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# Report of the Communist Party of America to the Executive Committee of the Communist International.

[December 1921]

by L.E. Katterfeld

A document in the Comintern Archive, f. 515, op. 1, d. 39, ll. 237-247.

Although the Communist movement of America is now in the third year of its organized existence it has as yet hardly gained a foothold among the working masses. This is due largely to the circumstances under which it originated and developed. In America the Communist Parties came into being mainly as a reflex of the Russian Revolution and reaction to the opportunism of the Socialist Party — a party that had never taken root among the workers. On account of the traditional policy of isolation of the militant elements from the trade unions and the sectarian spirit and political inexperience of the Left Wing, the movement pursued a policy which resulted in segregating itself from the masses. This tendency was further emphasized by the assaults of the government. The “Red” raids of January 1920 resulted in the complete breakup of the open organizations and in the formation of the underground parties. As long as the two Communist Parties were in the field it seemed impossible to progress beyond “the first and simplest task.” Now at last there exists in the United States one solid Communist nucleus and the work of “connecting it with the working masses” is being undertaken with serious determination.

## Legal Party.

The Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of America realizes that the party cannot perform this task without developing the proper form and methods of organization. With the apparatus of the illegal machinery alone, this task would be hope-

less. It is necessary to build a machinery that can make the fullest use of all legal possibilities. In response to this need, the Central Executive Committee has begun the formation of a legal political organization under the name of “X” [Workers Party of America],† which will centralize the public activities of the party.

The publicly announced purpose of “X” [WPA] is: “to propagate the idea of the abolition of capitalism through the establishment of a workers’ Soviet Republic; to participate with the workers in every phase of the class war and help them in all their struggles; to defend class war prisoners; to combat all reactionary tendencies in the unions.” All working class organizations and individuals that endorse this purpose, and that agree to conform to the decisions of the Executive Committee in carrying out this purpose are invited to join.

The organization structure of “X” [WPA] is arranged so as to assure its absolute control by the underground party organization at all times. Of course this fact cannot be published in any printed documents, but the workers are allowed tacitly to understand that this is an open expression of the Communist Party, although we cannot say so because of the criminal law. A constitution, drawn up by the Central Executive Committee, was drawn up for “X” [WPA] for public circulation and the real set of governing rules adopted by the Central Executive Committee and communicated to the membership by word of mouth through the Party organizers.

The published constitution of “X” [WPA] provides that its national Executive Board shall be elected

†- This is an unusual use of the underground shorthand “X,” which generally was used as a name for the Trade Union Educational League. The context of the document makes it clear that Katterfeld is referring to the forthcoming Workers Party of America.

at the National Convention of that organization. As a matter of fact no convention of "X" [WPA] can be called unless the Central Executive Committee of the underground party orders it and the Executive of "X" [WPA] is in reality appointed by the underground Party Executive Committee. All of the national committee members of the "X" [WPA] must be members of the underground party and a majority of them must be members of the underground Central Executive Committee. In each city a similar arrangement assures that the local committees of "X" [WPA] will be under absolute control of the corresponding Party Committees. Organizations can be admitted nationally to the "X" [WPA] only after approval by the Central Executive Committee of the underground party and no branches or individual members can be admitted to the local organizations of "X" [WPA] without the consent of the underground party membership. These safeguards assure that "X" [WPA] will always remain an *instrument* of the party for the legal public work, not a competitor of the underground Party in its efforts to lead the proletarian masses.

Under direction of special committees appointed for this purpose by our regular Party Executive, the work of enrolling our underground party membership in open local branches of "X" [WPA] is now proceeding in all the party districts. Functioning committees of "X" [WPA] for the carrying on of various legal activities have already been established in nearly all industrial centers. The work of enrolling in these locals of "X" [WPA] the branches of a number of legal Language Federations has also begun. The Finnish Federation, for instance, which broke away from the Socialist Party a year ago, has since joined the "X" [WPA] in body. This organization has 9,000 dues-paying members, of whom over 1,000 are also members of our underground organization. As soon as the work of bringing our underground party membership into the "X" [WPA] is completed, a campaign will be made to assimilate the various Left Wing and Communist elements that have left the Socialist Party during the last three years.

