Migration Studies C 20

# Labouring Finns

## Transnational Politics in Finland, Canada, and the United States

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Institute of Migration
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# Acknowledgements

Publication of this volume has been made possible through the support of a number of individuals and organizations. FinnForum IX, from which the discussion of this volume began, was one of the many efforts by the Chair of Finnish Studies Advisory Committee at Lakehead University to engage academics, both Canadian and International, and the local community, in conversations regarding a wide range of issues on Finland and the Finnish Diaspora. The backdrop for this book is the Finnish Labour Temple in Thunder Bay, Ontario, which celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2010. Although the events depicted in this volume happened elsewhere, the Finnish Labour Temple stands today as a symbol of politics and agitation Finnish immigrants brought with them to North America. With the 100th Anniversary in mind, we agreed to host FinnForum IX in Thunder Bay and we counted on the vibrant Finnish community that has kept the Finnish Labour Temple alive for all these years for their support with the event. With the labour temple and the community as our foundation, we were able to attract leading scholars from across, Canada, the United States, Finland and Europe to the conference.

We are grateful to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for its financial support for FinnForum IX and to the Finnish community of Thunder Bay for its enthusiastic participation in the event. We are also grateful to Lakehead University's Centre for Northern Studies, Office of Research and the Advanced Institute for Globalization and Culture for their support for FinnForum IX. The support of the Institute of Migration is key to bringing this volume to life. We are grateful Ismo Söderling for his enthusiastic support. Many individuals assisted with the organization of the event. We are especially grateful to Chris Southcott, Raija Warkentin and Samira Saramo for their efforts. We would also like to thank Kelly Saxberg for providing support on the home front. This volume is dedicated to the memory of Varpu Lindström, a woman who ensured that the Finnish Diaspora in Canada became a part of mainstream Canadian history.

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# The Finnish Workers' Experience at Home and Abroad in Historical Perspective

Michel S. Beaulieu
Ronald N. Harpelle &
Jaimi Penney

At the heart of every Finnish community, no matter where in the world it is found, are its workers. This book celebrates Finnish workers as actors in a drama that has shaped working class politics in Finland, Canada and the United States. The chapters in this book tap into recent scholarship that suggests any study of immigration, and the exploration of power struggles inherent in migration studies, must examine the role played by workers from a variety of perspectives. As Marcel van der Linden and Lex Heerma van Voss have suggested, the scholarship of the 1980s and 1990s "*provoked questions as to whether working-class solidarity was in fact self-evidently a logical phenomenon*." As they remarked, "*women's and ethnic history made clear that workers were not only wage-earners with specific occupational and class interests, but also had other identities, including gendered and religious identities. Reality could no longer be reduced to class struggle*" (van der Linden 2002, 18). Consequently, Labouring Finns offers a variety of entry points into the world of class struggle and its impact on the transnational politics of the Finnish Diaspora.

This book combines some of the best presentations from the FinnForum IX held in Thunder Bay, Ontario Canada in May 2010. Since 1974, FinnForum has developed into a premier international conference where scholars from several countries working in a wide variety of disciplines are able to present the results of their research on aspects of Finnish Studies. While every conference organized

under the banner of FinnForum has offered opportunities to present research within the realm of Finnish Studies, the gathering began primarily as an opportunity for those working on the history of Finnish migration, and, since the first conference, the Finnish workers' experience has figured prominently. It is within this spirit that a selection of presenters at FinnForum IX were invited to share their work on these issues are they relate to the Finnish workers' experience at home and abroad.

As many of the contributors to this volume demonstrate, the presence of Finnish workers in North American communities added an "ethnic" dimension to the ever-changing nature and characteristic of socialism on that continent. In many respects, underneath the class conflict of the early twentieth century was a more pronounced interclass turmoil with its distinguishing feature being ethnic difference rather than material interests. Much as anthropologist Vron Ware understands "*race to be a socially constructed category with absolutely no basis in biology,*" so does any understanding that the closely-related idea of 'ethnicity' is similarly constructed and owes much to how people are recognized by others.[1]

The emphasis on ethnic Finns sets this volume also apart from the work of those Marxists who have tended to treat ethnicity as "*of only passing interest*," in the words of Peter Vasiliadis (1989, 5).[2] Rather, the works in this volume are in keeping with the ideas recently articulated by Canadian historian Ruth Frager. She argues,

*Whereas many scholars have contended that intense ethnic identity has generally precluded the emergence of strong class consciousness among early twentieth-century immigrant workers in Canada and the United States, others have emphasized historical situations where key groups of immigrant workers have simultaneously displayed deep class consciousness and a deep commitment to ethnic identity*. (Frager 1992, 4).[3]

The collection begins with Aappo Kähönen's examination of how Finnish society and its political system was shaped by the conflicts of autocracy and social revolution that occurred in Russia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. "Between Autocracy and Revolution: Formation of Finnish Nation State, 1890–1926" provides not only a detailed overview of the beginnings of independent Finland and the specific nature of the social and international challenges it faced, but explores the significance that the Russian empire had on the formation of political ideologies and parties in Finland. His article explores the origins of conservative, liberal and socialist thought within Finland and provides a backdrop to which Finnish workers' social and cultural experiences and their role in both the Finnish and international labour movement can be examined and contextualized.

In Chapter Two, Ralf Kauranen and Mikko Pollari provide a new lens through which to examine the Finnish workers' experience. With the concept of transnationalism informing the theoretical framework, Kauranen and Pollari are able to explore the experiences of first generation Finnish migrants and show the interconnectedness of the Finnish-American and Finnish working class movement.

According to Kauranen and Pollari, transnationalism not only enables historians to glean a better understanding of both Finnish-American radicalism and socialism in the nineteenth and twentieth century, but also allows for the diffusion of the traditional classification of labour movements as national based. This allows historians to re-examine labour movements as an international phenomenon without the presuppositions of national borders or identities.

Chapter Three, by Gary Kaunonen, provides an examination of the unique and integral role that Finnish immigrants played in the early American socialist and labour movement. By examining the Finnish contribution to the labour and socialist movement through the Finnish Työmies Publishing Company as well as Finnish leadership political organizations such as the Socialist Party of America, the Industrial Workers of the World, and the Western Federation of Miners, Kaunonen challenges the traditional view of Finnish immigrants as "clannish" outsiders. This article enables Finnish immigrants as eager members of the larger proletariat who sought solidarity through engagement with American culture and many large labour and socialist political organizations throughout the United States.


Poster announcing Worker's International Relief fundraiser, Port Arthur, Ontario, Canada. – Lakehead University Library Archives, Thunder Bay Finnish-Canadian Historical Society Collection.

Tauno Saarela also examines the interconnectedness of the Finns in the American labour movement in Chapter Four. Focusing primarily on Finnish communism and major political leaders who travelled between the two countries, Saarela argues that the traditions of the Finnish labour movement that existed prior to the 1918 civil war in Finland were preserved only in America, whereas the left movement in Finland and Soviet Russia was influenced by populism or Bolshevization. In this sense, the political activism of Finns in North America can be seen as both a throw back to an early time and as direct descendent of the struggles that resulted in the Russian Revolution and Finnish independence.

In Chapter Five William C. Pratt continues the examination of American Finnish immigrants from the perspective of the Communist Party of the United States of America. His work examines the history of the Communist Party in the upper mid-western United States and the role that Finnish immigrants had in its various institutions. Here he asserts that, while Finns did comprise a large portion of membership in the Communist Party, their roles were more products of policy dictated by the Third International or Comintern, than of any predisposition to socialistic or communist ideology.

Chapter Six, by Paul Lubotina examines the role that socialist-syndicalist labour organizations played in the multi-ethnic integration of Finnish, Swedish, Slovene and Italian immigrants along Minnesota's Mesabi Iron Range between 1900 and 1929. Although Finnish immigrants have been portrayed by other scholars as the dominant immigrant group within the American socialist and labour movement, Lubotina challenges this argument by focusing on the multi-ethnic and gender neutral approaches employed by several of the socialist organizations and labour unions. Lubotina argues that leaders such as Dr. Tanner, Ida Pasanen, and Leo Laukki each established complex multi-ethnic networks that united and organized immigrant workers.

Chapter Seven turns northward with a focus on Canada. J. Donald Wilson provides an overview of the life and activities of socialist newspaperman and Finnish immigrant A.B. Mäkelä. Whereas traditional scholarship is devoted to prominent party leaders, A.B. Mäkelä offers an alternative perspective on the left in Canada, as a man who attempted to further the interests of workingmen rather than his own philosophies or ambitions. It is important to note here however, that Wilson sets Mäkelä up as a character who acknowledges the supposed assimilation of immigrants into the North American socialist and labour movement, while at the same time exemplifies an Finnish immigrant who is hesitant to become too involved in Canadian affairs, as he does not feel Canadian.

In Chapter Eight, Samira Saramo writes about the role that Finnish women played in the Canadian leftist movement. By looking at the activities of Finnish women in Port Arthur, Ontario, particularly left Canadian political parties such as the Communist Party of Canada, the Socialist Party of Canada and the Social

Democratic Party of Canada as well as in other prominent political organizations such as the International Workers of the World and the Finnish Socialist Organzation of Canada, Saramo is able to argue that Finnish women, unlike their Anglo-Saxon counterparts, were an integral part of the socialist and labour movement. These women were encouraged to become educated and participate in socialist endeavours, and that this radicalism was part of their everyday lives.

The final chapter, takes readers back to the United States. Rather than looking at broad events, social movement or even Finnish culture, Tuomas Savonen uncovers the family history of prominent American Communist Party chairmen Gus Hall. In order to better understand Hall's political ideologies, Savonen argues that we must look to his father, a Finnish immigrant, and his life's events. Savonen provides a detailed synopsis of the Halberg family in northern Minnesota amidst the active Finnish-American labour movement by piecing together various archival records, interviewing relatives and relying on Gus Hall's own autobiography.

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## Notes

1 Vron Ware in her classic study Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History comments that her book is "*predicated on a recognition that to be white and female is to occupy a social category that is inescapably racialized as well as gendered. It is not about being a white woman, it is about being thought of as a white woman*" (Ware 1992, xii). For more on the treatment of the issues of "ethnicity" in Canadian history, see Dhalie & Fernando 1981; Harney 1985. The Canadian Historical Association has also produced two short works on the subject. See Iacovetta 1997; Zucchi 2007.

2 For examples, see Penner 1977; Angus 1981; Palmer 1983; and Horowitz 1968.

3 For more on this debate, see Barrett 1986; Bernstein 1972; Brody 1960; Cumbler 1979; Heron 1988; Kolko 1976; Patrias 1990; Seager 1986.

# 1

# Between autocracy and revolution: Formation of Finnish nation state, 1890–1926

— Aappo Kähönen —

In order to understand better the Finnish development towards nationhood and statehood, and the specific features connected to this, it is useful to relate it to a larger context, formed primarily by the former mother country and later great power neighbour, Russia/Soviet Union. The conquest by the Russian empire in 1809 formed the basis for the Finnish nation-state. The previous 700 year connection to Sweden gave Finland, by and large, Nordic social and economic structures. However, paradoxically, it was the connection to autocratic Russia that made Finland an autonomous Grand Duchy, with its own autonomous administration and home rule. When the Russian empire tried to react to the crises created by nationalism and modernisation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Finnish Grand Duchy, like the rest of the multinational empire, had to adapt to the tensions caused by the defending autocratic state and, towards its collapse, to the rise of the revolutionary groups challenging its legitimacy.

The main questions discussed in this article are as follows: How was the Finnish society and political system shaped by the conflict between autocracy and revolution in the mother-country? What preconditions did the collapse of the Russian empire in 1917 and the civil war in Finland in 1918 set for the Finnish foreign relations? How did these developments change the relations between the local Finnish and imperial or revolutionary Russian elites? Answers to these questions will help to understand the specific nature of social and international

challenges for independent Finland in the 1920s, as well as how 'the East neighbour' became acutely both a domestic and foreign political problem for the elite of the new republic. The article attempts to understand Russia's influence on Finnish politics, or to be more exact, how Russian autocracy and revolution have influenced on the Finnish understanding of politics and policy formation through three periods: 1899–1905, 1917–1918, and 1919–1926.

