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# Minutes of the Central Executive Committee, of the Communist Party of America: Chicago — November 15-18, 1919.

A document in the Comintern Archive, RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 7. ll. 7-? (first part); d. 31, ll. 1-5 (second part);  
Second copy in Theodore Draper Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, box 32.

## *Meeting of [Saturday] Nov. 15 [1919].*

Present: Dirba, Fraina, Ferguson, Bittelman, Elbaum, Hourwich, Karosas, Cohen, Schwartz, Tyverovsky, and Ruthenberg.

Absent: Lovestone, Petras, and Wicks (Wicks in jail).

Report of the Executive Secretary [Ruthenberg] was read.†

*Motion:* That we take up the matters listed in the summary of the report in the following order:

1. Communist Labor Party reply and unity resolutions.
2. International Relations.
3. Relations with Soviet Bureau.
4. Organization Problems.
5. Finnish and Scandinavian Federations.
6. Printing Plant and Party Press.
7. Attitude toward Industrial Unionism and Councils.
8. Correspondence regarding YPCL.
9. New Business.

### **[Communist Labor Party.]**

Reply of the Communist Labor Party in answer to our statement on unity read, together with resolutions from branches at Cambridge, Mass., CP; Belaire, O., CLP; Neffs, O., unaffiliated; Los Angeles, Calif., CP; Boston, Mass., CP — all urging unity.

*Motion (by Hourwich):* That we reaffirm our opposition to unity with the Communist Labor Party

as a party on account of fundamental differences in principle and that we elect a committee of 5 to draft a reply to the latest statement of the CLP.

**Voting Yes:** Bittelman, Cohen, Dirba, Elbaum, Hourwich, Karosas, Fraina, Ruthenberg, Schwartz, and Tyverovsky. [10]

**Voting No:** Ferguson. [1]

*Motion:* That we elect a committee of 3 on CLP and unity, a committee of 3 to draw a declaration regarding the unification of the strikes, and a committee of 2 to draft an appeal to the Finnish and Scandinavian Federations.

Fraina, [Fritz] Friedman, and Hourwich elected committee on CLP Statement.

Cohen, Fraina, and Ruthenberg elected committee on Strike Declaration.

*Motion:* That we adjourn at 10:30 pm.

*Carried* by vote of 6 Yes and 4 No.

### **[Printing Plant.]**

*Motion (by Tyverovsky):* That the Executive Council be authorized to purchase a printing plant.

*Carried unanimously.*

*Motion:* That the allowance to the members of the committee for expenses attending meetings be railroad fare and \$5.00 per day.

*Carried.*

The meeting then adjourned.

†- This report is available separately as a downloadable document from [www.marxisthistory.org](http://www.marxisthistory.org) entitled "Report of the Executive Secretary of the CPA: Submitted to the Central Executive Committee at Meeting of November 15, 1919," by C.E. Ruthenberg.

**Meeting of Nov. 16 [1919].**

Cohen elected chairman.

The subject of International Relations was next taken up. Comrade Fraina submitted a verbal report, suggesting action on the following subjects:

1. Joint Statement Regarding Intervention in Mexico with the Mexican Communist Party.
2. International representation.
3. Report to the International.
4. [Ludwig] Martens' Bureau.

*Motion:* That we take up the Report to the International first.

*Carried.*

*Motion:* That the original and revised report be read.

*Amendment:* That a committee of 2 be elected to go over the report [to the CI] and bring in a report.

*Amendment lost, motion carried.*

*Motion:* That no speaker be allowed to speak more than twice and be given 5 minutes first time and 3 minutes second time.

*Carried.*

It was found that the revised Report to the International was not at hand and a motion carried to pass on to International Representation.

**[International Relations & the CI.]**

*Motion:* That all correspondence in regard to International Relations be read.

*Carried.*

The Executive Secretary [Ruthenberg] read a letter addressed to the chairman of the Communist International [Grigorii Zinoviev], stating that this letter together with a copy of the *Manifesto, Program and Constitution, and Report to the International* had been placed in the hands of a South Slavic comrade who was leaving for Europe. Later it was decided to hold

†- The four "International Delegates" elected by the Founding Convention of the CPA (Sept. 1-7, 1919) were: I.E. Ferguson, Nicholas Hourwich, C.E. Ruthenberg, and Alexander Stoklitsky.

up this letter but the Secretary could not state definitely whether this had been accomplished.

