

The Communist

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THE BURNING QUESTION of the LABOUR PARTY

THE following letter from the Musselburgh comrades is typical of one or two letters that have been received at the Party headquarters from branches of the Communist Party relative to the decision of the National Executive to withdraw its parliamentary candidates standing in opposition to official Labour Party candidates. The reply of the Executive Committee to the letter is attached.

COMMUNIST PARTY OF GT. BRITAIN.
(Musselburgh Branch).

12/8/22.

Dear Comrade,

I am instructed by my branch to inform you of our objections to the decisions arrived at by the E.C. meetings of July 29th, 30th and 31st. While we intend to carry out your instructions to the best of our ability, we unanimously disapprove of your decision to support the Labour Party at the General Election.

We also disapprove of the action of the E.C. in instructing Communist delegates to the Labour Party to accept the constitution of the Labour Party, thereby pledging themselves to support the Labour Party when the Labour Party had already endorsed certain amendments to the constitution which could be utilised for the purpose of ousting all Communists representing Labour Organisations on local Labour Parties.

I can assure you that we find the struggle to exist as a branch is keen enough without involving ourselves in shaking hands with men at political meetings when we are knocking hell out of the same men at our Trade Union branch meetings.

Nevertheless, we intend to carry out your instructions in spite of our disapproval.

Yours fraternally,

W. BRACKENRIDGE,
Acting Secretary.

Reply of the Executive Committee

18th August, 1922.

Dear Comrade,

I have to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 12th inst. In reply I am directed to express regret that your members disapprove of the decision of the National Executive to withdraw the Party's parliamentary candidates from those constituencies where Labour Party candidates are in the field, as a manifestation to the workers of our desire to form a united working class front against capitalism, and in order to strengthen the position of Party members whose representation of trade union branches on local Trades and Labour Councils was threatened by the Edinburgh amendments to the Labour Party Constitution.

When the Executive Committee made their decision they had before them demands from branches all over the country for an immediate lead in the direction of combating the attempts being made to exclude Communist Party members from delegate positions in the local organisations. More than a month

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Special Article on the "Voice
of the Workers International"
By Karl Radek

had elapsed since the Edinburgh Conference. Action had already been taken by the Labour Party headquarters, supported by reactionary elements in Trades and Labour Councils and trade union branches, to enforce the Edinburgh amendments against C.P. members acting as delegates of their trade organisations. In a number of important industrial centres the retention of Party members in key positions in the Trades and Labour Council and of a large number of members as trade union delegates was involved. The situation was urgent and the need for immediate action was imperative. Had the Executive Committee hesitated to accept the responsibility for an immediate decision and failed to meet the demands of the branches for a clear and definite lead, they would have betrayed the trust reposed in them by the Party and forsaken their rôle as a guiding Party Centre. To have waited for the long drawn-out process of a Party Conference or referendum would have been simply pandering to the "democratic" sentiment that is largely responsible for the deplorable condition to which the working class movement in this country has been reduced. Valuable points of contact with the workers would have been lost which are essential to the successful carrying on of the Party's work, more especially in view of the pending organisational changes necessary to bring the Party into conformity with the needs of the every-day struggle against capitalism, and the requirements of the Communist International. These points of contact, once lost, would have taken months of weary effort to re-gain.

The Executive Committee fully thrashed out the possibilities and probabilities of trade union branches putting up a fight to retain the right to appoint C.P. members as delegates to local Trades and Labour Councils. There has never been any question but that that right must be vigorously upheld and that our Party members in the trade union branches must bend their energies to that end. But the Executive Committee had to face the realities of the situation, and not to allow their imagination to overshadow their judgment. At the best, an effective fight could only be expected to be waged by trade union branches in a small minority of cases. Even in such cases, with all the subtle influences that would be brought to bear by official Labour Party and Trade Union circles, the opposition to accepting the amendments would inevitably be worn down. Refusal to pay the political levy is condemned by Communist principle and practice, whilst a spectacular policy of re-electing rejected delegates would sooner or later lose its glamour. A more sure and effective method of defeating the purpose of the amendments and maintaining our positions was to deprive the amendments of their point.

There are no grounds for assuming, as some appear to do, that the withdrawal of our oppositional candidates constitutes a departure from the policy of the Party as laid down at the Policy Conference. On the contrary, it is a step in the application of that policy that is necessitated by an offensive on the part of the reactionary leaders of the Labour Party who seek to isolate the Communist Party from the organised working class movement. The withdrawal of our candidates will have the effect of securing the contact of our Party members with the local working class organisations, or it will force those reactionary leaders to place a still more rigid interpretation upon the amendments in the endeavour to exclude us. In either event the advantage is to the Communist Party. In the former, the ground will be clear for a further effort in the struggle to secure our right to affiliation. If the latter, the onus of splitting the Labour Movement in the most critical period of its existence will be fastened even more definitely upon our opponents.

Your members may be assured that the decision of the Executive Committee was not taken without the most careful thought and deliberation, and in the full sense of responsibility of all that was involved. They see no reason to regret that decision, but are prepared to uphold and justify before the membership the step they have decided to take.

We note with approval that although your members do not agree with the decision of the Executive, nevertheless they will loyally endeavour to carry its implications into effect. We also hope that further consideration will convince them of the wisdom of the decision and its ultimate benefit to the Party as a whole.

Yours fraternally,

(Signed) ALBERT INKPIN.
Secretary.



THE MIDNIGHT ATTEMPT TO
REMOVE A FIELD GUN FROM A LONDON SQUARE
WAS FORTUNATELY OVERHEARD.



SMART WORK BY THE
C.I.D. UNEARTHES A
REBEL ARMS DEPOT



THE DESPERADOES
ROUNDED UP

DUNN

Where Have you hidden that Bomb?