## Russian state-building and the origins of the Finnish autonomy during the nineteenth century

Finland's incorporation into the Russian empire during the Napoleonic wars and the specific autonomic status it was given forms the background for observing the construction of the state and position of elites in both countries. Russia had been a multinational empire at least since the strong territorial expansion which began in the sixteenth century. As such, it often acquired territories with different nationalities and administrative practises. This was common for other multinational, dynastic empires in Europe as well. After the French Revolution of 1789 and rise of nationalism, this kind of state-building began to face increasing challenges. However, the aspect, which set Russia apart from the other European multinational empires of the time, and in a decisive manner influenced its social and political structures, was the patrimonial character of the state. This means that the state was understood as the personal property or estate of the ruler-the absolute monarch. Together with this base, the lack of feudalism with its administrative and representative organs, made it difficult for interest groups independent of the ruler to organize before the early twentieth century (Pipes 1979, 249).

As the autocracy had traditionally been quite effective in concentrating power and becoming the ultimate source of material benefits, the interest groups were rather trying to compete for autocratic favour than challenge it. The vast majority of the Russian people, the peasants, also expected the autocratic monarch to fulfill their central objective-land and personal freedom. The same monarch had given these to the nobility in 1762, ninety-nine years before he gave it to the peasants, officially ending serfdom in 1861. Since this was the case, the challenge to the monarchy would not easily materialize from the direction of traditional social or political interest groups. However, regional interests were a potential source, especially in an empire as vast as the Russian one, containing numerous different cultures and administrative practises.

The reign of Alexander I (1801–1825), during which Finland was incorporated to Russia, saw decentralization at its highest. In a number of territories, usually recently added to the empire, the inhabitants enjoyed greater freedoms than in

Russia proper. Together with Finland, Poland received a constitution and a national Diet for internal matters. The Baltic Provinces of Estonia, Livonia and Courland were administered according to charters, originating from the earlier Swedish rule. The nomads in Siberia and Central Asia had only few direct contacts to the imperial authorities and the Jews also had a kind of internal autonomy through their religious communal organizations in the Western Russia. However, many of these arrangements were due to lack of administrative organization and shortage of personnel. As the imperial administration expanded and developed in the nineteenth century, many of these privileged arrangements were curtailed or ended, in one way or other. The Finnish constitution was the last to be altered in 1899 (Pipes 1979, 250–251).

In the autonomic Grand Duchy of Finland, the political culture and the elites were distinctly organized. Already during the Swedish rule, the Finnish elites had participated in the Swedish Diet, organized on a four chamber basis. Instead of the typical three estates-the nobility, the clergy, and the bourgeoisie-the peasants were represented in the Nordic Diets, as there had not been serfdom in the Scandinavian countries. As Alexander I granted autonomic self-rule to Finland in connection to the Russian conquest in 1809, the Finnish population received thus its own, "national" representative body, about one hundred years before the Russians. Together with this four chambered Diet, with the electorate of about the 1/10 of the population, Swedish tradition remained in Finnish laws and local administration.

Traditionally the elites in Finland, the nobility, the clergy, and even the bourgeoisie, were Swedish speaking, though not necessarily of Swedish origin, as Swedish was the language of education. However, from the 1860s onwards, a division began to take place among the Swedish speaking elite. It now became divided to "Finlandisized" Fennomans, promoters of local Finnish culture and language, and Liberals, promoting Swedish and general Western cultural and political values. The Fennomans not only promoted popular enlightenment in Finnish language, but also gradually, during the decades, took the trouble of changing their language to Finnish and translating their names as well. For both parties the relation to the empire proper was a decisive factor. The common interest of the Finnish elites was to maintain, and if possible, to strengthen Finnish autonomy within the Russian empire. Differences were connected mainly to means.

The Fennomans, consisting mainly of civil servants and the educated classes, especially the clergy, saw the mobilization of the majority of the population around the Finnish language and culture advantageous, on two grounds. Firstly, such an "alliance" would give them some guarantees against the potential Russian attempts to limit the Finnish autonomy in the future. Secondly, educating the majority of lower classes also justified their leading position in relation to them. Instead of construction of national culture policies, the Liberals emphasized more,

the principles and practises connected to the Finnish autonomy which was now being more and more understood as a constitution (Liikanen 1987, 130–132).

From the Russian viewpoint it was useful to support the "Finnishness," -local and language based nationalism-of the Fennomans, against the "Swedishness" of the Liberals, as this was seen to weaken ties to the former mother country, Sweden. The late nineteenth century working-class organization in Finland was based on the "association culture" founded by "Finlandisized" Fennoman elites. The temperance movement remained the largest mass organization in Finland until the mid 1890s, when the Youth association movement surpassed it. However, the worker associations surpassed the membership of the temperance movement only in 1905 (Alapuro and Sulkunen 1987, 142–145).

## Modernisation of political system, 1899–1905

The relations between the Finnish elites and the Russian imperial establishment were cordial during the nineteenth century, as the Russian monarch had granted the Finnish elites such privileges they had not enjoyed earlier, during the Swedish rule. However, developments on both sides began to threaten this relationship. Economic and political pressures of modernization began to have decisive influence over Russia in the late nineteenth19th century, despite its autocratic system. This meant such administrative and economic reforms that underlined unity and centralization, without undermining the autocracy. The Finnish autonomy within the empire began to seem more and more like a relic, and even a security risk in the close vicinity of the imperial capital, St. Petersburg. At the same time, from 1880s onwards, Finnish nationalism began to transform from language based to constitutionalist in its direction, underlining so-called separate state doctrine. According to this doctrine, Finland was now seen to be distinct state in relation to the rest of the empire, connected to it only by personal union, by the Russian monarch. This monarch was seen to be the ruler of the Finnish Grand Duchy, bound by a "constitution", at the same time as he was the "Autocrat of all Russians" (Jussila 1979, 31, 35).

Not surprisingly, the Russian imperial administration did not share this interpretation. The reorganization of the Russian army in 1899 demanded unification of conscription and service regulations throughout the empire. This meant abolition of the local small Finnish Army. To settle the confrontation between the empire and its autonomic province, in a declaration the Russian emperor reserved the right to determine which legislation in Finland was of "general imperial concern", to which the Finnish Diet could only give its opinion. Though this actually had been the substance of previous Russo-Finnish relations, con-

flicts had been customarily been avoided. Now the Finnish elites felt that their "constitutional" rights had been violated. This feeling grew stronger, as the new imperial policy contained additional reforms to unify more the Finnish administration and education system with the Russian, and increase the teaching of Russian language in Finland. As suchthe years 1899–1905 were coined by the Finns, the "First period of Oppression", and the Finnish elites began to look for the support of the lower classes, in particular the peasants, but also from the workers, for their protests against the imperial policy.[1]. The defeat of Russia in a war against Japan in 1904–1905 broke the domestic myth on the invincibility of the autocracy. This, together with the shooting of peaceful demonstrators in St. Petersburg in January 1905, launched massive social unrest throughout the empire, first in towns, then in the countryside. Within a few weeks after the "Bloody Sunday" the unrest spread among the national minorities making the Polish and Georgian provinces "ungovernable". On 20 October 1905, a General Strike against autocracy which demanded a constitutional system began in the Russian empire (Service 1997, 13–14).

The General Strike in the Russian empire from October to November 1905 brought into question, together with the social and political crisis, the existing power relations in the society. The strikers managed to paralyze transportation and official communication by controlling the railroads and the telegraph agencies, thus denying the effective use of the state's final resource, the organized violence of the armed forces. The Finnish General Strike, or "Great Strike" as it was also known in Finland, lasted eight days, between 30 October and 6 November (Jussila 1979, 65–66). It resulted in clarifying the power relations between the Finnish political groups, and between Finnish and Russian elites which resulted in a radically reformed political culture within Finland.

The main Finnish political groups within the Finnish bourgeois side were the Old Finns, who continued the cultural and political tradition of the Fennomans from the nineteenth century. They had been ready to cooperate, to certain extent, with the Russian unification policy in 1899–1905, seeing other alternatives even more harmful for the Finnish position in the Russian empire. The Young Finns had split from this group, moving closer to the constitutionalist views of the Swedish speaking Liberals. They also believed in passive resistance against the "russification policy," as it was termed, meaning civil disobedience of the officials in relation to the Russians. There was also certain sympathy for the working class movement, as the right to strike, and in certain cases, also universal suffrage was supported unconditionally. However, the Old Finns were not unsympathetic to the worker movement as a whole, either, with their popular enlightenment tradition. Just before the outbreak of open unrest in June 1905, the Old Finns had also accepted universal suffrage, though not unicameral assembly, on their agenda (Alapuro 1988, 112–113).

The Finnish Social Democratic party was founded in 1899. Despite its class struggle position, it, as a party, had only few contacts to the Russian revolutionary groups. However, this did not mean that individual members of the party could not have co-operated with some Russian revolutionary groups, such as the Socialist Revolutionaries or the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party. However, the party's practical objectives were formed mainly within the national context, and included the right to strike and universal suffrage. The relative moderation of the Finnish Socialists can be explained by the fact that they were the only legally operating socialist party within the Russian Empire. The national context also makes it understandable that some of the socialists also actively resisted the Russian policies in cooperation with bourgeois Activist group, who were ready to use violence against the Russians. The Activists had split away from the Young Finns, finding their passive resistance insufficient. This group was, in fact, most active in its international relations creating contacts with the Russian revolutionaries as well as the foreign enemy of the Russian empire, Japan (Kujala 1989, 107–111).

However, when it came to challenging the representatives of the imperial government in Finland, all these Finnish groups had in common was the eradication of Russian unification policy. Differences existed as to what extent further reforms of the political system should be taken. These differences began to grow between the constitutionalist Young Finns and the Socialists. When strike continued for two days, even after the emperor had the promised the restoration of Finland's autonomy to pre–1899 level and universal suffrage, the Young Finns began to feel the threat of social(ist) revolution. As the emperor had had to consent to giving a constitution to save his throne in Russia, the Young Finns now had more common interests with the moderately reformist imperial administration, headed by the prime minister Sergei Witte. This was exacerbated by the Russian acceptance of the formation of the autonomic government of Finland under their leadership (Jussila 1979, 75–77).

In Finland, there occurred clear changes in the positions of the political parties. The Young Finns, as the party in government and the socialists as the practical organizers of the General Strike were clear winners. The Social Democratic Party benefited the most in the mobilization boom in Finland as it had the only real nationwide party-organization. During the strike, the party had offered a way to direct political mass participation, both in town and in the country side, and surpassed the temperance movement as workers' major organization. However, drastic reformation of the Finnish political system began after autumn of 1905, leading to the election of unicameral parliament on the bases of universal suffrage in 1907. As the electorate was ten folded, rising from 125 000 to 1.2 million, this changed political culture in a profound way in Finland. Parties had reform themselves from political clubs to political movements, requiring support directly from the population. However, democratization and modernization of the political

system had clear limits in Finland, as the emperor's prerogatives in relation to the representative body remained unchanged. In case of conflict, he could always disband it and order premature elections.

The breaking up of traditional cooperation between the Finnish provincial and Russian imperial elites enabled, on the one hand, cooperation between different political groups in Finland, and on the other, enabled open conflict in society.[2] Despite tension, the cooperation worked through most of the 1880s and 1890s, at least from the Russian and Finnish elites' perspective. Open conflict began in 1899–1905however, which did not cease contact between the Finnish and Russian elites, nor did it lead to violent social crisis in Finland.

The stabilization of the new political system in Finland and the discharging of conflict in relation to Russia were decided between 1905 and 1917. The connection between the elites in Finland and Russia was finally severed only after the Russian October Revolution in 1917. At the same time, in the winter of 1917–1918, social tensions in Finland broke out as Civil War, unlike in 1905.

## Independence and breaking up of political system, 1917–1918

If the developments of 1905–1907 – the General Strike and resulting parliamentary reform – can be characterised as a unifying national event, the period between1917 and1918, despite certain similarities, became its exact opposite. Though during both periods the weakness of the Russian Empire increased Finnish self-determination, in the latter period emerged strong polarization and escalating conflict in Finnish domestic politics-leading almost simultaneously to independence and civil war.

The causes for this development have been widely discussed. Generally the civil war in Finland has been viewed against the background of long term social conflict or a number of short term economic problems and threat of famine-all somehow related to the Russian revolutions of 1917. However, studying these developments in relation to the civil war primarily from the viewpoint of conquering the political power of the state will offer better means for understanding how the conflict and significance of the Russian developments had influence on Finnish policy-making.[3]

In this the concept of dual power, as presented by Charles Tilly in relation to revolution should prove useful. According to Tilly, the revolutionary situation had its basis in Leon Trotsky's expression of dual power (e. g. the Provisional government and the soviets in 1917), meaning multiple sovereignty and incompatible claims to control the state. Revolutionary situation can be defined by three main causes:1) Appearance of contenders, or a coalition of contenders, advancing competing, exclusive claims to control of the state or some segment of it, 2) commitment to

those claims by a significant segment of citizens, 3) Incapacity or unwillingness of the rulers to suppress the alternative coalition and/or commitment to their claims.

