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# State Convention Passes Upon Many Important Questions: Finnish Difficulties Satisfactorily Settled — Many Constitutional Changes [events of February 26-28, 1916]

Unsigned article in *New Times* [Minneapolis], v. 6, no. 20 (March 11, 1916), pp. 1, 3.  
Managing Editor of *New Times* was Alexis Georgian.

One hundred two delegates representing 93 locals were in attendance at the State Socialist Convention held at Duluth, Feb. 26, 27, and 28 [1916]. The Secretary's report showed 195 locals so that the convention still lacked the desirable feature of representing the entire organized movement. As usual the representation was almost entirely from the northern part of the state, there being only 3 or 4 locals south of the Twin Cities that were represented.

T.E. Latimer was elected chairman and O.W. Wassing was elected secretary of the convention.

## Membership Declines.

The report of the State Secretary showed a falling off of the membership. This was accounted for by the disastrous efforts of the fight within the Finnish Federation and to the same causes that have reduced the membership throughout the United States.† That the outbreak of the war in Europe and the subsequent economic depression was one of the chief causes is shown by the fact that the membership increased steadily up to July 1914 after which it took a sudden and decided slump. In July 1914 it was 5,600, six months later it was 4,100, and at the present time is only 3,547. This in spite of the fact that 1,032 new

members in 103 new locals were brought into the party through the efforts of organizers.

During 1914 and 1915 the total amount spent for organizational purposes was \$1,910.32. Office assets were increased to the value of \$581, bringing the value of the present supplies, fixtures, and literature up to \$853.

## Woman's Propaganda Committees.

The report of the woman's organizer showed a net result of two years' work at an expense of \$292 of 12 Woman's Propaganda Committees.

## Legislative Committee's Powers Defined.

A number of constitutional amendments were adopted. Among the more important are the following:

A Legislative Committee of 5 members is to be elected by the state convention, "whose functions and duties shall be the preparation of such bills as are called for in the party platform and aiding members of the legislature elected by the party in any way possible. This committee is to determine the policy of the party on any question not covered by the platform. Del-

† - A faction fight swept the Finnish Socialist Federation in 1914 and 1915, pitting moderate constructive socialists centered in the east against a syndicalist left wing centered in Minnesota and Wisconsin. The more conservative faction controlled the organization and engaged in mass expulsions of the radicals, an action which pared thousands from the federation. The National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party was ultimately called in to arbitrate the dispute, finding in favor of the Eastern moderates who controlled the Federation apparatus. A big percentage of the membership of the Socialist Party of Minnesota were Finns, primarily on the SPA's ideological left wing, and the long-running controversy was of great importance to the state.

egates Latimer, Wassing, Stafford, Sala, and Adams were elected to this committee.

A constitutional amendment fixed the salary of the Secretary at \$100.

Another amendment provided that the State Executive Board shall not suspend a local unless first the charges against the local are published in the official state paper and a suspension is seconded by at least 6 locals in 5 different counties.

The convention adopted an amendment prohibiting the election of more than one state officer from the same local. This includes the State Secretary, National Committeemen, and members of the State Executive Board.

Another amendment disqualified any member who had been elected to public office and who had refused to obey the instructions of the party organization from receiving a nomination from the party for 3 years.

#### **Powers of County Committee Enlarged.**

Five locals in any county may form a county organization which is to have charge of all political campaigns in the county, and control over officers elected within such county who have to deal with questions in which the entire county is involved, or, of cities having more than 50,000 population.

Such county organization has the power by a referendum vote of imposing a per capita tax of not to exceed 3 cents [per month].

By the provisions of a constitutional amendment the Executive Board is directed to appoint a campaign committee of 3 members to conduct the campaign.

#### **Charters to be Granted to Finnish Applicants.**

The Finnish difficulty was also settled by a constitutional amendment. Finnish socialist locals affiliated with the national Finnish federation from Hibbing, Chisholm, Virginia, Eveleth, Toimi, and Duluth, with a total membership of 472 had applied for state charters, but were refused by the State Executive Board. The amendment provided that charters should be granted these applicants provided that such charters be not used as a pretext for the purpose of destroying the existing local or acquiring control over the property owned by it, through legal litigation or in any other manner.

It was decided to establish a party weekly in addition to the present bulletin, for which purpose the dues to the State Office were increased 3 cents [per month]. This is to be edited by a board of 7 editors and published by the State Secretary under the supervision of the Executive Board.

The platform as adopted by the convention will be found elsewhere in this issue.

J.O. Bentall, of Litchfield, was nominated for Governor and Andrew Hanson of Minneapolis for Lieutenant Governor.

*Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport.*

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