Comrade Fraina gave an outline of letter received from [Nathan] Chabrow.

**[Delegates to ECCL.]**

*Motion:* That we send a representative to the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, reported to be held in December [1919] and to the Congress of the Communist International, and if there be no such meeting of the Executive Committee that a representative be sent to establish relations with Europe.

*Amendment:* That we send a representative to the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Communist International and representatives to the Congress of the Communist International.

After discussion, the mover of the original motion stated the motion to be as follows: That the Communist Party send a representative or representatives to Europe to make contact with the movement there and to attend the meeting of the Communist International.

*The amendment was first voted upon and lost.*

The vote was next taken on the motion, with the following result:

**Voting Yes:** Bittelman, Cohen, Dirba, Elbaum, Hourwich, Karosas, Tyverovsky, Fraina. (8)

**Voting No:** Ferguson, Ruthenberg, Schwartz. [3]

*Motion:* That the International Secretary [Fraina] leave for Europe at once and that the other 4 delegates leave in time to attend the Congress of the Communist International. †

*Amendment:* That we send the International Secretary and 2 delegates to Europe.

*Amendment to the Amendment:* That the choice of 2 delegates be made from the delegates and the alternates.

*Substitute:* That we send 2 delegates, the International Secretary and done other.

*Substitute lost* by a vote of 4 Yes and 7 No.

*Amendment to Amendment lost,* 3 Yes and 8 No. (Comrade Wicks arrived at this point.)

*Amendment carried*, 8 Yes and 3 No.

*Motion as amended carried*, 10 Yes and 2 Not Voting.

*Motion:* That we proceed to select the 2 delegates to attend the Congress.

*Carried.*

Discussion of which delegates should go.

A roll call ballot was taken, resulting in 9 votes for Hourwich, 9 for Ruthenberg, 4 for Stoklitsky, and 2 for Ferguson.

*Motion:* That our vote to limit the number of delegates to be sent to Europe not limit our representation in case any other delegate is in Europe.

*Carried.*

*Motion:* That alternates be taken from the other two in order of their vote.

*Amendment:* That in case Hourwich is unable to go Stoklitsky shall replace him and if Ruthenberg is unable to go Ferguson shall replace him.

*Amendment carried.*

*Motion:* That any International Delegates who are not on the party payroll be placed on the payroll from the time of starting the trip.

*Carried.*

*Motion:* That \$750.00 be appropriated for use by the International Secretary to finance his trip.

*Carried.*

The meeting was then adjourned until 4 o'clock.

### ***Afternoon Meeting, Nov. 16 [1919].***

Present: Same as before, except Wicks and Bittelman.

#### **[Assistant Executive Secretary.]**

*Motion:* That in case of the absence to the Executive Secretary, Comrade Dirba in conjunction with the Executive Council act as Executive Secretary.

*Carried.*

*Motion:* That if both Ferguson and Fraina are unable to act, that Ruthenberg have the editorial responsibility.

*Carried.*

#### **[Miscellaneous Business.]**

*Motion:* That Comrades Lovestone and Cohen be appointed Associate Editors, to fill vacancies in the order named.

*Carried.*

*Motion:* That Executive Secretary [Ruthenberg] write appeal to the Scandinavian and Finnish Federations.

*Carried.*

*Motion:* That charters be issued to State and District Organizations.

*Carried.*

Telegram from Marion Sproule read, stating that he had declined to speak from the same platform with [Gregory] Weinstein before receipt of direction to that effect from the Executive Council.

*Motion:* That we pay the Convention Reporting Co. for work at Left Wing Conference as we collect the indebtedness from delegates.

*Carried.*

*Motion:* That we ask for the notes of the Communist Party Convention and place these in a safe place.

*Motion:* That we engage a comrade to take charge of the work of organizing Finnish branches.

*Carried.*

*Motion:* That we endorse action of Executive Council regarding Young People's Communist Leagues and proceed with the work of organizing same.

*Carried.*

*Motion:* That the Convention Resolution regarding "Woman" be referred to the Executive Council for revision.

*Carried.*

The meeting then adjourned.

C.E. Ruthenberg. †

### **Next Physical Meeting.**

Motion carried that the Central Executive Committee's next meeting be held on January 17th, 1920.

