

Party Statement:

Issued by the Central Executive Committee as a Result of the First Party Council Assembled in December. [circa Dec. 31, 1922]

Published in *The Communist* [New York], v. 1, no. 12 (Dated "1922," actually Jan. 1923), pp. 1-2.

Three important events have closed a period in the development of the Party. These three events are the Cleveland Conference for Progressive Political Action [Dec. 11-12, 1922], the Chicago Railway Conference [Chicago: Dec. 9-10, 1922], and the Second Convention of the LPP [Workers Party of America: New York: Dec. 24-26, 1922]. If we draw the balance of this period, we will find that, since the party Convention of the Party [Bridgman: Aug. 17-22, 1922] the Party has had several political victories. As a result of the correct policies laid down by the CEC, the Party is a unit and is no longer isolated from the American labor movement.

There is every possibility of making our Party a powerful factor in the United States.

If we observe the political situation with open eyes, we must confirm the fact that despite good the good policies adopted by the CEC, the Party, as a party, has not proven equal to the task. Our political ideas were good, but they were not carried into realization. In spite of all efforts of the CEC, it was not possible to mobilize the Party for any of our campaigns.

The Defense campaign was a success politically, because we could win over a large number of trade

unions; but organizationally it was a failure because the Party, as an organization, participated in the campaign to but a small extent.

The Labor Party campaign was politically a big success, for the LPP won the cooperation of the Farmer-Labor Party, the Chicago Federation of Labor, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, and various farmer organizations; but we did not succeed in getting the Party itself into the Labor Party campaign. The worst example was set by New York, where a "mass meeting" of 600 people took place as the apex of the Labor Party campaign, and after the Cleveland Conference only 200 people represented a "mass meeting." It must be remembered that the LPP [WPA] has a membership of 3,000 in New York City!

The campaign for amalgamation was politically a tremendous success. No less than 11 state federations of labor, representing about 25 percent of organized labor of this country, declared themselves ideologically for amalgamation; organizationally, however, we had a fearful failure, for, as we could not mobilize our Party forces, we were not able to occupy all the strategic points, and there is danger that the amalgam-



ation movement, which is growing more and more powerful from day to day, will get out of control.

In a word: in the defense, Labor Party, and amalgamation campaigns, there was every possibility of good political success, but very great, even destructive failure from an organizational standpoint.

The CEC feels compelled to enlighten the Party members on these questions with perfect frankness. We declare most emphatically that organizationally our Party has been a failure, so that now we must issue the slogan: "BUILD THE PARTY."

We must analyze the reasons of this failure.

It would be a mistake to believe that our Party could not be mobilized because it is an underground party. It is a mistake to believe that an underground party cannot be mobilized, as the Centrists claim. That is not true; as an analysis will show that during this time we could perform all political work openly, and that the LPP [WPA] daily is functioning more and more completely as an open Communist party. Evidences of this latter fact are:

1. The entire political administration and the whole political work of the LPP [WPA] are Communist.

2. The LPP [WPA] is now connected with the Communist International through fraternal representation.

3. The LPP [WPA] adopted a good Communist program at its convention.

4. The LPP [WPA] is regarded not only by the authorities as a Communist Party, but by the workers as well.

5. Through the LPP [WPA] we have had full possibilities of propagating the Communist ideology.

During the whole period, the CEC, in accordance with the Convention decision, has consciously acted on the idea that every chance for open work should be taken advantage of. For that reason, we not only consciously aimed at making the LPP [WPA] a

Communist Party, but also determined that the Industrial Department of the Party [TUEL] should be an open institution. Before the large masses of American workers we openly stated in our Labor Day Manifesto that the underground form of Party organization is not a dogma for us, but a bitter necessity.

The real cause of the organizational failure of the Party, however, are as follows:

1. The Party apparatus is too cumbersome. This defect has had a most harmful effect on all Party actions.

2. The groups [primary party units] are removed too many steps from the CEC. As a result, instructions sent by the CEC at times have not reached the groups for 3 or 4 weeks. Innumerable examples could be given, but 2 will suffice. Instructions regarding the mobilization of the Party forces against the split threatened in the LPP [WPA] by a certain federation [Jewish, i.e., Yiddish language] did not reach a section organizer in District No. 2 [New York] till long after the controversy was settled.† The instructions in regard to the Labor Party reached the Party membership after it had been taken up in the LPP.‡

3. Our groups are too small. Group meetings have degenerated, and it is a most rare event when a full meeting occurs.

4. The very often exaggerated dualism between the Party and the LPP [WPA] doubles the work. Meetings of the Party units are duplicated in most instances in the LPP branch meetings. Thus, in District No. 2 [New York] a comrade of the DEC [District Executive Committee] had to discuss a certain matter in a subcommittee of the Party DEC and then take it up again in the full DEC. He had to discuss the same matter in a subcommittee of the DEC of the LPP [WPA] and finally in the full DEC of the LPP [WPA]. In other words, the comrade had to discuss the matter 4 times, which represents a fearful loss of energy.

