
**Statement to
the Executive Committee of
the Communist International
by Suspended UCP Members
“Flat” and “Adams”
[circa April 1, 1921]**

Mimeographed document in the CI Archive, RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 43, ll. 116-117.

Comrades:—

We have been expelled from the CEC and suspended from the Party for a period of 3 months presumably for violation of Party Discipline.

We do not accept this verdict as we have committed no wrong against the Party. On the contrary we are convinced that we have acted in full accord with Communist principles, with the decisions of our last Party Convention, and with the best interests of our movement.

We are presenting to you some of the questions upon which we did not agree with the majority of the CEC so that you will be able to judge our position.

We maintain that we were within [our rights] in tendering in our resignations from the [Editorial] department on which we served and from the CEC when it became apparent that we

could not work in harmony with the majority of the CEC. We maintain that the majority had no right to force us to remain.¹

As to the “trial,” it was conducted in such a manner that no charges were preferred against us. We were asked some questions but the hearing was a mere comedy as the case was decided beforehand by the caucus of the majority. The CEC barred the minority from recording any statement in the minutes of the CEC.

The true cause of our expulsion is not Party discipline but because we were not desirable to a majority of the CEC; they felt in us the critical eye of the membership and grasped at a pretext in order to get rid of us.

Here is their conception of discipline: “Even if only 500 members remain with us, we shall not give in,” said one of them.

“Even if a convention were to decide against us we would not submit,” said another. District No. 7 [Chicago], to which the CEC majority carried the controversy, reacted with the resolution requesting our reinstatement. “To Hell with District 7” was the verdict of one of the defenders of discipline. Since none

¹ The Chicagoans “Adams” and “Flat” were elected to the CEC by the Dec. 24, 1920-Jan. 2, 1921 Kingston Convention. They tendered their resignation on the spot when their factional ally Jay Lovestone (“Beacon”) was denied a seat on the CEC. This resignation was refused by the convention. The pair went to New York to sit on the CEC, where they once again attempted to resign their position. This was again rejected. The pair returned to Chicago regardless, where the District Executive Committee upbraided them for their breach of discipline, resulting in the return of “Adams” and “Flat” to New York City to assume their CEC seats, at which time they were placed on the editorial board. A fight ensued over the CEC majority’s decision to make use of per diem payments to supplement the convention-determined wages of CEC members L.E. Katterfeld (“Bell”) and Alfred Wagenknecht (“Altman”), the two having multiple children and a living situation which required the maintenance of dual residences. “Adams” and “Flat” apparently attempted to take this matter to the pages of the party press, but were stopped by other members of the Editorial Committee, who referred the matter to the CEC, which delayed taking quick action on the question due to the absence of two of its members on the road for the party. “Adams” and “Flat” furiously rejected the notion that the CEC had purview to limit discussion of this matter about its decisions in the party press and resigned their positions on the Editorial Board, with one of the two returning home to Chicago without permission. The matter was finally addressed by the full CEC, which after protracted discussion voted to expel the pair from the CEC and to suspend them from party membership for a period of 3 months.

of the other members of the majority protested against the above remarks we infer they were in accord with them.

This cloak of Supreme Authority only hides all the bureaucrats who use the phrase "Communist Discipline" but who do not understand its substance.

Here are the various questions that came up before the CEC and which may clear up our position.

ORGANIZATION.— The CEC has adopted for organization purposes an artificial territorial division of the country into numerous districts. We maintain that under such plan the organization work cannot be successful.

Our financial means and the number of capable workers are small. Scattering our forces over a large territory we are weakening the established units of the Party, we are weakening our control over the movement, we are getting poor results in comparison to the expenses. Such is actually the situation at the present time with our big expense and wages and with the organization becoming weaker and disjointed. We have maintained and still maintain that our efforts should be concentrated at first in important industrial centers. After we have strengthened our organization through the education of the membership and its training in communist work, then it becomes possible to expand the organization.

MEMBERSHIP AFFILIATION.— The CEC in its attempt to capture the various federations of the SP and to attract the prominent leaders of other organizations with no other assurance of their sincerity than only their verbal acceptance of the Party program with which they are often not even familiar, acted in contradiction with the principles of the Communist International.

In our opinion the expansion of our party must proceed by attracting into the organization the revolutionary proletarian elements of the shops and unions. There shall be no hunting for membership. On the contrary, the Party by its activities must conquer the confidence of the workers and inspire them to such a degree that the most conscious of them will seek admission to the Party.

We maintained that in case of prominent leaders seeking admission into the Party, the CEC must demand from them a public declaration of their agreement with the principles of the CI and the reasons that caused them to change their minds. So far the prominent individuals who came into the Party came in at the request of the CEC and were placed in positions of responsibility immediately on their entrance in the Party.

CLOSE CONTACT OF THE CEC WITH THE MEMBERSHIP.— We have found such does not exist. The CEC has no knowledge of the conditions in the various districts, of their needs, and what is more important, of the Communist work that is being done there. Without such knowledge the CEC is not in a position to fulfill its main duty, i.e., to unify and direct the work of the local organizations, to control their work, in short to insure the functioning of the Party as a centralized organization.