### **Resignation of Petros from CEC.**

Comrade Petros resigning from the CEC, Comrade Rose Pastor Stokes takes the place as the first of the alternates.

Adjourn to meet Monday at 10:00 am.

### ***Monday, November 17th [1919].***

Meeting came to order at 11:45 am with 10 members present.

Appeal of the Russian comrade expelled by the Federation, ruled out of order.

### **Report of Committee on Communist Labor Party.**

Declaration as drawn up by the committee read. Motion to table lost. Motion to take up the declaration as a basis for discussion carried. Motion to add Bittelman and Elbaum to the committee to revise declaration carried.

### **Declaration on the Present Unrest in the US.**

Report of committee read.

*Motion:* To discuss the present situation and draw up resolution setting forth the situation and what are the steps to be taken.

*Amendment:* To elect a committee of 3 to draw up the resolution and leave the drawing up of the proclamation to the Executive Council.

*Motion carried as amended.*

Fraina, Bittelman, and Cohen constitute committee.

The floor was then given to the MESSENGER FROM NEW YORK.

*Motion carried,* in view of changed conditions and to economize with party workers, to reconsider yesterday's motion electing Lovestone Associate Editor.

*Motion carried* that the decision remain as made yesterday.

### ***Afternoon Session, Monday, Nov. 17th.***

Eight members present.

*Motion carried* that the Executive Council be instructed to draw up a declaration against intervention in Mexico, to be sent to the Mexican Communist Party to be made a joint declaration.

*Motion carried* to take up the Soviet Bureau question.

### **Soviet Bureau Question.**

Two propositions were presented, one declaring for control of the Soviet Bureau and one for coordination.

*Motion carried* to refer the first proposition declaring for control to a committee to draw up a resolution.

Fraina, Hourwich, and Cohen elected.

†- The copy in the Comintern archive abruptly terminates here, with a second section including the last 2 days of meetings filed in another archival folder. A second example of the same minutes in the Theodore Draper Papers at Stanford University is complete. There is no secretarial signature on the Draper copy, but the Comintern Archive copy is handsigned by Charles Dirba.

### [Appeal of Russian Member Expelled.]

The question of the expulsion of the Russian comrade was then taken up and a committee of 3 constituted (Stoklitsky, Schwartz, and Dirba) to hear the comrade and report back to the committee.

*Motion carried* that the New York members be asked to collect all pamphlets from Europe and make typewritten copies of them.

### Michigan Question.

Executive Committee members reported the Proletarian University, not controlled by the party, routing speakers outside of Michigan.

Rochester local [of Proletarian University] refused to apply for charter [from CPA].

Speakers for the Proletarian University discussing the "Michigan program" and the program of the party.

Grand Rapids branch [of the CPA] sent in resolution preferring the Michigan program as against the Communist Party program.

German Liebknecht branch [of the CPA] in Detroit sending in a resolution declaring for the Michigan program as against the program of the Communist Party.

*Motion carried unanimously* to expel the Grand Rapids branch and German Liebknecht branch of Detroit.

*Motion:* That no member of the Communist Party should be a teacher or director of the Proletarian University or the Proletarian Clubs as long as their activities are not controlled by the party and go against the party principles.

*Amendment:* Any member refusing to abide by this decision shall be expelled from the party.

*Amendment to the amendment was carried* as follows: "In view of the fact that the Proletarian University and Clubs are engaged in propaganda contrary to the Communist Party program, principles, and organization, no party member shall teach, be member of, or in any way promote the activities of the Proletarian University and Clubs."

*Motion carried* to instruct the Executive Council to enforce Article 3, Section 9 in relation to the magazine The Proletarian.

*Motion carried* to instruct the Executive Council to immediately send an organizer to Michigan and other places in question.

*Motion:* To adjourn to reconvene at 3 pm Tuesday [Nov. 18, 1919] and all committees to have reports complete by that time.

*Amendment:* Members of committees to be here and work at 11 am.

*Motion carried as amended.*

### Tuesday, November 18th [1919].

Meeting called to order at 4:15 pm with 9 members present.

### Report of Special Committee on Expelled Russian Comrade.

Committee finds that the comrade can be trusted and that he can be very valuable in establishing connections; that it recommends to give him correspondent credentials for that purpose, if necessary.

*Motion:* Not to concur in the report as to the giving of the credentials.

