
Manifesto of the Communist Party of America to the Workers of the United States [Sept. 4, 1922]

Published in *The Worker* [New York], vol. 5, whole no. 240 (Sept. 16, 1922), pp. 1, 4.

To the Workers of the United States:

Barbarous persecution is today being directed against Communists and all those whom it suits the Department of Justice to call Communists. In the eyes of the Attorney General, everyone who is “red,” everyone who is a “radical,” everyone who is class-conscious and takes his part in the class struggle in a conscientious manner, every trade unionist who refuses to betray the interests of the workers, is a Communist.

This is the “legal” basis for the arrest of Ruthenberg, Dunne, and their 15 brother workers at Bridgman, Michigan. This is the “legal” basis for the arrest of William Z. Foster.

Turn to Workers of America.

It is only on such a “legal” basis that agents of the Department of Justice have arrested 15 other workers at the convention of the Trade Union Educational League in Chicago.

This always is the only “legal” basis, and is now again the only “legal” basis for the issuance of 40 more warrants for the arrest of the workers who are charged with having attended an alleged “secret,” “underground,” “conspiratorial” convention in Michigan.

Workers of America! We are now turning to you. We want to make it clear to you why we are being persecuted.

The Government, the hordes of spies and stool pigeons, and the kept press, are howling day and night: “Persecute and crush the Communists; they are a dangerous secret band of conspirators!” The

Gompers clique rushes to the rescue of this unholy Trinity. And even the Socialist *New York Call* and the *Forward* print documents and evidence to prove that the Communists are an underground party with secret objectives and mysterious methods.

Want Workers to Know Everything.

Workers of America! We want to make it clear to you why all the powers that be of American capitalism have solidly lined up against us.

They are persecuting us, not because we are a secret band of conspirators.

The Communist Party of America is not a secret band of plotters. We do not desire to conceal a single one of our objects from the great working class of America. It is an infamous lie that we Communists organize campaigns of bomb throwing, dynamiting, and sabotage. On the contrary, we Communists, as all of our manifestos, books, and press show, are in principle opposed to all such individual actions — instead of action of the masses — not because we want to save the capitalists, but because we know that all such terroristic acts are ineffective and would serve to confuse the working masses, poison public opinion against the workers' cause, and would afford the capitalist government an excuse to proceed against the workers.

We can perfectly well understand how honest, striking workers, embittered by the brutal oppression suffered by them under capitalism, resort to acts of sabotage, and we look upon the persecution of such workers with utmost disdain. But we do not look upon such methods as methods of the Revolution.

Revolutionists Not Bomb Throwers.

We are revolutionists and not bomb throwers. We want to destroy the whole building of capitalist society and not the building of some railway station.

We are after the life of the political and economic rule of the bourgeoisie and not after the life of this banker or that government official.

The road to the workers' revolution does not lie in train wrecks and petty dynamiting feats, but in broad huge mass actions, that is through the organized mass movements of the organized workers.

It is base and senseless slander to brand the Communists a small, sinister band in ambush. Foe to face with all the workers in America, we openly declare that we have neither arms nor an armed organization. We know very well that capitalism cannot be abolished without the use of force.

The capitalist magnates will hand over power to the workers only as willingly and as peacefully as the British Crown and Feudal Forces handed it over to the American bourgeoisie in 1776, and as peacefully and as willingly as the Southern slaveowners freed the Negro slaves in the Civil War.

Attack Capitalist Hypocrisy.

Indeed, we openly proclaim that the industrial and agricultural workers, who, being the vast majority of the population of this country, have a right to establish their own rule, with force if need be, against the rule of the small group of trust magnates and capitalists generally.

We are for the rule of the workers; we are for huge mass actions; we are for participation of tens of millions of workers in this struggle. It is not then plain and self-evident that it would be ridiculous and stupid for us even to attempt to achieve all of these in a secret, concealed manner without the knowledge and behind the backs of the millions of workers?

