
Report of the Finnish Translator-Secretary to the Socialist Party National Convention [May 1912]

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To the Socialist Party National Convention, 1912:

The organizing of the Finns into the Socialist party was mainly begun in 1902 and 1903, and during the years following there were scores of Finnish locals and branches organized. But the movement was weak until our present form of national organization, composed of all Finnish locals and branches of the Socialist Party, was started in 1906 and the Translator's office established at the party's national headquarters beginning with the year 1907. At the beginning there were 53 branches in the organization with membership of about 2,000. With this small but promising group of units and members our organization was then heartily recognized by the Socialist Party, through its National Executive Committee and National Secretary, and a space for our Translator in the national headquarters was arranged for. Of course, we had to have our own office fixtures, pay rent for the space, and compensate our Translator-Secretary, but the simple recognition and the moral and advisory aid given to us by the Socialist Party was of great help to our organization when added to the praiseworthy enthusiasm in the rank and file. From May 1908, we have had the office space free, and from October 1910, the Translator's wages have been paid by the national office. The continuous growth of our organization will be best seen by the following figures as shown by the records in the Translator's office. The average paid-up membership per month and the number of locals in good standing at the end of each year respectively has been as follows:

1907 — 133 locals — membership 2,928

1908 — 160 locals — membership 3,960
1909 — 180 locals — membership 5,384
1910 — 173 locals — membership 7,767
1911 — 217 locals — membership 9,139
1912 — 223 locals — membership 11,483
(1912 figures as of April 30, 1912)

The figures showing the financial transaction of the Translator's office during the same period are as follows:

In 1907 — Total receipts, \$7,329.52; receipts for party dues, \$4,128.36. Total expenditures, \$6,545.45; for state and national dues, \$3,570.13.

In 1908 — Total receipts, \$10,069.82; receipts for party dues, \$4,770.45. Total expenditures, \$9,964.74; for national dues, \$1,939.40; for state dues, \$2,121.09.

In 1909 — Total receipts, \$15,645.94; receipts for party dues, \$6,087.00. Total expenditures, \$15,208.79; for national dues, \$76.10; for state dues \$2,862.63.

In 1910 — Total receipts, \$18,836.34; receipts for party dues, \$8,332.25. Total expenditures, \$18,824.39; for national dues \$3,539.50; for state dues \$4,135.89.

In 1911 — Total receipts, \$20,646.46; receipts for party dues, \$9,469.52. Total expenditures, \$19,578.56; for national dues, \$4,604.80; for state dues, \$4,755.55.

In 1912 (up to and including April 30) — Total receipts, \$11,315; receipts for party dues, \$4,087.80. Total expenditures, \$9,902.57; for national dues,

\$1,993.70; for state dues, \$2,094.10.

Besides the receipts and disbursements for party dues the financial transactions consist mainly of the following: Special monthly assessment of 5 cents per member, collected for agitation and organization purposes, which has been permanent during the whole life of our organization and which is required from every affiliated branch; special assessments and donations for the Finnish College; special yearly assessments to our convention fund, and contributions to Finland's socialist and trade union movements; for Russian revolutionists; for the general strike in Sweden (\$1,369.70 in 1909), and for every strike, labor controversy, special election fund, etc., in this country, for which a call for funds has been issued among the socialists. The total amount collected as assessments for the College during the years 1909, 1911, and 1912 up to April 30 has been \$6,073.79. The next highest sum collected through our organization during 1908, 1910, 1911, and 1912 has been for the socialist movement in Finland, a total of \$4,622.92.

To our call for statistics about the activities and conditions of the Finnish locals, during and at the end of last year, 185 of the 217 locals answered. According to the answers of these 185 locals, the following data is given:

The membership of these locals on December 31, 1911, was:

Paid up to date — 8,332; total in the books — 13,391 (of which 9,138 were men and 3,755 were women). Members of labor unions — 2,317; naturalized citizens — 1,635, and 2,234 having the first papers.

Business meetings held during the year — 4,346; propaganda meetings — 2,128; entertainments, etc. — 3,233.