Revolutionary outcome can be defined more briefly as forcible transfer of state power from those who have held it before; multiple sovereignty to a new ruling coalition, which may include also elements of the old coalition. Not all revolutionary situations, of course, lead to revolutionary outcomes, as governments may be quite successful in suppressing the revolt, or co-opting some of the contenders (Tilly 1993, 10–13). The disintegration of the Russian state in 1917 and the emergence dual power in the form of the Provisional government and the soviets reflected on Finland as well. Both Russia and Finland, as its autonomous Grand Duchy, had in common the collapse of state monopoly of violence.

However, instead of an emergence of radical soviets, in Finland a moderate labour movement was already in power; the SDP had reached absolute majority holding 103 seats of 200 in the parliamentary elections in 1916 which left the bourgeois parties in a minority position. In fact, the February (March) revolution did not lead to real dual power in Finland, as the labour movement (the party, unions – and from autumn 1917 – the red guards) could to a large extent act within, or as part of the existing political system. However, the labour movement did not have any official armed force under its control. The Russian army, including troops stationed in Finland, was quickly losing its operative capacity and the police had been disarmed after the February revolution. Bourgeois concern over disorder and attempts to restore normalcy during the summer of 1917 could take form only through private organization such as the civil guards.

This situation began to change during the autumn, once again in connection to development in Russia, following the abdication of the emperor in March, 1917. The SDP's attempt to strengthen Finnish self-determination through so-called 'executive power laws'(bordering a declaration of independence), at the same time as the Bolsheviks pressured the Russian Provisional government in July 1917, was checked after the government was able to crush the Bolshevik demonstrators. As a response, the Russian government, with the support of the Finnish bourgeois parties, now ordered premature elections in Finland in October. As a result, the SDP fell just below majority, receiving 92 seats of 200 and the bourgeois parties formed the government. This marked the beginning of actual dual power in Finland, since the SDP did not recognize the legality of the elections even though it eventually participated to them.

These circumstances formed the basis for polarization in Finland. The new bourgeois government restored order by focusing on the reorganization of executive power and police as its central objective. Now the labour movement became increasingly concerned, as it lost its earlier legislative achievements and saw the end of labour reforms. On this basis it declared a General Strike in November 1917, just after the Bolsheviks had taken power in St. Petersburg. This meant

the birth of two competing power centres in Finland, both of which were beginning to organize an armed force for their support. Through this perspective, it would seem that according to its own self-understanding, the labour movement was driven to a 'defensive revolution' when the government declared bourgeois civil guards as government troops in January 1918. The question was mostly of defending achieved gains, instead of a total restructuring of existing social and political order, which was the Bolshevik objective in Russia (Alapuro 1997, 57–64).

However, polarization and the breakup of the existing political system, which led to civil war, had a strong influence on the image of Finnish independence. The 6 December saw a formal declaration, the proposition of SDP, requiring cooperation with the new Bolshevik government of Russia, losing to the governments unilateral proposition. The following war, casualties and terror from late January to early May, 1918 resulted in widely different interpretations on the causes of the conflict and the significance of Russia. The victorious government, or bourgeois groups, had a strong need for firm executive power even in the form of German based monarchy together with national consolidation. However, complete unity even among the bourgeois groups could not be reached, as the constitutional questions became dividing factors. Contrasting, to some extent, both red and white views, Russia was not the external supporter, or agitator, of carefully prepared red revolution in Finland, but mostly a source for the collapse of state monopoly of violence on the basis of its own disintegration and revolutionary processes.

## Limits of the possible for the political system, 1919–1926

After the civil war of 1918, Finland received a republican political system based on the forms of parliamentary democracy. This was in no way self-evident. The declaration of independence made Finland a republic, but during the autumn of 1918 Finland already had received, with the support of the conservative part of the bourgeoisie, a monarchic constitution and a king of German origin. However, the king eventually decided to decline the throne after German defeat in November 1918, and the precondition for British and American recognitions of Finnish independence in the spring of 1919 were a new government based on free parliamentary elections, including the SDP. Thus the Finnish republic was originally more a result of the collapse of the German Empire and the pressure of the Entente than of unqualified support of the bourgeois winners of the civil war.

The Civil Guards a voluntary, autonomous organization of the winning side, was given formal control of the armed forces and were central in ensuring the success and continuation of the outcomes of the civil war (or the 'Liberation War', as it was called by the winners) against both internal (communist rebellion) and

external (Russia/USSR) threats. These were understood as the different sides of the same question. The Civil Guard activity was based on an interpretation, which saw the events of autumn 1917 and spring 1918 as phase of mass mobilization against 'redness' and 'Russkie-likeness'. According to the "White" understanding of democracy in Finland, in 1918 took place not only rebellion against government, but also a White revolt, or rise of the peasant people for the 'Liberation War' (Kettunen 2001, 20–23).

However, the bourgeois groups were not unified in their relation to the heritage of the civil war. Main divisions took place between questions related to the labour movement, monarchy and the White revolt of the countryside. After the monarchy had been lost, the conservatives advocated strong restrictions on the labour movement and union activity, as well as strong executive power for the head of the state. They formed the basis for National Coalition Party. The moderate bourgeoisie of social liberals were ready to include a limited role for the labour movement, especially on the union side, so as to better heal the society after the civil war. They were also strong supporters of the republican constitution and formed the National Progress Party. Thirdly, the countryside based Agrarian League had a previous tradition of co-operating with the Social Democrats in parliament prior to the civil war and had also supported the creation of a republic. However, they emphasized the importance of the White revolt of the countryside as the basis for Finnish democracy.

The position of the Civil Guards within bourgeois groups was related to two main concerns. The first was that the parliamentary democracy would not enable a state agreeing with the heritage of the 'Liberation War'. The second was that the 'the people that had won the civil war' would lose possibilities for political influence, for example by monarchist plans, or by coup d'état (Kettunen 2001, 24). Thus the Civil Guards became a strong and armed political pressure group in Finland. However they were not without division (Ahti 1998, 239–240).

The role of the Civil Guards in conditioning democracy and as a pressure group both against the Social Democrats and the centrist bourgeoisie is exemplified by two cases of the 1920s – the so-called Civil Guard conflict of 1921 and the reaction to the first SDP minority government in 1926.

The Civil Guard conflict began in 1921 from a relatively modest question – a newspaper opinion article by a pseudonym criticising government's foreign policy-the so-called rim-state policy. However, the article turned into a diplomatic scandal when it became known, that the article was written by the Helsinki district commander of the Civil Guards, general major von Gerich. First even the government tried to apply to the autonomy and the apolitical nature of the Civil Guards. After diplomatic protests and public pressure, the government, including minister of defense, agreed to dismiss the Helsinki district commander. However, at this point the Commander in Chief of the Civil Guards, von Essen, declined to obey on the basis of the autonomy of the organization. Now the question moved to a new level,

as it became a conflict within the chain of command and an issue on the relation of the Civil Guards towards the state. Finally, President K. J. Ståhlberg had to dismiss the Commander in Chief of the Civil Guards. This did not immediately end the less than cooperative mood of the Civil Guards, as their central meeting proposed first von Essen, then the former commander of White army, C. G. E. Mannerheim, as new Commanders, before accepting the appointment of Lauri Malmberg.

However, much more serious, especially in terms of loyalty towards the constitution, was that the conflict had led to contemplation of coup d'état among the opposition in the Civil Guards, Mannerheim and the Activist right. Even the bourgeois centre was defined as 'half red'. The realisation of these plans was checked then, as it was number of other times, by doubts related to the opinion of the Civil Guards in general: Would the rank and file of the countryside really follow, if the officers started a coup, even on behalf of generally admired Mannerheim? There was no conclusive evidence then, but even earlier it was clear that considerable support existed also for the republic, especially in the countryside.

The case of the first SDP government after the civil war in 1926, representing the defeated side, is a much more obvious example of the significant role the Civil Guard possessed in terms of shaping the new Finnish state. However, it did receive some attention during its own time as well, as the Civil Guards had been moderating their action. This was based on the facts that their position was becoming more established, and that Ståhlberg was no longer the president. The prospect of SDP minority government led still to dramatic first reaction. The Civil Guards were concerned, on the basis of SDP's previous critique of the armed forces that they would try to suppress the organisation. Plans for a coup d'état were made very quickly together with some army officers, but these remained unrealized. The first contacts to the social democrats revealed that they had no intention of attempting to abolish the Civil Guard (Ahti 1998, 239–240). Despite the government's legal authority to do so, the limits of political action had already been made clear, especially to social democrats, but also to bourgeois centre.

## Conclusions: Russia in Finnish Politics

In the light of the three periods observed it can be argued that Russia or the USSR was a remarkable determinant of the political system during the formative years of the Finnish nation state. It had either a direct or indirect influence on the defining of such central concepts as people, democracy and politics.

When beginning the mobilisation for their nation project in the latter half of the 19th century, the Fennomans had to define who would be the 'people' of the new Finnish nation and what was expected from them. The Finnish people were

seen, first and foremost, as free peasants. They would be both accustomed to (local) self-rule and connected to the state, run by the "Finlandicizing" Fennoman elite. When the Finnish political system was modernized and democratised during the 1905 Russian revolution, this greatly increased the self-determination of the people, bringing in to light the impact of association activity and the development of civil society. However the dramatic democratisation of the representative system was seriously limited by the fact that the emperor's prerogatives in relation to the parliament remained untouched. It could be dismissed and new elections ordered when the ruler was not satisfied with the decisions of the parliament. These conditions created the basis for adapting to the needs of the executive power and undermined the value of universal suffrage.

However, the civil war became the real turning point of the Finnish political system and culture. Because of the strongly divisive nature of the conflict, there was an overt need amongst the winners to emphasize the need for strong executive power and national unity which was seen to be threatened both by the domestic revolutionary communists and the foreign power, Soviet Russia. This kind of interpretation, initially, did not leave much room for compromise in Finnish politics. Common good could not be achieved through compromise of different interests. Common good is understood rather like a pre-given mission, which needs to be clarified to everyone. Under the circumstances compromises become more often dressed as the only possibilities, necessary for saving the common good, instead of consequences of many alternatives (Kettunen 2001, 34–35). This kind of argumentation remained popular among politicians, not only during the 1920's and 1930's, but during the cold war and later as well.

Thus, the Finnish-Russian relations changed after the successful nationalistic mobilisation, independence and civil war, as well as after the Second World War. Adapting to these changes has always redefined the Finnish political system and its influence can still be felt.

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## Notes

1 When collecting names for a so-called Great Address in 1899, for example, a petition to the Emperor for restoring Finnish autonomy (Alapuro 1988, pp. 110–112)

2 The argument in detail see Risto Alapuro, Valta ja valtio – miksi vallasta tuli ongelma 1900-luvun vaihteessa?, in Talous, valta, valtio: Tutkimuksia 1800-luvun Suomesta, ed. Pertti Haapala, Helsinki 1990, pp. 249–251.

3 On interpretations underlining combination of short and long term causes, e. g. Tuomo Polvinen, Venäjän vallankumous ja Suomi, vol.1, Porvoo 1967, pp. 86–87, 202–211, Viljo Rasila, *Kehitys ja sen tulokset*, in Suomen taloushistoria, vol. 2, Helsinki 1982, p. 163. On interpretations regarding the Finnish civil war and the centrality of the conflict related to the political power of the state, Risto Alapuro, *Kansalaissota vallankumouksena*, in Suomen älymystö Venäjän varjossa, Hämeenlinna 1997, pp. 55–58, and more generally on the historiography of the civil war, Alapuro, Suomen synty paikallisena ilmiönä 1890–1933, Vantaa 2001, pp. 299–301. On related interpretation regarding the breaking up of the society from the top, see Pertti Haapala, Kun yhteiskunta hajosi: Suomi 1914–920, Kleio ja nykypäivä. Helsinki: Painatuskeskus, 1995, pp. 151–152.

# 2

# Transnational socialist imagination: The connections between Finnish socialists in the USA and Finland at the turn of the 20th century

— Ralf Kauranen & Mikko Pollari —

At the Finnish Social Democratic Party convention in 1909 political tactics were once again debated. The most heated discussion concerned a proposition made by Kaapo Murros, who suggested that the social democrats should focus on municipal policy instead of national parliamentary work. According to Murros, work in the municipalities was to strive for local, collective control of means of production. He considered this a more efficient way of establishing socialism than parliamentary work, which he characterized as legal patchwork with no effect on the foundation of private ownership. Murros's proposition lost out to the counter-proposition made by Yrjö Sirola, who, among other things, suggested that the party should condemn anti-parliamentarian tendencies as harmful to the workers' cause.

