
Letter to Leonid Belsky in Chicago from C.E. Ruthenberg in New York, May 1, 1920.

A document in the Hoover Institution Archives, Jay Lovestone Papers, box 195, folder 11.

New York, May 1, 1920.

Dear Fisher [Belsky]:—

You were entirely too optimistic in sending out your call as a call for the joint convention of the CP and the CLP, as the prospects for such a Joint Convention are not too bright. I met the representatives of the CLP Thursday [April 29, 1920] and they refused to accept our apportionment of delegates.

They inform me that prior to the split in our committee they had rejected the apportionment of 32 and 18 and they now propose that the delegates be evenly divided, arguing that our membership is problematical and that an equal division is the only fair proposition. I stated in reply that such a division was impossible, that we could not even consider it, because to do so would be to weaken our position in the present factional struggle. I suggested that as an alternative proposition we might come to an agreement with our “majority” group [the Hourwich/Dirba faction] and that surely they would prefer to unite with us than to again have to face our united organization, but this did not have any effect.

As an alternative to a convention with equal division of the delegates they suggested that we have a unity conference of a joint convention, that is, that the delegates from both organizations meet together, but vote as separate groups until a basis for uniting the two groups in the convention is agreed upon. It was also suggested that we might have a joint committee appointed, three from each organization, to work out a manifesto, program, and constitution before the convention, so that when the two groups met in convention the basis for agreement would already have been developed. While many difficulties suggest them-

selves in this connection, this latter proposal may open a road to unity, without compromising ourselves on the issue.

I suggest that you and [Isaac E.] Ferguson, [Joseph] Kowalski, and Stankovich talk over this proposition and let me know your opinion. I have already conferred with Kasbeck [Alex Georgian], Michels, and others.

The Ukrainian Federation is wavering. A motion was passed at the last meeting of their CEC to withdraw from the minority group, without endorsing the majority and to ask the majority to delay their convention. Tomorrow there will be another meeting of their committee at which both Bunte [Charles Dirba] and I are to be present.

In Philadelphia we have the majority of the members, having whipped Henry [George Ashkenuzi]. At the District Committee meeting the “minority” was endorsed by a vote of 4 to 3 and later the Russian Branches — their District Organizer was one of the 3 who voted for the “majority” — endorsed the “minority” and voted to participate in our convention.

In Detroit there seems to be something wrong and I think it would be advisable for both Stankovich and Kowalski to go there to line up their branches. The District Committee voted to discharge the District Organizer [“W.E. Allen”] and remain neutral. It seems that the man who went there with the leaflets and papers failed to deliver them, for they had not been received up to last Tuesday [April 27, 1920] and his action has aroused a great deal of opposition. I am arranging to send Kasbeck [Georgian] there to work among the Russians and if the Polish and South Slavic comrades can be lined up through their Executive Secretaries we may be able to make some progress.

Kasbeck [Georgian] is going to Boston Monday

[May 3, 1920]. Things there are not satisfactory, although I do not think the other side has made any progress.

There is a considerable demand, even among our own supporters, to delay our convention for another week or two. If we can shift the date two weeks and still have the place we have in view I think it will be advisable. † Please let me know about this. If we cannot shift it two weeks, one week will have to do.

I have not received any reply from the “majority” on the question of agreeing on a convention in which both groups will be represented, although Bunte [Charles Dirba] tells me a statement is being drafted. I understand that their proposal is several months delay and the exclusion of the CLP, to which, of course, I will not agree.

Please send me the statement of the South Slavic Federation, covering the \$551.00 which you received, so that I can credit Dues Stamps, Organization Stamps, and Defense fund correctly. Also ask Kowalski for a March and April statement.

I am planning to remain here until the present negotiations come to a climax and then to go to Cleveland. Will come to Chicago a week before the convention so that the arrangements can be completed.

Fraternally yours,

[C.E. Ruthenberg]
Executive Secretary.

P.S. Did you sent out the Dues Stamps and Organization Stamps? Please send me a list of how many and to whom sent. Also send me 1,000 Dues and 2,000 Organization Stamps to this address by return mail.

†- Apparently a reference to Karl Wolfskeel’s summer resort, on the shores of Lake Michigan about 1 mile outside of Bridgman, Michigan. As an official history by the Communist Party [*Highlights of a Fighting History*] mentions a starting date of May 15, 1920 for this convention — in contrast to the May 26-31, 1920 actual date of the Bridgman Joint Unity Convention — it seems likely that a delay was accomplished.

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport.
Second Edition, May 2007 — identifies “Kasbeck” as Alex Georgian.
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