
Letter to the Central Executive Committee of the United Communist Party in New York from Max Bedacht [“James A. Marshall”], Representative of the UCP to ECCI in Moscow, May 18, 1921.

Document in the Comintern Archive, RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 39, ll. 47-49.

May 18, 1921.

Dear Friends:—

If you would have made the same efforts, with a display of the same consistency, that you are employing in showing me that I am guilty of neglect of duty for not writing often enough, for being frozen in or sleeping, toward your former representatives here, you might have succeeded in getting a report out of them at least once in 6 months. I want to have it understood that neither myself nor Mr. Morton [Oliver Carlson] are neglecting their duty, are sleeping, nor dopping around.† We are doing our regular work, every day, as conscientiously as if you were watching over us. Your letters of “appreciation” will in no way succeed in altering anything in the status quo. I have already told you, and I repeat it here, that a report, sometimes short and sometimes longer, has been sent to you every week — at least 1 every week — since our departure. I repeat again that Mr. M. [Carlson] and myself are busy in translating reports, which must be ready for the general stockholders’ meeting [CI World Congress]. I know very well what I have been sent here for, and have enough sense of duty to live up to expectations without somebody continuously step-



ping upon my toes to remind me of it. As to write-ups that you may possibly expect from us, let me say that the main office [the ECCI apparatus] has complained about in the most unmistakable terms about our publications dealing with all questions at hand too much in the abstract. Having no material whatever about home affairs, I could only contribute some more of those abstractions.

With a grand gesture you “instruct” me to write to “our” address and not to Scott’s [Karlis

†- Oliver C. Carlson, former Secretary of the Young Peoples’ Socialist League who became a key Young Communist leader, was in Moscow to attend the 2nd World Congress of the Young Communist International, held from June 9-23, 1921.

Janson's]. Maybe I can make you understand how that complaint makes me feel if I state here the facts. When I left, I was given 4 addresses, one for parcels in the city of D-7 [Chicago], one for cables (by the way, a very questionable address), and two for mail. One of them is the same that you wrote me not to use anymore. Up to the receipt of the correction of my addresses list, I have sent *all* my mail to one of these two addresses, excepting two letters, which were sent to the Schwartz [=???] address. The letter address I have not used anymore for a long time, because I have lost the book in which it was noted, and I was not sure any more of the number. After I lost this notebook, I wrote to you for new addresses. In the meantime, however, I received from you a letter in which you state that it does not seem necessary to you to give me new cable addresses, because, as Scott [Janson] has informed you, several such addresses are in possession of the main office [the ECCI apparatus]. I have sent 3 cables since I am here, one containing the decision of the Board of Directors [ECCI], one in answer to a request to get the main office [ECCI] to confirm the 5 conditions,† and one in answer to a cable about the chairmanship.‡ All of these cables I have simply turned over to the foreign department of the main office [the CI apparatus], telling them to send them to one of the addresses known to them as per Scott [Janson] and as per your letter. Must I understand that you want to raise hell with me for having followed your advice in using Scott's [Janson's] addresses in default of you sending others? If that is the case, I frankly tell you that I am not in the mood to appreciate such a joker. I am fully aware that I am not the representative of Scott [Janson], I have never pretended to be, and never acted as such.

Your instruction to get the OK of the main office [ECCI apparatus] to the conditions of the AA [for the forthcoming Joint Unity Convention] have meanwhile lost their value. I received a cablegram to the same effect, and thought it was from you. The Board of Directors [ECCI], as a whole as well as the most influential members individually, absolutely and irrevocably refuse to have anything more to do with the matter. As far as they did favor us with any answer, it is only this: "We have acted in the matter, the rest is up to you." I have done whatever could be done. After the receipt of this cablegram, there was only one thing left, and that is to follow the advice of the Secretary of the Board of Directors [Zinoviev?] and come to an agreement with Mr. Nicol [Nicholas Hourwich], the representative of the competing concern [CPA]. The AA [American Agency] had full power and did not understand to use it. Had the instructions, which they finally agree upon to give, been given 3 months or so ago, and had the AA [American Agency] then, instead of asking the Board of Directors [ECCI] to OK this, asked that same body to throw out the disobedient bunch, all trouble would have been settled. I did what was left to do and refuse to be held responsible for the faults and mistakes of others. I conferred with Mr. Nicol [Hourwich] and was damn glad when I succeeded in bringing about an agreement on two points, which were sent to you by cable.§ To show you the willingness of the members of the Board of Directors [ECCI] to again take up any phase of the matter, I may tell you again that even our combined efforts — Mr. Nicol's [Hourwich's] and mine — did not succeed in inducing this body to take action in conformity with the second point. Thus we were compelled to again

†- Reference is to 5 preconditions for unity which AA member Janson attempted to impose upon the forthcoming Joint Unity Convention. On April 21, 1921, CPA rep Nicholas Hourwich and Bedacht agreed that the conditions were not germane and cabled this back to the two parties in America, stating only that an equal count of delegates and a neutral chairman were all that was required.

