

1919

Call for a National Convention for the purpose of organizing the Communist Party of America

After considerable negotiations seeking to eliminate the differences existing between the Communist elements of the Left Wing, as represented by the so-called Minority and Majority of the Left Wing Conference held in New York June 21st to 24th, the National Council of the Left Wing Section Socialist Party realizing the necessity of the organization of the Communist Party of America, in accordance with the decisions of the National Left Wing Conference, realizing also the futility of participating in the proposed Emergency Convention of the Socialist Party, does hereby join with the National Organization Committee in issuing the following call for the organization of the Communist Party:

In this the most momentous period of the world's history Capitalism is tottering to its ruin. The proletariat is straining at the chains which bind it. A revolutionary spirit is spreading throughout the world. The workers are rising to answer the clarion call of the Third International.

Only one Socialism is possible in the crisis. A Socialism based upon understanding. A Socialism that will express in action the needs of the proletariat. The time has passed for temporizing and hesitating. We must act. The Communist call of the Third International, the echo of the Communist Manifesto of 1848, must be answered.

The National Executive Committee

of the Socialist Party of America has evidenced by its expulsion of nearly half of the membership that it will not hesitate at wrecking the organization in order to maintain control. A crisis has been precipitated in the ranks of revolutionary Socialism by the wholesale expulsion or suspension of the membership comprising the Socialist Party of Michigan and Massachusetts, Locals and Branches throughout the country, together with seven language federations. This has created a condition in our movement that makes it manifestly impossible to longer delay the calling of a convention to organize a new party. Those who realize that the capturing of the Socialist Party as such is but an empty victory will not hesitate to respond to this call and leave the "right" and "center" to sink together with their leaders.

No other course is possible; therefore, we, the National Left Wing Council and the National Organization Committee, call a convention to meet in the city of Chicago on September 1st, 1919, for the purpose of organizing a Communist Party in America.

This party will be founded upon the following principles:

1. The present is the period of the dissolution and collapse of the whole capitalist world system, which will mean the complete collapse of world culture, if Capitalism with its unsolvable contradictions is not replaced by Communism.

2. The problem of the proletariat consists in organizing and training itself for the conquest of the powers of the state. This conquest of power means the replacement of the state machinery of the bourgeoisie with a new proletarian machinery of government.

3. This new proletarian state must embody the dictatorship of the proletariat, both industrial and agricultural, this dictatorship constituting the instrument for the taking over of property used for exploiting the workers, and for the re-organization of society on a communist basis.

Not the fraudulent bourgeois democracy—the hypocritical form of the rule of the finance-oligarchy, with its purely formal equality—but proletarian democracy based on the possibility of actual realization of freedom for the working masses; not capitalist bureaucracy, but organs of administration which have been created by the masses themselves, with the real participation of these masses in the government of the country and in the activity of the communistic structure—this should be the type of the proletarian state. The Workers' Councils and similar organizations represent its concrete form.

4. The Dictatorship of the Proletariat shall carry out the abolition of private property in the means of production and distribution, by transfer to the proletarian state under Socialist administration of the working class; nationalization of the great business enterprises and financial trusts.

5. The present world situation demands the closest relation between the revolutionary proletariat of all countries.

6. The fundamental means of the struggle for power is the mass action of the proletariat, a gathering together and concentration of all its energies; whereas methods such as the revolutionary use of bourgeois parliamentarism are only of subsidiary significance.

In those countries in which the historical development has furnished the opportunity, the working class has

utilized the regime of political democracy for its organization against Capitalism. In all countries where the conditions for a worker's revolution are not yet ripe, the same process will go on.

But within the process the workers must never lose sight of the true character of bourgeois democracy. If the finance-oligarchy considers it advantageous to veil its deeds of violence behind parliamentary votes, then the capitalist power has at its command, in order to gain its ends, all the traditions and attainments of former centuries of upper class rule, demagogism, persecution, slander, bribery, calumny and terror. To demand of the proletariat that it shall be content to yield itself to the artificial rules devised by its mortal enemy, but not observed by the enemy, is to make a mockery of the proletarian struggle for power—a struggle which depends primarily on the development of separate organs of the working class power.

7. The old Socialist International has broken into three main groups: (a) Those frankly social patriots, who since 1914 have supported their bourgeoisie and transformed those elements of the working class which they control into hangmen of the international revolution.

(b) The "Center," representing elements which are constantly wavering and incapable of following a definite plan of action, and which are at times positively traitorous; and

(c) The Communists.

As regards the social patriots, who everywhere in the critical moment oppose the proletarian revolution with force of arms, a merciless fight is absolutely necessary. As regards the "Center" our tactics must be to separate the revolutionary elements by pitilessly criticizing the leaders. Absolute separation from the organization of the "center" is necessary.

8. It is necessary to rally the groups and proletarian organizations who, though not as yet in the wake of the revolutionary trend of the Communist movement, nevertheless have manifested and developed a tendency leading in that direction.

