
Problem of Communist Organization in the US.

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The historic role of the Communist Party is through its leadership to marshal the working masses against the capitalist state, conquer and destroy that state power, and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat in the form of Workers Councils and through the power of the Workers' state transform capitalist productions into communist production.

In order that the CP may perform this historic task, there are two conditions which it must fulfill:

(a) it must organize in the CP the class conscious revolutionary workers and have a clear understanding of the class struggle and the aims of the CP. It must infuse these workers with an unshakable loyalty and iron discipline.

(b) through its program of action in the everyday struggles of the workers, through the activities of its members in these struggles, the Party must win the confidence and leadership of the masses of the workers. Through the winning of this confidence and leadership in the everyday struggles the Party creates the conditions when it will be able in time of revolutionary crisis to array the mass power of the workers against the capitalist state to overthrow that state.

The Communist Parties organized in the United States in 1919 were made up of a membership of which at least 90% were from the language federations. With the open Party and open work these earnest, loyal revolutionary language

groups which came into the Communist Party and the Communist Labor Party would have served as a basis of a movement that would soon attract to its ranks the best elements among the American workers.

The attacks upon the Communist Parties 4 months after their organization resulted in reducing the membership of the two Communist Parties from 50 to 60,000 to about 10,000, which resulted in cutting down the American element to a still smaller proportion than before. As a result of the various splits, the membership has been still further reduce to about 5,000 to 6,000, among whom it would be difficult to find 500 American comrades.

It is almost an impossible task for the Party as it exists today to fulfill the historic role as outlined above. How can we hope to interpenetrate the life of working masses of the country and have the members of our Party become the leaders in their everyday struggles when a large proportion of our membership is not able to speak the language of these workers and only a very small number are not debarred from active public work. It is true that there are in the basic industries of the country a large number of workers who are of the language groups represented in the Party and though these language groups are of great service to us we cannot hope to fulfill the role laid down in (b) above while our Party is made up completely of its present membership only, nor is there much

hope of bringing into that membership the required new elements as long as we work under the organization conditions of the last two years. We need only to ask how many of our members can take an active public part in carrying out our program in the unions, how many of our members can assume positions of responsibility in a strike, to realize that we must achieve a revolutionary change in the character of our organization before we even make the beginning in becoming a force in the class struggle in the United States.

No one will be able to challenge the statement that our Party would have been far in advance of its present position if it had been permitted to develop as an open Communist Party. We would by now have had a Party stronger than the SP even was both in the character of the membership and its numbers. We would have had attracted a large American element. Under the guidance of the CI we would have established our organization for underground work as part of that Party. We would have created a machinery which could take the Party underground in times of crisis. Such normal development would have by now made our Party a powerful force in the struggle of the American workers.

There has grown in the Party during these two years of illegal existence the belief that a Communist Party must of necessity exist as an underground organization. There is no revolutionary virtue in a Communist Party being an underground organization. It is at all times a bitter necessity against which the party must fight with all its energies. When the capitalist state forces a Communist Party underground it gains a victory because it increases the difficulties of its tasks; when a Communist Party throws off its underground existence it wins an advantage in the struggle. The aim of the CP must, therefore, be to systematically work for its establishment as an

open CP.

The attacks of 1919 and 1920 which drove the Communist Parties underground arose out of the revolutionary crisis which existed at that time. The Russian workers and peasants had established their dictatorship; Europe was aflame with the spirit of revolution; the whole capitalist world felt insecure. When, therefore, the American capitalists found themselves face to face with a series of great strikes — the steel strike, the miners' strike, the threatened strike of the railroads at the end of 1919 — expressing the revolutionary ferment prevalent in the capitalist world, they struck out at the Communist Parties which were the leaders in revolutionary agitation.

These conditions do not exist now. True, there are great strikes and more strikes threatening, but the capitalists do not feel insecure. They feel that they have gained the whip hand; that they are safe. As a consequence they have again assumed the hypocritical mask of "democracy" and tolerate revolutionary agitation which 2 years ago was put down with an iron hand. The CP must take advantage of this situation to again achieve existence as an open CP. There is an element in the party which holds that the Party can only come into the open when it can advocate as part of its program "the principle of mass action and armed *insurrection*." This view is a hangover from the "leftist nonsense" which felt it necessary to preach "armed insurrection" to the workers when there was a street car strike or some other struggle of the workers over wages and working conditions.† There is no magic in the words "armed insurrection" to the workers which makes it necessary to a program in order that it can be made a communist program. The test of a communist program is whether it advocates mass action, the Soviet State and proletarian dictatorship, and includes affiliation with the CI. To make a test of the possibility of an open CP the advocacy of "armed insurrec-

† - This is a crack at Israel Amter, who authored a much-criticized party leaflet during an economic strike of Brooklyn Rapid Transit workers advocating insurrection.

tion" by the program is to say that there can be no open CP until the time of revolution, a condition which is given the lie by the greater number of existing open Communist Parties all over the world.

Based on the foregoing discussion, we declare:

(a) That there is no revolutionary virtue in a Communist Party existing as an underground organization; on the contrary in order to fulfill its historic role, it must, if driven underground carry out a consistent struggle to attain an open existence.

(b) That it is an established necessity for the CPA to again attain an open existence so that it may draw new elements into its ranks on the basis of a full communist program; elements which are needed in order that it may attain the leadership in the class struggle in the US.

(c) The formation of the No. 2 [Legal Political Party] must be considered as the first step toward the attainment of an open existence by the CPA. The CPA must make use of the No. 2, make a consistent drive to again work itself into the open.

(d) This task is accomplished by extending the activities, enlarging the functions, and clarifying the program of the No. 2 *step by step*; in the degree that the program and activities of the No. 2 take on a communist character, the underground loses more and more its character as a separate political party.

(e) Through this process the apparent duality of the No. 1 [underground CPA] and No. 2 [LPP] ceases to exist and there is a transformation

into an unquestioned entity. This is accomplished through the permeation of the No. 2 with communist understanding and spirit.

The immediate steps to be taken by the coming convention should be:

(a) To develop a clear communist program for the No. 2 although retaining its present name.

(b) To seek recognition as a sympathetic organization from the CI for the No. 2.

During the process of transformation the relationship between the No. 1 [underground CPA] and No. 2 [LPP] should be the following:

(a) All duality of committees and officers should be eliminated as quickly as possible wherever possible. To achieve this end, the best elements of the No. 2 who are not members of the No. 1 must be brought into the No. 1.

(b) The units of organization of the No. 1 must act as a caucus within the No. 2, have meetings and discuss questions of policy relating to the actions to be carried out by the No. 2, and act as a unit within the No. 2 committee so long as these are not made up completely of No. 1 members. In carrying on its political activities through the No. 2, the CP acts as the directing force of the No. 2. The Executive Committees of the CP then become the coordinating force of the directing caucus of the CP within the No. 2.

After the CPA becomes an open party it will maintain an illegal apparatus for the conduct of such work as cannot be carried on openly. It will maintain machinery necessary to carry the party underground in case of renewed attack upon the organization.

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport.

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