5. The Party groups are built artificially and not

†- The primary party unit of the underground CPA was the "group" of up to 10 members; up to 10 of these groups constituted a "branch," up to 10 of these branches constituted a "section," up to 10 of these sections constituted a "sub-district," which was a further subdivision of the CPA's 12 functioning "districts," each headed by a paid employee appointed by the CEC. For reasons of security, information was to flow straight up and instructions straight down this chain of command — primary party units or intermediate units were not permitted to contact one another, or in theory even to know of one another's existence. Thus, it is stated that the instructions of the CEC took an inordinate length of time to get *only half way* down this cumbersome chain of command.

‡- Theoretically, CPA units were to serve as advance caucuses which would then direct and control the fundamental decisions of their parallel WPA units. The inefficient CPA organizational structure was not equal to this task, the CEC statement indicates.

on the basis of the work to be done. The groups are not based on a similarity of function, but on residential qualifications. To work effectively, there must be unity of function.

6. The Party numerically is not equal to the tremendous tasks confronting it. The number of Party members is too small. The number of organizations among which we must work is so large that only a few members are available for each organization. In order to extend our work we must increase our membership.

On the basis of the decisions by the CEC and the Party Council, therefore the following remedies for these are to be applied:

1. To increase the size of the Party, a big membership drive shall be conducted. We must absorb all good elements in the LPP [WPA] into the Party. We must, in addition, get militant trade unionists into the Party. We wish to remove a serious obstacle to increasing our membership, by reducing the dues to 25 cents per month.

2. We intend to reduce the number of steps between the CEC and the membership.

3. We must enlarge the Party groups and allow Party branches to meet regularly as units of the Party.

4. We must convert the groups from mechanical units into working bodies, through a division of labor, by assigning specific tasks to various groups, such as trade union, protection of foreign-born workers, defense, relief, literature distribution, confidential work.

5. We must combine the leading committees of the Party and the LPP [WPA], so as to make them identical wherever possible. (How intolerable the position of the Party is, is manifest in the fact that the LPP [WPA] District Organizer of a certain district has no less than 16 Party meetings a week, aside from trade union and other meetings.)

6. At last we must seriously take up the self-protection of the Party. The present underground party is only underground in name. We must organize various confidential and secret departments of the Party for ensuring its safety and carrying on the Party's underground work, in order to protect ourselves from future attacks.

The CEC will furnish detailed instructions on methods of achieving these improvements.

The political development and the condition of the labor movement demand more and more work from our Party, and, we may add, ever MORE OPEN political and trade union work. Up to the present, the CEC has done everything to remove all impediments from the path to open work. With these organizational decisions, the CEC and the Party Council have sought to simplify and facilitate the open work. We must continue to study political developments most carefully. We must not fail to mention some important facts which demonstrate that, since our last Party convention, better and broader possibilities for the open existence of our Party are developing.

These new possibilities are as follows:

1. The class struggle within the bourgeoisie. The November 7th [1922] elections and the formation of the LaFollette group showed that the petty bourgeoisie and the farmers are conducting an ever sharper struggle against the big bourgeoisie. In the matter of the treatment of the labor movement, there are deep conflicts between the two sections of the bourgeoisie. This cleft in the bourgeoisie makes it impossible to persecute the Communists with united forces and with a solid bourgeois public opinion behind it, as was done in the past.

2. The solidarity of the working class revealed itself in the past few months as never before. The signs of this solidarity are: (a) the tremendous labor struggles; (b) the idea of a general strike in the minds of the workers; (c) the rapid development of the amalgamation movement; (d) the growing Labor Party movement, (e) greater influence of the Communists in the labor unions; (f) greater sympathy for the communists and the LPP [WPA] in the labor movement, as, for instance, in the defense and the Labor Party Conference; (g) to be persecuted is no longer a privilege of the Communists, for it strikes all militant elements of the working class. Therefore, persecutions no longer remain local matters but become events of national significance; (h) the LPP [WPA] is functioning more and more as a Communist Party, and is controlled more and more completely by the Communists.

All of these facts demonstrate clearly that the development is in the direction of an open Communist Party. Of course, it is one of the most important duties of the CEC not to attempt any dangerous experiments. We state most emphatically that the CEC

would gage a pitiless struggle against any attempt to FORCE the establishment of an open Communist Party; against any attempt not only to establish an open party before a Convention of the CP has decided, but also against any effort to propagate the idea that an open Communist Party may be established without a decision of the Party Convention. The CEC will wage a sharp fight against any attempt to make a factional controversy of the matter.

The CEC declares: We adhere to the decision of the last Party Convention. In the spirit of the Communist International we make no more a principle of the underground form of organization than of the open form. *We stand for a well equipped, large, politically mature, elastic CP, which, according to circumstances, can function openly or underground.*

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The question of the reorganization of the Party was taken up at the Party Council which recently took place. The matter was discussed most thoroughly, every angle being touched upon. When the vote was taken, the proposal of the CEC, upon which the above document is based, was adopted almost unanimously. No member of the Party Council was against the principle of the proposal; only a few objected to the method of carrying it out. A subsequent conference with the comrades who dissented removed all doubts so that the decision now is practically unanimous.

Central Executive Committee CPA.

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Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.

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