But — this being so, the honest working man may also ask: “Why is the Communist Party of America an underground party?”

We want to answer this question also. It is true that the Communist Party of America is an underground party. But why? simply because the capitalist State Powers compel us to be an underground party. In many of our states there are “anti-syndicalist laws, the object of which is, through imprisonment, deportation, and all sorts of persecutions, to make impossible the open existence of the Communist Party organization. You have here before you the most brazen example of capitalist hypocrisy.

On the one hand, the capitalist State Powers, through their own laws make it impossible for us to exist openly, and then on the other hand, these same capitalist State Powers turn round and blame us for being an underground party.

Organized as Open Party.

It is not an infrequent feature of a Communist party to be underground. In France, in Germany, in Italy, in England, in Czechoslovakia, we have Communist parties with hundreds of thousands of workers in their ranks, whose program is the same as ours, that is, the establishment of working class rule, the abolition of capitalism.

And yet, these parties are not underground; on the contrary, they are able to organize openly, to carry on the most open Communist propaganda in their press, assembly, and the legislative bodies.

It is only in the most backward countries, in the countries most apart from the center of the modern world, as in Romania, Yugoslavia, Poland, Hungary, and Finland, that the brutality of the State Powers has condemned the Communist parties to an underground existence.

The Communist Party of America has done everything in its power to organize as an open political party. In 1919 the Communist Party of America was organized as an open party. It is only the brutal persecution that has driven us underground. And today also, we want to do everything in our power that will enable us to participate openly in political life.

Our great aim, revolutionizing the broad masses, the development of huge political mass actions, the enhancement of proletarian class-consciousness, the raising of the working class to be the ruling class, all of these especially, we can only achieve in the great open field. We openly declare and we can convince every sincere worker that the Communist Party of America, despite the fact that it is today an underground party has not carried out a single plan in secret; and is carrying on all of its work, all of its activity in the open.

We are, then, not persecuted because we are a band of conspirators, and not because we are building an underground party. This is all false. The real reasons for this persecution are positively to be found elsewhere.

Why This Persecution!

The real reasons are the following: As a result of the war and the economic crisis, the class struggle of the American workers against the capitalists is developing on an ever larger scale and assuming an ever sharper turn. The offensive of the capitalists seeks, with the aid of

their State Powers, to destroy the whole organized labor movement. The open shop movement and the brutal attempts of the government to destroy the Coal Miners' Union through the Coronado decision, indicates the real plans of the capitalists.

The workers must defend themselves unless they wish to go down to utter defeat. The big battles of this campaign of self-defense are the miners' and railroad workers' strikes. Neither America nor the rest of the capitalist world has seen such gigantic strikes, of such long duration, imbued with so courageous a spirit, and involving such huge masses as we now have in the Miners', Railroad workers', and other strikes.

The results of these strikes are already momentous. The production of coal has been brought to a standstill. The whole capitalist press, after treating the strike arrogantly for months, has now for the past few weeks been lamenting the fact that the flames of American capitalist economic life are smothered. As a consequence of the coal strike, Ford must close his gigantic automobile works and other capitalists must follow suit.

Workers Demand Amalgamation.

The railway strike is becoming more and more general. Even the strike of the shopmen alone obstructed traffic. The Interstate Commerce Commission was obliged to notify the Senate that no less than 60 percent of the 79,000 locomotives in use in the United States were rendered useless for service.

The organized workers of the Big Four are out on strike by the tens of thousands — against the will of the yellow trade union bureaucracy. The Steel Trust, terrified lest the steel workers be drawn into this strike movement, was forced “voluntarily” to raise the wages 20 percent.

The amalgamation of the craft unions into industrial unions is becoming an even larger factor in the minds of the workers. What has ever manifested itself in the history of the American labor movement has already appeared: the idea and the possibility of conducting a General Strike throughout the entire United States.

