
**Letter to the Central Executive Committee
and Joint Convention Committee of the
Communist Party of America in New York
from Alfred Wagenknecht, Executive
Secretary of the Communist Labor Party
in New York, April 9, 1920**

Published in *Communist Labor* [New York], vol. 1, no. 6 (May 15, 1920), pg. 7.

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Central Executive Committee,
Joint Convention Committee,
Communist Party.

Comrades:—

The ultimatum which you issue, namely, that we accept your latest proposals within five days or you will discontinue all further negotiations, is entirely uncalled for and unprincipled in the circumstances.

You presume to dictate a new representation for the convention to us. You presume to dictate to use the form and wording of the joint call. All this was reserved specifically for the deliberations of the Joint Convention Committee as per previous agreement. We interpret your latest communication as not conducive to unity. It seems to breathe, not a spirit of unity but a passion for dictatorial control.

It is physically impossible for the National Executive Committee or the Joint Convention Committee of the Communist Labor Party to either give answer to or to accept your latest proposal within five days. Every member of both committees, except the undersigned, is in the field and the majority of them are more than a thousand miles from this city.

Might we recall to you the fact that you have consumed whatever time you needed in making answer to proposals in regard to unity sent you by us? You promised an answer Thursday, April 1st [1920] to our last proposal [of March 31]. Your answer arrived eight days later. In every instance you have taken the time you wanted and needed to discuss the steps toward unity among yourselves. Now you place a five day limit, not upon an answer from us but upon our acceptance of your terms, your new representation basis.

The National Executive Committee and the Joint Convention Committee of the Communist Labor Party will hold a meeting to discuss your latest communication just as soon as the committeemen can be reached and transported.

Comradely yours,

[Alfred Wagenknecht],
Executive Secretary,
Communist Labor Party.

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At this point in the negotiations a split occurred in the Communist Party. As will be remembered, certain persons, more intent upon a career for themselves than upon the building of a strong communist movement, by controlling a language federation <*line missing in source*> [to] split the left wing convention [of June 1919], to split the Executive Council of the Left Wing, all of which eventually led to a split in left wing ranks and the organization of two communist parties. These careerists controlled the organization convention of the Communist Party [Sept. 1-7, 1919], refused unity at the time both the conventions of the CP and CLP were in session, knowing full well that such unity would end their control. Immediately after the organization conventions of both communist parties, the membership of the CP began to make demands for unity with the CLP. these membership demands were ignored until about the first of the present year, when they became the subject of controversy in the Central Executive Committee of the CP. Negotiations for unity were begun with the CLP as above reported. Throughout the negotiations the

aim of the careerists was not to unite with the CLP, but to absorb it and to clear the field for unopposed control. As unity negotiations proceeded the careerists realized that the rank and file of the CP were tiring of their control. Fearing that a joint convention with the CLP would result in a majority of delegates in opposition to their control, the careerists began a movement to depose those district officials which opposed the controllers. A meeting of the Central Executive Committee of the CP was held to which all District Organizers and federation representatives were invited. There the question of deposing District Organizers was debated for several days, with the result that the careerists, who had a majority upon the committee, maintained their right to depose subordinates, whereas the minority of the Central Executive Committee held that such action should not be taken before the convention, knowing full well that the majority contemplated this action in order to control the organization and so continue in control of the united party. As neither side would compromise, the minority withdrew from the meeting, taking with it most of the District Organizers and federation representatives present.

Following this split in the Communist Party these letters were received by the national office of the CLP. the first is from the majority faction of the CEC of the CP [April 20, 1920] and the second from the minority faction [April 22].

Edited by Tim Davenport

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