
Letter to the Executive Committee of the Communist International in Moscow from Abraham Jakira in New York [December 1922]

A documents in the Comintern Archive, f. 515, op. 1, d. 59, ll. 55-58.

To the Executive Committee of the Comintern.

Dear Comrades:—

The CEC of the CP of A requests the Comintern to send a political letter to the convention of the Workers Party, which will take place on December 25.

The Workers Party includes not only Communists but also a group of Centrists. This group does not wish to join the Communist Party, although they have been invited to do so. Their main argument is that they are against the underground party. But their whole trend of thought is centrist. They consider that the labor situation in America is such that there will be no growth in the labor movement for a long time to come. One of their principal representatives declared that it is too early to have a political party in America; the country needs only a propaganda club. There is not the slightest question that these people are centrists, still we wish to work with them. If possible, we want to bring them close to us.

We are convinced that the authority of the Comintern will aid us in bringing about closer cooperation. For that reason, recommend that the Executive of the Comintern shall send a letter to the convention of the Workers Party.

The following points should be emphasized in the letter:

1. The Workers Party does not participate sufficiently in the political life of America. It is a

serious defect that the Workers Party takes no position to the daily struggles in the political daily life of America. The tariff question, the [WWI veterans] bonus question, the ship subsidy question, the great military preparations of the American government, have not cause the Workers Party *as a party* to take a position. The press of the Party did not occupy itself with these questions, or at least very slightly, and has not cleared up the minds of the workers that these questions touched life interests of the working masses.

It was a serious mistake that the Workers Party was so poorly prepared for the elections in which it participated. It is a wrong conception when one believes that such questions as bonus, tariff, etc. only interest the bourgeoisie and are only artificial problems to distract the attention of the workers from the real "labor questions."

2. The Workers Party has been in existence for nearly one year and in this time has not conducted a real serious campaign. It does not suffice merely to pass resolutions. It is necessary to conduct long, persistent, well-prepared campaigns that become more powerful as time goes on. The Party took the proper position when it decided to take up the campaign of the General Labor Defense. It was correct that they asserted that persecutions of the Communists were attacks on the working class of the country. But correct decisions can only be turned into mass actions through long, persistent political campaigns.

The decision on the Labor Party was cor-

rect. It is truly the task of the Workers Party to aid in the formation of an independent labor party representing the workers of America. It is correct that the background of this Labor Party must be made up of the organized workers of the country; and it is correct that the Workers Party shall endeavor to become an integral part of the Labor Party. But merely taking a correct position does not suffice. Only a well-laid campaign will enable the Workers Party to mobilize its forces in favor of a Labor Party.

The Chicago Conference for Progressive Political Action [Feb. 21-21, 1922] should have been the subject of a hard political campaign throughout the country for months. But the main struggle for the Labor Party will take place after the Chicago conference, and the WP must enter into this fight with all its forces.

We believe that the WP has not conducted the campaign against the Socialist Party with sufficient vigor. It failed to criticize the SP for standing solidly on the side of the yellow treacherous bureaucracy in all trade union matters. We do not believe that the political position is correct when one part of the WP press writes that it cannot rejoice that the Socialists were not successful in the elections. It is not right for our papers to publish without criticism reports of Socialist meetings. It shows lack of fighting energy if the press of the WP does not utilize the presence of Longuet in America and his shameless anti-Communist propaganda for the sharpest criticism.

In all of these questions, in the question of the defense, of the Labor Party, in the question of the Socialist Party, it is the duty of the Workers Party not only to adopt resolutions, but to carry on long, persistent political fights.

3. The Workers Party has accepted the leadership of the Comintern and sent fraternal delegates to the Fourth Congress of the Comintern [Nov. 5-Dec. 5, 1922]. We greet with pleasure the fact that the Workers Party appears openly in its sympathy [with] the Comintern. We know that

the Workers Party cannot affiliate with the Comintern since it could not lead a legal existence any longer under the famous American "democracy." But we believe that the acceptance of the leadership of the Comintern stands in direct contradiction if a leading organ like the Workers Party continually attacks the section of the Comintern in America, the CP of A. We must attack the language that the organs of the Workers Party, the German *Volkszeitung*, and the Jewish *Freiheit* use against the Communists. It is not true that the American section of the Comintern is a band of conspirators; that it is composed of "caucus Communists." It is not true that the Communists of America are persecuted because, as these papers contend, they have an underground party. On the contrary, the truth is that the American section of the Comintern was forced to become an underground party because the persecutions of the American government forced it to take that step. We believe that leading comrades of the Workers Party — Lore, Olgin, and Salutsky — have made mistakes in making use of the raids that the Department of Justice conducted on the Communists in Michigan, for an attack on the persecuted Communists. On the contrary, it was the duty of the leaders and organs of the Workers Party to defend the Communists. It was their duty not to treat the Michigan affair as a ridiculous affair, but as a most serious political matter.