Coal and railroads, fuel and traffic are in danger — the amalgamation of craft unions into industrial unions, the idea of the General Strike!

The capitalists of the United States feel that these struggles are shaking the capitalist system to its very depths.

Capitalists Employ Violence.

The capitalists of this country cannot crush the millions of striking workers economically; hence they are compelled to employ the Government power, they are applying open, naked violence.

The American courts have issued a whole series of injunctions against the strikers for the protection of capitalist enterprises.

The aim of the Coronado decision is to strike to the heart of organized labor. The police dogs of the Department of Justice are fabricating lies and stories of sabotage to incriminate the workers.

The capitalists do not hesitate to increase the use of violence, even to the point of civil war. The bloody tragedy of Herrin is only a battle in the civil war between the capitalist and the working class of America.

The siege of Joliet is another battle in this big war. An extensive, well-planned campaign of the capitalists is clearly demonstrated by the fact that troops have been used in no less than 15 states.

But the capitalists are not satisfied with this. What has already happened in 15 states, they intend to enact in all 48 states of the union. Harding demands dictatorial power, he asks for a law which will hand over the organized workers of this country completely to the powers of the government.

Harding's message to Congress stated in the hypocritical juristic language of the capitalist class what Hoover said in all brutality: "If the strike is not settled within a week, we will simply raise the flag and appoint General Pershing to take charge of matters."

The dictatorship of the American capitalists has been changed into an open military dictatorship, owing to the increasing sharpness of the class struggle.

Struggle for Political Power.

The mighty executive of the capitalist class — the Government immediately grasped what the working class has not yet grasped, namely, that every large economic struggle between capital and labor becomes a political struggle — that is, a struggle for political power.

The extensive strike movement of the workers, which up to the present has been on the defensive, has reached the point at which it now faces the whole capitalist State Power. It is quite evident that Harding and his accomplices have determined to destroy the entire strike movement and, if necessary, to accomplish it by drowning the workers in their own blood. Attorney General Daugherty has said quite openly that if the workers do not surrender to the bosses, "the Government will destroy the unions."

Workers of America! This is the heart of the problem. you must understand that the persecutions to which the Communists have been subjected are nothing but the beginning and part and parcel of the persecutions which the whole working class of this country will suffer.

You must understand that the same courts that condemn Communists to prison also issue injunctions against the workers. The same courts that outlawed the Communist Party also declared the Child Labor Law unconstitutional. The same Department of Justice that carries on raids against the Communists also sends its spies and rats into the unions, and by means of provocateurs carries out bomb attacks and acts of sabotage, and then proclaims them as acts of the working class.

These Happenings Not Accidents.

The same armed forces that came out of their hiding place in Michigan and attacked the Communists also besieged Joliet and marched out to put down striking workers in 15 states.

You must understand that the attack on the Communists at Bridgman, Michigan, and the raid on the Trade Union Educational League in Chicago are not things that happen only once in a while. You must understand that Patrick Hamrock who drove Foster out of Colorado is the same man who shot down the wives and children of the miners at Ludlow, Colo.

It is clearly no accident that Attorney General Daugherty one week ordered raids on the Communists, and the next week, by means of the most vicious, far-reaching, drastic injunction ever asked of a federal court in any labor dispute restrained the Railroad Employees' Department of the American Federation of Labor from ever "issuing any instructions, public statements, or suggestions" to union members regarding the conduct of the strike. The funds of the strike are

thus tied up, no money can be used to help the strikers and all picketing and meetings of strikers are banned.

The same capitalists who drove us underground are now trying to drive the trade unionists underground. The same powers of state that have declared us illegal and have forgotten all about democracy, so far as we are concerned, and have denied us the freedom of press, assemblage, and speech, the same powers of state which have ruthlessly exercised a dictatorship over us for many years, these same powers are now planning to force the same brutal, naked dictatorship on the whole mass of workers.

