
**Letter to O.W. Kuusinen, Secretary,
Executive Committee of the Communist
International in Moscow
from John Keracher, National Secretary,
Proletarian Party of America in Chicago,
May 26, 1923.**

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May 26, 1923.

O.W. Kuusinen, Secretary,
General Executive Committee of the
Communist International,
Moscow, Russia.

Dear Comrade:—

On March 29, 1923, there was received by the Proletarian Party of America a communication dated at Moscow, February 19, 1923, purporting to come from the Communist International, signed by “The Executive Committee of the Communist International,” and in essence urging the Proletarian Party to liquidate — its members to be absorbed into the Workers Party of America.

The Executive Committee of the Proletarian Party has given careful consideration to this communication. The step urged upon the Proletarian Party is a very serious one, and possibly will have great influence upon the future development of the communist movement in America. The Proletarian Party therefore feels it is justified in carefully analyzing what it believes to be the reasons that actuate the suggestions contained in your communication.

The second paragraph is an admission that the Workers Party is not the revolutionary mass party of the American working class. It reads as follows:

We call on the members of the Proletarian Party to join the Workers Party, to accept the program, constitution, and

decisions adopted by the last convention of the party [2nd: Dec. 24-26, 1922] and help to develop it into the revolutionary mass party of the American working class.

When this communication says that the Workers Party “already has gained a great influence in the trade unions” and that its members “already have secured control of large bodies of workers,” it displays a very serious lack of knowledge on the part of the authors of the communication, as to the actual status of working class political parties in relation to the labor movement of this country.

It appears to the Executive Committee of the Proletarian Party that the authors of the communication make the mistake of taking at their face value the statements the Workers Party makes concerning itself. As yet no labor body of any consequence in the United States has indicated in any way that it is under the control of the Workers Party. The Proletarian Party does not doubt that the responsibility for such bombastic claims rests upon the executives of the Workers Party, and not upon the Communist International.

These exaggerated claims are typical of the Workers Party and are but indications of the methods and principles which are outstanding characteristics of that organization. Far from having achieved influence in and having gained control of any portion of the labor movement, the WP is following a course which, if unchecked, will add to the discredit of the revolutionists within the organized labor movement of America.

The communication criticizes the Proletarian Party for “attacking” some leaders of the Trade Union

Educational League. The following words are used:

The attitude of members of your party, attacking some of the leaders of the Trade Union Educational League is not a correct one. Even if some of the elements are not communistic, yet this league is conducting one of the most valuable propaganda campaigns in the history of the American trade union movement. The league is assailed by the reactionary trade union bureaucracy and the government authorities. Therefore it is the duty of all Proletarian Party members to cooperate with the endeavors of the left wing so that they will be successful in their work of overthrowing the yellow officialdom of the AF of L and putting militants into leadership.

If members of the Proletarian Party have "attacked" some leaders of the Trade Union Educational League, it has been because they disagreed with the tactics of these individuals. If the Proletarian Party has withdrawn its support from the Trade Union Educational League, it has done so after mature consideration. The Proletarian Party can not accept the position, under the conditions which prevail in America at this time, that criticism of those who aspire to working class leadership should be suspended. Nor does the Proletarian Party confuse, as do the authors of the communication, the Trade Union Educational League with the left wing of the trade unions.

The Proletarian Party will continue in the future as in the past to cooperate with legitimate left wing elements in the trade unions. In this connection we cannot lose sight of the fact that many worthwhile elements in the left of the trade unions are seriously dissatisfied with the tactics of the Trade Union Educational League, which makes cooperation practically impossible.

We keenly appreciate the change of mind which permits this communication to say: "The membership of the Proletarian Party is communistic in thought." This is an agreeable change from the state of mind which existed at the time of the Third Congress of the Communist International [June 22-July 12, 1921], as reported by our delegate [Dennis Batt]. It is quite possible that when the purported authors of this communication acquire a better understanding of the movement in this country, they will be able to see that the Proletarian Party is communistic in action as well as in thought, and may perceive constructive work other than the "purely educational activity," the value of which it is alleged we overestimate.

The Proletarian Party expects to continue its

"valuable educational work in Marxism," and continue to broaden and strengthen those other phases of party activity which are so essential to revolutionary progress. When the authors of this communication say that members of the Proletarian Party "are leaders in central bodies of various large towns," they again indicate their woeful lack of information regarding conditions in America; we would not be guilty of making such a broad statement. We do not believe in lying to ourselves and other communists about the actual state of affairs here. The Proletarian Party has more real influence than other working class parties claiming to be revolutionary, but does not pursue the policy of boastful exaggeration so characteristic of the Workers Party.

While being desirous of cooperating at all times with the work of the Communist International in the struggle against world capitalism, the steps urged upon the Proletarian Party in the communication are so out of harmony with the requirements of the revolutionary movement in America that the Proletarian Party can not bring itself to an acceptance of this unsound proposal.

The Proletarian Party desires to call attention to the fact that it always has been ready to enter into UNITY with other sound revolutionary organizations. We would also draw attention to the fact that the Proletarian Party has submitted to the Workers Party, 3 weeks before the receipt of your communication, a proposal of UNITY upon conditions which were drafted after consideration of the needs of the revolutionary movement in this country. The Executive Committee of the Proletarian Party cannot see any valid reason at this time for receding from its recent actions.

The Proletarian Party is the result of the development of a group which has identified itself in the American labor movement through sound, constructive action, based upon an understanding of Marxism, and the objective conditions of the class struggle in America. The Proletarian Party cannot see why it should renounce sound, constructive, and honorable revolutionary action, and allow itself to be absorbed into a fetid swamp of sentimentalism — the Workers Party, which is fast discrediting itself with the American workers.

Your communication says, "The revolutionary movement demands UNITY." With this statement we are in full accord; but to join the Workers Party, as

you suggest, would not in our opinion constitute COMMUNIST UNITY. The contents of your communication, together with the recent actions of the Workers Party, force us to the conclusion that it is a clumsy maneuver on the part of the latter to deceive the workers into believing that UNITY is desired, while the Workers Party simply aims at the destruction of the Proletarian Party.

The point that we are small in numbers cannot be held against us. All working class parties "claiming to be revolutionary" are small in America at this time. Size after all is but a relative matter. Other organizations that were small have outlived larger groups which sneered at them for being small and sectarian. The growth of *The Proletarian* encourages us to think that the future holds great possibilities for communist service to the working class. It is not so small now as when this communication was addressed to us and quite possibly we will be larger when this reply reaches its destination. The growth of our party is a healthy sign.

We trust that in the near future the Communist International will take the proper steps to achieve COMMUNIST UNITY in America. It can only be

attained with a full knowledge of conditions here, and this knowledge can only be obtained by a thorough investigation and study of conditions as they exist in America, as well as the principles of the different revolutionary groups here.

With best wishes for the success of the Communist International, and assuring you of our deep and sincere desire for real UNITY in America upon a Marxian basis, we remain,

With communist greetings,

The Proletarian Party of America,

John Keracher,
National Secretary.

The Proletarian Party of America,
John Keracher, National Secretary,
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Chicago, Illinois, USA.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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