One of the arguments made against Murros's standpoint was that he had become a socialist in America and represented a skepticism towards parliamentary work suitable to the American environment, but not to the political situation of the Finnish working class. Alex Halonen, who just as Murro, had taken part in the Finnish-American socialist mobilization, described him in these words:

*He has become a social democrat in America. There he has seen that money is everything. Even a ballot is weaker, because votes can be bought with money. Capital controls voting. In some states the tyranny of capital is so enormous that a person who is known to have voted for social democrats is driven out of the state. It is natural,*

*that hatred towards parliamentarism grows in a country like this. And Murros, who has gained his opinions in American circumstances, distrusts parliamentarism here as well.* (Suomen sosialidemokratisen puolueen kuudennen edustajakokouksen pöytäkirja [The Proceedings of the Sixth Meeting of Delegates of the Finnish Social Democratic Party] 1909, 109).

The debate is illustrative of a few things. Firstly, it shows that many of the central figures in the Finnish socialist movement had an American experience. In 1909 Halonen and Murros had a background as immigrants in the US and as activists of the Finnish-American socialist field. Sirola, too, was soon to leave for America to teach at the socialist Work People's College in Duluth, Minnesota. Secondly, the arguments made in the debate present an apt concretization of V. I. Lenin's insistence on social democrats learning from and reflecting critically on the experiences of the movement in other countries (Lenin 1902). In this sense the Finnish social democrats adopted the internationalism of socialist doctrine in its search for political direction. Thirdly, as the first two notions indicate, the contacts between Finnish and Finnish-American socialists were very real, but the proximity in political ideology and tactics as well as the extent to which experiences were felt as shared varied.

The aim of this article is to outline the possibilities of a research focused on the contacts between Finnish and Finnish-American socialists at the turn of the 20th century within a theoretical framework informed by the concept of transnationalism. We propose that examining the two local fields in their inter-connectedness may enhance our understanding of the formation of the ideological, experiential and operational aspects within them.

Transnationalism is a theoretical construct and concept that has gained popularity after most of the existing research on Finnish-American and Finnish radicalism has been done. Auvo Kostiainen (2009) has noted that the study of Finnish-Americans has represented a take on the theme of transnationalism prior to the introduction of the term. The examples of earlier research taking cognizance of the Finnish-Americans', in general, as well as Finnish-American radicals' transnational connections, in particular, are many and varied. It may be useful to ask what new the concept of transnationalism and its explicit use can bring to the understanding of Finnish-American radicalism, and Finnish radicalism, for that matter. Following Steven Vertovec we define transnationalism as follows:

*When referring to sustained linkages and ongoing exchanges among non-state actors based across national borders – businesses, non-government organizations, and individuals sharing the same interests (by way of criteria such as religious beliefs, common cultural and geographic origins) – we can differentiate these as 'transnational' practices and groups (referring to their links functioning across nation states). The collective attributes of such connections, their processes of*

*formation and maintenance, and their wider implications are referred to broadly as 'transnationalism'*. (Vertovec 2009, 3).

With such a definition, transnational contacts may or may not involve the migration of people. Furthermore, migration can be viewed as both an instance of transnational ties and a prerequisite for transnational contacts. Individuals and groups crossing national borders represent transnational ties of one sort, but it is the more continuous connections – networks, communities[1] – upheld by the emigrated individuals and groups with individuals and groups in other locations that are at the center of understanding transnational connections. Finnish immigrants' contacts with relatives, companies and organizations in their former home country represent the archetypical form of migrants' transnational ties, often also described with the concept of diaspora (Wahlbeck 2002).[2]

Not all emigrants maintain contacts with their so-called home country, and not all migrants wish to identify with a common background based on locale of departure. Still, like many other migrant groups, the Finnish-Americans have shown a great affinity to Finland, despite their varying political inclinations. Two factors characteristic of the early Finnish-American socialists make them particularly interesting for an analysis through the lens of transnationalism. Firstly, the early socialists of Finnish ancestry represent the first generation of immigrants. This generation is much keener on maintaining contacts with the former homeland than subsequent generations (Hummasti 1990).[3] Secondly, the embrace of socialist ideas posed, for the Finnish-American radicals, a different problematic with regard to issues of ethnicity, language and nationality, when compared to Finnish-Americans of other political orientation. Socialism's internationalism – voiced in The Communist Manifesto by the phrase *"[t]he working men have no country*" (Marx & Engels 1998, 34) – and the central idea of a class based identity in capitalist society offered another type of belonging than nationalism.

Accordingly, the transnational contacts of the Finnish-American socialists can be argued to imply a dual frame of reference. On the one hand their transnational contacts to Finland represent a form of internationalism in the spirit of socialism. On the other hand, the contacts to Finland represent an internationalism confined by perceptions of common nationality, ethnicity and linguistic belonging. The intense contacts between Finland and the US among the first generation of migrants, the co-existence of ties based on class and nationality and their interaction in the forming of the Finnish-American socialists' identity make them an interesting case of a transnationally-minded study.

In this context it is worth noting that although our focus is on the transnational connections between socialist Finns in Finland and the US, radicalism among these was formed in a more complex transnational network than this dual setting. Early Finnish socialists were, for example, in many ways influenced by socialists in Germany, Russia and Sweden.[4] Later on, the Moscow-based Comintern played

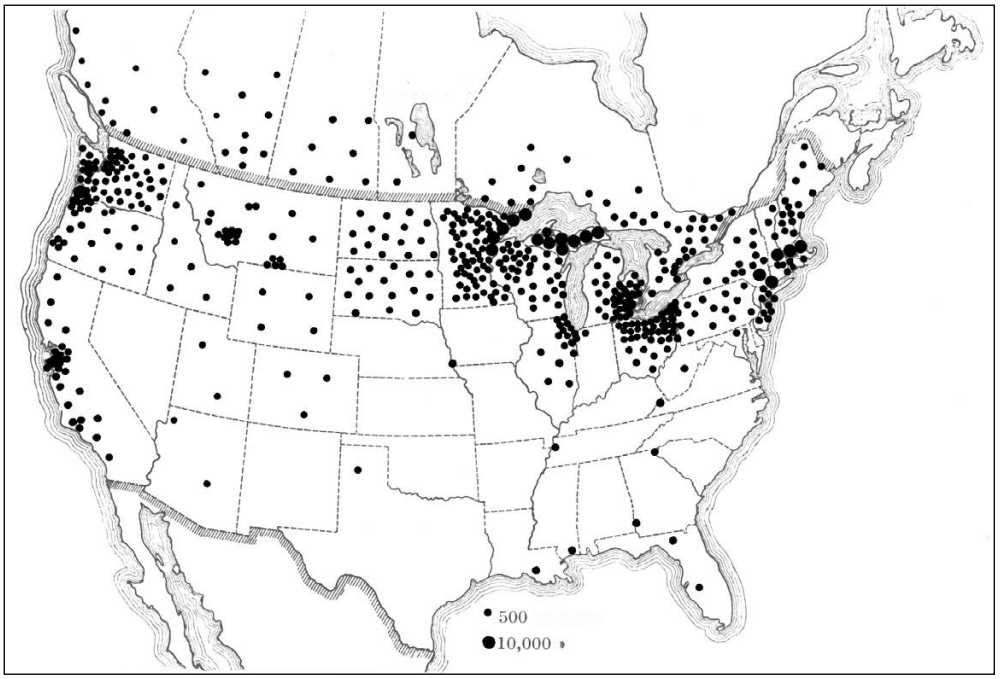
a crucial role in the formation of communism in both Finland and the US, not least among the Finnish-Americans (Kostiainen 1978). Also, the emigration of Finnish-American socialists to the "Workers' Paradise" of Soviet Karelia in the 1930s was a clear manifestation of transnational ties.[5]

The transnational bonds of Finnish-American socialists varied in intensity from time to time, and extended from the more mundane to ones related to key political events. Peter Kivisto notes that times of crisis increased the interest in the homeland (Kivisto 1987). Certain overseas events, such as the general strike in 1905, the rebellion of Viapori in 1906, the Russian revolution and Finnish independence in 1917, as well as the civil war in Finland in 1918 stirred the field of Finnish-American radicalism and resulted in heightened activity, which in parts had a transnational character.

For example, the Viapori rebellion led to the flight of Finnish socialist activists from Finland to the US, thus reviving the field of radicalism there (Ross 1977, 141–142). The civil war, for its part, resulted in hopes of a proletarian revolution in Finland and, later on, attempts to offer overseas help such as the Million Mark Fund (which had a background in a wish to help Finns due to the consequences of the World War I in Finland) as well as the reception of refugees (Luodesmeri 1974; Kostiainen 1977). Also, the split of the socialists in Finland was reflected in the disputes among Finnish-Americans. In addition, the changes in the field of leftist radicalism in both Finland and the US were connected to more international development trends related to, among other things, differing stances toward the Soviet Union.

## The transnational ties of Finnish radicals

From the mid-1860s to the end of the 1920s over 350,000 Finns left Finland for North-America. Half of this immigration occurred during the first fifteen years of the 20th century (Kero 1997, 13–14). The years of World War I meant a virtual cessation of immigration from Finland to the US, and after the war the flow of immigrants never reached its prewar numbers (Hoglund 1984, 270–271). The typical migrant was a 20 year old son of a peasant or crofter family in Ostrobothnia, who migrated with the hope of making a better living in the new country (Kero 1997, 14–15). Although the number of emigrants was large in relation to the population of Finland (about a ninth of the Finnish population; Kivisto 1984, 63), the share of Finnish immigrants of the total number of immigrants to the USA (roughly 40 million; Kero 1997, 13) was very small. In the country of arrival the Finns constituted collectives that in their local environment, however, could make up the largest immigrant group (Kivisto 1984, 74). The largest numbers of Finnish migrants were

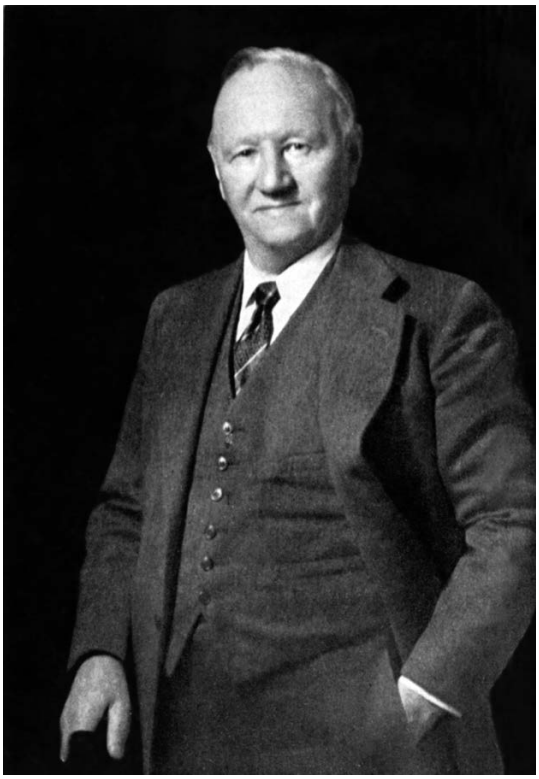



Distribution of Finnish North Americans in 1920. – A modified version of the map published in Iso Tietosanakirja 1931.

channelled to the states of Michigan and Minnesota in the mid-west, Massachusetts and New York in the east and Washington in the west (Kivisto 1984, 72–73).

Among the migrants was a score of notable Finnish socialists: for example Alex Halonen, Johan Kock, Vihtori Kosonen, Matti Kurikka, Leo Laukki, Kaapo Murros, A. B. Mäkelä, Eetu Salin, Yrjö Sirola, Taavi Tainio, A. F. Tanner and Oskari Tokoi (Kostiainen & Pilli 1983, 96; Kivisto 1984, 93). Some of them had become socialists before their migration, whereas some found socialism in the USA. Those who had already been introduced to socialism in Finland, such as A. F. Tanner, acted as "apostles" for the socialist ideology among the Finnish immigrants in America.[6]

The socialists' migration from the 1890s onwards had its ups and downs: some immigrants stayed, some returned to Finland and some even came back again. Carl Ross sees that the tide of immigration experienced a new high after 1908 due to the frustration caused by the ineffectiveness of the Finnish parliamentary reform of 1907 and the continuation of the repressive measures by the czar's regime. Included in this wave was a new, young breed of socialists (Ross 1977, 141–144). Some of them, like Leo Laukki, who was involved in the aforementioned rebellion of Viapori, were forced to flee from Finland, others, like Yrjö Sirola, came voluntarily to acquire new insights (Ross 1977, 141–142, Salomaa 1966, 149–150). Sirola is a good example of a Finnish socialist being invited or even



Oskari Tokoi. – Institute of Migration photo archive.

drafted to the Finnish-American labour movement. He was called to teach at the Work Peoples' College in Duluth, but other institutions also recruited socialists from Finland.[7] Sometimes the recruitment failed, as when the Finnish-American socialist newspaper Työmies (The Worker) wanted Alma Malander to come to the US and join its staff in 1904 (Karvonen 1977, 198).

