
Statement to All Members of the Communist Party of America from the Chicago DEC, May 14, 1920

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Comrades:

An attempt by a majority of the Central Executive Committee under a pretense of party discipline to divide the Chicago District organization has brought a collision between the active rank and file members of the Communist Party and the insignificant talkers who tamed our organization by a policy of inactivity.

Since the time when the Communist Party was organized, not a single paragraph of our program was developed. Not one paragraph of the program was ever used as a basis for action, [nor was it] even discussed by the Central Executive Committee.

Not one of the most important tactical questions of the Communist movement in America was solved or discussed.

The Communist Party was put in a state of coma because the central organ never showed any initiative or capability to develop party questions and build up an organization. The rank and file did not have the opportunity to learn the party questions and express their opinions. Was the Party Program carried on? Printing the Manifesto and Program of the party in the form of a pamphlet does not mean the building of the Communist Party. This program must be built up into a living reality and the movement of the class struggle in the United States.

Mass Action.

The members of the party realized that the basis of the Manifesto and Program adopted in Chicago [Sept. 1-7, 1919] lays in the understanding of mass action. The Communist Party is preparing for the revo-

lution in the same measure as she is developing the program of immediate action by being a mirror of the proletarian class struggle.

The immediate action promised by the program was never started by the Central Executive Committee, whose motto has been "Inactivity." This institution devoted little of its time and thought to the mass struggle of the American proletariat, which, according to the program, should be developed into revolutionary mass action to conquer the government, the power. This, according to the instructions of the program, should be carried out by way of pre-election campaigns for the purpose of revolutionary propaganda, mass strikes, agitation in the shops, industrial unionism, workers' soviets, control of industry by workers' organizations of the laborers and harvest workers into unions, organization of the negroes, propaganda and agitation against militarism, internationalizing of proletarian action and thoughts.

Now after 8 months of quietness and inactivity, the majority group of the Central Executive Committee in the [current] issue of *The Communist*, gives us a contention of mass action which plainly repudiates the program of the party. They deny that the Communist Party and its basis is a party of action. They say that our party cannot allow itself to establish a connection with the masses because it is necessary to be on the lookout for the dangers which lie in the attempt to come near the masses at such a time when they are not ready for the Communistic idea. If this is so, that the Party Program repudiates mass action, then why did the majority of the Central Executive Committee keep quiet about it until now? Did not the Russian Bolshe-

viks come to the masses of the Russian workers for the purpose of developing their struggle into revolutionary mass action long before the workers were [ready] for the idea of Communism? Are not the real Bolsheviks at present making attempts to come near to the masses of Chinese, Indian, and other Asiatic workers, and are those workers more [ready for] the ideas of Communism than the American workers?

For what purpose did we accept our program in Chicago? For the purpose of playing with revolutionary phrases, or to establish principles which would guide the activity of the party in developing revolutionary mass action? The majority of the Central Executive Committee are afraid to inspect the principles of Communism in action because, in their opinion, a connection with the masses is a danger for these principles. The real explanation is that they are absolutely incapable of putting these principles into life. They are a group of weak talkers who could never organize a party of revolutionary proletarians. They are coming out from their place of refuge.

There was never before, or is there now, any differentiation inside of our party on the place of "force" in a proletarian revolution. If this question was [glossed over] at the Chicago convention, assuming that the party could say something on that subject at that time, then the same group from the Central Executive Committee is to blame since this group controlled the convention. The Communist Party must teach the necessity of using force in a proletarian revolution. [There is an] inevitability of an armed collision of the workers and the capitalistic government, but we cannot allow the mixing of this teaching with terrorism or anarchism, which emphasize force as the only means for propaganda... What we must emphasize, now and always, is a Communistic understanding in a conscious organization which would answer the demands of the revolutionary struggle in a Communistic upbuilding, such as industrial unions, factory committees, workers' soviets, etc.

The Communist Party and Industrial Unionism.

Anybody who reads our party program, at least on the surface, will note that the major part pertains to the development of political action through the

medium of strikes. More than one-half of the program, practically every paragraph of it, puts the strike movement and industrial unionism as the basis of party action, and emphasizes it, more than anything else, as the basis of organization for industrial mass action in the United States.