Sub-committees: 83 agitation committees, 12 women's committees, 106 show committees, 22 singing societies, 28 brass bands, 89 sewing clubs, and 53 gymnastic clubs.

Lecture courses were held in 39 locals, for a total time of 58-1/2 weeks and the combined attendance has been 4,576 persons. Schools for English in 21 locals for 615 pupils.

Locals own 19 libraries with 10,061 volumes. Besides there are 62 libraries, with 20,419 volumes, which are not owned by locals, but by all the Finns in

each locality and in most cases are controlled and managed by Socialists.

Approximate amount of literature and papers distributed free, \$2,436.19.

Approximate amount of literature and papers sold, \$22,644.70.

Total receipts for the year, \$193,569.47; expenditures, \$180,922.50.

Sixty-three of the locals own real estate or hall buildings, or both, with a total valuation of \$313,365.11. Total value of shares of stock and bonds to the college and different publishing companies, etc., \$55,118.00. Total value of all property belonging to these locals, \$550,751.00. Debts to individual members and real estate sellers, \$232,084.98. Net resources of all locals combined, \$323,964.41.

Approximate Finnish population — men, women, and children — in the localities where these party locals exist is 108,323.

The actual paid-up membership of the Finnish locals and branches of the Socialist Party is well over 10,000. The number of Finnish locals in good standing is 223, which are located in 28 states as follows: Arizona (1), California (6), Colorado (2), Connecticut (1), Florida (1), Idaho (3), Illinois (5), Indiana (2), Maine (5), Massachusetts (17), Michigan (26), Minnesota (48), Montana (10), Nevada (3), New Hampshire (7), New Jersey (3), New York (6), North Dakota (2), Ohio (11), Oregon (3), Pennsylvania (10), Rhode Island (1), Utah (2), Vermont (3), Washington (16), West Virginia (2), Wisconsin (17), Wyoming (10). With the exception of Connecticut, Florida, New York, and Rhode Island and the large cities in California, Ohio, and Oregon, the Finnish locals and branches in these states have had the right to buy their party due stamps from the Translator. The state organizations of Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Wisconsin, and Wyoming have already allowed the Finnish branches the requested 50 percent rebate on state dues, but not always on local dues; California, Montana, Pennsylvania, Utah, Washington, and West Virginia are allowing some rebate; and the rest of the states do not allow any at all.

The agitation and organization work is being carried on by the Eastern, Middle, and Western Dis-

trict Committees, which were organized after the plan decided upon at our Hancock convention of 1909. Every district is routing a permanent organizer and special organizers occasionally. While, on account of language difficulties, our work is and has been more of an educational propaganda, still we are trying to take part in the political affairs as well. Our locals are bound, by the prevailing resolution of the Hancock convention, to participate in the affairs of their county and city organization as much as possible, and every effort is being made in the way of urging our members to become American citizens. At least three special organizers will be put in the field during the coming campaign.

The Finnish Socialists of the United States have had three national conventions. The first one was held at Cleveland, Ohio, in 1904; the second one at Hibbing, Minn., in 1906; and the third at Hancock, Mich., in 1909. The welfare of the Socialistic activity among the Finns in this country, the plans of work for our national organization and its relations to the Socialist Party have been the most important matters for discussion at the conventions. The Socialist Party has had a representative at every one of these conventions. Our next convention will be held June 1, 1912, at Duluth, Minn., and most likely it will be not less of importance than any of the previous conventions. One of the propositions is the taking over of our papers and publishing houses into the ownership of the organization.

The Socialist papers in the United States, published in the Finnish language are:

Työmies, a daily, published at Hancock, Mich., circulation of about 12,000; *Raivaaja*, a daily, published at Fitchburg, Mass., circulation over 6,000; *Toveri*, a tri-weekly, but will appear as a daily on and after July 1, published at Astoria, Ore., circulation around, 4000; a weekly woman's paper, *Toveritar*, published at Astoria, Ore., has been in existence since July of last year and already has a circulation of over 2,000. A monthly magazine, named *Säkeniä*, is also published at Fitchburg, Mass., and a comic semi-monthly paper, *Lapatossu*, at Hancock, Mich. Besides these, there is *Työkansa*, published at Port Arthur, Ont., Canada, heretofore a tri-weekly, but by May 1 will be a daily, which is widely circulated among and gets a considerable part of its support from the Finns in the United

States. The papers are owned by stock companies, in which the Finnish locals as well as individual Socialists are the shareholders. *Työmies* and *Raivaaja* both own their buildings, convenient for printing and publishing the Socialist message which they have been doing in a most valuable manner.