*Motion carried to table the whole matter.*

### Report of Committee on Soviet Bureau.

Report read.

Comrade Fraina offered substitute.

*Motion carried* to take up the substitute resolution seriatim.

*Motion carried* to adopt substitute as a whole with a few minor changes accepted by the committee.

Tyverovsky voting against and filing explanation of his vote.

*Motion carried* to adjourn to reconvene at 8:30 pm.

[Tuesday Night, November 18th.]

### **Report of Committee on Communist Labor Party.**

Declaration offered by committee read and adopted, [Isaac] Ferguson voting against it.

### **Report of Committee on Present Unrest.**

*Motion carried* to return the declaration of the committee for rewriting same in line with the changes and discussion, and to make the analytical part more complete, and to include a statement for mass action.

*Motion carried* that the International Secretary [Louis Fraina] and International Delegates [Ferguson, Hourwich, Ruthenberg, Stoklitsky] constitute the Committee for Revision of the Report of the International Secretary to the Third International, and that the revised report be submitted to the Third International and be published in the party press as the official report.

*Motion carried* that the delegates to the International Congress be instructed to present a resolution dealing with the question of Industrial Unionism in relation to Communism according to the program of the Communist Party of America.

*Motion:* That this committee be instructed to enter protest against the Soviet Bureau against their employees being allowed to work against the Communist Party and to demand that they cease and that it take this question up with the Soviet Government if there is no response to this demand.

### **The Industrial Workers of the World Question.**

*Motion carried* to refer the whole question to a Committee of 3 (Fraina, Ferguson, and Bittelman) to report to the next meeting of the Central Executive Committee and that in the meantime the matter be discussed in the party press.

Motion carried that the Executive Council be instructed to issue a declaration to the membership in the name of the Central Executive Committee on the

following points:

1. Attack of the government upon the Communist Party.
2. Strengthening the organization.
3. Communist Party shop branches.
4. Distribution of leaflets.
5. The propaganda classes.

*Motion carried* that the question of establishing party schools be referred to the Executive Council with a view of working out plans and collecting suggestions from other members, to report back to the next meeting of the Central Executive Committee.

### **Party Press.**

*Motion carried* that the Executive Council be authorized to secure comrades for work on *The Communist* as the third man.†

*Motion lost* that on the demand of 3 editors of any party papers the Executive Council should call a meeting of party editors.

*Motion carried* that the Executive Council instruct the editors of all party publications to send translations of articles of general interest to the editors of *The Communist* and that editors of *The Communist* should distribute copies of such articles for publication to all the party papers.

*Motion carried* to recall the decision of the Executive Council as to the newspapers of the newly created language federations. If in the process of organizing a new language federation the CEC or the Executive Council deem it necessary to start a paper in the language of that federation, it should give this paper into the hands of that federation when it will be strong enough to take it over, or at the request of the federation, or to the next convention of that federation.

*Motion carried* that the national Executive Council request the German state organization of Ohio to turn their paper Echo over to the National Committee to become the organ of the German Federation, in accordance with the motion just passed.

### **[Translator-Secretaries.]**

On the question of Translator-Secretaries, a *motion was carried* that any federation can combine with

the duties of their Translator-Secretaries the duties of organizer, or any other duties for the federation, performance of which duties in these cases should be considered as part of the duties of the Translator-Secretaries; but that the work of the Translator-Secretaries should still be primarily under the control of the Executive Council and the Executive Secretary of the Communist Party.

Tyverovsky goes on record that this is against the constitution of the party.

**[On Mass Demonstrations.]**

*Motion:* That no local or any other party of the Communist Party shall have the right to call general political strikes or organize mass demonstrations <*illeg. inserted words*> without the consent of the Central Executive Committee.

*Amendment:* Part referring to mass demonstrations to be stricken out.

*Amendment carried by vote of 5 to 4.*

*Motion as amended lost by vote of 6 to 2.*

**[Miscellaneous Business.]**

*Motion carried* to contribute \$100.00 to the organization work of the State Organization of Minnesota.

*Motion carried* that Hourwich come to Chicago for Friday [Nov. 21, 1919] to carry out the work left to him as one of the International Delegates.

Tyverovsky voted against.

*Motion carried* that the matter of completing report on the present unrest be left to the Executive Council.

*Motion carried* to adjourn.

*Charles Dirba,*  
Assistant Secretary.

*Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.*

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