Can we find anything to show that our Central Executive Committee ever attempted to realize this very important part of our program? [Even] if they told us that time was limited, the Central Executive Committee could have, once in these 6 months, looked into our program to at least bring out discussions of the fundamental questions of the party. [Instead], many days, at the cost of hundreds of dollars, were expended discussing the question of "Who shall go to Europe?" or the unnecessary discussion of the logical consequences of the demand made by the Russian Federation to control the Martens Bureau. They did not find any time to discuss the relation of the party to industrial unionism and strikes.

This majority has the nerve to state that Communist principles are safe when they are in their hands, but it is evident that their understanding of these principles is an empty play with phrases. Nothing has been done. Even the question that primarily occupied the thoughts of our members, the question of the relation of our party to the IWW, was completely ignored by the Central Executive Committee.

How can we develop political consciousness in the industrial movement without the Communists penetrating into the workers' movement? Under the word "action," we understand that every member of the party carries on a definite Communistic function at the factory and in the unions, not that a certain committee works out the plans of a revolution.

Whatever we may say about the IWW, undoubtedly this organization has a conception of a revolutionary character and could be made a primary instrument of Communistic agitation. This organization will accept a Communistic expression only after the rank and file members of the IWW understand the Communistic conception. In order to accomplish this, our members must at every opportunity penetrate into the unions of the IWW. Socialist boring from within the American Federation of Labor was [inadequate] because they were aiming indirectly and by simulation to maintain a real reactionary workers' organization.

The Communist who by necessity must belong to the AF of L must utilize every opportunity to express his hostility to this organization; he must emphasize the necessity of the idea that the betterment of this organization is impossible because it is counterrevolutionary in its nature. We must contrast to it a strong IWW organization and at the same time carry on the work of Communistic education inside the IWW.

The Russian Bolsheviks helped to build in their country class-conscious workers' unions, penetrated them, made them guides of revolutionary political propaganda. The American parody of Bolshevism by the majority group of the Central Executive Committee isolated the idea from the industrial movement of the country, paralyzed every attempt of the members of the party in this direction. It showed its sharp hostility to every action relative to industrial unionism and to participation in strikes, which is demanded by the party program.

Our program distinguishes clearly its general appraisal of parliamentary action. The program says "participation in pre-election campaigns has a secondary significance in the general struggle of the proletariat and serves only for purposes of revolutionary propaganda. But it is undoubtedly correct that the Central Executive Committee does not spend a single second to discuss the plan of action to carry into effect this program." From September [1919], many important events passed which showed an influence on the tactics of the Communist Party relative to the elections. We, as a party, do not find a word on the question of the November elections except this: that we [accepted the views of] 2 or 3 members of the New York local, who have been supported with irresponsible editorials by the party editor clamoring about boycotting the election on the basis that this time is a revolutionary conflict not suitable for our participation in the elections.

Just how deep such an analysis was is made clear by this: that now, 6 months later, some of the same people defend the politics of party non-activity by reason of the apathy and inertia of the masses.

We did not say anything in reference to the question of and expulsion of BERGER, notwithstanding that this is very important for explaining the difference between Communist and Socialist views. We have had no occasion to brag about the difference between

Socialist reformism in action and complete inactivity. What did we say about the expulsion of the Socialist assemblymen in Albany, except that the newspaper emphasized the yellow defense.

We do not utilize such facts for analyzing the false democracy of capitalism and exposing that the entire parliamentary system of the United States, particularly from 1917, has become an empty mockery. The dictatorship of the capitalist class is now openly [expressed] through the medium of the dictatorship used by the executive authority, shamelessly ignoring Congress, which is nothing more than a discussion club for amusement. Capitalistic domination drives out and expels from Congress the toothless, slavish, reformist opposition, [which] they relate to the might of the workers [who] do not utilize their right to vote. The workers' movement, even in its trade unionist form, soon became outlawed.

One of the main, important [propositions] of Communist propaganda in the United States is the destruction of the constitutional illusion of the American masses. This duty lies even more upon the Communist Party, since the Socialist Party became a supporter of those illusions, covering themselves with DEBS' name. They are traitors to the class struggle. No doubt we must use the slogan "Boycott the elections," not because we are on the eve of the revolution, but as an answer to the impotence and delusion of parliamentarism. "Down with parliaments; long live soviets" must be our electoral program. If, as in Russia, the turn of events according to the revolutionary class struggle allow us to actively participate in pre-election campaigns, even then we should declare "Down with false democracy and capitalistic government; long live dictatorship of the proletariat and the real democracy of the workers' Communist Republic."

Party Organization.