What the later socialist immigrants had in common was a more radical view of society and socialism than the socialist immigrants that preceded them. The radicalizing impact that they had on the course of Finnish-American socialism was, according to Ross, made possible by the exit of the older guard of socialists (Tainio, Murros, Kosonen, etc.) that somewhat coincided with the arrival of the aforementioned (Ross 1977, 141–144). These returning immigrants, on the other hand, contributed to the development of socialism in Finland with the experience gained in America. They remained active in politics and some wrote works inspired by their sojourn in America. One example of these returnees was the above-mentioned Kaapo Murros, whose pamphlet Suoria sanoja suurissa kysymyksissä [Straight words in big questions, 1908] was clearly influenced by the syndicalist anti-parliamentarism he had encountered in America. The continuous import and export of socialists, thus, had an impact on the formation of socialist ideologies on both continents. As the example of Murros, related in the beginning

of this article, shows, the impact was not necessarily one of direct influence, but possibly more indirect as the American input was denounced.

The exchange of socialist ideas across the Atlantic was not restricted to the travels of prominent socialist leaders. It has been noted that compared to earlier immigrants, the workers that landed in America in the beginning of the 1900s were already well acquainted with socialist ideas (Alanen 1981, 35). These immigrants inevitably spread their knowledge of the principles of the working class movement in their new surroundings. On the other hand, Antti Liuttunen sees that it is highly probable that immigrants from Ostrobothnia – the area of the highest amount of emigrants in Finland – had no earlier ties to the working class movement and became socialists only during their stay in America (Liuttunen 1998, 338). In the early stages of migration, influences mainly traveled from Finland to the US, but later on the trans-Atlantic connection became a two-way street. If and when migrants returned home they took their new ideas with them and added to the radicalism in their home district. Keijo Virtanen argues that returning migrants brought about a major increase in rural radicalism in Ostrobothnia. He also points out that their radicalizing effect was greatest in rural areas, and that urban Finnish socialism was more clearly home-grown (Virtanen 1986, 287–288).

That events such as the civil war in Finland or the Russian revolution could have effects among Finnish-American socialists, presupposes the distribution of news from one part of the world to another. Both in the US and in Finland the socialist press was lively. Among Finnish–Americans the interest towards Finnish politics and on-goings was clearly visible. Because the immigrants' lack of skills in English made it hard to read local papers, Finnish communities in the USA subscribed and read Finnish newspapers (Liuttunen 1998, 342). The Finnish-American workers' newspapers that were established in the beginning of the 1900s usually included news both from the immigrants' old homeland, Finland, and of the activities of Finns in America (Hummasti 1977, 167).

According to P. George Hummasti, the newspapers had a dual role. They both encouraged the assimilation of their readers into the American society, and "served as a brake on this process by providing these same readers with a source of information and contact within the cultural substance of their Finnish heritage". In addition to that, the papers also worked toward uniting the workers under socialist principles (Hummasti 1977; 167–168, 178–180). In other words, the newspapers helped to uphold and create both the "Finnish" and the "socialist" identities of the workers. By keeping up ties to other Finnish immigrants in the US and in Finland they ended up strengthening the separate Finnish-American identity of the immigrants. Simultaneously, the papers also contributed to the creation of a transnational working class community, which included socialists both in the homeland, the US and the rest of the world. Gary Kaunonen notes in

his study of Finnish-American immigrants' role in Michigan's Copper Country how they united with workers of other ethnicities "*[b]y printing non-Finnish-language publications, by translating English-language publications into Finnish, and by opening the doors of their hall and publishing company to Copper Country proletarians in a time of great tumult*", that is during the Copper Country Strike in 1913–14 (Kaunonen 2010, 179).

The working class newspapers in Finland worked in a similar way: by publishing news and emigrants' letters from overseas they created and kept up unity between the Finnish workers of the old and the new world. Their reports expanded the awareness of Finnish workers by giving them insights into what it meant to be a worker under different – American – circumstances. In addition to news reports, Finnish-American newspapers also made their way to Finland – even in such amounts that the nationalist paper Uusi Suometar [The New Finn] stated in 1896 that almost as many Finnish-American as Finnish newspapers were read in the towns of Oulu and Vaasa (Hoglund 1981, 14).

Another manifestation of transnational contacts between Finnish and Finnish-American socialists was literature published both in Finland and the US and its travels across the Atlantic. Literature, as the printed word in general, was an efficient way of spreading socialism among Finnish workers both in America and Finland because of their high literacy rate. Most of the Finnish immigrants that arrived in the US were able to read, some even write. This was a major difference compared to East or South European immigrants, who were often illiterate (Kero 1997, 85). Also, as was the case with newspapers, the workers' lack of skills in other languages than Finnish meant that local socialist literature was unusable in Finnish-American socialist propaganda. Therefore it was imperative to import socialist texts from Finland and publish socialist literature and translations of important works in Finnish.

The first Finnish introduction to socialism in the US was Sosialismi [Socialism] written and published by A. F. Tanner in 1900 (Virtanen 2001, 44). From there on began a steady flow of translations and original works in Finnish.[8] In America it was possible to publish books that might not have been allowed under the strict censorship in Finland before 1906. After the general strike of 1905 pre-censorship was abolished and during the following years publishing activities increased within the Finnish labour movement. A significant amount of the socialist literature published in Finnish consisted of translations (Ilmonen 1931, 118; Pilli 1986, 141–142). These included the works of Marx, Kautsky, Ingersoll and Lenin in several editions. Alongside works with a theoretical approach, Finnish-American immigrants also wrote and published calendars, songbooks, school books, poems, prose and plays. Their literary activity reached a peak during the blooming period of the working class movement in the two first decades of the 20th century and it seems that members of the working


A collection of Finnish American newspapers. – Institute of Migration photo archive.

class were the most prolific of the immigrant writers (Kero 1997, 166). Works published both in Finland and North America crossed the Atlantic. A large part of the Finnish literature spread among the workers was subscribed from Finland (Pilli 1986, 124). Also, for example, some of Jack London's works were first translated into Finnish in the US, and subsequently sold in Finland by the book shops of the workers' press (Roininen 1993, 270). The fiction produced by Finnish-American writers, however, never became widely read in the old homeland (Kero 1997, 166).

Another type of transnational contacts between continents was letters sent by Finnish-American workers to Finland and vice versa. These letters included personal information, local news and sometimes straightforward political and ideological content. One recurring feature of letters sent to Finland seems to be the will to encourage or discourage the recipients' possible plans of immigration by giving descriptions of the living conditions in America (see e.g. Kero 1985). These letters differed from the aforementioned types of transnational connections in that they were more intimate and personal. Nevertheless, they had their impact on the impressions that workers in Finland and America had of overseas events, and because of their private nature, their impact may have been even stronger than for example that of the news provided by print media. Private letters, for instance reporting from a Finland in civil war, were also published in Finnish-American

newspapers (Luodesmeri 1974, 72), and letters from America made their way onto the pages of Finnish newspapers. For example, in the nationalist-minded newspapers the intention of their publication was to dampen the enthusiasm of potential future immigrants by giving a picture of the hard living conditions in America (Hoglund 1981, 24).

In the literature on transnational migration and networks, remittances from emigrants to family members in the country of emigration have been defined as a key feature, not only of family, but also of national economic significance in many countries. In the context of Finland at the turn of the 19th century, when emigration from the country was seen as something negative also in an economic sense, remittances from emigrants were an object of interest. Sometimes it was stated that their significance was small. On the other hand, some municipalities represented the view that the emigrants took good care of the relatives left behind. The emigrants were also known to have financially supported the building of temperance and workers' halls in Finland (Virtanen 1981, 40). A special form of remittance was constituted by the collectively organized fund-raisings for different recipients and causes in the old home country. For example, in 1918 Suomalainen Sosialistijärjestö [Finnish Socialist Federation] arranged three different fund raisings to provide help to the Reds in Finland. Finnish IWW activists had their own fund raising initiatives (Luodesmeri 1974, 73).

As can be seen, the transnational contacts of the Finnish-American and Finnish socialists were rich and varied. The bonds and interaction between radicals on the two continents in the early 20th century were intense in a way that even makes the division of separate Finnish-American and Finnish working class movements, at times, seem artificial. Therefore it is not surprising that their contacts have been under scrutiny in research done before the employment of the term transnationalism.

## "Transnationalism" in previous studies on Finnish-American radicalism

There are a few studies on Finnish-American radicalism specifically focusing on the relationships with Finland and Finnish politics, and, as it happens, on the role of the Finnish civil war (Kostiainen 1972; Kostiainen 1977; Luodesmeri 1974). Others have studied the transnational relations between Finnish-Americans and their former homeland with the focus set on the whole political spectrum among Finnish-Americans (Engelberg 1944; Kivisto 1987). These studies do not use the concept "transnationalism", but their interests might as well be described with that term. The literature on the working class movement in Finland has not

focused on the relationship with the Finnish-American movement. Relations in other directions, e.g. Sweden[9] and Russia[10], have gained some interest.

Auvo Kostiainen's (1977) article "The tragic crisis: Finnish-American workers and the civil war in Finland" presents a range of different transnational ties between the US and Finland, and their respective labour movements.[11] The war was consequential for Finnish-American radicalism both during and after the war. When the battles of the war were fought in spring 1918 news was spread to the US via telegrams sent from Stockholm, Sweden (Kostiainen 1977, 220). The news, published in the Finnish-language socialist press in the US, was ambivalent with regards to the wins and losses of the Red Guards and the revolutionary government, clearly favoured by the Finnish-American socialists in what was considered a class war (Kostiainen 1977, 222; 220). Therefore news had to be interpreted in the American context, and the newspapers were "apt to understate leftist defeats in the battles" (Kostiainen 1977, 222). Instead they overstated the significance of the German troops in Finland, thus presenting the Red Guards as protecting Finnish independence against foreign intrusion.

Anti-German sentiments in the US were also appealed to in the workings of the Finnish Information Bureau, which provides an extraordinary example of transnationalism. The Finnish Information Bureau was the Finnish revolutionary government's representative in the USA (Kostiainen 1977, 224). It was practically constituted by Santeri Nuorteva, an American Finn since 1911. The aim of the "legation" was first to organize shipments of food supplies to Finland, but it gained its greatest significance as a propagandist for "Red Finland" in the US (Kostiainen 1983, 92). As an instance of the Finnish People's Commission on American soil, upheld by an American Finn, the Finnish Information Bureau diffuses the issue of transnationalism. The transnational ties result in such a tight knot that it almost becomes superfluous to speak of a relationship between two locally defined, connected parts, and rather more meaningful to consider them as one common, perhaps "supranational" body.

One of the consequences of the civil war in Finland was an influx of new Finnish immigrants in the US. These were met with skepticism by the Finnish-American radicals. The Työmies paper warned against letting unknown immigrants give speeches at the workers' halls, in case they were representing a positive take on the winning bourgeois government in Finland (Luodesmeri 1974, 75–76). Sometimes the Finnish-American community was warned by Finnish workers' associations about Finnish immigrants or visitors (Luodesmeri 1974, 78). A measure taken in the US and Canada was the foundation of the "Committees of examination of recent arrivals from Finland" [Hiljan Suomesta tulleitten tutkijakomiteat], which were to examine incoming Finnish immigrants' role in the war. Whether a Finnish immigrant was to be approved for membership in a workers' organization he or she had to be cleared as either neutral or a leftist in the war. Had an immigrant fought on the

bourgeois White side, he was obliged to make a confession and ask for forgiveness to be able to become a member of an organization. The first committees started their activity in 1921; after 1924 few were active. At one point the committees began to require an official certificate from a Finnish workers' association to clear the name of an immigrant. News of this spread in Finland and prospective emigrants started to procure certificates before they left for the US (Luodesmeri 1974).

Not only did the Finnish civil war consolidate existing schisms between leftist and conservative Finns in America, it also contributed to the antagonisms within the labour movement. Socialists, communists and syndicalists provide both common and distinctive reactions to the civil war, reactions that also were of significance to the constituency of the Finnish-American field of radicalism. The socialists, for example, were only to a limited extent involved in the examination committees (Luodesmeri 1974, 110). On a more general level, Auvo Kostiainen (1977, 232) concludes that "*[t]he Civil War in Finland had a radicalizing effect on Finnish-American workers*". In the division of the socialist camp in a social democratic and a communist strand, many Finns in America chose to become a member of the more radical communist parties. The division of radical Finns in America in more or less radical groups was part of a global trend, but their specific relationship to Finland, the Finnish civil war and the Finnish socialists had an impact on how they steered within the more general trend.

