
Letter to “J. Kasbeck” in New York from C.E. Ruthenberg in Cleveland, May 14, 1920.

A document in the Hoover Institution Archives, Jay Lovestone Papers, box 195, folder 11.

Cleveland, May 14, 1920.

Dear Comrade Kasbeck:—

I received your letter today and have read it with much interest. In regard to my returning to New York, that is out of the question, as I must proceed to Chicago in a few days to meet with the CLP committee that is to work with us on a joint Manifesto and Program. I only left New York last Saturday [May 8, 1920] and it does not seem to me that any conditions can have arisen that would necessitate my return there in the few days that have elapsed.

About the date of the convention, we made one postponement of one week, and it is now impossible to postpone again. Delegates to District Conventions have been elected in at least three districts and the District Conventions will have been held and delegates to the National Convention elected by the time this letter reaches you. You can readily see that only harm would come from any postponement in these three districts, which are Chicago, Cleveland, and Philadelphia. Chicago is solidly with us in spite of all the efforts of the opposition; Cleveland is 75 to 90% ours, and in Philadelphia we have at least 60%. We would be making a laughing stock of ourselves in these districts if, after the members have acted and elected their delegates to the District and National Convention, we were to go to them and tell them that they must start all over again.

In New York and Boston we must proceed during the week that is left and elect delegates with the participation of as many members as we can get to support us. There is no other way. Comrade Mike [??] had definite instructions about the matter before I left and his letter received at the same time that yours came shows he is carrying them out. I am writing him again about the matter, telling him to hold a District Convention and elect the National Convention delegates, even if only 500 members participate.

I am in touch with Boston. They requested me to come there Saturday and Sunday [May 15-16], but I am unable to do so. I have written them giving instructions to proceed with the organization of a District Convention with such membership action as is possible. I am quite sure these instructions will be followed and that delegates will be elected and sent to the convention, even though only a small proportion of the membership participates. That is the best we can do in that district. It is the fault of the District Committee if there is no opportunity for full participation, for it should have made up its mind some time ago about what it intended to do.

You must realize that this convention no longer depends upon our arrangements alone, but it is also a unity conference with the CLP. Their delegates and ours will meet together and agree upon principles and program and constitution, and if there is such agreement the two bodies will unite. The date was agreed upon with them and

we cannot change it now without a great deal of confusion.

There is still another reason why we must have this convention quickly. We are at present without any governing committee for our faction. I am acting alone, merely conferring with different persons on important matters. This is a source of weakness. We must have a responsible committee to represent us. It is neither fair to me, nor a proper arrangement to force me to make all the decisions for our group individually. In spite of the view of the "majority," I don't want to be the party. The convention will organize our group, with possibly the CLP included.

This convention does not necessarily mean that the fight is over. The present struggle will go on before the membership after the convention even as it is going on now, only we will be much stronger. We will be definitely organized. We will have a clear-cut declaration of principles that will not be subject to attack. We will be able to say this is what we stand for and this is our committee.

We will still be able to deal with the Andrews [Nicholas Hourwich] group after the convention. We can lay down the terms on which they can join the united party at the convention. If we take such action we will be the stronger group

— we will stand in relation to them as the CP did toward the CLP during the last seven months.

There is no hope of our coming to an agreement with the "majority" group for a united convention. I have received the Jewish Federation resolution. It would never be accepted by the "majority" group. They have refused to negotiate with us until after we withdraw our convention call and of course I refused to take any such action until after we had come to an agreement in regard to the joint call. I have given up any hope of arriving at an agreement with the Andrews [Hourwich] and Bernstein [Max Cohen]. We must fight it out to a finish. The convention is our strong hope and we must have it quickly.

I hope, therefore, you will turn all your efforts during the next week into making the New York District Convention a success. This is not the time for wavering. We must act and we will win.

I am sending a remittance to Comrade Mike [??] with instructions to take the financial matter up with you.

Fraternally yours,

[C.E. Ruthenberg]
Executive Secretary.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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