Only a centralized party tightly uniting all political and industrial groups can concentrate its Communist propaganda and revolutionary [practice] into one active action. Only a really centralized party is capable of maintaining real discipline and cooperation between its executive component and ordinary members of the organization.

The Communist Party, stating the matter accurately, is only such in name. We were never a party, but rather a free federation of federations, with a few members out of place in the federations in the capacity of practically uninvited guests, or, in other words, in the capacity of technical agents of the federations. These work independently from the party and from each other. Their printed matter has been mainly nationalistic, bearing a distant relation to the Communist Party. Until the Russian Federation required an investigation of its own Executive Committee, the Central Executive Committee did not dare to ask about the views or the work of the various federations. Such investigation is evidently an empty formality. The Hungarian Federation, by decision of its Executive Committee, left the party on account of the raids. The Executive Committee of the Lithuanian Federation discussed the same steps but was stopped by its revolutionary membership. Then we were told that the existence of federations with such Central Committees is the soul of the revolutionary movement in this country.

The Jewish Federation, by decision of its Central Executive Committee, declare themselves neutral in the present inter-party struggle. Being neutral in a struggle which designates the life or death of the Communist Party? But 2 members of the Central Executive Committee of the party were among those who, several weeks ago, utilized the most extreme methods to bring about a split in the party.

The real control of the Communist Party has been in the hands of these bureaucratic federation committees, who perverted centralization of discipline and who use the federations as a plaything for a clique of politicians. The difference within the party in the understanding of party questions between these [federation] Central Committees is as big as between several individual parties.

We necessarily must have one centralized organization, which will carry Communist propaganda in all those languages which are being used by the workers of the United States, as well as literature and agitation in all these languages — but with one central authority and one party program. The basis of the active Communist Party must be factory branches; territorial and national branches must be used as main recruiting centers into regional organizations, accord-

ing to the position of the various important factory centers in existence in all party reorganization work.

Throughout the entire party organization, but under no circumstances independent of it, complete unity is possible between the groups speaking a single language through District Nationality Conferences, which meet when the propaganda and organization work requires.

All organizers and editors, regardless of their language, must work under complete supervision of the Central Executive Committee of the party. All publications must be under unitary control. The control of a publication solely by a committee composed of members of a certain national group is an unsuccessful illusion and an admission that the CEC cannot independently control party propaganda in foreign languages. It is also necessary to centralize party finances, general technical administration, legal defense, aid to prisoners, and educational work. Membership dues must be equal for all and along with other income must be directed into a single fund, divided up for party work according to need. In this regard, we can say that conditions in the party have been chaotic. We stand for a democratic and not a bureaucratic organization of the party. All committees must be elected by direct vote or by delegates elected for that purpose. We must accomplish direct action and control by the membership as much as the character of the party allows.

We declare in favor of a smaller Central Executive Committee in order to improve its activity and every member must manage a certain branch of party work, according to his ability.

Conclusion.

The present party controversy is not a controversy between two groups of the Central Executive Committee, but between 2 members of the party and a group of incapable demagogues who have held too long the exclusive privilege of representing Russian Bolshevism in this country.

Who are they? What do they represent? What are their duties? They offered a great pretext of exclusive knowledge of Communist principles, but they have become complete failures in their application to the existing class struggle in the United States.

They wanted a Communist Party of their own

kind and under their special care. Not stopping at that, they disorganized the Left Wing [National Council] and united with another, equally braggart, Detroit proletarian group — which the majority of the Central Executive Committee [subsequently] expelled from the new party as being non-Communitic.

They helped to build up the program of the Communist Party, at least with their votes, but they were not capable of understanding that program and developing it to realization. This group never [were forced to withstand] criticism of their chaotic management of party affairs and their incapability of solving party questions. They [wielded] party discipline [for] themselves.

Now after the controversy was raised by the Chicago District Committee, a month later, it is clear that real discipline and maintenance of substantial party principles and tactics is on our side. This is evident from the approval of our members and the action of non-recognition [undertaken] by the Central Executive Committee, a means of consolidation of their group control of the Communist Party. We maintain that the above sufficiently explains the fundamental revolution against the majority of the Central Executive Committee. We fully believe that this revolution is the actual beginning of the history of the Communist Party, a final preparation of an active party of Communist action in the United States.

Long live the Communist Party!

Long live the Communist International!

Chicago (5th) District Committee.

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Edited by Tim Davenport. (Substantial)

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