The Central Executive Committee has decided to call a National Convention of "X" [WPA] to be held within four months. All organizations that accept the general statement of purpose are invited to send delegates. This convention will mark the public

launching of "X" [WPA] as a new political party, national in scope, in time for entering the congressional campaign of 1922. Just before the "X" [WPA] convention a secret convention of the underground party is to be held to work out the plans and instruct the regular party delegates elected to the "X" [WPA] convention. This will assure that the work of "X" [WPA] will be in harmony with the decisions of the party and the Communist International.

Before any members were enrolled in "X" [WPA], the Central Executive prepared the Party membership for this new departure with articles in the underground press, with special circulars on the necessity of expanding and centralizing the public work, and with organizers sent to every district to explain the plans in detail and assure that the carrying out of these plans would not interfere with the performance of the regular work of the underground Party units.

A great majority of the Communist Party membership welcome the establishment of "X" [WPA]. They have learned from experience the limitations of an underground organization. They approve of the decisions of the Central Executive Committee and the mandate of the Comintern, and are cooperating splendidly in the work. But there has also appeared some opposition within the Party to these plans of the Executive.

### **The Situation.**

To understand the situation it is necessary to recall that but a few months ago the Communist movement of America consisted of two parties which united into one only under threat of discipline from the International. When we came together in the final convention that attained unity [Woodstock, NY: May 15-28, 1921] we were faced with the same difficulty that had always been the stumbling block. It was early evident that there existed no real difference of principle between the two parties. This was admitted on both sides, and a program was adopted with universal satisfaction. Then the real trouble came — the old trouble — the difficulty of the "Foreign Language Federations," which consisted in reality of the difficulty of making the foreign federation leaders accept the full centralized control of the Party.

Foreign language organizations had come into

existence naturally in the United States. They fill a real need in any American working class movement. About one-sixth of the entire population of the United States are foreign born and in some of the basic industries in certain sections, the percentage is over half. In the large cities there exist solid blocks of hundreds of thousands of foreign born, who speak almost no English at all. No revolutionary movement in the United States can afford to ignore these facts.

Practically every nationality in the United States has its own social, cultural, and nationalistic organizations. It was but natural that workers of revolutionary tendencies should also flock together with other workers speaking the same language. The old Socialist Party consisted largely of such foreign language federations. Most of these had started as independent organization, and, even after joining the Socialist Party, enjoyed practical autonomy. They were only loosely connected with the Party at the top through Translator-Secretaries.

Before the war these foreign federations were always the bulwark of the reactionary Berger-Hillquit machine. But under the influence of the Russian Revolution, the Russian Federation and other Slavic Federations rapidly became the backbone of the Left Wing. Their autonomy enabled them to conduct an independent propaganda. The same autonomy enabled them as a mobile Left Wing to smash up the Socialist Party beautifully. So when the time came to form a single Communist Party, the Russian Federation was very jealous of its autonomy. It regarded some degree of autonomy of the foreign language federation in ANY Party as a necessary guarantee — a sort of weapon against Menshevism. For a long time the leading elements in the Russian and other Federations were openly and frankly opposed to unity with the other Communist Party [the CLP], which contained most of the English speaking elements, because that Party would not tolerate autonomy for the foreign federations but insisted on centralized control of the entire party machinery.

This tendency, inherited from the struggles of the past, was brought to the unity convention and pre-

sented the most difficult problem there. A form of foreign language organization was finally adopted which, while providing for all the propaganda needs of the various nationalities, at the same time knitted the language branches together inseparably with the regular English-speaking organization. The Federations lost all power to discipline and tax the membership. “Autonomy” was discarded, and ONE CENTRALIZED STRUCTURE was adopted for the entire Party, with full power resting in the hands of the Central Executive Committee. Under the circumstances each side [CPA and UCP] was too suspicious of the other to grant to the other a majority on the [Central] Executive Committee. In order to achieve unity at all, it was necessary to elect a Central Executive Committee of 10 members, 5 from each side.†

The fear that this Committee would permanently deadlock along the former Party lines proved unfounded. Every question of any importance was decided in the new Committee by majority vote, sometimes one, sometimes the other side prevailing. The first task of the new Executive after the Unity Convention was of course to join the separate systems of underground groups into one system. In about three months this task was accomplished [i.e., end of Aug. 1921], and organic unity of the Party rank and file became a fact.

