

---

# The Only Issue

## [Statement of the Communist Unity Committee]

Published in *Communist Unity* [New York], v. 1, no. 3 (Feb. 15, 1921), pg. 2.

It there is any honest issue at all in all this factional strife within the Communist movement of America, this issue is — the question of federations. This question, like many others, has fared very badly at the hands of the “leaders” of our two parties. At no time was this question ever presented by them in its true light, or discussed on its merits. There was only one angle from which these leaders of ours considered the federation problem, that is, from the angle of control.

Now, we do not at all reject the idea of the importance of control. We recognize that it is a very vital matter for a Communist party to have the control of its machinery and the leadership of its policies placed in the proper hands. So far we are in perfect agreement with the Central Committees of the two parties. But no further. When it comes to defining of who the proper hands are, we definitely part company with them.

Let's take, for example, the attitude of the CEC of the CP toward the question of control. According to the best opinion of that worthy body, the Communist movement of America must be controlled and led by CP men only; not by every CP man, but only by the 100 Percenters.

So far, so good, the only thing that troubles our mind is, what does this 100% CP man stand for? What particular set of principles, tactics, and methods of organization does he represent to entitle him to the absolute control of the Communist movement? Surely, the things this man represents must be of a very superior nature, and so must be his wisdom, if he dares to put forth so large a claim.

Now, when you come down to brass tacks you find that this 100% CP man, whose number, we are being told, lies somewhere between 2 and 3, is just as good or bad a Communist as any member of the UCP. There is nothing very superior about him except his own opinions of himself. So on examination it turns out that the only

justification for the demand of the “leaders” of the CP to control the movement is their own claim. Only this, and nothing more.

For the old contention that the movement in America must be controlled only by federations holds good no longer. The English-speaking elements of the former Left Wing, against whose possible domination over the revolutionary movement of America the federations have been fighting, these elements are no longer Left Wingers. They are either nothing — and out of the movement — or they are conscious and reliable Communists. To be sure, there is in the ruling group of the UCP a goodly number of men who can under no circumstances be trusted with leadership. But, alas, such is precisely the case with the ruling group of the CP.

Then there is another new factor invalidating the old claim for federation-control. If we remember rightly, the argument used to be that unless the federations control the movement — the movement will go wrong. This argument was a pretty solid thing in September 1919, or even as late as December of that year. But at present with the Third International firmly established, with its principles and tactical methods clearly defined (see the Theses of the 2nd Congress), and with its powerful Executive Committee in close touch with every section of the International — what chances are there for an affiliated party to go wrong on important matters for a very long time? Mistakes will be made, no doubt. Are they not being made by the present CEC of the CP — by the 100 Percenters themselves? But no serious deflection from the proper Communist course can pass unnoticed by the Executive Committee of the Third International. And once this Committee is aware of a grave error committed by an affiliated party, that party will very promptly be set aright. So if the Communist movement of America needs at all a “keeper of its principles,” we’d much rather see them kept by the Executive Committee of the Third International than by the two 100 Percenters of the CEC of the CP.

In a similar manner the veiled desire for control of the ruling group of the UCP is empty and vicious. These UCP rulers like to talk of themselves as the true revolutionary party of the American working class. If this is to mean that their organization has succeeded in deeply rooting itself into the class struggle of this country, the UCP is just as American as the CP. None of them are parties in the real sense of the word. As to competency and ability, we really don’t know which of the two Central Committees is more incompetent.

From this it can be readily seen that the question of control has *at present*, and as far as the membership is concerned, nothing to do with the question of federations. The party should be controlled and led only by those trusted and respected by the rank and file of the movement, be these CP or UCP men. A joint convention properly elected, *without the interference of the present Central Committee of the two parties*, would take care of that.

But before our movement can dream of such a convention — it will never be called by the groups ruling at present — the question of federations must be settled on its merits at least in the minds of the rank and file of the two parties. For them this is really the issue. And if they — the rank and file of the two parties — could be brought to realize, as the CUC does, that the Communist organization and propaganda in foreign languages must be centralized in the hands of National Propaganda Committees — Central Bureaus, as they are called in Russia — elected by national conventions of each language group, the foundation for organic unity would have been created.

*Edited by Tim Davenport*

1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR · April 2012 · Non-commercial reproduction permitted.