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# Report of Convention †

## [events of Aug. 17-22, 1922]

Unsigned article in *The Communist* [New York: unified CPA], v. 1, no. 10 (Aug.-Sept. 1922), pp. 6-7.

The 2nd Convention of the Communist Party of America has been held [Bridgman, MI: Aug. 17-22, 1922]. This convention, which had long been looked forward to and long been delayed, dealt with questions of tremendous moment to the Party — questions which had nearly disrupted the Party, firstly, because of their nature and, secondly, because of the protracted, heated discussion that ensued almost to the exclusion of Party work.

*The convention settled these questions in an unequivocal fashion.* It also settled that once these questions were decided, the Party must go to work with iron zeal and rigid discipline to put these decisions into effect. *The Communist Party of America remains an underground party*, engaging in every form of revolutionary activity among the workers, but particularly in *extensive open work* in the trade unions, the LPP, and other open organizations, in order to reach, teach, and organize the working masses. *No caucuses, however justified in their origin and praiseworthy in their aims, shall be tolerated within the Party.* Loyalty to the Party, to Communism, to the Communist International, *not caucus loyalty*, must be the slogan henceforth. The seceding *opposition* must be brought back into the Party. There are not [to] be any Communists outside the Party ranks. The troublous times, the

terrific struggles in which the workers of America have been engaged demand that the advance guard be a solid, compact body working unitedly toward one end — the revolutionizing of the masses, the building up of their organizations, the directing of their struggles into channels that shall lead to the establishment of the Proletarian Dictatorship.

Unforeseen circumstances made it necessary to condense the convention deliberations within a shorter time than anticipated. *And yet at no Communist convention in America has so much constructive work been accomplished.*

There were present at the convention a representative of the Communist International [Genrik Valetski], a representative of the Red Trade Union International [Boris Reinstein], a third representative from abroad acting as a delegate of the American party [John Pepper], 45 regular delegates, 10 members of the CEC,‡ 3 ex-CEC members [presumably John Ballam, George Ashkenuzi, and Charles Dirba], a representative of the Communist Party of Canada, and 16 editors and federation secretaries.

This was too large a body for an *underground* convention. Comprising, as it did, however, the most active Party members, their presence ensures that every section of the country will be imbued

†- The grammar, punctuation, and sentence construction in this piece is markedly different from anything previously encountered by the editor, material written by “the usual suspects” who served as the leadership cadre of the CPA. It strikes the editor as rather likely that the piece was written by Russian Federationist Abram Jakira, newly elected as Executive Secretary of the underground CPA by the Bridgman Convention.

‡- The CEC current after the reorganization of April 17, 1922 included the following 10: Max Bedacht, Alexander Bittelman, Earl Browder, James P. Cannon, Jay Lovestone, Robert Minor, Joseph Stilson, Arne Swabeck, Alfred Wagenknecht, and J. Wilenkin.

with the new spirit and will work with increased energy for the realization of our aims.

From the very beginning of the convention, a tendency to caucuses was manifest. A majority caucus representing those contending against a tendency which they regarded as leading toward the liquidation of the underground party was formed and remained the majority of the convention. The second caucus was a looser aggregation and embraced those who declared there were no liquidators in the Party and others who for different reasons remained outside the majority caucus.

A new method of conducting conventions was adopted. After some debate, a *Convention Presidium* was elected to take charge of all matters to come before the convention. This Presidium determined the agenda for each session and thrashed out all problems so they would be presented in the best organized and most comprehensible manner possible. This assured precision and swiftness of action. The Presidium also elected the chairmen of the convention.

The *representative of the CI* [Valetski] delivered an inspiring address — a survey of the international situation, followed by an analysis of the American situation and particularly of conditions within the Party. He then went into the *report of the "Disarmament Commission,"* which, representing the various tendencies within the Party, brought in a *unanimous report* on 10 important Party problems. The CI representative [Valetski] explained how the problems had been approached, the arguments made, the difficulties that had to be surmounted. And yet a unanimous report has been arrived at in this commission of 8.

The Director of the *Trade Union* work [William Z. Foster] gave a masterly survey of industrial conditions in America. As the convention occurred at the time of the most serious and wide-

spread labor struggles that America has witnessed, his lecture was replete with examples taken from these struggles. This address went into minute details, the main idea of his analysis being that the American labor movement merely waits for radical leadership, since the conservative leaders have betrayed and defaulted. The comrades appreciated the gigantic task before the Party and asked numerous questions on policy and tactics.

Against this review of possibilities of revolutionary work in the trade unions was cited the appalling fact that *only 5% of the Party membership is actively engaged in trade union work.* Nevertheless, in various instances and localities, this small proportion of membership has done inestimable work.

Experience has upheld the Party's policies in the trade unions. The Party's policy at a certain convention held in Chicago was generally approved, encountering but minor criticism.

The whole discussion of the trade union work was a crying plea for extensive activity in the trade unions, LPP, and other open Party organizations. One hundred percent of the membership must become busy and assume leadership in the coming struggles of the workers, in order to make the Party a living force.

The *Executive Secretary's report* reviewed a year of Communist activity and internal Party controversy.† It pointed out the steps in advance that had been taken — particularly in the formation of the LPP. Nevertheless blunders had been made — which contributed to the split in the Party. Two members of the CEC who had acted as spokesmen of the majority of the convention spoke in opposition to this report.

The "Disarmament" report was *unanimously* adopted by the convention in principle and referred to the incoming CEC and Party Council for action.

†- It remains unclear who delivered the Report of the Executive Secretary to the 1922 Bridgman Convention. It is believed that the "Acting Secretary" at the time of the August convention was Max Bedacht, who seems to have supplanted Jay Lovestone in that role during June 1922.

The main work of the convention having been completed, the only essential task that remained was *the election of the CEC and the Party Council.*

The number of members in the CEC was increased to 11 (and since the convention, to 12, by the formal seating of the representative of the YCL in the CEC, as in international usage). Upon agreement, 2 members of the CEC were elected *unanimously*; then 6 from the *majority* caucus were elected, and 3 from the minority. The aim of the Party Council is to bring the CEC into closer contact with the Party membership, not only [so that] the may gain a better knowledge of its opinions but may more easily dissipate misunderstandings that may arise.

The convention thus came to an end. A year of intense activity is assured. Events and experiences have demonstrated that the Communist Party must remain an underground party in America for some time to come and will be able to merge into the open only when it grows powerful and can force the capitalist state to recognize it. Open work must be prosecuted in every field. Factionalism resulting in caucuses must cease. The spirit of the convention must permeate every Party unit and member. Unity, discipline, and intensive work are the slogans.

*Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.*

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