

---

# Letter to the Executive Committee of the Communist International in Moscow from Max Bedacht in Chicago. [circa April 1924] †

From the English translation of the German original provided by Bedacht to the CEC  
Workers Party. Copy in the Comintern Archive, f. 515, op. 1, d. 313, ll. 78-80.

To the EC of the CI.

Dear Comrades:—

Late developments in our party, the Workers Party of America, make it the duty of every comrade who is interested in the welfare of the party to bring them to the attention of the EC of our International.

My activities in the revolutionary movement give me the right to convey my fears to our general staff. I believe that my position in the Communist movement of the United States enables me to judge the situation. I joined the socialist movement as a young journeyman barber in 1902, and since that time I have faithfully served the movement, without interruption. I was active in the Left Wing movement of the SP of the United States, participated in the formation of the Communist Labor Party, was elected to the CEC of this party at the first congress [Aug. 31-Sept. 5, 1919], and was a member of all successive CECs of the UCP [1920-21], the finally united CP [1921-23], and the WP [1922-24], and I serve on the present CEC of the WP as an alternate. I represented our party at the 3rd [June 22-Aug. 12, 1921] and 4th [Nov. 5-Dec. 5, 1922] Congresses of the CI and also at the [1st] en-

larged session of the Executive in February 1922.

Up to the 4th Congress the American party was a hothouse for internal struggles. Because in the school of the Socialist Party they were never educated in political class action, the struggle between the left and the right was not fought by our members on the basis of revolutionary experience, but on the basis of abstract and scholastic formulas. Every step that our party made could only be made after serious internal struggles, and even then only after eventual interference by the CI. Endless and countless meetings of the Executive Committee were devoted only to the discussion of internal [matters]. And if there was really and truly a problem of the class struggle presented, it was only a starting point for another internal fight. The last internal fight of this sort was, as you doubtless well remember, a struggle for the “legalization” of our party and for a labor party campaign [1921-22].

Although the CI decided on the only correct solution of this problem, the problem was not finally solved in Moscow, nor was it solved after the decision of the CI, but it was solved within the party — and at a time when “geese” and “liquidators” were still merily fighting before the CI. It was solved by the work of Comrade Pepper, through his experience as a po-

†- The CEC Majority (Foster-Cannon-Lore alliance) sent an official letter to the Comintern on March 27, 1924 asking for the formal recall of John Pepper (née Jozsef Pogány) from America. At about the same time, the members of the Pepper-Ruthenberg Minority of the CEC each wrote personal letters to the ECCI in support of Pepper. This letter by Bedacht was probably written at this time. In accord with a decision taken by the 3rd 1924 session of the CEC (March 17-18) — a trip which was spurred by the demand of the CEC Minority to appeal the decided policy of the CEC Majority to higher authority — Pepper, William Z. Foster, and M.J. Olgin were dispatched to Moscow to argue the merits of their various factions’ perspectives on the Labor Party in America. The trio were intended to make their appeal to the ECCI and then stay on to serve as delegates of the Workers Party of America to the 5th World Congress of the Comintern (June 17-July 8, 1924) before returning home. Based on his absence from the CEC in early May, Pepper seems to have departed for Moscow during the month of April 1924. At the conclusion of the 5th World Congress, to the consternation of the CEC Minority, Pepper was not permitted to return to the USA, but was rather assigned other Comintern tasks in Moscow.

litical leader, through his practical experience on the fields of battle, where the storm of the real class struggle was howling around his ears; it was solved finally by the tactfulness of Comrade Pepper. He not only solved the problem of “liquidation,” but he also led the party out of the cave of fruitless scholastic discussions onto the field of political action. On this field the party united in a measure that even the greatest optimist among us would not have thought possible. Yes, as bad as the testimony may be that I thus give our “native” leaders, it must be said: John Pepper, the foreigner, Pepper the foreign intruder, taught the American party and its leaders the forms and conditions of the American class struggle. Comrade Pepper, the stranger from another land, created the first real American literature of present day struggles. All Marxian literature that grew heretofore on American soil dealt either with the gray past or with gray theory. But Comrade Pepper pictured before the American workers the present problems of the class struggle in America. †

The only thing that still breathes a “foreign” air about Comrade Pepper (and the thing that is denounced by the “native” as strange and un-American) is his Marxian clarity and Bolshevist obstinacy with which he leads the party on the road of political action and with which he tries to keep it on this road.

The necessary struggle against left *Prinzipienreiter* [??] and phrase-mongers, however, unduly strengthened the right wing of our party. And today we, who only a short while ago had to appeal for help to the CI in our struggle against leftist paralysis, are compelled to appeal for a decision of the CI against right opportunism.