The next task, the first outward action of the newly united Party, was the creation of a legal apparatus with which to come out into open contact with the masses of the workers. This task had been expressly laid upon the Central Executive Committee by the Unity Convention of the Party. The industrial crisis, the increasing unemployment, the nationwide wage-cutting movement, these could not be adequately dealt with by an organization having its existence entirely secret and underground. The final breakup of the Socialist Party and the probability of the immediate formation of a new Centrist Party if the Central Executive Committee did not establish the machinery necessary to meet the situation pressed the issue to an early decision.

†- Members of the first CEC of the unified Communist Party of America (May 1921) were: George Ashkenuzi, John Ballam, Charles Dirba, Joseph Stilson, and J. Wilenkin (ex-old CPA); James Cannon, Abram Jakira, Ludwig Katterfeld, Joseph Zack Kornfeder, and Jay Lovestone (ex-UCP). While this group did not split 5-5 on every issue, Katterfeld underplays the fact that the divided CEC was initially gridlocked on many of the key questions of organizational structure and personnel appointment.

### The Opposition.

On this issue there occurred a new alignment in the Central Executive Committee. The Committee members from the former Communist Party, Comrade Morris [J. Wilenkin] — theoretical leader and program writer of the old Communist Party — and Comrade Stilson, who had recently come from Moscow, together with the 5 members from the former United Communist Party, formed a majority of 7 in favor of the immediate establishment of a national legal organization and the early formation of a legal political party. The Executive Secretary — Comrade Dow [Charles Dirba], was one of this minority and resigned the secretaryship because of unwillingness to carry out the Central Executive Committee decisions on these questions.† At first the minority expressed opposition to all development of legal activities on a national scale. Finding this position absolutely untenable and in direct opposition to the Theses of the International, they changed their argument. They said: “a legal *organization*, but not a legal *Party*” — “a legal *Party later*, but not *now*” — “a legal *Party* perhaps even now, but not in this way; this is dangerous business, only a small part of our members should be risked in it” — “besides, the Central Executive Committee has *no authority* to act.” The three minority members are now trying at any cost to stop the present formation of a legal party. They are capitalizing the circumstances that all three of them are members of the old Communist Party in an endeavor to awaken the old division between the two former parties. They call the other two members of the old Communist party, who are with the majority, “traitors” who have gone over to the “enemy.” They appeal to the suspicion and antagonism of the foreign language federations towards the English-speaking membership. They have organized a caucus with some leaders of the Russian, Lithuanian, Lettish [Latvian], and Ukrainian Federations for common action against the formation of the legal party. The “actions” advised in one circular is to call for an emergency convention and in the meantime to withhold funds from the Party.

A letter written by Dow [Dirba] — the resigned

Executive Secretary — gives a clue to their mental attitude. It reads in part as follows:

“The Central Executive Committee majority has decided on the formation of a parallel legal party side by side with our present party. The argument that our underground party, upon which our legal party must be based, upon which it must absolutely depend for working forces and guidance, is at *the present moment* entirely not in condition, not ready for the great change, that the change at this moment will disorganize the underground party structure, that the present Central Executive Committee has no authority to take such a step without a party convention, to all arguments they have one answer, and that is, that they are proceeding upon the direct and explicit direction of Comintern brought over by Marshall [Max Bedacht].

We deny the possibility of Comintern giving such directions and explicit instructions. We know that Comintern urges open activities on the widest possible scale, but we are also convinced that the Comintern would not give direct and specific instructions as to when and how the various sections (parties) should proceed in this general direction. That would be against the general policy of the Comintern.

Then it is absolutely clear to us that the great change at *this moment* and in the way they propose to bring it about is heading the entire party to ruin. And why? Because due to general conditions, and still more to the inside developments, to the acts of the Central Executive Committee against opposition and against foreign language federations, [to] the financial bankruptcy and their incapacities and unfittedness to do real work, the underground party is absolutely not ready for the change.”

