscious workers of the whole world, and that it is growing stronger every day.

The Communist International is being threatened with the danger of dilution with fluctuating and half-and-half groups which have as yet not abandoned the ideology of the Second International.

These two quotations show very clearly and definitely why on the one hand the UCP fights against unity with the Communist Party of America, and on the other hand, why they do not want to leave the Communist International.

The leaders of the UCP on the question of the necessity of armed insurrection for the purpose of the overthrow of the bourgeois state take the position of typical opportunists and centrists, for in their lip-service acceptance of this method of struggle you can notice a decided hesitation in propagating this tactic to the masses. In their attitude towards mass action, and still more so in their attitude towards the trade union movement, the leaders of the UCP suffer from the infantile sickness of "leftism." It is therefore difficult for the leaders of the UCP to unite with the Communist Party of America, which cleansed itself from both [deviations] and which defends without reservation the principles and tactics of the Communist International. The seeming intricacy of the unity question becomes very simple and easy to understand when we take into consideration that the membership of the Communist Party is nearly twice as large as that of the UCP and that the leaders of the UCP, who are consummate politicians, know full well that due to this circumstance their anarcho-opportunist influence will be wiped out in a united communist party. This is the reason why these centrist leaders of the UCP try to postpone unity indefinitely, and try to squirm out of the conditions of the International on unity.

Although the leaders of the UCP find themselves in disagreement with the principles and tactics of the Communist International, they do not want to be expelled from that body, for they understand very well that expulsion from the CI will end the careers of the centrist leaders of the UCP. The rank and file of the UCP are for the most part sincere and honest although misled, and would not follow their centrist leaders the moment they were thoroughly exposed.

[The Dilemma of the UCP Politicians.]

The leaders of the UCP are caught between two fires: they do not want to unite with us, but the rank and file of their party demand unity according to the terms of the Communist International. Therefore these UCP leaders change their attitude from day to day — one day they sign a certain document in which they declare their willingness to submit to all the decisions of the Executive Committee of the CI — that is, they agree to call a joint unity convention on the basis of proportional representation according to the actual dues paying membership as appearing upon the official books of both parties for the months of July, August, September, and October [1920]; the next day they break their pledged word on some flimsy pretext or other, such as "the Communist Party has manipulated its figures" or "has given a false account of the number of its members" or that "all the members of the Communist Party are not really organized in underground groups," etc., etc.

We appeal to the rank and file of the UCP to force their leaders to submit to the decisions of the Executive Committee of the CI. The Communist Party of America has complied with all of the 6 conditions for unity and stands ready at any time to call its delegates to a JOINT UNITY CONVENTION.

The insolence of the leaders of the UCP knows no bounds. They are absolutely desperate. Their last proposition to hold a unity convention on the basis of equal representation is in direct defiance of the Communist International and will not hold water.

The leaders of the UCP have the unmitigated insolence to demand that the Communist Party of America, recognized by the Communist International as the most consistent party in its conception of communist principles and tactics and having almost twice

as many members as the UCP, should on some mysterious grounds give up its position which it has maintained in spite of the attempts of these same UCP leaders to split and destroy us — and voluntarily weaken its position and influence in the communist movement in America, simply because a few charlatans and politicians at the head of the UCP demand it.

We are certain that when the true communists in the ranks of the UCP come to understand the unity question in all its phases, they will compel their leaders to obey the mandate of the Communist International and call their delegates to a joint convention and thereby put an end to the disgraceful situation in the Communist movement in America, so that we may take our rightful place in the world movement and march on to victory side by side with our comrades in the Communist International.

Long live the Communist Party of America.

Long live the Communist International.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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