
Letter to an Unnamed Comrade in Moscow Regarding the Communist Unity Committee from Alexander Bittelman in New York, February 1, 1921

Handwritten document in the Comintern Archive, RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 43, ll. 21-28

February 1, 1921.

Dear Comrade:—

This letter is intended as a supplementary report to our memorandum which, by this time, you have no doubt already submitted to the Executive Committee of the CI. You can dispose of this letter in one of the following two ways: You can either submit it in full to the Executive Committee of the CI, or you may ~~<illeg.> disclose its contents to only the influential members of the Committee.~~ Keep it for your own information.¹

Now, I am going to tell you that the response of the membership of both parties to the first steps of the CUC was magnificent. In spite of the difficulties encountered by us in the way of getting connections, we have managed to distribute our paper pretty thoroughly. The membership of the two parties is deeply interested in what we say at present, and in what we may do in the immediate future. It may be said with absolute certainty that the great majority of the members of both parties is in heartfelt sympathy with our criticisms and aims. But there are great numbers of comrades in both parties who, though sympathizing

¹ Struck-through line was scratched out and the subsequent line inserted in the original document.

with our movement, cannot see their way clear into joining and actively supporting our activities.

The reason why these comrades are rather shy of getting squarely behind the CEC is their skepticism as to the power of our committee to bring about the unification of the two parties *without first breaking their existing organizations*. In other words, it is the fear of a new split that keeps back large numbers of comrades from actively ~~supporting~~ joining our movement. But at the same time these very same skeptical comrades perfectly agree with us that no unity will be achieved as long as the present leading groups are in control; they also trust our motives and believe in our integrity, and they would certainly get behind our leadership the moment they could see our *power* to achieve unity without breaking the machinery of the existing parties. In other words, if the Third International should endorse the activities of the CEC and delegate to it the power to proceed with the unification of the two parties, the *full* membership of both parties would instantly get behind the CUC.

But even without this our prospects of success are very bright. You will be interested to learn that the Central Committees of the two parties, in order to break the deadlock created by themselves, have begun preparations for creating splits in one another's party. The CEC of the UCP is attempting to split away from the CP its English-speaking minority. Conferences and intrigues to that effect are being carried on constantly by the CEC of the UCP. Besides, they have also addressed a proclamation to the membership of the CP, calling upon them to break their party and join the UCP. I am sending you, attached to this letter, a copy of the proclamation.

The CEC of the CP, on the other hand, is attempting to break the UCP by splitting away from it its dissatisfied foreign language-speaking membership. If the Central Committees of the two parties are allowed to continue in this manner, they may succeed in creating a new split that will definitely break the

movement into two hostile parts — English-speaking and foreign language-speaking — and that will make unity between them impossible for a very long time to come.

The danger of this approaching break is beginning to be realized by the rank and file of the two parties. They are also slowly coming to the realization that the only force capable to prevent the occurrence of new splits is the Communist Unity Committee. And the moment this realization is definitely fixed in the minds of the majority of comrades in the two parties, the success of the unity efforts of the CUC will have been assured.

Meanwhile we are proceeding with our work of propaganda. We are sending you a bundle of the second issue of our paper. At this writing, the third issue is already in preparation. Besides, we are doing a great deal of oral propaganda among the most active and devoted comrades in the two parties. You will be surprised to learn how easily we succeed in reconciling the warring factions of the different federations that find themselves at present in the two parties. One of the reasons is, no doubt, our sensible and correct attitude on the question of “federations.”

I would also like to tell you that the “Trade Union Bureau” appointed, according to Comrade Scott [Karlis “Charley” Janson], by the Executive Committee of the CI — that this Bureau has already caused a new conflict between the CECs of the two parties. The CEC of the CP claims that the entire personnel of the Bureau is by the UCP, since Comrade Allen [Max Cohen], one of the Bureau, no longer belongs to the CP, and therefore the CEC of the CP has instructed its nuclei in the unions not to cooperate with the Bureau. To this the Bureau and the CEC of the UCP reply that the Bureau has been appointed by the CI and is therefore not responsible to the Communist parties of America.

We do not know which of the two CECs is right, but we *do* know that this new conflict, if allowed to develop, will actually destroy the organized Communist movement in America, since

the new conflict is taking place not within the strict limits of the party organizations, but on the broad field of the organized labor movement of America. We shall do all in our power to check this fresh outrage of the present “leadership” of the two parties.

In short, this is what we wanted to tell you:

If the Executive Committee of the Third International could see its way to officially endorse the CUC, we would instantly carry with us at least 80% of the membership of both parties, and achieve unity within six (6) weeks.

Yours for Communism,

A. Raphael [Alexander Bittelman],
Secretary.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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