Thus do they fish for an answer that will help them to evade the issue. They practically invite their friends here in Moscow to write them to the effect that the instruction of the Comintern was not direct and explicit but merely general, so that they need not obey it for the present.

Their next argument is that the Central Executive Committee has no authority to form a legal organization without first calling another underground convention. The fact is that the Unity Convention itself referred the whole question of forming a legal organization to the Central Executive Committee, including, of course, the question as to when and how to do it. The Executive decided this according to the best judgment of the majority. It will not now call an extraordinary underground Party convention to debate once more whether or not a legal party shall be organized. That question is already definitely settled.

†- Dirba was replaced as Executive Secretary by Ludwig Katterfeld on July 27, 1921. Katterfeld remained at the post until he was in turn replaced by Will Weinstone on Oct. 15, 1921. Katterfeld formally took over as the unified CPA's representative to ECCI on Nov. 23, 1921.

When the Central Executive Committee calls the next underground convention it will not be to debate whether a legal party should be *started*, but to decide just what shall be *done* at the legal party's open convention.

You will see that the three minority members still preserve their old mental attitude of veneration for the foreign language federations, considering them sufficient in themselves and being horrified by the thought of change. They express special horror because the Central Executive Committee commits the sacrilege of asserting its authority over the foreign language federation officials. Their letters to Russia complain that "the Central Executive Committee has been meddling into the internal affairs of the federations, removing their editors, putting their own men in place of them," etc....

The three hope to create enough dissatisfaction among the membership to force through their demand for a special emergency convention in which they will try to displace the Central Executive Committee majority that started the legal work. The majority is convinced that this is the real basis for the actions of the minority — the desire to regain factional control for their foreign language federation caucus. It was partly for this reason that the Central Executive Committee cabled Ballister [Robert Minor] to replace Baldwin [Oscar Tyverovsky] on the Executive of the Comintern.

With letters and cables the three are now calling for Russians to come back to America. They want their help in arousing the foreign language federation spirit once more and to solidify it along the former factional lines. It was reported to the Executive Committee that 25 former members now in Russia had pledged themselves to return to America for this struggle. A telegram sent by the three to Comrade Baldwin [Tyverovsky], former member of the Executive of the Comintern, who is prominent in the Russian Federation reads: "We want you and Stepan [Steven Ross/"Charles Wallace"], or one of you, immediately. A further decision raising present party branches into legal party means liquidation. Situation desperate. Letter follows. Don't mix addresses." This telegram as well as the letter from Dow [Dirba] are translated from half-cipher.

The objection to the plans of the Central Executive Committee on the ground of the liquidation is based upon a failure to comprehend the communist task in the class struggle. The underground organization is not liquidated. It takes on permanently the character which it had already started to assume in the extension of the legal activities. The underground organization becomes the controlling and directing body. It will continue to comprise and recruit only the most conscious, clear-sighted, and aggressive elements. Far from liquidating the underground party, the legal organization will form a recruiting center for the underground, adding to it new blood and stimulating its growth.

The overwhelming majority of the membership, comprising all of the former United Communist Party and over half of the former Communist Party, are cooperating fully with all the plans of the Central Executive Committee. The Executive has mapped out a campaign of education to win the rest of the membership for its program if possible, rather than to put them out of the party with the immediate exercise of discipline. Members of the Committee are sent to all districts to explain the Party's new tactics and with very few exceptions are successful in their missions. The present majority and the legal party program of the Central Executive Committee could not be defeated in the American Communist Party even if all the former members of the Russian Federation were to return to the United States to plot against them. The party is now on a solid foundation, determined not to degenerate into a sect of dogmatists but to become as quickly as lies in its power, a vital force in the struggle of the American working class.

It would be very unfortunate if the Russian comrades in America should so badly misunderstand the wishes of the Comintern in regard to the open activity as to leave the Party or cause themselves to be expelled in large numbers. We do not want any KAPD in America.† The Executive of the Communist Party of America thinks it should be very quick to expel intellectuals of the Right, but very slow and patient before expelling working men of the extreme Left or even those who think they belong to the Left, while in real-

†- Reference is to the *Kommunistische Arbeiter-Partei Deutschlands* (Communist Workers' Party of Germany), an independent Left Oppositional Communist Party. At the 3rd Congress of the Comintern in the summer of 1921, delegates of the KAPD were accorded only with non-voting status and the party was widely vilified for its failure to adhere to the line of the Comintern.

ity they merely suffer from “Left sickness.” The Executive remembers that the Russians in America have, after all, been the most influenced by the Russian Revolution and are among the most reliable revolutionists.