Communists Part of Labor.

This, and this only, is the meaning of the plan to hand over the mines and the railroads to Harding; this, and this only, is the meaning of the employment of Federal troops; this and this only, is the meaning of the raising of the flag over the mines and railways at this time; and this, and this only, is the meaning of Pershing's entry as a force into the strike arena.

The workers of America must understand that the fate of the working class and the fate of the Communists are inseparable. This is self-evident. The Communists are not a group separate and distinct from the working class. They are an integral part of the working class. The Communists are those workers who are conscious of the fact that in the struggle against the capitalists the workers must fight as a class.

The Communists are among the first to recognize that the workers cannot fight well when they are divided into nearly 150 separate and distinct unions.

The Communists are among the first to protest against the reduction of wages and the first to agitate against the pauperization of the masses.

Against Capitalist State Power.

The Communists are those who maintain that it is insufficient to struggle merely against the individual capitalists or trusts, because the organ of the organized capitalists — the Government — immediately rushes to the aid of the exploiters whenever they are attacked.

It is therefore necessary to wage a political struggle against the whole system of capitalist state power.

The Communists are those who demand that the workers should declare themselves independent of the capitalist political parties. The workers must have their own class party representing the interests of the whole working class.

The Communists are those who wish to substitute for the dictatorship of the trusts the rule of the workers in the interests of all. And neither does the Communist International, the great association of all Communist parties, have any secret, mysterious, "Russian" aims.

At this moment, in the prevailing situation in America, the Communist International (the real International and not the sham International portrayed to you by your enemies) asks that the railroad workers, the miners, and the seamen of England and France should not permit the transportation of scab coal to America.

The Communists are not a sinister, secret band of conspirators. Our aim, the liberation of the workers, the abolition of wage slavery, working class control of industry, and state power, can only be achieved if the great masses of the workers stand with us.

Spread Truths of Communism.

Workers' rule is the only possible when the millions of workers support the Communist program. The essential feature of the Communist program is to convince the majority of the workers of the truth of the ideas of Communism.

We do not have a single point in our whole program which we wish to conceal from the millions of workers. In the first Communist program ever issued, the founders of scientific Communism, Marx and Engels, long ago declared: "The Communists disdain to conceal their aims."

We have nothing to conceal from the workers. We once more appeal to the workers to look upon the persecution of Communists as a matter concerning all workers as well.

The Communists are today outlawed because the capitalists are planning to outlaw the whole working class. When William Z. Foster was forcibly run out of Colorado, Adjutant General Hamrock declared: "That he did so for the best interests of the State." And he added: "No law was consulted."

Capitalists Break Own Laws.

The capitalists break their own laws whenever their interests demand it. If the workers will not defend their advance guard, the persecuted Communists, then the workers, will have to get ready to have the whole working class face the same declaration from the Hamrocks, Hardings, Doughertys, and Pershings that the organized workers must be crushed “for the best interests of the State” — and in this instance also “no law will be consulted.”

In the interests of the whole working class, we call upon the American workers:

1. To build throughout the country a United Front against all political persecution.

2. Demand the unrestricted right to organize, strike, and picket.

3. Democracy in fact for all the workers as it is now given to the capitalists — the unrestricted right to freedom of press, assembly, and speech.

4. You must wage your struggles more effectively. Demand the amalgamation of your craft unions.

5. You must have a political party of the workers entirely independent of the capitalist parties.

6. Organize a country-wide protest against the slanderous capitalist campaign against your foreign-born brother workers.

7. For the realization of these demands, organize everywhere open protest meetings and demonstrations. Pass resolutions on a national scale. Every union, every labor organization should pass such resolutions of protest.

8. Raise money everywhere to aid the victims of capitalist persecution.

For a united struggle against our common enemy, we are,

Fraternally yours,

Communist Party of America,
Section of the Communist International.

Labor Day, 1922.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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