
Further Negotiations on Unity. †

[circa December 5, 1920]

by Charles Dirba

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The Unity Committee of the Communist Party in its negotiations with the Unity Committee of the UCP have now reached another stage in the negotiations, and it is necessary to apprise the membership of all the steps taken and reasons for the temporary break. These documents follow in chronological order:

[1]
*To the Unity Committee,
United Communist Party,
Nov. 13, 1920.*

Nov. 13, 1920.

Comrades:—

It is eight days now since we interchanged the last of our communications with you, and since we have been expecting to hear from you as to your further actions and as to another meeting with our Unity Committee.

At that time we understood that you would be ready to give us answer to our last communication and to make another appointment with our committee in about three days. Can you not give this answer and make the appointment now? Or tell us why you can not or will not do that?

We regret that our CEC was compelled to adjourn before the negotiations were brought to a definite agreement, but before adjourning it was decided that in view of the time limit set by the International, and in accordance with the decisions of the Congress, we issue a call for a Special Convention, which is to be a Joint Convention with the UCP when final agreement is reached. Copy of our Call is enclosed for your information.

A prompt reply from you will be appreciated. You can communicate with us every day through the same comrade through whom you will receive this letter.

Fraternally,

C. Dobin [Charles Dirba],
Executive Secretary, CP of A.

[2]
*To the Central Executive Committee,
Communist Party,
Nov. 14, 1920.*

Nov. 14, 1920.

Comrades:—

In answer to your two recent communications, the Central Executive Committee of the United Communist Party passed the following resolution:

“That in reply to recent letters from the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party, part of the contents of which purport to transmit a recent decision of the Executive Committee of the Communist International in regard to unity, we state that we can only rely upon our own means of communication with the Executive Committee of the Communist International and see no reason for altering the provisions for a joint convention nor the basis of representation for same.”

Fraternally,

Paul Holt [Alfred Wagenknecht],
Executive Secretary.

CEC, United Communist Party of America.

November 23 [1920] we received word of an appointment to meet their unity committee. When the two committees met, our committee was handed the following document from the Communist International (in Russian):

†- While written after the latter, the bulk of this material is transitional between the first two CPA leaflets on unity, “Statement on the Unity Proceedings Between the Communist Party and the UCP of A” [Nov. 15, 1920] and “Further Statement on Unity Proceedings” [circa Dec. 1, 1920].

[3]
To UCP and CP:
Resolution adopted September 20th [1920].

The Executive Committee decides:

1) To extend the term for the complete unification of both parties in America to January 1st, 1921.

2) To call the attention of the American comrades to the extreme inconvenience of the systematic arrival of new delegates from America who question decisions already passed in presence of other delegates.

3) The Executive Committee demands as an ultimatum, unity on the basis of the decisions adopted by the Second Congress of the Communist International.

4) Responsible representatives of both Parties give a pledge to the Executive Committee of the Communist International to accomplish unity without fail.

[4]
**Excerpts from the Minutes of the Meeting
of the ECCI of August 20th, 1920.**

Heard and accepted: 4) Motion of Comrade [John] Reed in reference to the basis of representation at the Unity Congress of the Communist Party of America:

“Representation at the Unity Congress shall be proportional, and the basis shall be the number of dues-paying members by the 1st of September, 1920, according to the official books of both parties.”

Original signed by Kobetsky,
copy by A. Scott [Karlis Janson].

P.S. Decisions of the Executive Committee of the Communist International: Name of the unified party to be “Communist Party of America.”

A later decision:

“In the Small Bureau it was decided to take July, August, September, and October [1920] for the basis. And, in addition, that temporarily, representatives of both parties may take part in the meetings of the Executive Committee. But this is not important. The main thing is that unity MUST BE carried out, because all Moscow is considering this as a necessary and urgent matter.”

A. Scott [Karlis Janson].

Then, without directly agreeing to a Unity convention on the basis of the decisions of the Comintern, the UCP committee wanted to talk about the representation on it. We refused this and handed them the following note:

[5]
To the Unity Committee of the UCP.
Nov. 24, 1920.

Comrades:—

The Unity Committee of the CP stands ready and is empowered to enter into conference with your Committee for a Unity Convention of both parties, to be held on the basis of the decisions of the Comintern, as soon as you are ready and empowered to do so.

Dobin [Charles Dirba],
Allen [Max Cohen],
Morris [J. Wilenkin].

In reply we received the following:

[6]
To the Unity Committee of the CP.
Nov. 24, 1920.

Comrades:—

The CEC of the UCP still maintains the position, stated in its previous communications, that the interests of the Communist movement in America imperatively demand a major representation, arbitrarily fixed in advance, for the UCP at the Unity Convention, not only on the ground of its greater numerical strength, but also because its centralized form of organization, every group of which is underground, and its organization policies have already established the UCP as the major party.

However, now the CEC has received an official mandate for unity from the Executive Committee of the Communist International, as well as a notation that the Small Bureau of the EC of the CI has fixed the basis of representation on the dues paid during the months of July, Aug., Sept., and Oct. [1920]. The Unity Committee of the UCP has therefore communicated this decision of the EC of the CI and the decision of the Small Bureau to the Unity Committee of the CP, and is ready and empowered to take the necessary steps to carry out these decisions, confident that an honest statement of membership by both parties will fully establish the claim of the UCP for major representation at the ratio of at least 6 delegates for the UCP to 4 delegates for the CP.

Alden [???],
Holt [Alfred Wagenknecht],
McGee [???].

This statement was considered sufficiently satisfactory to proceed with negotiations by our committee, in spite of the personal opinions and conjectures contained in the first and last paragraphs of their statement. A date was set (November 28th [1920]) for the

submission of membership figures of both sides. On November 28th, both committees met and these statements were presented. (Copies of these statements will be found in the second statement on Unity, which has already been published and in the hands of the membership). The total figures as presented give the CP 7,552 dues paying members as the average for the four months and the UCP 4,561 for the same period. The Unity Committee of the UCP demanded then to see the signed statements of the Federations (Russian, Lithuanian, and Ukrainian) and on November 30th we presented them, not only with such statements but also the official books of these Federations as well. No serious discrepancies were indicated in the figures submitted by both sides, but instead of settling the final matters preliminary to issuing the joint call, the UCP committee stated that they intended to “investigate on the ground,” and stated that their committee would be unable to work with ours until a week later.

Here the matter rests for the present. Just a word as to the so-called investigation “on the ground.” Either this is intended as a mere formality, in which case we may expect to complete unity in the period specified by the Communist International, or, if the UCP really intend to “investigate on the ground,” it is the most hypocritical and deliberate piece of chicanery ever perpetrated. It is quite evident to anyone familiar with underground organization, that it is absolutely impossible to verify figures except with the cooperation of our own officials. Even then this would take some months. But for outsiders to attempt a serious, honest “investigation” without the cooperation of our officials (which they did not request and seemed not to want) in the period of a week or so, is a manifest fraud. An outsider can comb a whole city without finding out the organization strength of any underground party. Does the UCP intend to use this fraudulent “investigation” to hold up the Unity proceedings?

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