It is nevertheless clear that the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of America cannot tolerate any serious interference with the construction and operation of an open apparatus at the present time. It might be well for the Comintern to do something to make the Russian followers of these three minority members understand so explicitly that it cannot be misunderstood that the creation of the legal apparatus could not wait for some future time, but must operate now, and that it is their communist duty to support it with all their strength.

An endorsement by the Comintern of the work of the Central Executive Committee in beginning the formation of a legal party *now* will prevent much factional strife and will be of great assistance in the settling of this issue once and for all. For this purpose the Comintern is asked to approve the Thesis on Legal Work in the United States which accompanies this Report and which elaborates the position of the Executive on this question. With this issue definitely settled, the Communist Party of America should quickly grow in power, begin to measure up the responsibilities that rest upon the Party in the strongest bulwark of world imperialism, and take its rightful place as one of the major sections of the Communist International.

### **Election Campaigns.**

The process of amalgamating the two parties into one made it possible to do much in the recent election campaign. The Central Executive Committee decided that candidates should be placed in the field in a number of the principal cities, but it was possible to carry this decision only in one locality [New York City]. These candidates were not nominated as candidates

of “X” [WPA], but as candidates of the “C” [the Workers’ League], because no one knew what the authorities would do when candidates and speakers were openly known to be Communists. A very successful nominating convention was held [Aug. 26, 1921] where all the plans previously determined upon by a small party committee were carried out with clock-like precision. Public Headquarters were opened and an active campaign was launched with leaflets and street and hall meetings. The meetings of the “C” [Workers’ League] were generally much better attended by the workers than those of the Socialist Party. The poisonous opposition of a yellow socialist daily [*The New York Call*], which lost no opportunity to point out to the authorities that these were in reality candidates of the Communist Party, helped very much.

The result is not yet known to us here.† No matter what it is the experience has been very much worthwhile and will be applied in the Congressional campaign next fall. The ice has now been broken. The false tradition that it is impossible for Communists to make use of election campaigns in the United States has been shattered. The party is anxious really to test its full strength in the parliamentary campaign next year.

### **Russian Famine Relief.**

In answer to the call from the Comintern asking all working class organizations to participate in the work of Famine Relief, the Central Executive Committee immediately ordered the formation of a famine relief organization [Friends of Soviet Russia].

Two specifications were made in asking organizations to join in the work. 1) The campaign for funds for famine relief must not be made on purely sentimental grounds alone, but the common interest of the workers of America with the workers of Russia, the fact of CLASS SOLIDARITY must be emphasized. 2) All funds raised must be turned over to the Soviet

†- In conventional political terms, the Workers’ League campaign of Nov. 1921 was something of a debacle, in which paid signature-gatherers had to be employed to get the ticket on the city ballot due to the failure of the Party rank and file to circulate petitions, and a new debt of over \$3,000 was accumulated to gain just the votes of 3,337 New Yorkers, according to the party’s own statistics [f. 515, op. 1, d. 78, ll. 11-29 — published as a downloadable document on [www.marxisthistory.org](http://www.marxisthistory.org) as “Report of Campaign Committee, Workers’ League Campaign, Dec. 1, 1921”]. The Workers’ League campaign did have real value as a mechanism to test the reaction of the authorities to a campaign featuring public meetings and speeches by open Communists, however, thus paving the way for the formation of the Workers Party of America in a New York convention about 6 weeks later.

Government or its authorized agencies without any stipulations, to be used as the Russian comrades themselves see fit, and not to any private or capitalist government agencies.

