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# Further Statement on Unity Proceedings.

[circa Dec. 1, 1920]

by Charles Dirba

Unsigned typeset leaflet by the old Communist Party of America (New York: n.d. [1920]).  
Copy in Comintern Archive, RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 47, ll. 7-8.

*To the Membership  
of the Communist Party of America.*

**Chronological Development  
of Present Situation.**

Dear Comrades:

The situation at the present moment has all the appearances of another serious delay on the part of the United Communist Party.

The statements of membership, based upon the average of July, August, September, and October [1920] dues, were exchanged on November 28 [1920]. The UCP statement shows a total average of 4,561; the CP — 7,552, which is 5 to 3 in favor of the Communist Party.

We have examined the UCP records, have found their statement substantially correct, and we have expressed our willingness to accept it.

The UCP committee have examined all they wanted to examine of the CP books and records, and they have not indicated any discrepancies between the records and our statement submitted to them.

But — they have interrupted the proceedings indefinitely under the pretext of investigating the CP membership “on the ground.” They say that they want to compare our dues figures with the actual membership of our Party in the various cities — although this would be absolutely impossible, in a short time, even for ourselves, not to speak of “outsiders” — although the Executive Committee of the Communist International has specified that the representation at the Joint Convention shall be based upon dues actually paid for during July, August, September, and October, “according to the official books of both parties.”

The previous deadlock, produced by the refusal of the UCP to recede from the impossible conditions expressed in their letter of Nov. 5, even in the face of the decision of the Comintern communicated to them on the same date (because they had not received them through their own sources, they said), this deadlock lasted until Nov. 23 [1920], when we received word of an appointment to meet their Unity Committee.

When the two committees came together, we were shown two official documents from the Comintern setting forth the following decisions:

[1] To extend the term for the complete unification of both parties in America to January 1, 1921.

[2] To call the attention of American comrades to the extreme inconvenience of the systematic arrival of new delegates from America, who question decisions already passed in the presence of other delegates.

[3] As an ultimatum to demand unity on the basis of the decisions adopted by the Second Congress of the Communist International [July 19-Aug. 7, 1920].

[4] Responsible representatives of both Parties, with equal rights, to give a pledge to the Executive Committee of the Comintern to accomplish unity without fail.

[5] That representation at the Unity Congress shall be proportional, and the basis shall be the number of dues paying members for July, August, September, and October [1920], according to the official

books of both parties.

[6] The name of the united party to be “Communist Party of America.”

[7] That temporarily the representatives of both parties may take part in the meetings of the Executive Committee.

Then, without directly agreeing to a Unity convention on the basis of the decisions of the Comintern, the UCP committee wanted to talk about the representation on it. We refused this and handed them the following note:

[1]

***To the Unity Committee of the UCP.***  
***Nov. 24, 1920.***

Comrades:—

The Unity Committee of the CP stands ready and is empowered to enter into conference with your Committee for a Unity Convention of both parties, to be held on the basis of the decisions of the Comintern, as soon as you are ready and empowered to do so.

Dobin [Charles Dirba],  
Allen [Max Cohen],  
Morris [J. Wilenkin].

In reply we received the following:

[2]

***To the Unity Committee of the CP.***  
***Nov. 24, 1920.***

Comrades:—

The CEC of the UCP still maintains the position, stated in its previous communications, that the interests of the Communist movement in America imperatively demand a major representation, arbitrarily fixed in advance, for the UCP at the Unity Convention, not only on the ground of its greater numerical strength, but also because its centralized form of organization, every group of which is underground, and its organization policies have already established the UCP as the major party.

However, now the CEC has received an official mandate for unity from the Executive Committee of the Communist International, as well as a notation that the Small Bureau of the EC of the CI has fixed the basis of representation on the dues paid during the months of July, Aug., Sept., and Oct. [1920]. The Unity Committee of the UCP has therefore communicated this decision of the EC of the CI and the decision of the Small Bureau to the Unity Committee of the CP, and is ready and empowered to take the necessary

steps to carry out these decisions, confident that an honest statement of membership by both parties will fully establish the claim of the UCP for major representation at the ratio of at least 6 delegates for the UCP to 4 delegates for the CP.

Alden [???],  
Holt [Alfred Wagenknecht],  
McGee [???].