‡- This last was a cable signed by Hourwich and Bedacht that Shachno Epstein ("Arthur Staly") was being dispatched to America to serve as the neutral chairman of the Joint Unity Convention, but noting that he would probably not arrive soon enough to actually fulfill that duty. In the end, Dr. Jacob Hartman served as neutral chairman of the convention.

§- That is: equal delegate representation between parties and an independent, non-factional chairman for the Joint Unity Convention.

come to a new agreement, which resulted in my last cable to you. These agreements, which were cabled to you, were reached per instructions and not at the initiation of Mr. Nichol [Hourwich] or myself. The last cable received by me, stating that an agreement had been signed by all parties concerned, seems to settle the matter so far that your last instructions would not need to be carried out, even if the climate were more favorable. You ask me that you want to know what I am doing in the situation which confronts us. The above is the answer to this question.

In the matter of money I again tell you that it is ABSOLUTELY IMPOSSIBLE to do anything. Not only are the present conditions in America in the way, but even otherwise the Main Office [CI] is somewhat reluctant to unhesitatingly consider all demands for money. Some of the branch offices [national parties] have overdone the thing so much that a plan is now being considered to change the procedure in regard to financial transactions completely. I have made requests for the support of our wounded [legal defense of prisoners]. I was permitted this support, but it is impossible to find out now whether it was ever passed. By what I see in your letter in regard to the AA [American Agency], it rather seems that it did pass. If the money was turned over to the AA, it would only be in conformity with their new policy in this matter.

As to your command, "Hit hard and often," I want to say that with our dead between hammer and anvil, such a policy would certainly put on the finishing touches.

I have told you again and again that you base many of your plans and instructions upon a misconception of the character of this concern [nature of the CI]. Our previous representatives have failed to inform us in this respect. I, therefore, give you here as much information as I can, without overstepping the nature of such a report:

Firstly, the Board of Directors [ECCI] is the supreme body, is fully conscious of that, and is

influenced in its actions neither by threats nor by any other method.

Secondly, in the Board of Directors [ECCI] there are *never* discussed any details.

Thirdly, the body meets only about every 3 weeks, and then only for a session of about 6 to 8 hours. This alone can prove to you the impossibility of discussing or taking up any details. The body is concerned with POLICIES, and WITH POLICIES ONLY.

Fourthly, the matters discussed at the meetings of the Board of Directors [ECCI] are not the choice of its members but are prepared by the Small Bureau, which generally meets the day previously.

Of course, this does not mean that our grievances in regards to the AA [American Agency] and other things cannot and will not be brought to the attention of responsible officials. However, the principle involved in this question is one that will have to be settled after the report of amalgamation reached here. Up to that time a complaint about duality of authority is answered by an accusation that it was the American branch office [Communist movement], which consciously and intentionally continued a duality [between the CPA and UCP], and compelled the main office [CI] to set up its own agency over both. After the settlement of our own duality, I, or whomever will represent the amalgamated concern after the completion of amalgamation, will be able to settle that matter and settle it satisfactorily. This especially refers to the questions contained in the copy of your letter sent to me, dated April 19th [1921], addressed to Scott [Janson], AA [American Agency].

The TU report bears on its face the AA as its father, and I cannot and would not like to claim it for us. Your Ind. Dept. [Industrial Department, the party's trade union section] should have taken up the statistical material contained in this report, prepared its own report for the Board of Directors [ECCI] here. The Neg. [Negro] report, that

you have signalled to me over a month ago to come with the TU people [RILU delegates], is not as yet in my hands. I was just informed by Dixon [Earl Browder] that it was again the AA that worked out the report by using the statistical material to make suggestions and draw conclusions. It will be impossible for us to claim credit as long as we are not able to use all this material gathered by our people, under our supervision, in our own reports. Your representative here [Bedacht], as much as he would possibly like to do that, cannot take it upon himself to use this material as basis for a report drafted by him alone, with conclusions and suggestions by him alone, and then submit them as the report of the whole Branch Office [American party].

As we gather from the papers today, some accident has befallen F. [Fraina?], J. [=???], and Flanagan [???]., this would indicate an epidemical increase in accidents of that kind [mishaps with authorities during transit], a circumstance which induces me to again ask you whether your opti-

mism still prevails and if you are still bent upon sending Brown [=???] and Donald Alden [Ludwig Katterfeld] the same road to hell that so many of our friends travelled before.

In closing I wish to state that I am anxiously waiting for my successor, so I can give up my "cinch" job, in which I am frozen in, do not write any reports, and develop other disagreeable qualities, according to your kind letters of late, so that I may get back to work again.

Yours as ever,

James [Max Bedacht].

Two copies of this are sent to two diff. add.

P.S. I did send one letter, about a week ago, to an address given to me by Dixon [Browder]. This add. may be S. [???] But I had sent so many to the other add. that I thought it advisable to change off.

Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.

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