
**Letter to Fred Walchli in Bellaire, Ohio,
from L.E. Katterfeld in Cleveland, Ohio,
October 12, 1919. †**

From a typewritten and signed original document in the collection of Tim Davenport.

National Office
Communist Labor Party
3207 Clark Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio

Oct. 12, 1919

Fred Walchli
Bellaire, Ohio

Dear Comrade:—

Your letter of the 6th has been turned over to me for answer as Organization Director.

I was present at the meeting at which Clifford is accused having made the statement attributed to him. I know that he did not make it, as I stood right near him throughout the meeting. What he said is this:— “We want to build an *American Communist Party*.” He of course did not have in mind building a Party of native born Americans. He meant a Party that deals with the conditions of the working class right here in America and that adapts itself to these conditions instead of following blindly some leader abroad. Could any fair Comrade object to that? But the minute he had said this, several Comrades across

the hall assailed him for wanting only Americans in the Party etc. etc. Clifford tried hard to get the floor in order to correct these misunderstandings, but the chairman would not give him the floor again, and then Clifford got disgusted and left the hall.

When our opponents have to make capital out of little incidents like this, does not that prove that they have no point of fundamental principle on which they can attack us?

Just in passing I might point out that EVERY member of our National Executive Committee was born in a foreign land. [Max] Bedacht and myself in Germany, [Edward] Lindgren in Sweden, [Jack] Carney in Ireland, and [Alexander] Bilan in Russia, and we ARE “one hundred percent revolutionary.”‡

Now as to your questions:— The Communist Party provides in its program, for putting up candidates for “legislative bodies only, such as municipal councils, state legislatures, and national congress.” This means that they would enter municipal campaigns but have no candidate for mayor, and they would never put up candidates for governor nor President.

The Communist Party has asked all Ohio Comrades to boycott the municipal elections this

†-A handwritten written note by a previous owner of this document states: “Oct. 6, 1919— Fred Walchli of Ohio writes to [CLP Executive Secretary] A. Wagenknecht that he opposes the statement of Tom Clifford, who it is said stated ‘We want to make the Communist Labor Party One Hundred Percent American.’ Oct. 12, 1919— L.E. Katterfeld, organizational director of Ohio [*sic.*] C. Labor Party replies to above letter. Denies that Clifford made above statement....” While the original letter by Walchli has not been located, there seems to be no reason to doubt this sequence of events.

‡-Alexander Bilan (née Kadikis) was born in Riga, Latvia, then part of the Russian empire. Katterfeld might easily have added that CLP Executive Secretary Alfred Wagenknecht was also born in Germany. The reference to “one hundred percent revolutionary” seems clearly to be a reference to a phrase in the original letter of Walchli.

year and not to vote at all.

The position of the Communist Labor Party is that we participate in campaigns, not with the hope of “conquering the State” that way but for the purpose of education and propaganda.

Since this is our purpose, we do not discriminate between different offices, and propose to put up complete tickets. We believe that we could make a much stronger campaign to “abolish capitalism” by having a presidential candidate in the field next year, than with only a group of congressional candidates as the Communist Party proposes.

However this difference is not one of fundamental principle. It could be waived by either side without serious compromise.

Regarding the IWW I can find no specific endorsement in the Communist Party literature. Neither has our Party specifically endorsed the IWW. A resolution to this effect was introduced in our Convention, but the IWW delegates opposed it, and instead of the outright endorsement of the organization we have the endorsement of the principle of revolutionary industrial unionism, and a recognition of the IWW as having made heroic sacrifices and valiant struggles in the class war and having earned the respect and affection of all workers everywhere.

The IWW generally are very favorable to the Communist Labor Party. See the article by Charles Mundell in the *One Big Union Monthly*. Yet the way our program is worded, members of the United Mine Workers can belong to our Party without getting in bad with their own organization.

The numerical strength of the two parties it

is impossible to estimate accurately until we have statements of dues receipts. The CP has made all kinds of claims to membership that never joined them. Not until the individual members affiliates with a Party by paying his dues can you claim him as a member. On this basis the strength of the Communist Labor Party is growing from day to day. About 20,000 due stamps have been ordered to date. In a general way this is true, that the bulk of the membership of the seven expelled federations is with the CP but very few English speaking members. The CLP has almost all of the English speaking Left Wing elements outside of a few leaders who were taken up by the Russian Federation. We have all the western states practically solid, and much of the German, Italian, Scandinavian Federations and already a Russian Federation with eighteen good sized branches.

The Communist Labor Party News coming out next week will give quite a little information and I'll see that a bundle reaches you before your convention.

Hope Belmont County remains true to the State Convention and referendum decisions and decides to remain part of the Ohio State organization of the Communist Labor Party, affiliated with the Third International of the Bolsheviks and the Spartacans.

Regards to the Comrades I met there last winter.

Yours in Comradeship,

L.E. Katterfeld
Organization Director.

Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.

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