Regardless of what they “maintained” (thought) as to what (according to their position) “the interests of the Communist movement in America imperatively demand” (we have our own ideas of what they demand); regardless of what their hope were (fond, but insincere hopes) in reference to membership figures; we noted the “However,” that “the Unity Committee of the UCP is ready and empowered to take the necessary steps to carry out these decisions” — and that was satisfactory to us.

In general terms the committee then talked of the time and place to hold a Joint Convention, and decided to hold another meeting in 3 days to which both sides were to bring their statements of July, August, September, and October [1920] dues, showing number, rate, and amount by those subdivisions from which dues were remitted to the National Organizations.

These statements were exchanged on November 28 [1920], and on the next day each side examined the books and records of the other. No serious discrepancies between these records and the submitted statements were found.

The UCP committee refused, however, to agree upon another appointment, stating that they wanted to check up our dues figures with the actual CP membership in the various cities, as shown by the detailed reports of the Federations; and that, in consequence, they would not be ready for another meeting with our committee before a week or so.

On the next day we sent them the following letter:

[3]

***To the Unity Committee of the UCP.***  
***Nov. 30, 1920.***

Comrades:—

Having examined your official records we find that the total of July, August, September, and October [1920] dues

shown on your statement; that is, \$12,004.70, representing an average of 4001 dues per month, is substantially correct.

As to the additions claimed by you: (1) 150 for membership in District 11 [Seattle] and 12 [Minneapolis], whose dues, you say, have been used for organization expenses in those districts themselves; (2) 200 for married comrades, to whom one single stamp has been sold for both husband and wife; (3) 200 for July [1920] dues paid at the old rates of 50 cents for CLP membership and 40 cents for CP membership — we think that the first and the third items are a little too high. However, since there seems to be no method by which they could be definitely ascertained or disputed, and since the error of itself must be quite small, we are willing to allow the additions in full.

This brings the total average July, August, September, and October [1920] dues paying membership of your party up to 4,561, and we are willing to accept this figure as the basis upon which to calculate the UCP delegation to the Joint Convention, as soon as you have verified and accepted our membership report submitted to you on the 28th of November [1920], and showing a total average July, August, September, and October dues paying membership of the Communist Party of 7,552.

We have submitted to you for examination and comparison all the official books and records of the Communist Party which you requested. You have examined and compared them, and you have not indicated any discrepancies between our records and the statement submitted to you.

It is up to you now to act on our statement.

The time for the Joint Convention is short. Every day must be counted and used in the preliminary arrangements.

The joint call must be drawn up, approved by both Central Executive Committees, and sent out to the membership immediately. The time for the Convention must be fixed, and the place found without delay.

We insist that your committee come to meet with our committee again within the next few days.

Let us know at once when you can come to the next meeting.

C. Dobin [Charles Dirba],  
Executive Secretary, CP of A.

### **Who is Trying to Block Unity?**

And now we hasten to inform our members of the situation.

We have checked up and cross-checked the membership figure shown by our dues for the four months; we have checked up by our estimate right after the split, by Federation reports of actual membership and District reports of actual membership, and we have found that the figure of 7,550 is as near to the exact present membership of the Communist Party as any membership figure in a large organization can be (within 2 or 3 percent).

The UCP committee knows that the figure is substantially correct, because through Damon [C.E. Ruthenberg] they know what the CP membership was before the last split, and by this time they must have found out quite closely how little went over to them in the split. Besides, the financial statements of the CP and of all our Federations have been published right along in our papers — not only in membership bulletins that are destroyed upon reading and are inaccessible to outsiders, like the UCP statements.

It is very hard for the UCP to come down from a claim of 6 to 4 in their favor to the reality of 5 to 3 in our favor, we understand; and we would understand their showing distrust, and investigating the “actual membership” of the CP, in order to satisfy their membership that they had really believed in the past that the membership of the CP was only two-fifths of the UCP membership. We say, we would understand this, if the utter impossibility of that plan would not betray at once that it was merely a pretense.

It would require a long time for our CEC to carry through a comparison of dues figures with the actual membership in branches and groups. It is an obvious impossibility for “outsiders” to do that in an underground organization, without the assistance of this organization, in a short time.

What then may be the real intentions of the UCP committee? There are two possibilities: 1) They may be simply playing for more time, until further information from Moscow, or some other development that might (?) possibly improve their plight; or 2) They may already have something schemed up by which to block the unity proceedings indefinitely, and try to jockey into a better position by hook or crook.

