
Letter to Leonid Belsky in Chicago from C.E. Ruthenberg in New York, April 28, 1920.

A document in the Hoover Institution Archives, Jay Lovestone Papers, box 195, folder 10.

New York, April 28, 1920.

Dear Fisher [Belsky]:—

I returned her this morning and have just received your letters. I have made arrangements to have the letter sent to Detroit forwarded to you.

In regard to the next issue of the paper [*The Communist*], I have a letter from Comrade F. [Ferguson] stating that the next issue will go to press Saturday, May 1, which does not agree with what you say about the matter. I think it desirable to get out another issue as quickly as possible, but I want included in this issue an article on "What Kind of Party?" which I am writing. I hope to get this off to you today, but may have to go to Philadelphia this afternoon, as our organizer ["L. Zlonk"] has requested me to come there for a meeting of the District Committee tonight. If I go I will send the article tomorrow and request that the paper be held for same, as this article will meet the issues which the other side is raising, and it is important that it be got to the membership quickly. You may expect this article and anything else I have for the paper by Saturday morning [May 1, 1920] at the latest.

I have heard nothing from the CLP, but there may be a communication from them today. Bunte [Charles Dirba] left a note for me saying that the Council had appointed a committee to make a reply to us on the question of both groups joining in the call for the coming convention.

Both you and Comrade F. [Ferguson] are entirely too optimistic about the situation. You are judging by the facts as they exist in the Chicago District. Elsewhere different conditions prevail. In the Boston

District the committee voted to carry on the work independently until the convention. In Detroit the District Committee has taken the same position and requested the District Organizer ["W.E. Allen"] to leave until the District Convention is held. In Cleveland the committee will support us. In Pittsburgh there were only 4 District Organizers present and the Russian, Lithuanian, and Ukrainian voted against us and the South Slavic for us. Of course we have the majority of the membership in the Pittsburgh District in the South Slavic Federation.

Both you and Comrade F. [Ferguson] are mistaken if you think that all that is necessary that we raise the banner of revolt against the CEC majority and the members will flock to our side. The contrary is true. The CEC majority has the advantage of legality. It is the authorized administrative body of the party in the minds of the members and we must justify our action in repudiating this majority in order to win support. The view of most of those I have talked with upon hearing of the division is bewilderment. They cannot understand why there is a split and a statement of the facts of the how the split came about leaves them unconvinced as to there being an issue between the groups of sufficient importance to justify the split.

I do not want you to understand from the above that our cause is hopeless, or even that we will not be able to secure the support of a large part of the membership for our convention call, but I want to destroy your illusions that the whole party — or even a majority of the party — is rushing to our support. The attitude is rather that of suspicion and disgust with both groups.

It is because I am rather inclined to believe that our convention, if carried through on our call alone,

will be a failure, that I lean toward an agreement between ourselves and the Council majority for a joint call for the convention. If there is a joint call the entire membership will respond and there will be no difficulty in getting the CLP in such a convention. If with the CLP and our own following we are unable to whip the present majority group in open convention, then we haven't got much ground to stand on. The joint call for the convention will also be the demand of the membership — even that part of it which is supporting us.

The above are my impressions gained from actual contact with the District Committees and individual members in Boston, Detroit, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh. I have written them down so that you and Comrade F. [Ferguson] — to whom I hope you will read this letter — will revise your view of the situation, which from both your letters received this morning, I know not to be in accord with the facts. I think Comrade Stankovich, who held a similar view, has revised his ideas since his experience in Pittsburgh and will bear out what I have said above.

Fraternally yours,

[C.E. Ruthenberg]
Executive Secretary.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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