These ideas struck a responsive chord in the hearts of the workers, and spread like wildfire over the country. In practically every industrial center, local organizations were quickly formed. Labor organizations by the score interested themselves in the work. Some of them voted to contribute a day's wages from every member, although *The New York Call*, a yellow socialist daily, pointed out that they were handing their money over to the Communists in turning it over to this organization. Funds were raised at various successful public and union meetings. Speakers are now being toured over the country for this purpose. Subscription lists for private donations were of course sent out by the thousands. Although the returns from these were only beginning to come in, the amount raised by October 14th was over \$125,000. The funds at that time were coming in at the rate of \$2,000 to \$5,000 per day, so that by this time the total should be well over the \$200,000 mark.†

Some of the larger labor organizations were raising their own funds. For instance, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers voted to donate half a day's wages from each of their members. Although this was partly due to the propaganda carried on within that organization by our Communist nuclei, such funds will not go through our treasury, but direct to the federated committee for Russian Famine Relief. The majority of this Federated Committee are also members of our party, and our organization turns over to this Committee the funds that we collect. The distinction between the two committees is practically this — that the one is at the same time one of our agencies for open communist propaganda, so that only more or less sympathetic working class elements will cooperate with it, whereas the Federated Committee does

not concern itself with propaganda at all, and therefore secures support also from some liberal and bourgeois organizations.

### Party Finances.

Our very success in raising funds from the workers for Famine Relief has made the financial situation of the Party itself very critical. It seems that practically all the funds that are raised through the public activities of our members and that would otherwise have gone into the regular Party treasury are now being turned over to our Famine Relief organization. Under the circumstances the party can expect very little financial support from the membership aside from the regular Party dues and payments for party publications.

The situation was made acute through the expense for holding 10 different national Language Federation conventions, to which the Party HAD to agree as one of the conditions for achieving unity at the recent unity convention. Those language conferences cost about \$15,000. The widespread unemployment among our membership aggravates the situation still more. In any factory those suspected of being Communists are usually laid off first, so that the percentage of unemployment among our members is far greater than it is among the workers at large. In many sections over half of our members are out of work and in some places nearly all of them.

### Membership.

The Party has between 12,000 and 13,000 members, organized in about 1700 groups, all strictly underground.‡ These groups meet weekly, and no member can remain in the Party unless he actively participates in its work. The whole United States is divided into 12 Districts territorially, and in each District there is a paid District Organizer to represent the Central

†- Friends of Soviet Russia ultimately raised over \$500,000 for Russian famine relief and donations of clothing worth over \$200,000 more. While the organization did help to indirectly support the American Communist movement by providing employment for party members at a time when the organization's finances were particularly dire, advertising dollars for the Communist (and liberal) press, and propaganda in support of the Soviet system in its official organ, the magazine *Soviet Russia*, the 1921-22 Famine Relief Campaign nevertheless represented a significant humanitarian achievement.

‡- This is a significant overstatement of the actual paid membership, which averaged 8,759 in the Third Quarter of 1921 (f. 515, op. 1, d, 57, l. 13 — available as a downloadable document on [www.marxisthistory.org](http://www.marxisthistory.org) entitled "Membership Series by District for the (unified) Communist Party of America, June to October 1921.") To this may be added a certain percentage of (dues exempt) unemployed and active members in arrears — perhaps pushing the *de facto* total for the organization to the 10,000 mark.

Executive Committee. There are Branch affiliates in 23 different languages: English, Armenian, Bohemian [Czech], Bulgarian, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Jewish [Yiddish], Lettish [Latvian], Lithuanian, Polish, Romanian, Russian, South Slavic [Croatian and Slovenian], Ukrainian. In 10 of these there are regularly organized underground federations: Finnish, German, Hungarian, Jewish [Yiddish], Lettish [Latvian], Lithuanian, Polish, Russian, South Slavic, Ukrainian. The party also conducts propaganda in most of these other languages. There is considerable activity right now among Bulgarians, who have just split away from the Socialist Labor Party over the issue of the Third International. Among Italians, also, there are very good prospects right now, and from every District come calls for organizers and literature in that language. Although we have a number of Italian Branches, there is no comrade competent for this work in the United States, and the Comintern should supply one. In general the membership of the various Russian and Slavic Federations is decreasing through emigration, and the English speaking membership is growing steadily and will soon be the largest factor in the Party.