Socialist criticism has sufficiently stigmatized the bourgeois world order. The task of the International Communist party is to carry on propaganda for the abolition of this order and to erect in its place the structure of the Communist world order. Under the Communist banner, the emblem under which the first great victories have already been won; in the war against imperialistic barbarity, against the privileged classes, against the bourgeois state and bourgeois property, against all forms of social and national oppression—we call upon the proletariat of all lands to unite!

Program of the Call

1. We favor international alliance of the Communist Party of the United States only with the Communist groups of other countries, such as the Bolsheviks of Russia, Spartacans of Germany, etc., according to the program of Communism as above outlined.

2. We are opposed to association with other groups not committed to the revolutionary class struggle, such as Labor parties, Non-Partisan leagues, People's Councils, Municipal Ownership Leagues and the like.

3. We maintain that the class struggle is essentially a political struggle by the proletariat to conquer the capitalist state, whether its form be monarchistic or democratic-republican, and to destroy and replace it by a governmental structure adapted to the Communist transformation.

4. The Party shall propagandize class-conscious industrial unionism as against the craft form of unionism, and shall carry on party activity in co-operation with industrial disputes that take on a revolutionary character.

5. We do not disparage voting nor the value of success in electing our candidates to public office—not if these are in direct line with the class struggle. The trouble comes with the illusion that political or industrial immediate achievements are of themselves steps in the revolution, the progressive merging of Capitalism into the Co-operative Commonwealth.

The basis of our political campaign should be:

(a) To propagandize the overthrow of Capitalism by proletarian conquest of the political power and the establishment of a Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

(b) To maintain a political organization as a clearing house for proletarian thought, a center of political education for the development of revolutionary working class action.

(c) To keep in the foreground our consistent appeal for proletarian revolution; and to analyze the counter proposals and reformist palliatives in their true light of evasions of the issue; recognizing at all times the characteristic development of the class conflict as applicable to all capitalistic nations.

(d) To propagandize the party organization as the organ of contact with the revolutionary proletariat of other lands, the basis for international association being the same political understanding and the common plan of action, tending toward increasing unity in detail as the international crisis develops.

6. Communist platforms, proceeding on the basis of the class struggle, recognizing that the Socialist movement has come into the historic period of the social revolution, can contain only the demand for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

(a) The basis of this demand should be thoroughly explained in the economic, political and social analysis of the class struggle, as evolving within the system of Capitalism.

(b) The implication of this demand should be illustrated by the first steps and general modes of social reconstruction dependent upon and involved within the proletarian domination of the political life of the nation.

(c) A municipal platform of Communism cannot proceed on a separate basis, but must conform to the general platform, simply relating the attainment of local power to the immediate goal of gaining national power. There are no separate city problems within the terms of the

class struggle, only the one problem of capitalist versus proletarian domination.

7. We realize that the coming of the social revolution depends on an overwhelming assertion of mass power by the proletariat, taking on political consciousness and the definite direction of revolutionary socialism. The manifestations of this power and consciousness are not subject to precise pre-calculation. But the history of the movement of the proletariat toward emancipation since 1900 shows the close connection between the revolutionary proletarian assertion and the political mass strike.

The mass action conception looks to the general unity of the proletarian forces under revolutionary provocation and stimulus. In the preliminary stages, which alone come within our pre-determination and party initiative, the tactic of mass action includes all mass demonstrations and mass struggles which sharpen the understanding of the proletariat as to the class conflict and which separate the revolutionary proletariat into a group distinct from all others.

Mass action, in time of revolutionary crisis, or in the analogous case of large scale industrial conflict, naturally accepts the Council form of organization for its expression over a continued period of time.

8. Applying our declarations of party principle to the organization of the party itself, we realize the need, in correspondence with the highly centralized capitalist power to be combated, of a centralized party organization.

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Organizations endorsing the principles and program outlined above as a tentative basis for the organization

For the National Left Wing Council,

I. E. FERGUSON, Sec'y.

For the National Organization Committee,

DENNIS E. BATT, Sec'y.

On all matters relating to the Communist Convention, address:
1221 Blue Island Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.



of a Communist Party are invited to send delegates to the Convention at Chicago on September first, 1919.

The basis of representation to be one delegate for every organization and one additional for every additional 500 members or major fraction thereof.

Provided, that States which are organized and endorsing this call shall send delegates as States. In States which are not organized the organized locals accepting this call shall send delegates as locals. In locals which are not organized a part of the local may send delegates.

Provided further, that organizations composed of less than 251 members shall be given fractional votes; and provided that the total vote for each State represented at the Convention shall not exceed one, plus one per five hundred members or major fraction thereof.

Organizations sending delegates will be assessed Fifty Dollars for each delegate. This fund will be applied to equalize the railroad fare of all delegates to the Convention. Organizations having less than 251 members which are unable to pay all of this amount (\$50.00) are urged to send delegates. A special fund will be created to defray their traveling expenses. Expenses other than railroad fares will be paid by the organizations sending delegates. In the event the delegates are not provided with funds for rooms and meals effort will be made to assist them.

Do not fail to be represented at this historic Convention. All delegates, either directly or through their local secretaries, are requested to communicate with the National Secretary immediately following their election. Uniform credential blanks will be furnished.