## Central issues in the study of Finnish-American radicalism… and what has transnationalism to offer?

There are some central questions concerning Finnish-American radicalism that most researchers touch upon. One question concerns the exceptional radicalism of Finns, when compared to other immigrant groups. Another issue relates to the combination of, or antagonism between, a socialist and a Finnish identity. Discussions on both these questions actualize specific takes on the issue of transnationalism.

It is an oft repeated fact that the Finns in America were an exceptionally radical group compared to other immigrant groups (Kivisto 1984, 16; Lipset & Marks 2001, 143). This has raised a reasonable amount of curiosity and resulted in attempts to explain the fact. Explanations have been sought for both in the Finns' country and settings of emigration and in the surroundings of their settlement in a new country. Conservative contemporaries of the radical Finns also explained the radicalism of Finns with their background. In a commentary on the Mesabi Strike in July 1907, the Minneapolis Journal stated: "*the largest number of Mesabi workers came from Finland, in the frozen north, a land where Russia's oppression*

*has bred hatred of government and a rampant form of socialism*" (quoted in Karni 1977, 77). According to this explanation, being a subject in the Russian empire taught Finns disobedience and opposition to rule. In subsequent research the issue of exceptionalism is well put by P. George Hummasti in his study of Finnish radicals in Astoria, Oregon:

*In order to understand even partially why Finnish-Americans including those in Astoria were attracted to socialism when most American immigrants stood apart from the radical struggle of the working class, it is necessary to know something about the land where they had been born and raised; about the circumstances causing them to leave that homeland to come to America; and about the environment they found in America; for all these were important in predisposing the Finns to a radical outlook on life and in shaping the outlines of that outlook.* (Hummasti 1979, 7–8).

Accordingly, explanations to the radicalism of Finns are to be found in the environs where they have grown up and which they leave – the "cultural baggage thesis" (Kivisto 1984, 16) – as well as in the society that they arrive in. In this view, two different local settings are to explain the political development of the Finns as individuals and as a group. The connection between the localized settings is made up by the migration of individuals and their "predispositions" to certain forms of action, identification, and world-view. Predispositions are formed continually, but they (assumedly) carry along the culture and ideas of the country of emigration to the new surroundings and the new situations that the immigrant is to meet.

The migrating Finns and their predispositions constitute a transnational tie of sorts, although the strength of the tie may vary significantly. An individual may never look back or be in contact with the old country and try to discard the identifications predisposed before migration. Such migrants, of course, exist. But so do migrants who continue to personify the ties between two local-national settings, by their movement back and forth, by clinging to identities formed in both settings, and by consuming culture, media and goods tying together the two environs. Still, it may be asked whether the two settings, moulding the migrants' predispositions to various degrees, are connected and entangled in other ways than by the migrants themselves. And, furthermore, one might ask how the radical Finns' predispositions are influenced specifically by these entwined aspects of their surroundings.

What, then, is the "cultural baggage" carried by the Finns, explaining their radicalism? When this question is raised, it is noteworthy that, however radical the Finns are considered to have been, only one fourth or one fifth – not all – of the Finnish immigrants were involved in the American radical workers' movement.

The largest migration flow came from the rural areas of Ostrobothnia. Only in the first decade of the 20th century did emigration from southern Finland's more urban parts increase. The rural background and the relations of ownership

and production in Finnish agriculture have been seen as one factor explaining the Finns' readiness to accept socialism. The lack of a feudal system and small class differences between landowners and the landless employed in agriculture has been seen as enabling Finns to question social hierarchies and class-related injustices and hence as predisposed to socialism. The argument has been made with more or less reserve.

In many ways the landless employees were in a similar position as industrial workers, which in some respect also may explain their readiness to identify with socialist ideas.[12] Peter Kivisto has pointed at the secularism of the Finnish immigrants as an explanation to their radicalism. For secularized immigrants, socialism offered an alternative form of knowledge partly fulfilling the same functions as religion might have done (Kivisto 1984, 92, 210–211). Another form of baggage the Finns brought was their aforementioned relatively high literacy rate, which made it easier to spread the word of socialism among them (Kero 1997, 86). Most Finnish-American radicals came in contact with socialism in the US, not in Finland (Kivisto 1984, 70). As the socialists gained popularity in Finland, the number of Finnish emigrants familiar with socialism prior to migration increased; however, the Finns' radicalism seems to be something "predisposed", rather than "prepossessed" before migration. The so-called socialist apostles make an important exception, as they (among many others before them) may be said not only to have imported socialism to the US, but also provided for the leadership within the Finnish-American radical community.

Beside explanations referring to the "cultural baggage" of the Finnish immigrants, reasons for the Finns' radicalism have been found in the surroundings of the receiving country. The existence of a capable leadership, which was forced to leave Finland, has been pointed out as a possible explanation to the exceptional radicalism of the Finns. The lack of such leaders made the mobilization of other immigrant groups decisively less efficient. Another form of explanation addresses the disappointment felt by Finns coming to the "promised land" of America. The high expectations regarding freedom and wealth were not met and the feelings of discontent resulted in a radical questioning of the society's hierarchies. Unemployment and hard working conditions led to a radical reaction; later on the prejudices against Finns as radicals and problematic employees fed this radicalism (Kero 1997, 85). A biographer of the Swedish-American wobbly-legend Joe Hill speculates about Hill's reaction to the new American environment being one of bafflement of the conditions of workers in America often being worse than those in Sweden (Söderström 2002, 49). All dissatisfaction, however, cannot be accounted for as disappointment and wrongful expectations; a reaction upon injustice and bad circumstances can occur on the basis of emotions other than disappointment. On the other hand, one should be wary of vocabularies that account for political action either in purely emotional or purely rationalistic explanations.

Finnish American lumberjacks. Detailed information missing. – Institute of Migration photo archive.

Both rational and emotional aspects should be considered when appraising the motives of political action.

It is a self-evident fact that the formation of radical ideas and the identification with them takes place in certain local environments and contexts. Migrants' predispositions are formed in Finland and they continue to be moulded in the US, and positions are chosen and filled in different settings and contexts, according to the predispositions. The environments where Finnish radicals are active do not, however, need to be seen as national – Finnish and American – contexts, but may be broken down in smaller units. They may also, and this is the point we want to emphasize, be seen as transnationally moulded settings. What is transnationally moulded in a certain environment is open to question, and various parts of a setting surrounding an immigrant may be transnationally formed in different ways. The companies of the Copper Country of Michigan and the socialist organizations there were the result of different processes of becoming, to which varying transnational ties contributed. Still, both formations had an effect on the political choices and identifications of Finnish workers settling in the Copper Country.

The "Finnishness" of the Finnish-Americans was a central concern to the socialists. This was clearly visible in the debates over the position of the Finnish language socialist locals in relation to the American socialist parties and the American working class more generally. Whereas the Finnish language was central

to being able to transmit the ideas of socialism to the Finnish immigrants, this ethnically and nationalistically defined organization constituted a problem from the perspective of socialism's internationalism, which was also to be applied within the national borders of the US (Hummasti 1979, 48). Instead of seeing the workers as nationally, ethnically or linguistically defined, they were to be understood as sharing a much more important commonality based on class belonging.

The issue of a Finnish identity of the Finnish-American radicals was not only a linguistic question but the language, no doubt, constituted a pivotal prerequisite to the preservation of the ethnic ties. The "Finnishness" is perceptible in the interest of the American Finns in the issues of the old home country, its politics and its socialists. The interest in the "old country" by the radicals was shared with conservatives and liberals. Finns of different political orientations also shared the issue of having to (re)act upon Americanization. The meeting between "Finnishness" and "Americanness" had to be negotiated; perhaps especially in situations when being Finnish was deemed as something problematic, for example when the Finns' "whiteness" was questioned (Karni 1977, 79; Kivisto 2009). What separated Finnish radicals from other Finns was the demand from socialist doctrine of internationalism and class based solidarity despite national or ethnic differences. In this respect, Finnish radicals, at least in theory, had to position themselves not only in regard to Finns and Americans, but also other immigrant groups in the US as well as the working class in different parts of the world. As the construction of identities, of what is the same as oneself, presupposes a notion of differences, of that which is diverse from oneself, Finnish radicals' identifications in the US, but also in Finland, presupposed a noteworthy amount of work. This identity work as well as the meanings given to radical politics by radical Finns has in previous research been illuminated with reference to transnational ties.

As Peter Kivisto has put it,

*The relationship that existed between the point of origin and the migratory destination of Finnish emigrants was not a dichotomous one. The sea change did not simply constitute a rupture between a pre-modern world and modernity; it neither resulted in the thorough deracination of old-world traits and social organizations [...], nor the mere transplantation of the Old World in the new [...]. Instead, the relationship is best seen as a dialectical one in which immigrants, to the extent that they were able, constructed a meaningful social reality out of the old and the new.* (Kivisto 1984, 37).

To this we want to add that the immigrant was not the only intermediary between the old and the new. The connections between the old and the new, which in this case imply transnational connections, were upheld by various means and actors. The old and the new in many ways were simultaneous, not just the environments of consecutive phases in an immigrants' life, but transnationally, more or less continually connected places.

## From national to transnational histories of radicalism

Most of the study of Finnish-American radicalism has taken place within the framework of migration studies or immigration history, a discussion which clearly has taken transnational connections seriously and furthered the understanding of transnationalism in the human and social sciences more generally (Levitt & Jaworsky 2007). Labour history and the study of social movements and collective action have increasingly started to take into account transnationalism.[13] Whereas the focal point for migration studies is the migration of individuals and groups and their contacts with future and former homelands as well as global Diasporas, a focus on transnational collective action, in principle, does not necessitate the foundation of migration. Transnational contacts and co-operation concerning a political issue or cause do not rest solely on the movement of people, but may be upheld by transmission of telephone calls, money, pamphlets and letters etc.

This crude distinction between two lines of study points to an important theoretical issue. Although both strands of study enable a focus on transnational ties, they portray different takes on locality and the field of study. The field of the transnational suggests a common space, but the context of migration points toward a movement between two (or more) places. Also, in the context of migration, the social action of interest takes place in two (or more) localities, e.g. Finland and the US. In contrast, the transnational study of social movements or labour history may be said to accentuate one common field shared by agents located in many places. Despite a common focus on transnationalism we have, in the aforementioned, case two (or more) national settings and in the latter one transnational setting.

This distinction is connected to the issue of methodological nationalism (Beck 2004), which both migration studies and the study of social movements have had to deal with. Labour history and the study of social movements have addressed the tradition of writing national histories of this or that movement. The understanding of, for instance, labour movements has long been built on division based on nation (van der Linden 2002). As with the social sciences more generally the most common move from this focus has been the comparative study of different phenomena in multiple national settings. Still, in comparative studies, the national has often offered the frame of reference. Also, a central problematic for comparative studies is comparability, which presupposes at least two separate entities sharing some commonality. Comparison actualizes the question of shared or entangled histories (Kaelble 2005). Instead of comparing phenomena defined as national, it may prove useful to study them as tied together by different connections across the national borders.

The concept of transnationalism can also be criticized for representing methodological nationalism. A narrow focus on transnational ties may obscure other

(more) relevant ties, such as family ties or regional ties (Wilding 2007). For a Finnish-American immigrant, the central networks may be other than nationally defined, between, for example Ostrobothnia and Oregon or Helsinki and New York. Ruben Gielis (2009, 274) suggests that it might be better to use a concept such as trans-social instead of transnational. A study of the trans-social could then capture different kinds of ties or networks, which connect the migrant to meaningful social groups and localities. Gielis (2009) also proposes that transnational networks be studied through the lens offered by the concept of place. Migrants' lives are lived in different places, e.g. homes and workplaces, where transnational and trans-social networks of different kinds concur. In some places people define their situation with reference to the national, in other places family, regional or cosmopolitan ties are more important. This has consequences for the analysis of radicalism.

The "nationalism" inherent in a transnational point of view may also fail to take notice of the special characteristics of different localities. For example, the transnational ties of the Finnish workers of Brooklyn, New York, were different from workers in Duluth, Minnesota, had to their homeland and to the rest of the world. In Brooklyn the constant influx of new emigrants meant that Finland was always present and recent news from the old homeland was easy to come by. This suggests that the local working class community developed more in interaction with the Finnish working class movement and perhaps also remained more "Finnish" than the workers' associations farther in the west, which were more isolated and therefore developed by way of other kinds of connections (Liuttunen 1998, 452).