### **Party Press.**

Until recently one could find more in the Party press about Russia than about the developments of the class struggle in America. The Party press at present consists of 8 dailies (3 of them Finnish, 1 Polish, 1 Russian, 1 Lithuanian, 1 Hungarian, 1 Ukrainian) and over 30 weekly, semi-weekly, and monthly publications under absolute Party control. The Party also possesses the machinery for influencing the contents of other papers having over 2 million circulation.

One of the greatest needs of the Communist Party of America at the present time is a Central English Daily Organ. The Party Executive realizes this need full well, and has appointed a subcommittee to conduct a campaign immediately to raise the necessary amount of cash for such a venture. If this campaign had been started earlier it would have interfered with the raising of the funds for Famine Relief. The plans for the English Daily Fund were almost com-

pleted on October 15th [i.e. when Katterfeld left the country] and the work has undoubtedly been launched by this time. There is no question about the ability of the Party to raise the additional sum. The question in the minds of our members has been regarding the Party's ability to finance it continuously. Daily papers can be published in the United States in foreign languages comparatively cheap. It does not matter if their contents consist largely of rewrites of articles appearing the day before in the capitalist press. But an English Daily to be at all successful and appeal to the mass of the workers must really compete with the established capitalist dailies in the matter of furnishing the news, and this costs money. However, to influence the masses we must have an English Daily press, and the full strength of the Party will be put into launching the English Daily Central Organ at the earliest possible moment. †

### **Work Among the Unions.**

In the labor unions the Party membership is becoming increasingly active. Practically every member of the Party is now functioning, not only in his regular Party group, but also in the nuclei that have been developed within the unions or other working class organizations. These nuclei of Party members endeavor to create around themselves larger bodies of sympathizers for influencing ever wider circles of the labor movement. They are being connected with each other nationally as well as locally. This work has not progressed as fast as it should, but, as the old tradition of segregation of the Pure-in-Dogma is lived down and as Communists gain experience in the present policy of penetration and permeation, it will make headway faster and faster. This winter the entire nuclei machinery will cooperate with the Party's political legal expression in an intensive campaign to exploit the unemployment situation.

Plans have also been made for an active campaign on behalf of the Red Trade Union International among the various unions that already have a leaning toward the Left, and a beginning has been made in this work. Our initial success was gained in Detroit, the Federation of Labor in that city having just voted

†- *The Daily Worker* was not finally launched until Jan. 13, 1924.

unanimously to line up with the Red Trade Union International. Some of the strongest labor union elements in the United States are already enlisting in this cause. However, too much must not be expected for the time being, as the Gompers machine is still strong.

### Various Activities.

The lack of money has limited the Party to only the most indispensable activities. A number of fertile fields have remained uncultivated. Although some plans have been made and work can be launched as soon as funds are available, nothing has as yet been done about the establishment of Training Schools for Party workers, bookstores in various centers, propaganda in the Army and Navy, organization of sporting clubs, etc. However, the activities of the Communist Party of America are gradually extending to ever wider fields.

There is an organization for propaganda among America's 10 million Irish, and a paper is published for this purpose as regularly as finances allow. Another organization under guidance of our members propagandizes among America's 12 million negroes and endeavors to organize the revolutionary elements among them. The organization of agrarian workers has not yet begun, but the Party has spent over six months in special research work in this field, which resulted in an exhaustive report, and on the basis of which an Agrarian program is being worked out. The Party realizes that the revolution can not win in the United States if it is opposed by a solid block of agrarian workers and small farmers, and that the problem of splitting them away from the large capitalist interests MUST be solved.

The educational work of the Party naturally suffered in the past, but regular study class work is now being conducted in nearly all the Branches. For this season's work, Bukharin's *ABC of Communism*, which we have just published, is being used as a textbook.

Much of the Party's energy is constantly used up in the defense of arrested comrades. The Defense machinery is well organized on a national scale. It has secured the release on bail of every member whom it was possible to release under the capitalist laws, and saved for the Party work a large number of comrades who would otherwise be in prison. There is constant

work for the Defense, as the persecution is ever vigilant.

Since the unity convention [May 1921] an average of one leaflet a month has been issued in editions of about 1 million copies, for nationwide distribution. A number of special leaflets dealing with local strikes or union issues have also been published. During the recent World Congress of Negroes a number of special leaflets were distributed.