Together with Comrade Cannon (“Cook”) I participated in the 4th Congress [of the CI] representing the tendency of the “liquidators.” The decision of the CI in our pockets, we hurried home, full of enthusiasm, ready to carry out the difficult task of carrying out the CI decision. But to our surprise we found that the anti-“legal” majority of the Executive Committee had already carried out the program of the “legalists.” And it was Comrade Pepper who had accomplished the seemingly impossible and who had united the party

that was almost split into three parts, on the basis of concrete action into a unified whole.

Upon the returning delegates fell the duty of recognizing the new situation and supporting effectively the Executive Committee. But Comrade Cannon refused to see this duty. He continued to look upon the majority of the Executive Committee in the light of former factional differences. In spite of the changed situation he never for a moment stopped considering the elimination of the old opposition as a desirable goal. Apparently he saw in this opposition not only the handicap of yesterday but also the stumbling block of tomorrow when opportunist plans were to be carried out. Therefore he concentrated his activity to the building of a new majority for the coming convention, which could defeat the hated majority of the Executive Committee and thus could open the doors to opportunism. The result of his endeavors was the last convention of our party [3rd: Dec. 30, 1923-Jan. 2, 1924].

Cannon built a new majority in the party by uniting the extreme right of the party with the “industrialists.” The extreme right in the party is under the leadership of Comrade Ludwig Lore, who uses his position as editor of the *New York Volkszeitung* not for the presentation and defense of the position of the CI, but who, at best, carries on a “benevolent” criticism of the CI. The “industrialists” in our party do not want the work and tactics of the party in the trade unions subordinated to political considerations, but they insist that all political actions of the party be subordinated to their plans in the trade union work. Comrade Foster has overcome his old anti-political tendencies only so far that he does not consider political considerations and activities as all important. The leaders of that group are *Nur-Gewerkschaftler* [Trade Union-Exclusivists]. He [Foster], the leader of the present majority [of the CEC] and thus the leader of the party has never yet, in his two years activity in the party, written a political article, nor has he delivered a political speech. The *circulus viciosis* of his thoughts are the trade unions and the conquest of them. No matter how necessary this work is for our party, it is not its

†- Reference seems to be to Pepper’s pamphlet *For a Labor Party*, the first edition of which was published in October of 1922. This assertion by Bedacht overlooks the fact that under the auspices of the Trade Union Educational League William Z. Foster published one pamphlet on a practical American theme in 1921 (*The Railroaders’ Next Step*) and was writing another (*The Bankruptcy of the American Labor Movement*) at the time Pepper’s Labor Party title was published.

ultimate aim.

Another prominent member of the new majority, Comrade William F. Dunne, represented at one time — when the struggle between the left and the right shook the Socialist Party and finally resulted in the formation of the Communist Party — the Democratic Party in the State Legislature of Montana.

And that is the “New Majority” which, as a result of Comrade Cannon’s endeavors, controls the destinies of our party in the future. The minority of the Executive Committee does everything in its power to keep the ship of our party on its political revolutionary course. The best, clearest, and ablest of the minority is Comrade Pepper. Thus the battle cry of the “New Majority” that Comrade Pepper must be eliminated. This elimination is impossible here, because Comrade Pepper has the confidence of the membership to a high degree. Therefore the fable of Pepper the factionalist was invented. With this issue they are trying to turn the CI into a tool of the opportunists and *Nur-Gewerkschaftler* [Trade Union-Exclusivists] in the American party. The CI is to hang Comrade Pepper.

Comrades: As one of those who has fought against paralytic conditions in our American Executive Committees for three years with little success, as one of those who shudders at the thought that through eliminating the lifeblood of the party the old conditions may be restored, as one of those that fears the

drowning of our party in the swamp of opportunism not less than sectarian paralysis, I address myself to the International Executive with the request to protect our party from these dangers.

The majority today speaks of factionalism. Fortunately that does not exist in the party as yet. But if the recall of Comrade Pepper paralyzes the political and (I say it with convictions) the clear communist tendencies within our party, and if this clear communist tendency in our party will not be strengthened by the action of the CI, then the Right course of the present majority will compromise the communist movement of the world and the Communist International. The clear communist elements in our party will not give up the struggle. But serious factional struggles between loyal fighters of the CI in the United States and the Centrists, in league with the Industrialists, will then be inevitable.

Only serious apprehensions for the future of our party, which has advanced with such rapid strides during the past months, have caused me, together with other comrades, to call your attention to the crisis within our party in personal letters.

With Communist greetings,

Bedacht (“Marshall”).

*Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.*

*Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2006. • Non-commercial reproduction permitted.*

*The content of this document is reproduced with permission of the Reference Center for Marxist Studies (RCMS), New York, NY.*

*For additional reprint information, please contact RCMS.*