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# Appeal of Earl Browder to the National Committee, CPUSA Against the Decision of the National Board for His Expulsion, Feb. 8, 1946

First part of the mimeographed pamphlet by Earl Browder, *Appeal of Earl Browder to the National Committee CPUSA Against the Decision of the National Board of February 5th, 1946 for His Expulsion*. n.c. [Yonkers, NY]: n.p. [Earl Browder], n.d. [1946].

Yonkers, NY,  
February 8, 1946.

To the National Committee, Communist Party of the USA.

Dear Comrades:—

I hereby appeal to you against the decision of the National Board, published in the *Daily Worker* of Feb. 7 [1946], expelling me from membership in the Party, on the following grounds:

1) *The indecent haste of the proceedings renders the entire proposal suspect, and therefore not in the best interest of the Party.*

I was called before the National Board on Feb. 5, and there I was handed a copy of the decision which it was proposed to adopt. When I demanded that charges in writing should be given me, with an opportunity to prepare my answer, I was told that the draft decision constituted the “written charges” and a copy was now in my possession, therefore the Board would proceed to hold a trial. The questions submitted to me to answer were: “Give us the names of all Party members with whom you have spoken since the Convention, and the nature of your conversations,” and others of similar purport. My request for a few days time to prepare a political answer to the proposed

decision was refused by formal vote on motion of Comrade Foster. I thereupon refused to answer the particular questions asked of me, and declared that I considered the issue of proper procedure of great importance, and not “the cheap trick of a petty-fogging lawyer” (as the draft decision was amended to say).

May I say for the record that during the 3-month campaign carried on in the Party for my expulsion by the National Secretariat and members of the Board, the charges wildly circulated have ranged the whole gamut of social and political crimes excepting perhaps that of murder, that I never before Feb. 5 received any notification of charges of any kind (except through newspapers and gossip), and was never given an opportunity to combat these charges. It was unreasonable, and harmful to the Party, when the National Board rushed to a decision within the hour after the first written charges were submitted, and those charges already in the form of a final decision.

2) On Feb. 1, I had been called to the Yonkers Club of which I am a member, to “discuss your relationship with the Party.” I did not receive from the Yonkers Club, however, any written charges. I had heard orally from a fellow-member that on Jan. 29, a motion calling for my expulsion had been submitted to a Westchester County membership meeting, which was defeated by a vote of 64 to 52, and which was subsequently referred to the Yonkers Club.<sup>1</sup> I presumed that the Club would consider that resolution, and therefore prepared an answer to it as it had been reported to me, and read this answer to the Club (giving them a written copy), and submitted to unlimited questioning, even though these proceedings were highly irregular. I have never been informed as to the action of the Club on these proceedings. The Board decision now mentions my statement before the Yonkers Club executive, but to my knowledge its contents have never been made known. I therefore attach a copy herewith, as a part of this appeal.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This rejection of the expulsion motion on Jan. 29, 1946 was apparently made on technical grounds and should not be viewed as a reflection of the correlation of factional forces within the CPUSA. It would have been the primary party unit — the Yonkers Club — which was constitutionally assigned the task of initiating expulsion proceedings, not the county organization. Browder’s expulsion matter was merely referred to the Yonkers Club for action in accord with standard practice.

<sup>2</sup> Republished by 1000 Flowers Publishing as “Open Letter from Earl Browder in Yonkers, NY, to the Yonkers Club, CPUSA, Feb. 1, 1946.” (October 2013).

3) The Board decision states: "Browder has continuously resisted the program and decisions of the Convention." This is completely false, and not the slightest evidence exists to support such a charge.

I publicly accepted the Party Convention decisions and subordinated myself to them, because I profoundly believed that their central strategic and tactical conclusions, to do everything to maintain the Roosevelt-labor-democratic coalition and to realize its program, and to support the Truman Administration in all its efforts to that end, were absolutely sound decisions, and therefore all other matters were subordinate thereto. I never appealed against any decision which I had opposed before, and consider those issues closed. The only charge that might lie against me in relation to the Convention decisions, is that I failed to speak up to criticize and oppose the steps taken by Foster, supported by his associates in the leadership, to withdraw from the Roosevelt-labor-democratic coalition and to break up the Truman Administration at a moment when it was improving its implementation of Roosevelt's foreign policy and aligning itself with labor in the biggest inner political struggle since 1944. It is the National Board which has departed from the Convention decisions, and not myself. It has done so without a pretense of consultation with the Party, apparently operating upon the theory that the Board's position of leadership includes full power to change Convention decisions and to suppress even to the point of expulsion all criticism of such actions.

4) The Board decision states: "He has violated his pledge to the National Convention to place himself at the disposal of the Party and, by refusing to accept any assignment from the Party, has violated Party discipline and deserted Communist duties and responsibilities." This charge is completely false, and not the slightest evidence exists to support such a charge.

No assignment of any kind was ever offered to me in any form, and no decision as to my party work was ever transmitted to me. On the contrary, I was specifically told in a meeting with the Secretariat in September [1945], that there was no work available for me in the Party. as to my period of non-attendance in the Yonkers Club, this was in specific agreement with local and national leadership, as explained in my statement to the Yonkers Club.

5) The Board decision states: "He has carried on factional activity and a campaign of unprincipled attacks against the leadership of our

Party and of our brother French Party.” This charge is completely false, and not the slightest evidence exists to support such a charge.