### Some Other Organizations.

Small as the Communist Party of America is, it is today by far the strongest political organization claiming to represent the working class of the United States. The Farmer-Labor Party, which entered the 1920 elections like a lion, came out of them like a shorn lamb and has practically disintegrated.

Of the Anarchists the best working class elements have already been enrolled in the ranks of the Communist Party. The Bolshevik revolution seems to have caused a cleavage in their ranks, and to have had the effect of separating the working class elements from the "intellectuals." Some of the latter are now conducting a bitter counterrevolutionary propaganda, but without effect.

The IWW is decreasing in membership, and has now changed tactics. Last year some of its editors officially attacked the Bolsheviks as being "just another bunch of politicians," but this year the word has gone over to IWW organizers to "stop attacking the Communists." The relations between the IWW membership and the Communist Party membership are very friendly, many comrades belonging to both organizations, and being active in both.

The Proletarian party has dwindled to a few branches since much of its best strength is being absorbed by the Communist Party. The Industrial Socialist League has already been entirely assimilated.

The Socialist Labor Party has long since ceased to be any factor. When it refused to declare itself for the Third International, when it began to ridicule the 21 Points and actually assumed a counterrevolutionary attitude, the revolutionary elements left its ranks in disgust. The process of aligning these with the Communist Party is going on.

The yellow Socialist Party has gone down to prac-

tically complete destruction over the issue of the Third International. It has lost 99,000 members since March 1919, and has now less than 6,000 left, according to an official report.† It lost about 70,000 when the Communist Parties were organized. It lost thousands more when Morris Hillquit and the New York Aldermen renounced their principles, and other thousands forsook it after the infamous National Convention last spring [Detroit: June 25-29, 1921]. Its final blow of destruction came with the withdrawal of the Bohemian [Czech] and Jewish [Yiddish] Socialist Federations in September [1921],‡ followed by the resignation of 20 of its best-known “Left” leaders in favor of the Third International.

This group of 20 call themselves the “Committee for the Third International” and publish a monthly organ, *The Workers’ Council*. They have some following among the 100,000 ex-members of the Socialist Party that are now unattached, and are seeking to organize them into “Workers’ Councils.” They declare themselves in favor of the 21 Points of the Communist International, without reservations, but there are probably far more Daumigs and Levis than there are Liebknechts among them. Not only in their political records, but also in their present utterances, they betray strong centrist tendencies. While declaring of the 21 Points “without reservations,” they usually add that “All discussion as to the applicability to the United States at the present time of one or another point of tactics, as proposed by the Third International, should be carried on within the International, and not outside of it.”

While, of course, the Communist Party points out the shortcomings of this group, the relations between our members and this element are friendly. The Workers’ Council group takes an active interest in some of the Communist Party’s activities. They decided unanimously to accept the platform of our legal organization and support our candidates in the recent elections. However, they do not want to submit to the discipline of our Party, and will not do so as long as they are allowed to cherish the hope that in time they will be permitted to claim membership in the Third International without coming into the regular organization of the American Section.

Such organization as they have is based solely upon the promise of affiliation to the Third, without the necessity of Communist Party membership. If they are allowed to continue unhampered with their slogan, there is danger that they may succeed in organizing a real “Centrist” party out of elements that should come under the influence of our legal organization. This danger will be lessened very much and the entire situation clarified, if the Comintern will formulate some specific announcement to the effect that it has already established an American Section, and that ONLY through membership in the American Section can workers in America affiliate with the Communist International.

Fraternally Submitted,

Member Comintern Executive  
for Communist Party of America,  
J. Carr [L.E. Katterfeld].

†- The document to which Katterfeld refers is unclear. Official party statistics show an average monthly paid membership for the SPA in 1921 of 13,484 — i.e., over 50% *more* than the average monthly paid membership of the unified CPA, which averaged 8,588 in the 5 months running up to the November 1921 Central Caucus dues strike and split. [f. 515, op. 1, d. 57, l. 13]

‡- Rather than “withdrawal,” the term “split” is more descriptive. The SPA continued to have affiliated Yiddish- and Czech-language organizations throughout the 1920s.

*Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.*

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