
Our Movement in Crisis

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Our movement has reached a critical stage; the most critical stage in its history. If it is set going immediately on the right tracks, it may succeed in reaching shortly a turn, where Unity will become a possibility — a practical, realizable proposition. But should the moment for such action be missed, most of the efforts and sacrifices brought into the upbuilding of the Communist movement of America will have been spent in vain. The difficult task of creating a party will have to be started anew. It lies with the American Agency of the Communist International to decide which it is to be.

Let us first get at the facts. On April 2, 1921, the Agency has received a mandate from the Executive Committee of the Communist International, stating “that the American Agency of the Communist International has full power to unite the two Communist parties and that this unity must be achieved by June 1st [1921], otherwise the whole movement will be reorganized without regard to the existing parties. The Executive Committee of the Communist International will not recognize representatives from America unless they come from the United party (Communist and United Communist Party united).

This is the substance of the mandate. It is definite and explicit. It gives full and unlimited power to the Agency. What use did the Agency make of its power?

On April 4th, 1921, the Agency addressed a communication to the Executive Committees of the two parties, submitting its mandate together with a list of 9 conditions which are to serve as a basis for the realization of the mandate given to the Agency. The membership of the two parties are by this time most probably acquainted with the nature of these conditions. Now, what was the answer of the two Central Committees?

The Central Committee of the UCP has officially recognized the mandate and accepted the 9 conditions. So they write in the 16th

issue of their official organ [*The Communist*]. They have also appointed a man on the Organization Committee (according to the demand of the Agency) that is to call and organize the Joint Unity Convention. All this has been done officially and above ground. But *unofficially* and *underground*, this very same Central Committee of the UCP is preparing to send a delegation of its own to the 3rd Congress of the Communist International. For what purpose, we do not know. But we do know that such action is a flagrant violation of the Unity mandate granted to the Agency; and it is, moreover, a clear indication of the insincerity and hypocrisy of the official statement of the CEC of the UCP that they accept the mandate and conditions of the Agency. If this interpretation should be considered unfair by the “leaders” of the UCP, we would ask them to tell us, why and for what purpose are they preparing to send to Moscow, now and at present a delegation of their own?

So much for the UCP. As to the “leaders” of the CP, they are playing a very dangerous game, from the unity point of view, of evasion and procrastination. They have accepted — so they report to their membership — the mandate of the Agency as far as the calling of the Joint Convention is concerned, that is, the basis of representation, the Organization Committee, and the idea of an “impartial” chairman. All of this is covered by point 1 of the 9 conditions of Unity proposed by the Agency. As to the other 8 conditions, the CEC of the CP wisely reserve judgment. They contest the right of the Agency to bind the convention with conditions. The fact that the Agency has been given by the Communist International *full power* does not worry them a bit. They just don’t want to accept the conditions. So they submitted a reply to the Agency’s first communication (of the 4th of April) and have refused to sign it. They have also appointed a man on the Organization Committee, and that man refuses to sign the call for the joint convention. Such is the policy of the CEC of the CP, and a fine game it is, isn’t it? It is also very effective, for there is not a single man in the CP who could tell precisely whether his CEC accepted the mandate or has not. Thus is the “leadership” of the CP once more trying to bury in failure an attempt of the Communist International to unify the Communist movement of America.

As a result of the interaction of all these facts, our movement finds itself at present at a dangerous parting of ways. It will take the right direction, and thereby be saved from disintegration, if the Agency is strong enough and courageous enough to force its will

upon the Central Committees of the two parties. For *force* is the only language these two groups understand. Will the Agency rise to the occasion? We do not know. We shall have to judge by its deeds. As far as it was in our power to help, we have done all we could by offering to the Agency the services of our caucus and paper. If the Agency possesses sufficient foresight and strength of will, it will accept our proposition and thereby acquire a powerful lever for making its mandate a reality. Should, however, the reverse be the case, we can still manage to avoid a calamity if the rank and file of the two parties stands loyally by the Communist International and does its full duty.

What can the membership do?

If it is a question of compelling the two Central Committees to order immediately elections to the Joint Convention, the members of the two parties can do *nothing* about it, as long as they recognized the authority of the existing Central Committees, and since the interests of our movement require that the members of the two parties *abstain for the present* from taking the matter of Unity into their own hands, we must leave the disposal of the question of ordering elections and calling the convention into session to the Agency and the two Central Committees.

What we can and must prepare ourselves for is the election itself. If and when the election machinery is set into motion, the rank and file of our movement must be ready to properly perform its supreme and difficult task of electing the right persons to the Joint Unity Convention. This is no simple matter. The ruling machines of the two parties, if it ever comes to election, will be fighting for their very existence. They will stop at nothing, no matter how low, to crush and exterminate the real and sincere defenders of the cause of Unity. We must therefore be prepared to meet the ruling cliques in an organized manner. It is only by defeating the ruling cliques at the elections, thereby preventing them from capturing the joint convention, that the rank and file of the two parties can make the mandate of the Agency, if it is ever realized, a stepping stone toward real and organic Unity.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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