Peter Kivisto stresses the importance of localities from another angle. In the words of Kivisto, "*[e]ven in transnational social spaces, place continues to count*". He points out, that despite transnational contacts; the majority of immigrants live their lives primarily in one place and over time the issues of this locality will take precedence over the issues of the old homeland (Kivisto 2001, 571). This estrangement from the homeland is bound to increase among the next immigrant generations. Hand in hand with this alienation transnational contacts to the homeland tend to decrease, too. This notion directs the study of transnationalism to concentrate on the first generation of immigrants and, therefore, on eras of high migration.

The point of view of transnationalism in the study of the early Finnish and Finnish-American working class movements is supported by the notion that many of the above-mentioned members of the working class movement were, in a very literal sense, transnational actors. Contrary to the image of the immigrant who little by little gets more and more attached to his or her place of immigration, Finnish-American socialists such as Yrjö Sirola and Kaapo Murros were active in two localities and acted as intermediaries between them.

By concentrating on the transnational ties between Finns on the two continents it is possible, we believe, to enhance our understanding of both Finnish and Finnish-American radicalism and socialism in the late 19th and early 20th

century. It is evident that both Finnish and Finnish-American workers were influenced by the exchange of ideas and experiences as well as printed matters and people between the two continents. The wealth and the liveliness of early 20th century Finnish socialists' trans-Atlantic connections could even lead one to question whether the division into separate fields of study of Finnish socialism and Finnish-American socialism actually is in accordance with the thinking of the contemporaries. Could it be that by concentrating on one of those two, previous research has been unable to comprehend the importance of one aspect of their actual experience? What was the contemporaries' conception of the connection between Finnish workers on the two continents? Should the Finnish working class movements rather be considered as a whole divided on two continents – and several localities – than two separate entities?

As mentioned above, the transnational affinities of Finnish and Finnish-American radicals' may have lain elsewhere as well, based on the political connectedness with socialist and labour movements around the globe. However important the contacts between Finnish radicals in Finland and the US were, a narrow focus on these two countries risks missing out on important aspects of the formation of radicalism and labour movement in its internationalism and globally spread influences. A focus on the transnational ties of the labour movement and the Finnish radicals in the US and in Finland should be able to account for what the world where they lived looked like to them. An analysis of transnational connections can posit places such as the US, Russia, Germany and Sweden on the world map of the Finnish socialists and estimate how steadily different localities – national, regional and others – and their labour movements were attached to the map. This again is informative with regards to the entanglements of labour movement and socialist ideology in Finland, in the US and also elsewhere.

A transnational approach shifts the focus of research from nationalistically defined movements to the connections and interaction between them and even calls into question nation-based divisions and presuppositions. Instead of following the dividing line between Finnish-American and Finnish working class movements a transnational or trans-social approach might scrutinize the connections between defined individuals and groups and their different ways and intensities of interaction.

The study of labour movement and radical ideologies from a transnational or trans-social point of view represents a special take on political imagination (Wolin 1961; McBride 2005). Sheldon S. Wolin's definition of political imagination emphasizes the utopian aspect of political thinking; its ability to imagine something outside of the existing. Still, thinking is always also attached to the historical context where it is performed. Our proposition to assume a transnational perspective on early Finnish-American and Finnish socialists stresses one aspect of this context.

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## Notes

1 For a discussion on the varying vocabulary, see Dufoix 2008, 30–34

2 See Dufoix 2008; Vertovec 2009, 128–133

3 See Kivisto 1987

4 See Hentilä 1980; Ehrnrooth 1992, Kujala 1989

5 See Kero 1983; Karni 1999

6 See Karni 1977, 65–71

7 See Hummasti 1979, 25, 72

8 For example, see Alex Halonen's Työväen liike eri muodoissaan [The Working Class Movement in its Different Forms, 1904] and Kaapo Murros's Suuret haaveilijat [Great Dreamers, 1905]

9 See Hentilä 1980

10 See Kujala 1989

11 See Kostiainen 1972

12 See Kero 1997, 84

13 For a critical review, see Tarrow 1998

# 3

# American impact on Finnish communism in the 1920s

— Tauno Saarela —

Between 1870 and 1919, 329, 000 Finnish workingmen and women emigrated from Finland to America. Many of these emigrants became members and supporters of the Finnish labour movement in America and some brought with them principles and working methods of the labour movement in Finland – if they had experience of it. On the other hand they learned new ideas and working methods in the labour movement in America and when returning to Finland, carried those experiences with them. (Kero 1996, 54 –56, 255). Of the well-known Finnish labour leaders, for instance, Oskari Tokoi, Taavi Tainio and Yrjö Sirola spent some years in America. (Soikkanen 1961, 36, 167; Salomaa 1966, 149 –169).

This lively interaction between the labour movements in Finland and America decreased during World War I. The emigration from Finland to America revived in the 1920s (Kero 1996, 54, 58), but movement from one labour movement to another did not occur as smoothly as before the First World War. In Finland there was need for experienced and capable functionaries in the labour movement as the workers' side lost 27, 000 persons during the abortive revolution and its aftermath in 1918, and 6, 000 to 10, 000 escaped to Soviet Russia.[1] The conditions in the country did not inveigle those working in America into returning to Finland.

The division of the labour movement also made interaction more complicated. The Communist International, founded in March 1919, wanted to be an international world party and the centre of all communist activities. It demanded its member parties to follow, strictly, its decisions and instructions in their policies.[2] It was also reluctant to promote co-operation between national communist parties, and wanted to have a strict control of contacts and impulses between them. (Saarela 2009b, 244). There was, however, interaction between communism in Finland and the Finnish labour movement in America. This article touches those contacts and impulses and the impact of American Finns on Finnish communism in the 1920s.

## Finnish communism

Communism in Finland was a product of movements that occurred in both Finland and Soviet Russia. Commitment to both countries was an inherent characteristic of the movement.[3] As the Civil War fought after the independence of Finland from January to May 1918, ended in the defeat of the Reds, most of the leaders and functionaries of the revolutionary government escaped to Soviet Russia. There they came to the conclusion that the Finnish revolution had failed because they had stayed within the boundaries of bourgeois democracy. In order to get rid of this shortcoming, the red refugees founded the Finnish Communist Party (from 1920, the Communist Party of Finland) (SKP) in Moscow in August 1918. The new party wanted to abandon all the methods of the Finnish labour movement. It abandoned working within the parliament, trade unions and co-operative movement, and propagated armed revolution and the establishment of the iron hard dictatorship of the proletariat. The SKP was forbidden and had to work underground in Finland.

In Finland, Finnish communism began in the summer of 1919 as those dissatisfied with the politics of the re-founded Social Democratic Party (SDP) started to associate. These groups felt that the new leaders of the SDP had forsaken the strict line of the class struggle of the pre-Civil War labour movement, as they had condemned the attempt to take the power, rejected extra-parliamentary actions and given priority to the work in parliament and municipal councils and wanted to co-operate with centre parties. After the failed attempt to conquer the majority in the party congress in December 1919, these groups founded the Socialist Workers' Party of Finland (SSTP) in May 1920.

The SSTP got nearly 15 per cent of the votes in the parliamentary elections in 1922 and 27 seats out of 200. The supporters of the SSTP also had a distinct majority in the Finnish trade union movement (the SAJ), and most of the impor-

tant unions. Thus the SSTP worked in the traditional fields of the Finnish labour movement, however all activities of the party were forbidden and its central and local leadership and members of the parliament were imprisoned in August 1923.

After the ban of the SSTP, which was consolidated by the court in 1924 and 1925, there were thoughts of founding a new party but Finnish communism was, however, organized in various local workers' associations which tried to keep up national and regional co-operation on the basis of Socialist workers' and smallholders' electoral organisations (STPV). This loose organization achieved 10 to 13 per cent of the votes and won 18 to 23 seats in 1924–1929. In the summer of 1930, all the public activities of Finnish communism were, however, forbidden, and its representatives in the parliament and municipal councils were expelled. It was only in autumn 1944 that the supporters of Finnish communism could properly participate in the political life of Finland.

Although the birth of the two branches of Finnish communism demonstrated different ideas on the character and tasks of the revolutionary labour movement, the representatives of the SKP and those in Finland were in contact in the summer of 1919 and worked together very closely from autumn 1920. Some of the leaders of the SSTP and STPV belonged to the Finnish Bureau, the main body of the SKP in Finland, and some of the Finnish activists participated in the conferences of the SKP in Soviet Russia/the Soviet Union. The SKP financially supported SSTP and STPV's election campaigns and some of their newspapers.

The two branches of Finnish communism were, however, living in quite different conditions which had effects on their political line. Those in Soviet Russia/the Soviet Union were captured by the idea of the world revolution and found their salvation in the Bolshevik ideas. In a country where communists were in power, it was easier to follow the instructions of the Bolsheviks and the Communist International than in Finland, where the movement tried to overcome the losses of the Civil War and to fight for its existence. Thus the agendas of the Finnish and Soviet branches of Finnish communism were quite different.

As the Finnish branch of the movement was under a constant threat of being forbidden, questions concerning political rights and liberties of the workers and the labour movement were very important. Closely connected with rights and liberties were the demands of the abolition of the coercive apparatus of the state. These were main paroles in the election campaigns and demonstrations during the whole decade. The questions concerning the ideological institutions – religion, church and school – were also important for the movement. The concern for the economic and social situation of the workers put forth proposals of various social reforms, especially those concerning workers' insurances. The forbiddance of the SSTP and other organizations made the movement in Finland continuously ponder the organizational questions and movement's relation to social democrats.

Organizational questions and relation to social democrats were also important for the SKP leadership, as for the whole international communist movement. The international aspect was more obvious in the questions concerning the international situation and the position of Soviet Russia/the Soviet Union within the international community. That was the perspective from which the Soviet branch of Finnish communism studied Finland and its relation to other nations, especially to imperialist powers.

## American Finnish support and solidarity towards Finnish communism

While Finnish communism was formed as a mixture of the traditions of the Finnish labour movement and the new communist movement and doctrine inspired by the Russian Bolsheviks, the Finnish labour movement in America also had a great influence on the formation of Finnish communism. In 1918, after the disastrous Civil War in Finland, the American Finns had started a money-raising campaign in order to help the re-birth of the labour movement in Finland. Each local was supposed to contribute to the campaign. With the division of the labour movement, the question arose as to who in Finland should receive the money. The radicals wanted the money to be sent to the 'real representatives of the Finnish working class', while the majority of the eastern associations wanted the Social Democratic Party of Finland to get the money. The radicals had, however, the majority at the Chicago convention in 1919, and the decision was made to send the money to the radical faction of Finnish labour movement. The decision caused disagreement among the Finnish American associations, and at the beginning of 1920 it was decided to organise a general vote on the matter. Before the vote was taken, news about the foundation of the Socialist Workers' Party of Finland reached America and the leadership of the Finnish Federation sent the money to the newly founded party. (Kostiainen 1978, 99–100).

Although the SKP also sent money to Finland, the American money – about 55 000 dollars – had a significant contribution to the formation of the SSTP and the whole Finnish branch of Finnish communism. Most of the money was obviously used in the creation of the publishing company Työ and Suomen Työmies, the main organ of the SSTP in Helsinki. The American money gave basis for a certain amount of independence at the moment when the SKP was willing to give money to the SSTP only on the condition the SSTP would obey its instructions and platform. (Saarela 1996, 197–198).

Later on the financial support of Finnish communism was dominated by the money coming from the Russian Communist Party and the Communist Interna-

tional (Saarela 1998). In some instances, the financial support from the Finns in the United States and Canada was significant; during the parliamentary election in 1927, for instance, one quarter of the money the STPV spent in elections came from America. (Saarela 1998, 284–285). The newspapers occasionally also received smaller sums of money from Finns in America (Saarela 2008a, 130).