Nothing could be more silly than to charge the existence of a “faction” which no one can locate, and a campaign of which no one knows the content. As a matter of fact I have been completely cut off from contact with the Party membership for more than 7 months, even my speech to the National Convention has been suppressed and is entirely unknown except to those who were present there, and but for the continued public reiteration of my name in the Party press, as the synonym for all deviations from Marxism, I might have passed completely into oblivion — certainly would, if it had depended upon any word or action on my part. No charge can even plausibly be made against me except “inactivity” and that I have fully answered in my statement to the Yonkers Club.

6) The charge that I “adopted an equivocal attitude” at the Un-American Committee hearings is a vile falsehood and slander, manufactured out of whole cloth. (Incidentally, the supposed quotation on this matter from the November Plenum report contains a forgery, since its last sentence was added on the galley-proofs after the Plenum was adjourned.) Previous to the Washington hearings, I met twice with the Secretariat and outlined how I proposed to conduct myself there, including the much-quoted “private citizen” phrase. Not the slightest objection was raised to my proposals. I followed the agreed line strictly in the hearings. A member of the National Board and the Board’s attorney were present, and at the conclusion of both sessions in which controversial issues were handled, they both shook hands with me and congratulated me on my successful handling of the Committee. *Later, after the hearings, Foster overruled the opinion of those who were present, so they changed their minds without even notifying me.*

This accusation is a flagrant case of bad faith and disloyalty on the part of the accusers. It is a crude frame-up after the event.

7) The Board decision, ascribing to me views which I do not hold and actions which I have not performed, proclaims me “outside the working class movement” and my supposed views as “enemy-class ideology” and “not “a trend in the labor movement.” This is preposterous babbling, a parrot-like repetition of the formula by which the Trotskyites were condemned in the Soviet Union after years of patient

and thorough refutation of all their views, and after they had plunged into violent sabotage, armed rebellion, and conspiracy with the fascist enemy abroad. Its basis in the Board's decision is purely in the fevered imagination of the decision's author.

What nonsense this is requires no argument by me. Even the views falsely ascribed to me are, according to *Political Affairs*, Feb. 1946, the views of "the great mass of trade unionists," plus Roosevelt, plus Henry Wallace, plus President Truman, plus all progressive democrats who have not yet come to Marxism-Leninism.

The resolution which describes these views as "not a trend in the labor movement," and "enemy-class ideology," is signed first of all by the same person who signed the article in *Political Affairs*, namely, William Z. Foster.

Can confusion be worse confounded than this?

In his fantastic factional hatred, Foster has not hesitated to declare the views of "the great mass of trade unionists" as "enemy-class ideology," only in order thereby to blacken my name before the membership and before the world. What happens to me is relatively unimportant, but it is supremely important that the Party and the great trade union movement shall not be stultified and confused by such irresponsible factionalist chatterboxes.

8) The stupid charge that I have become "adviser to Big Business" by editing a mimeographed bulletin in 200 copies called *Distributors Guide*, circulated exclusively in circles long allies of ours, is a typical example of hysteria. Whatever "advice" might be distilled from these bulletins, is exclusively for higher wages for the workers and for the execution of the Roosevelt program, support to which was pledged by our July Convention. I would be most happy to have these writings examined by any intelligent group, *not under factional hysteria or control*, to confirm my characterization of them.

The assumption is made in the decision that I am under obligation, as a disciplined rank-and-file Party member, to submit every word I put on paper to the censorship of Foster or someone appointed by him for that purpose. I am sure that very, very few of the thousands of writers and newspapermen now or lately in our Party, or the hundreds of economists, could possibly accept this principle and continue both their professions and their Party membership. The Party controls, or should control, or can control in detailed manner going further than the question of main political alignment, only

those writings which are published as expression of Party policy. Any control of writings that goes beyond this is newly-manufactured policy for the purpose of the case against me.

The bulletins I am editing are economic analyses, with a very limited circulation; they have no general circulation in the Party and are not intended to have, they are not proposals for Party policy and are not for the purpose of influencing such policy. They examine current economic problems from the premises generally accepted in the Roosevelt-labor-democratic coalition to which our July Convention pledged support, and attempt to deepen and further unfold these commonly-accepted premises in the sense and direction of the Marxist analysis of capitalism.

To make these writings of mine the basis of expulsion from the Party is in effect to copy the most extreme caricatures of the Communists drawn by our enemies. Slandorous caricatures by our enemies cannot seriously harm us, but when they are copied in our own Party actions, then indeed we are in grave danger.

9) The charge that in the past two weeks I have dropped my “inactivity” and launched “attempts to involve certain comrades” and to “broaden his contacts with individual members and sympathizers” doubtless refers to my appearance before the Yonkers Club executive, and the statement I there made sharply criticizing the departure of our Party leadership from the July Convention decisions.

I appeared before the Yonkers Club executive by its written instructions. There the demand was made that I express my opinions fully and frankly so that they could judge the validity of current attacks being made upon me before the Party. In my statement to the Yonkers Club I was exercising nothing more than the rights of any rank-and-file member, I was responding to the demands of Party responsibility. Nothing that I there expressed can be made grounds for expulsion without abolishing all inner democracy within the Party.

*In conclusion*, I call upon the National Committee to reject the proposal for my expulsion.

*Earl Browder.*

*Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport*

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