
Letter to Samuel Hankin in Chicago from Benjamin Gitlow in New York, August 20, 1919. †

A document in the Comintern Archive, RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 4, ll. 29-30.

August 21st, 1919

Samuel F. Hankin
c/o Clarion Rock Shop
204 N. Clark St.
Chicago, Ill.

Dear Comrade:

The majority of the National Left Wing Council — Ferguson, Wolfe, Cohen, Ballam, and Ruthenberg — have capitulated to the Minority Group who bolted and afterwards sabotaged the National Left Wing Movement. All with the exception of Ruthenberg have repudiated the National Emergency Convention and have gone over bodily to the Federations and Minority-Michigan. This group has sandbagged the National Left Wing organization. At one meeting of the Council, Ferguson remarked that if the National Council could not reach an agreement with the minority, the Michigan-Federation group, he would join the minority and leave the Council.

When the financial situation of *The Revolutionary Age* was critical, I asked for a meeting of the Council, which was refused, and I was told by one member of the National Council that my opposition to the Joint Call was sabotaging the paper, and therefore I resigned from the paper with the understanding that I was to remain on the paper until somebody else could take it over so that there would be no trouble in keeping the paper going.

At a time when the Russian Federation itself is being split into smithereens because it is controlled by a group of professional splitters, the majority of the National Left Wing Council, violating the definite

instructions laid down by the majority at the National Left Wing Conference, capitulated to them. They imagined that their capitulation would bring immediately a tremendous sum of money to them from the Federations for the support of their activities and *The Revolutionary Age*. So they made me resign at once, not even giving me an opportunity to clear up matters and put themselves in control as a Managing Committee of the paper. What was the result? The Federations, considered to be the “goose that laid the golden egg,” didn’t even come [close]. Money was not forthcoming, and so this group who ditched the Left Wing National movement have discontinued publication of *The Revolutionary Age*, the organ of the Left Wing. Not satisfied with this, they stretched out their hands of destruction to another paper published by the Left Wing known as *The Voice of Labor*. A paper dealing [in its] way with politics, but a propaganda organization of the workers into the revolutionary movement in this country. They passed a motion at the Council when they had no authority to do so, discontinuing the paper and discharging John Reed, Editor, and myself as Business Manager.

You asked about funds concerning the Left Wing. There are no funds at present. There are a large number of debts. It is really outrageous to think what a small group of compromisers can, in a period of two months, do to a sentiment that was fast crystallizing throughout the country into a solid, unified, revolutionary movement. I believe that nothing will come out of the Joint Call. The elements in it are weak and opposite in principle. They refuse to consider the problem as one of America. They are only concerned about perpetuating their little, petty political advantages.

†- Samuel Hankin was the leader of the Left Wing Section of Local Cook County (IL), Socialist Party.

Already the Left Wing in New York, headed by Cohen, has begun to expel branches that disagree with the Joint Call. When the Russian Federation violated in New York several decisions of the Left Wing here, these strong dictators submitted and never demanded discipline.

I believe that the Left Wing should muster all their forces at the National Emergency convention with the new NEC and from there build up a revolutionary movement that shall truly understand and meet the problems here.

I am enclosing two letters that have been sent out by us. I want you to read them because they will throw more light on the subject. I want to tell you that practically nothing has been left of the Left Wing movement here. At the present moment we cannot spare anyone to go to Chicago because we have all we can do to get things together here. However, I expect John Reed to be in Chicago at the Convention and I expect to be there also, and when we are there I will certainly see you and try to do whatever we can in this matter. Let me know whether or not you have seen *The Voice of Labor*, the paper of the Labor Committee of the National Left Wing Conference.

Fraternally Yours,

GRU NY †

†- It is believed that the initials "GRU" used in this signature stand for three surnames: Gitlow, Reed, and an unknown U—.

Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.
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