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# The Lithuanian Socialist Federation

## [circa June 1937]

by Alex Ambrose

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This version substantially edited by Tim Davenport for accuracy and clarity.

The Lithuanian Socialist Federation was organized in 1905. Before the establishment of the Lithuanian Socialist organization, Socialists and their sympathizers belonged to the Lithuanian Freethinkers Association. When the Lithuanian Socialists Federation central was organized, local Lithuanian Socialist branches were organized all over America. At the same time there was established a Lithuanian Socialist organ, a weekly newspaper *Kova* (The Struggle).

When several branches of Lithuanian Socialists were organized as a foreign socialist organization they joined the Socialist Party of America.

At this same time several Lithuanian Socialist branches were organized in Chicago. After these branches were established in Chicago and its vicinity, the 8th District of the Lithuanian Socialist Federation was formed. An organizer was then elected. With the help of the 8th District members he organized 12 Lithuanian Socialist branches in Chicago.

### **The Lithuanian Socialist Branches.**

Almost every Lithuanian Socialist branch had its own library, and at lectures, picnics, and other festivals it has sold socialist literature. The profits were turned over to the Lithuanian Socialist branch. These branches used to have theatrical groups. They performed many theatrical plays for the benefit of the branch, and the actors performed free, many times at their own expense.

Several branches had their own choirs. The choirs sang not only for their own branch, but also other branches without any charge. If the choir was asked to sing at a non-Socialist organization, the choir

leader used to charge a few dollars, but the choir members devoted their time free of charge.

In 1908 Lithuanian Socialist Federation Branch 81 organized its own choir under the name of the Lithuanian Socialist Federation, Branch 81 Choir. Several years later the same choir was named "Pirmyn" (Forward). The choir still exists, but the members of this choir at present are almost all American-born Lithuanians.

Every branch of the Lithuanian Socialists Federation used to celebrate the first day of May as a workers' holiday annually with lectures and songs. The branches of the Lithuanian Socialists Federation arranged several lectures, concerts, and picnics every year. During the summer, meetings were held on the streets. Speakers were attacked by the Socialists' enemies with rotten eggs and stones.

We are informed that when the Socialists performed a theatrical spectacle during Lent, only one Lithuanian girl dared to dance.

The members of the Lithuanian Socialists Alliance participated in various activities among Lithuanians to the best of their ability and intelligence. In many of the Lithuanian national organizations the Lithuanian Socialists were the leaders.

### **The 8th District of the Lithuanian Socialist Federation.**

The aim of the Lithuanian Socialists of the 8th District was to bring the Socialist branches of Chicago and its vicinity into strong unity, to watch the Lithuanian and American public movements, and to make plans for socialistic activity. The Lithuanian Socialist branches of the 8th District held once a year their convention, and at this convention plans were made how to spread the socialistic activity in conjunction with the American Socialist Party and in general the whole labor movement.

The Lithuanian Socialists Federation, 8th District, had several speakers. Lecture tours were arranged for the speakers. They explained to the public the science of Socialism, sold literature, and urged the people to join the Socialist Party.

The Lithuanian Socialists Federation, 8th District has established Lithuanian and English language schools on several occasions. Besides other studies, the teachers used to teach those enrolled how to conduct meetings. The Federation also had a dramatic circle to give theatrical festivals, and a school to train for public speaking, etc.

The most important accomplishment of the Lithuanian Socialist Federation, 8th District, was the establishment of the Naujienos Corporation, which today is publishing the daily newspaper, *Naujienos*.

At the beginning of the World War, three Lithuanian parties started to publish newspapers. The Lithuanian Socialists had no

money, but they had a strong organization. They started to publish *Naujienos* [early in 1914] as a weekly newspaper. The Catholics, supported by banker Tananevicius, published the daily newspaper *Katalikas* (The Catholic). The nationalists, have as their supporter, the banker A. Olszewski. They published the daily newspaper *Lietuva* [(Lithuania)]. The last two daily newspapers have stopped their publications and the banks are closed. Only the daily newspaper *Naujienos* still exists.

The Lithuanian Socialists Federation at its peak had 350 branches with about 6,500 members. It had its own organ, a weekly newspaper *Kova* (The Struggle) and a large monthly journal, the *Naujoji Gadyn* (The New Age). The Socialistic newspapers were: *Naujienos* (Liberty) a daily newspaper, Brooklyn, NY; *Keleivis* (The Traveler) a weekly newspaper, Boston, Mass.; and several monthly journals of socialistic ideals.<sup>1</sup>

The Lithuanian Socialist Federation was strong up to the year 1921.

At the end of the World War, with the spread of the Communistic wave, the Lithuanian Socialist Federation was torn to pieces. In the USA, there are only 10 branches of the Lithuanian Socialist Federation, and only one branch in Chicago.

The Lithuanian Socialist Federation Chicago branch's administration:

Chairman, J. Vilis,  
Secretary, V. Mankus,  
1739 S. Halsted Street,  
Chicago, Ill.

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<sup>1</sup> Ambrose's account is garbled here. In addition to *Naujienos* and *Kova*, mentioned in this article, the key radical Lithuanian newspapers were *Laisve* (Freedom), first published in Boston from 1911 before being moved to Ozone Park in Queens, New York in 1919, and the Communist paper *Vilnis* (The Surge), published in Chicago from 1920. The most important Lithuanian publication hailing from Brooklyn in the period of the Lithuanian Federation's strength was the bi-weekly of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, *Darbas* (Labor), produced from 1919 to 1920.