
The Finnish Socialists in America.

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Published in *The March of Socialism, 1928-1932: Journal of the Seventeenth National Convention, Socialist Party, Milwaukee, Wis., May 20-24, 1932.* (Chicago, IL: National Headquarters, Socialist Party of America, 1932), pg. 13.

The four years since the last National Convention of the Socialist Party have not been in any way exceptional in the annals of the Finnish Language Federation. As is to be expected, the language federations are diminishing in influence and importance as the Party grows and gathers members from the native Americans.

While the Finnish Federation has not materially lost members during the period in question, neither has it gained much. The younger element, those born here of the Finnish parents, seldom join the federation branches. They do, however, join the Socialist Party direct in the communities where there is a party branch. Thus the gains that would otherwise be lost, are gathered in by the American membership. Undoubtedly this is the case with all foreign speaking people here. Their youth do not follow in the footsteps of their parents directly, though they largely uphold the same ideals as their parents.

In spite of the fact that it is rather difficult to get new members at the present time, owing primarily to the prevailing unemployment, the prestige of the Finnish Federation is now much greater than it has been since the split in 1920. We gain adherents in the proportion that the Communists lose them. We are reaching out again to the Middle and Western states with our paper, which gained a considerable number of new readers and subscribers last year, particularly among disillusioned Communists and others who have either been opposed to us or have been indifferent.

Our active part in the Socialist Party affairs is negligible. We feel that the American element should direct and control the American labor movement in all its branches. No foreign element can be of great help to the Socialist Party directly, but only by the propaganda it carries on among its own nationality. The time when the Socialist Party was largely dominated by the foreign element is particularly the unhappiest time of the Party. However, it is for the American element to increase its membership so that it will stay in control.

We have often been asked by the active American comrades what will be the attitude of those thrown out of the Communist Party toward the Socialist Party? Will they come back and again take an active part in the labor movement in the ranks of the Socialist Party? The answer is in the negative. They are not coming back. They are bitter toward the old labor movement. Their mind has been poisoned by the lies and perverse propaganda which they were fed while in the Communist movement. There are exceptions, to be sure; we have many erstwhile Communists now active in our ranks, but there has been no general return and will not be. And I think that only comparatively few of those who went to the Communist movement are capable of understanding the failure of that movement and why only the Socialist Party program is feasible.

We do not look forward to a much larger membership than we have now. And perhaps it

would be a mistake if the youth joined us directly and stood aloof of the body of the Socialist Party just as the older element does now.

The future of the Socialist Party in America is in the native born stock. The days of the language federations are past. They will continue to live and function, but they should not be expected to become an active, virile element again. Let them have their own way among the immigrant population, which is dwindling year after year through old age and assimilation. Let them keep up their social activities, but let us not ask of them more than is reasonable, as is very often done.

May this national Socialist convention succeed in forming plans whereby the membership of the Socialist Party will continue to grow even more than it has grown in the past, though even that has been gratifying to those of us who have seen the movement through its various phases during the trying times of the last fifteen years.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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