
Letter to I.E. Ferguson in Chicago from C.E. Ruthenberg in New York, May 1, 1920.

A document in the Hoover Institution Archives, Jay Lovestone Papers, file 195, folder 11.

New York, May 1, 1920.

Dear Comrade Ferguson:—

In regard to the bill from Bachrach, the expenses for the two trips East seem rather heavy in view of the fact that in both instances we paid the fare one way. However, I suppose there is nothing to do but to pay. The \$184.25 for our case and the trip to Washington should be paid out of the general fund and the \$204.20 from Chicago cases out of the Chicago Defense Fund.

The total paid Mr. Bachrach is \$1,250.00. Of this amount \$500.00 was to apply for services in our case here and since the case is not to come up, this should be applied for Chicago work after deduction is made for whatever services in extradition proceedings.

Please send me the receipted bill when paid.

I am afraid you are judging the situation in the party from the Chicago viewpoint. This viewpoint is indicated in Fishers' [Belsky's] letter to me urging "Please send the call for the joint convention as early as possible." What Joint Convention? With the CLP? I suppose that is what he means and he seems to think that all that is necessary is to dictate or write the circular. It happens, however, that the CLP rejected the apportionment of 32 and 18 before our split and now will talk nothing but equal apportionment of delegates and the joint convention has disappeared from view. Similarly the situation in our own party. It is not all one way. I have been in Boston, Detroit, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia and I tell you it's a hard fight and the outcome is still in doubt. It is true we have won the majority in Philadelphia — both District Committee and membership — and have the majority of the membership in Pittsburgh and at least an even break here

in New York, but Boston and Detroit don't look good for us and the Ukrainian Federationists are wavering. I have been up two nights out of three during the last ten days until 2 and 3 in the morning fighting this thing and it doesn't appear in such rosy hues to me as it seemingly does to both you and Fisher [Leonid Belsky].

If I could reach an agreement for a joint convention of the two groups at some fairly early date I would jump at the opportunity. That is what even those who are supporting us are demanding. The membership is simply bewildered by the break and some of our support is due to the fact that we have called for a convention to settle the matter and not because the members understand the issues. The other side has the advantage of being the majority of a regularly constituted committee and we must make a case — in order to secure support — and it is hard to make a case out of the issues on account of which this break took place. If we do not come to an agreement we will have three parties — two stumbling blocks in place of the one we have had in the CLP. And even if we can patch up some kind of an agreement with the CLP, we will still have two Communist parties — and you know what that has meant to us during the last seven months. It will mean the same thing in the future. Already the big bluff of "differences in principle" is being used — and effectively. It is the cause of the wavering of the Ukrainian Federation. They are afraid that we will "soften the statement of principles," although strongly opposed to the Hourwich group.

I will stay here another week to negotiate with both the CLP and the other group. The CLP suggests a "unity conference" in place of a convention. They propose that we meet — as separate groups — and

first negotiate a basis for uniting the two groups in a convention. As a preliminary a joint committee, of say three on each side, is suggested to work out a manifesto, program, and constitution, which will be submitted to both groups for approval when they come together at the convention and will be the basis for the united convention. This plan may be developed into something, but it looks dubious.

The CEC majority, I understand, will demand several months delay before the convention and barring of the CLP. I would be inclined to agree to a delay of two weeks, but that is my limit. As to the CLP, it has barred itself by refusing the apportionment of 32:18. It may be that they can be brought to their senses and see their opportunity in accepting 18 delegates and having the chance to unite with us against the other group, and if they can be brought around I will insist that all three groups come into the one convention.

There never was any proposal about 1/3 representation. Proportional representation was suggested, meaning that if a district convention stood 1/3 for the "majority" group and 2/3 for the "minority," the delegates from the district would be divided accordingly. Or any other proportion. That looks to me like a fair

proposition.

One thing is necessary before we can hope to make much progress in this thing, and that is that you comrades there in Chicago undeceive yourself about it being a walkaway. Then you will get down to fighting in earnest. I think Stankovich has seen the light after his Pittsburgh experience.

As to New York, it isn't all bad when you get down below the people we have been dealing with, as I have been doing recently. Tomorrow I talk to the Ukrainian CEC and Monday to the group organizers of New York. Representatives of the other side will be on hand in each case.

Is there anything new about the machinery and books that we were negotiating about? How about the party seal you ordered?

As soon as things are settled definitively here — one way or another — I will leave for Cleveland. Will come to Chicago a week before the convention if everything goes well.

Fraternally,

[C.E. Ruthenberg]

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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