In either case the responsibility for the delay, or even more or less prolonged breach of the unity proceedings, will rest upon the UCP committee.

### **The UCP Appeal to the Communist International.**

And now while we are at it, let us turn to the UCP Appeal to the Communist International. Let us indicate the falsehoods and misrepresentations contained in it, and incidentally underscore some confessions on their own part.

“Since its inception, the Communist movement in America has been hampered in its development by a struggle for control by a small group of unprincipled elements”

— they say — and we agree; and the comrades know who are the “small group of unprincipled elements!”

The CP has 7,550 members, and the UCP has 4,560. In the light of these figures, who are those who had to “struggle for control?” Who are those who would have to manipulate and split and emasculate principles to get the control? WHO are those who would have lost their “control” through a real unity and *falsely* shouted for it? WHO BLOCKED UNITY ON MEMBERSHIP BASIS, every time, while *falsely* accusing others of a general opposition to it?!

They let the cat out of the bag when they say that

“Those of the majority of the Left Wing Council who were now members of the CEC of the CP (meaning Damon [Ruthenberg] and Caxton [Ferguson]) united their efforts with the CEC of the CLP”

after the raids, for a special kind of CLP unity. When they were unable to carry out their plans (treasonable to the CP) then they engineered the split in the CP.

They say:

“A convention being on hand, these ‘rule or ruin’ leaders prepared to expel the bulk of the membership which opposed their tactics. The majority of the Left Wing Council (Damon [Ruthenberg] and Caxton [Ferguson] should resent such damning reference to them) resented that move, and a split resulted. The CLP...suddenly became a coveted object for unity and received an unexpected invitation to proceed with unity negotiations.”

This is really a masterpiece of condensing numerous falsehoods into a very short statement. 1) It was not a CP Convention that was at hand, as the statement implies, but the Joint Convention of the CP and CLP. 2) There were no preparations to expel any CP membership, 3) the bulk of which were not opposed to their CEC (as their support and loyalty in the split plainly proved).

The “Left Wing Council” split the CP to prevent the Joint Convention, in which they and their colleagues from the CLP would have lost quit naturally their infamous “control.” It was a split coming not from the membership, but from the top, from the “Left Wing Council” on the CEC of the Communist Party.†

There was no suddenness, nothing unexpected in the invitation of the CP to the CLP to proceed (continue) with the unity negotiations, but the invitation could not be entertained by the CLP because they thought they had really succeeded in seriously splitting the CP.

It is simply an amazing falsehood the assertion about the emasculation and degradation of the CP to a mere propaganda organization — that the CP shop nuclei are limited to the distribution of leaflets, study classes, and the collection of funds. How do they expect to get away with such a lie, when every one who has read the CP declarations and papers can see it without any effort?!

By way of explanation, our circular did not accuse the whole UCP as defenders of Debs and legalists. It referred to such “varieties of also-communists” in their ranks, of the existence of which we need not offer any proofs here. It is a well known fact.

And now, as to Federations. It is a perversion of historical facts to say that “the foreign speaking comrades in the Socialist Party finally forced that organization to allow them to form federations for the purpose of organizing foreign language propaganda.” Hardly any foreign speaking comrades ever existed in the Socialist Party outside of those who from the very outset were organized in their federations. The purpose of the perversion is very apparent — it is to give an example of foreign speaking comrades previously existing in the SP *without* federations, and organizing the federations *only* for a “foreign language propaganda.” So, the federations are not essential for the organizational life of the foreign speaking comrades, and they are entirely unnecessary as soon as the party begins to take care of the foreign language propaganda

†- The three way correspondence from April and May 1920 between Ruthenberg, Ferguson, and Chicago District Organizer Leonid Belsky (“Ed Fisher”) very conclusively proves that volition for the split came from the Chicago organization, reacting to the actions of the CEC majority (Hourwich and Ballam), and being retaliated against for their insolence. See the various pieces of correspondence, originals housed in the Jay Lovestone Papers at Hoover Institution Archives, available on the net on [www.marxisthistory.org](http://www.marxisthistory.org) The analysis of the CPA of the split presented here was believed, no doubt — although it was factually inaccurate.