Without such knowledge it becomes impossible to secure capable Party workers. At the present time most of the appointees of the CEC are not known to the majority of the members of the CEC. They are appointed because someone mentioned their name and are given the “job” in order to “try them out.” This failure to see the importance of establishing close contact with the membership is coupled with an attitude of infallibility on the part of the majority of the CEC. No shortcomings are admitted, no other reason allowed for the criticisms expressed by the membership except the malicious influence of individuals who spread unrest and discontent. Very little, if any, attention is paid to any suggestions that come from the membership.

OFFICIAL ORGANS AND LITERATURE.— Our position in regard to official organs is expressed in the following statement that was adopted by the Party editorial board but the appearance of which in the official organ [The Communist] was barred because it was regarded by the majority of the CEC as unjustified and harmful criticism of the past “administration.”

Our last convention [2nd: Kingston, NY: Dec. 24, 1920-Jan. 2, 1921] has given a great deal of attention to the Party Press. Much justified criticism has been expressed concerning our official organ. Instead of

effecting the labor movement in this country and abroad, instead of clarifying important Party issues, instead of inspiring and calling the membership to Communist work, they have consisted of a series of reprints, often without a word of comment. The convention has conceived a new form of management of the organs. From now on they will not be the production of individuals but of the Editorial Board consisting of the editors of the official organs. This Editorial Board will strive as far as it is possible to eliminate the mistakes committed in the past and to carry out the decisions of the Convention. It hopes that in this work it will have the support of the membership.

In the printing of the official organ it was never ascertained what number of copies are actually distributed by the membership in the various districts. This, no doubt, caused a great material waste. We have taken up this question and proposed that the number of copies printed should depend upon reports of actual sales of papers in the various districts.

In respect to all Party literature we have proposed that in printing it, the CEC should consider the actual need for it as specific situations arise and the composition of the working masses to whom this literature is addressed, and not the number of members of a specific language belonging to the Party. We had a hard time to convince the members of the majority to accept this viewpoint.

We have proposed in line with our general viewpoint that every time agitational literature is issued the districts should make a full report of the distribution, how it was received by the workers, and also criticism of it. We have also proposed that the districts should have the right to reprint leaflets issued by the CEC if this is warranted by the demand. This was rejected.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.— We accuse the CEC, first, that in contradiction to the actual situation they attempt to impress the Communist International with the magnitude of the work the Party is performing in order to gain prestige in the eyes of the CI and for other reasons. Secondly, that for the same reasons they create the fiction of [an] “American element” in the Party, and overemphasize its importance. We consider that to differentiate our membership in such a manner is to create nationalistic feelings and antagonism in our ranks.

The true fact is that the labor movement of America consists of numerous language elements and it is the mission of the Party to weld them together for revolutionary action and to unite the advanced elements of this movement into a centralized Communist Party. But in this light the question was never considered by the CEC [majority].

THE PER DIEM QUESTION.— We have defended the necessity of low salaries for Party workers. We consider high salaries a danger to the Party as they may attract undesirable elements. We consider the viewpoint that efficient work, the success of the Party, depends upon the wages paid to Party workers, as wrong and detrimental to the movement. In addition we strenuously objected to the practice of paying to Party workers who were at the same time employed in other organizations, that the difference between the salary of that organization and the Party salary.

The CEC has appealed to the membership to form units of comrades that would put themselves at the disposal of the Party, ready at any moment to leave their jobs and follow the directions of the Party, receiving a smallest wage for their work. Should not the members of the CEC give an example of such self-sacrifice? Is it consistent with the per diem which they granted themselves without the knowledge of the membership and with their refusal to give that per diem up?

FINANCES.— We have found the financial situation with the Party poor, with the accounting so tangled up that so far it was impossible to give a complete financial report since last June [1920].

We have insisted upon regular monthly financial statements from the Executive Secretary [Wagenknecht] but received none during our service on the CEC.

The inspiration for Communist Saturdays was derived not of a desire to carry on propaganda and education but from the lack of income at that time to even pay the wages of the CEC members.

PARTIALITY.— How much the members of the CEC really care for the interests of the movement and for maintaining

a true discipline is clear from the fact that they have never attempted to discipline one that is still in their midst, who so far has done no work in the important Industrial Department assigned to him [Joseph Zack Kornfeder?]. All of the members of the CEC were unanimous in their disapproval of his actions, yet being one who does not threaten the peace of the “family” is not only tolerated but is given the position of judging us.

Comrades, there is more than the question of our formal guilt or innocence involved in this controversy. The question is whether you justify the whole line of action of the CEC, whether you intend to leave the Party in the hands of a few bureaucrats who only formally accept the Party principles but by their actions show their incapability of putting these principles into effect.

We on our part refused to deceive the membership by hiding from them the true situation and it is for this reason that we submit to you our present statement. We urge you comrades to give serious consideration to the various questions raised in the statement. We feel convinced that the communist movement in this country is suffering immeasurable harm because of the present leadership of our Party, and in the present situation we must proceed as the CI teaches, namely to entrust the executive position of the Party to sincere and devoted, although not full experienced, proletarians from our ranks. Our Party would be much more effective under the leadership of such comrades, who are willing and capable to learn, than under the present leadership of Socialist Party Bureaucrats.

Yours for Communism,

Flat [=???].

Adams [=???]

Edited by Tim Davenport

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