It was the duty of the *Volkszeitung* and *Freiheit* not to make attacks on the "dark, underground, irresponsible, uncontrollable" Communists, but to carry on broad Communist propaganda in their defense.

4. One of the principal reasons why the Workers Party has not become a real political party is that it is not yet a sufficiently centralized, homogeneous party. It cannot be centralized as long as it consists of loose Federations. The many nationalities make Federations imperative, but if the Party wishes to act as a party it is a fundamental problem for the party to bring the Federations

closer to the Party and closer to one another.

The Party must make every endeavor to "Americanize" the Federations. The Federations must occupy themselves not so much with Germany, Russia, or Poland, etc., but with American politics and the American labor movement.

The convention of the Workers Party must work out organizational measures to bring about real centralization and unification of the Party.

5. It is absolutely necessary for the Workers Party to possess a daily in English. The convention should appeal to the support not to the English sections, but to the Language Federations of the Party for the creation of the English daily. The foreign language press of the Workers Party is very defective. It is not political at all. It could appear just as easily in Germany, Poland, or Hungary, for it does not sufficiently reflect the political or social life of America.

The convention must take steps to put the entire press under the control of the Party. It is an untenable position that different organs of the Workers Party act on their own directions. It is unendurable that one part of the Workers Party speaks for the bonus, the other against it; that a small section of the press defends the Bridgman affair, and the largest papers attack the Communists in the Bridgman affair.

It is unendurable that the articles and communications from the Executive Committee [of the CPA] to the Party press are ignored and thrown into the waste basket. It is the duty of the Party press to allow far more space for Party affairs and Party activities. The editors are not allowed to reject the party communications under the presumption that they are not interesting for the reading public. Altogether the editors of the papers should not forget that they only possess mandates from the Party.

The convention should take energetic steps to ensure that the whole Party press is put under the control of the CEC of the Party.

6. The convention of the Workers Party must

take steps that Party discipline is upheld in fullest measure. It was a big mistake when a part of the Jewish Federation decided to hold a Federation convention against the decision of the CEC of the Party. The slogan that the Jewish comrades used was a dangerous one, namely that they wished to fight for an open Communist Party and for the Comintern. But this they wanted to do by means of a campaign of calumny against the American section of the Comintern, the underground Communist Party of America.

We are glad that the CEC of the Workers Party did not expel Olgin and his associates for their flagrant breach of discipline, since the CEC wishes to save the Party unity. But we must remind these comrades most emphatically that they cannot find a permanent place in a party under the leadership of the CI if they persist in their attacks on the American section of the Comintern.

The convention of the WP must take energetic steps that discipline is maintained by every member of the Party.

7. The Workers Party does not do enough active trade union work. It is not sufficient to adopt resolutions stating that industrial work must be done, but the Party must see to it that every member of the Party *joins* a trade union. The Party must make great efforts, on the one hand, to get more English-speaking workers into the Party, and on the other hand, to organize the foreign-born workers into the unions.

Campaigns against the old trade union bureaucracy must be conducted on real issues and not as a struggle against graft. The Party must learn that the same tactics cannot be employed on all occasions, that one must not apply the same methods against Gompers and against Hillman. One must learn that the former must be removed by ruthless struggle, while the latter must be forced over to the left by means of energetic criticism.

The Party should do everything in its power to get the English-speaking workers in the unions into the Party, but at the same time should not

forget that the workers in the basic industries are foreign-speaking workers. The Party should, therefore, conduct an energetic fight for the abolition of the alien-restriction laws. The Party should start campaigns to induce the foreign-born workers to become citizens of the country, so that they will get closer to the political life of the country and that the revolutionary elements may not be eliminated by means of deportation.

8. The Party is very poor in literature. It is not a wholesome condition when only translated literature is to be found and the Party has not issued a single book on the labor movement and political life of the country. It is a matter of life and death for the party to create *<illeg.>* literature.

The Party must find the intellectual and financial means to bring this about. The biggest organization is worthless if it has no political activity.

These are the principal tasks of the Workers Party. The Workers Party must engage in politics, it must become centralized and Americanized. Americanized means, of course, not what is understood by "100 Percent Americans," but that the WP becomes an integral part of the political

life and labor movement of America.

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Dear Comrades.

The above letter is our proposal. We beg you to

1. Telegraph us at once whether you have received this letter.

2. Act at once and write the letter immediately.

3. Send the main contents of the letter by cable to the office of the Workers Party, for we fear that your letter will arrive late. The convention is on December 25. Telegrams can be sent direct from Moscow to New York.

With Communist greetings,

Fraternally,

Central Executive Committee,
Communist Party of America.

Exec. Secy. [A. Jakira]

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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