— as for example the UCP, which *regularly publishes* its official organ (bare translations) in nine languages, *periodically* (once a year or so) in five other languages, and in *preparation* in three more languages. Besides, other books in *other* languages *will be published*.

There we have it very plainly: language federations are not necessary. Why weaken the argument by saying “autonomous federations”? There are no autonomous federations against which the argument should be used — and it is good against any kind of federations.

It is another brazen lie to say that

“The CEC of the CP is nothing more than the executive of the English speaking membership, which may transmit its wishes to the foreign speaking membership through the foreign language federation National Executive Committees. The autonomy of the federations stands in the way of centralization. It takes away all the power from the CEC. Instead of this body being the supreme body of the party it is, in reality, a tool in the hands of the federations.”

A causal glance into the CP constitution will prove the falseness of these statements, which we quote in full to show them in all their nakedness.

Again, it is a brazen lie that

“such legal organizations exist in the Lettish [Latvian] and Lithuanian Federations in Boston, New York, Cleveland, Detroit, and other cities. Though these legal organizations are nominally subdivided into groups of 10, they do not function as groups of the party, but continue to function exclusively as singing societies, benevolent and hall associations. Their only connection with the Communist Party is their payment of dues to the Federation.”

All CP membership, without any exceptions, are organized in underground groups, are *directly* connected with the Party through locals and sub-districts, and function in all the activities of the Party — distribution of leaflets and literature, in the shop and union nuclei, in the technical work of the Party, yes, and *also* in the existing workers’ legal societies.

As to the trouble in the Lettish [Latvian] Federation. Their secretary, who wrote the deplorable letter to the government of Latvia, did so without authority, and his action was repudiated by the Central Committee in whose name he wrote it. By the way, the letter did not “promise that government the support of the Lettish [Latvian] Federation of the Communist Party, as the UCP statement puts it. It prom-

ised nothing of the sort. The nationalists in the Lettish [Latvian] Federation, however nationalistic they might have been, had no such intentions. They wanted to aid the cooperatives in Latvia, and they wanted some guarantees from the Latvian government for their funds.

This was bad enough, far be it from us to defend it, and the exaggeration of it by the UCP is a small thing. The big thing (for which the exaggeration was made), the *big lie* is the statement about the “pontifical blessings of the CEC of the party,” which statement is made to imply that the CEC of the CP countenanced and overlooked such a breach of Party principles and discipline. It is a lie (however confusedly expressed) that those elements who revolted against the nationalistic affair were expelled — implying at the same time that those members who remained in the Federation are nationalistic.

The facts are that the CEC has specifically instructed the Lettish [Latvian] Federation to clear itself of all nationalistic elements, and that these elements did split away from the Federation, even though they dragged some good membership with them under the pretext of revolt against nationalism, which was really unfortunate, but could not be avoided by any action of the CEC.

It is interesting at this point to recall that while the CEC of the CP acted against the nationalistic tendency in the Lettish [Latvian] Federation as soon as it became aware of it, the UCP, without any apprehension or taking sides, were circularizing their Lettish [Latvian] membership to find out (just to find out) whether they were for or against the calling of and participation in a *Lettish* Convention, a nationalistic convention here in America.

To cap it off with a touch of the humorous, in the ending of their statement the CEC of the UCP writes word for word:

“If the Executive Committee of the Third, Communist International can not see its way clear to uphold the decision of the Central Executive Committee of the United Communist Party (on unity conditions: no autonomous federations and 6 to 4 representation for the UCP), then it *must order* (italics their own) an immediate affiliation of the Communist Party to the United Communist Party.”

If it can not see its way clear to let the UCP arbitrarily to swallow the CP (that is, the kind of unity

they have always been whining for — to put the “lion” inside of the “lamb”), then it must! — Yes, it must!

Any wonder then that it is very hard, very hard indeed for the UCP leaders to submit themselves to the decisions of the Comintern honestly, and not to try to block and disrupt the unity proceedings, and the final accomplishment of organic unity, by fair means or foul.

But this time they will not succeed. Unity *will be* achieved regardless of their opposition — because the International has spoken, and the Communist rank and file of the United Communist Party will listen to it in spite of their leaders.

Communist Party of America,

C. Dobin [Charles Dirba], Exec. Sec.

*Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport.*

*Second Edition, Feb. 2007 — adds identification of John Ballam to the footnote.*

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