"Työväen Opisto" (The Working People's College), with its school building and other accommodations at Smithville, Minn., is also owned and controlled by the Finnish Socialists and Socialist locals. This institution is being conducted on the same lines and for the same purposes as workers' universities in European countries. The common school subjects are taught, special stress being put upon the study of the English language, and lectures are given on Socialism and other economic subjects. The attendance in the school has been increasing every year. The tuition has been made as low as possible in order to give an opportunity for a greater number of people to attend. Heretofore the school has been maintained mainly by special assessments and voluntary donations by the locals of our organization, and methods for its support in the future will be discussed at our next convention as well as at the annual meeting of the College stockholders, which will be held after the adjournment of our convention.

As seen by the figures above published, the Finnish Socialists have always been lavish in their support of the movement in the old country. From time to time we have sent over financial aid for the political and educational campaigns of the Socialist Party of Finland. This has not been done for the love of the "fatherland," nor for the purpose of keeping our nationality alive or to simply save the so-called state autonomy of Finland. At least a great majority of us have had a deeper interest in the matter — have had the aim of international Socialism in mind and have given help to that part of the globe where suppression is more felt and where, on the other hand, our cause at present has a considerably strong foothold. It is the fight against the Russian autocracy, which for a decade and a half has used every effort to bring in reaction in place of the advanced education and ever-increasing interest in Socialism in Finland, in which we are taking part. We are in this fight with the struggling proletariat of Russia, and we know that only in the victory of the Socialists in Russia lies the victory of the

Socialists in Finland. Before the victory is won, the struggle may become more pressing, and the time may come when you — the delegates to this convention — and your constituents will be asked to do your utmost in the way directed in the resolution on Finland adopted at the last International Socialist Congress.

In conclusion I take the liberty to make a few suggestions regarding the matters concerning our organization as well as the other foreign-speaking organizations in the American Socialist Party.

The Socialist Party should do everything in its power to organize the so-called foreigners — all kinds of them — as it is the only probable way to prevent them from lowering the American standard of living. The same help should be given to every nationality in order to prevent the capitalist class from using the unorganized and yet unawakened nationalities against the others that happen to be organized and are trying to better their conditions. Agitators should be sent to speak to them in their own language and the organization of all non-English speaking Socialists should be given all possible forward push. The provisions for conducting the work of national non-English speaking organizations should be made a part of the national constitution and such part of the constitution made imperative to all state and local organizations, without regard to any state autonomy, as the welfare of these organizations affects the national party as a whole. The provisions in the present constitution have been of good help for non-English speaking organizations, but some modifications in them should be made. It should be strictly provided that only one national

organization of the same language shall be admitted or recognized by the Socialist Party; branches of non-English speaking organizations should belong to the national party only on the condition that they also belong to their respective state organizations should belong to the national party only on the condition that they also belong to their respective state organizations; the non-English speaking organizations should not be compelled to come under the jurisdiction of the county and city organizations, but in political campaigns and conventions for political purposes they should have equal standing with the rest (this provision has been successfully practiced in the state of Washington, for instance); an allowance of a certain amount, say 50 percent, of the state and local dues should be granted for use in agitation and organization work by such organizations; for the present the non-English speaking branches, no matter in what state or county they are located, should have the privilege of buying their party dues stamps from their respective national Translator-Secretaries.

The more you help the foreigners to organize, the sooner they cease to be foreigners. When, in the course of time, the National Finnish Organization will be no more a necessity, the moral spirit and the material holdings, which then will be left to the Socialist Party, will be worth receiving.

Fraternally submitted,

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Translator-Secretary

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