The Finnish labour movement in America was also, in other respects, important for Finnish communism in Finland. As Finnish communism was a target for the authorities' persecution in the 1920s, the Finnish labour associations in America, along with the Scandinavian labour movement, sent their expressions of solidarity to the Finnish comrades and of disapproval and condemnation to the Finnish authorities during large imprisonments and trials. (Saarela 2009c, 127–128). There were large demonstrations in many American cities especially in 1935, during the trial of Toivo Antikainen, a member of the leadership of the SKP who was accused of murdering a man in Karelia in 1922 (Saarela 2009a, 34–35). In the expressions of international solidarity Finnish communism was rather a receiving partner, but in August 1927, communist organizations in Finland expressed their condemnations against the execution of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti and the Finnish trade union movement started a boycott on American products.[4]

Despite the difficulties of publishing communist material in Finland from 1923 onwards, Finnish communists did not actively try to publish books in America in order to get communist material in Finland. They found it easier to publish communist material in the Finnish language in Soviet Russia , despite the occasional shortage of proper paper. Thus many of the basic works of communism – Lenin's State and Revolution, Imperialism as the Highest State of Capitalism, Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky, Left-wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder, Bukharin's and Preobrazhensky's The ABC of Communism, Trotsky's Terrorism and Communism as well as the most important decisions of the second and third congresses of the Communist International were already published in Finnish in Soviet Russia. State and Revolution and Left-wing Communism, The ABC of Communism and Terrorism and Communism were published in Finland in the early 1920s. It was also possible to publish Stalin's Problems of Leninism in Finland in 1926. The fact that socialist literature was often confiscated by the Finnish custom officials also prevented import of literature from America to Finland. (Saarela 1996, 199–200, 488–490; Saarela 2008a, 575–576).

It was only in 1927–28 that the leadership of the SKP tried to take advantage of the publishing opportunities of the Finnish labour movement in America. Finnish communists in the Soviet Union had, as early as 1925, founded a research club to study the events on various fronts during the Finnish Civil War. This club launched an idea of editing a large volume to honour the 10th anniversary of the class war in Finland. The SKP did not believe that it would be possible to publish

such a book in Finland, and therefore the SKP asked the Finnish labour movement in America about potentially publishing the book. The book, Suomen luokkasota, which consisted of articles about the battles of the war, white terror and prison camps, came out in Wisconsin at the end of January 1928. The intention was to smuggle the book from Sweden to Finland. The book was, however, late for the exact anniversary. Getting the book into Finland was further delayed because of the arrest of the underground functionaries of the SKP during the spring of 1928. Thus Suomen luokkasota did not contribute much to how the Finnish communist remembered the events of the abortive revolution and its aftermath in Finland in 1928. (Saarela 2008a, 562–564). The interest in taking advantage of the publishing opportunities of Finnish labour movement in America did not increase after the ban of the public activities of Finnish communism in Finland in the summer of 1930.

The solidarity between the Finnish labour movement in America and communism in Finland was one-way solidarity. This was mainly due to the difficult conditions in Finland. The interaction between the Finnish labour movement in America and Finnish communism was, however, not limited to instances of financial support or expressions of solidarity. There were also occasions when individuals with involvement in the Finnish labour movement in America came to Finland or to Soviet Russia/the Soviet Union.

## American Finns within Finnish communism

Leo Laukki was perhaps the most prominent of Finns with great experience in the Finnish labour movement in America who started to work for Finnish communists in Soviet Russia or in Finland in the early 1920s. Laukki, a former officer of the Russian imperial army, had worked in co-operation with the Bolsheviks in 1905–06 and escaped from Finland in 1907. Thereafter he had worked as a newspaperman and instructor in the Finnish labour movement in America. He had advocated first the ideas of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and then those of communism. Under the threat of being sentenced to prison, he escaped from the United States to Soviet Russia in the spring of 1921.[5] He arrived in Soviet Russia at a moment when the leadership of the SKP was divided into two fractions and in order to bring fresh blood into the SKP leadership, Laukki was elected as the member of the central committee and secretary of the SKP in its third congress in August 1921. Laukki was also sent to Finland, where he worked as a member of the Finnish Bureau of the SKP as an underground adviser of Finnish communism from September 1922 to April 1923. (Saarela 1996, 239–240, 322–325).

Niilo Wälläri (born Välläri) who, after three years at sea, worked in the United States from 1916 to 1920 and became acquainted with the ideas of the

IWW, returned to Finland in November 1920. Despite his youth, Wälläri was to become an important figure in the Finnish branch of Finnish communism. Before starting as a district secretary of the SSTP in Uusimaa in February 1921, Wälläri attended political courses organized by the SKP in the neighbourhood of Petrograd. A year later, at the end of January 1922, he became chairman of the SSTP and moved from that position to the secretary of the party in May 1923. Wälläri was arrested in the beginning of August the same year and condemned to imprisonment for preparation of high treason. (Savolainen 1978, 23–111; Saarela 2008a, 201, 328, 354, 501).

Toivo Vuorela, who had moved to America in 1913 and worked there as a carpenter and as an organizer for the Finnish Socialist Federation and the Communist Party of America, returned to Finland via Soviet Russia in September 1922. In Finland he was engaged as a propagandist of the SSTP in December 1922 and from April 1923 as the party's district secretary in Kuopio. Vuorela was also arrested in the beginning of August 1923, but set free to wait for the beginning of his trial.[6]

The ban of the SSTP and the arrests of the members of the SSTP's national and local leadership and its members of parliament in August 1923 made the Finns in America more important. Even the SKP wanted more activists in Finland and, in order to increase their numbers, invited two persons from the USA. Its intentions were to harness them in the guidance of public mass movement and to invite a third person later to help in the newspaper work. This plan of three individuals was, however, reduced to one. Severi Alanne, the man who arrived in Finland during the mid-November 1923 seemed to be very appropriate; as early as 1905–07 he had wanted to connect the Finnish labour movement with the struggle against autocratism in Russia, had helped the military organization of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (VSDTP) and had attempted to create a secret organization in order to promote these goals. Alanne was, however, forced to go into exile in America in 1907, where he had been active foremost in the cooperative movement, but also as a newspaperman and in editing the Finnish-English-Dictionary which came out in 1919. In addition, he had spoken for the affiliation of the American Socialist Party to the Communist International. (Saarela 2008a, 46).[7]

## Leo Laukki and the union of workers and ploughing men

The ban of the SSTP forced Finnish communists to question effective organizational forms. Those with American backgrounds presented their thoughts about the future organizational forms of Finnish communism.

Leo Laukki was among those who had an opinion of the new organization in Finland. In the plenum of the SKP in late August 1923, Laukki proposed the forma-

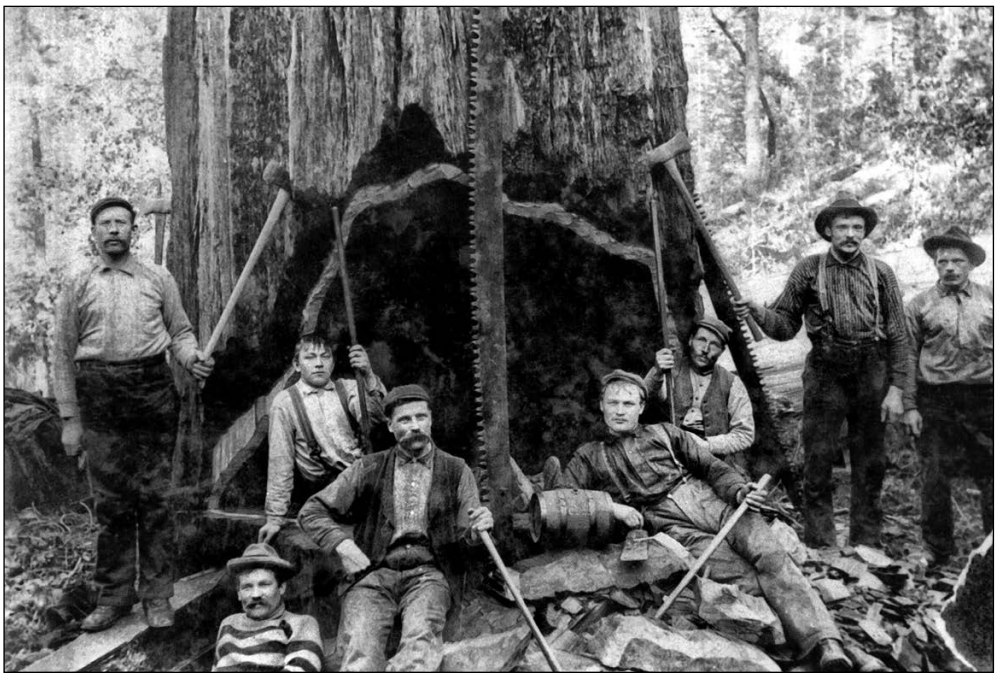
tion of the union of Finnish workers and ploughing men, which would unite the industrial workers and the toilers of the countryside and fight for their interests. Laukki was for an organisation without strict conditions for admission; all the industrial and farm workers' associations willing to accept its principals were welcome. While Laukki's proposal corresponded to the traditions of the Finnish labour movement, its roots lay with the Federated Farmer-Labor Party created in the United States in the summer of 1923. (Saarela 2008a, 304–305).[8]

Although all the participants were unanimous about the need to keep peasants apart from the ideological and political influence of the bourgeoisie and to abolish distrust between workers and working peasants, Laukki's proposal did not become the policy of the SKP. Otto Ville Kuusinen, a secretary of the Communist International, had considered promotion of the left opposition in the Agrarian Union and the formation of the union for the independent working peasants and agrarian labourers important in the beginning of August 1923. This union would fight against capitalism with the industrial proletariat. Despite its contradiction of the traditions of the Finnish labour movement, Kuusinen's proposal became the main line for the SKP policy in the 1920s. It also presented the idea of the union between the proletariat and peasants in a more mechanical way than Laukki's proposal. (Saarela 2008a, 305–306).

Kuusinen's ideas were based on the discussions in the Communist International about the co-operation between workers and peasants. The expectations of an immediate revolution in Germany also shaped Kuusinen's thoughts; in front of a new revolution it was important not to repeat old mistakes – to let the peasants join the bourgeoisie as had, according to the SKP, happened in Finland in 1918. As early as 1910, with the influx of members from rural areas, Kuusinen began to question how to preserve the social democratic character of the party (Peltonen 1992, 255–256). Preserving or creating an orthodox attitude was considered even more important in the communist movement.

## Severi Alanne and the independent workers' party

In Finland the possibilities for the formation of a new organization were regarded as more favourable after the parliamentary election in February 1924, as the authorities had not prevented the electoral campaign. The campaign also brought out the defects of the organization at the district level. The legal process concerning the SSTP was, however, not finished, and supporters in many places wanted to wait for its outcome. There was no need for new organizational forms in towns and villages where the workers' associations could continue their activities. (Saarela 2008a, 64–65). Thus the discussion on the new organizational forms



Finnish American lumberjacks. Detailed information missing. – Institute of Migration photo archive.

remained mainly in private spheres. The ideas presented by the functionaries of the SKP, like Severi Alanne, brought out different options and a different emphasis on partners, which perhaps reflected different backgrounds and experiences during the later years.

Alanne wanted to improve the possibilities of Finnish communism to act but also to prevent the social democrats from taking advantage of the situation.[9] According to Alanne, the situation had deteriorated because of the inactivity of the SKP – it had not done anything to prevent the labour associations which had belonged to the SSTP from joining the SDP. In his opinion, the inactivity only encouraged social democrats. Alanne tried to frighten the SKP leadership by saying that those belonging to the communist right would found a new party if the SKP would not do anything.

Alanne himself proposed that, after their arrival in Helsinki, the future members of parliament take measures for the foundation of an independent workers' party by summoning the meeting of its representatives in May 1924. According to him the new party would also need a daily newspaper in Helsinki. Alanne also outlined some general principles for the new party. He believed the party should announce in its platform that it wanted to unite the fragmented workers' groups into a party for class struggle. The new party should also explain that it would

not join any international organization but would, however, present its solidarity with Soviet Russia. The party should also urge workers in the SDP to join it and to let the SDP leaders to keep the SDP.

In order to promote that goal Alanne recommended helping the left in the SDP. It would be important that the SKP cease branding the 'centrists' but would try to bring them closer to the communists. Alanne proposed that the SKP give financial support to the newspaper as planned by the SDP-left in Helsinki. Alanne believed that through the newspaper it would be possible to solidify the SDP-left and isolate it from the party leadership. After more thorough consideration, Alanne changed his mind and thought that the 'centrists' would not dare to leave the SDP if the new party would be founded without hearing their opinions. Without the SDP-left the new party would look too 'communist' and its creation would obviously lead to actions by the authorities. Thus Alanne believed the 'centrists' should have the imitative or at least a leading position in the founding of a new party. Before that it would be good to provoke the SDP leadership against the 'centrists'.

Jaakko Kivi and Jalmari Salminen, who both had more experience with the leftist movement in Finland, supported the creation of a new party as soon as possible. Jaakko Kivi, the first chairman of the SSTP from summer 1920 to December 1920 and later the party's local functionary in middle-Finland, had escaped arrest in August 1923 and started to work as an underground member of the SKP leadership in Finland in the autumn of 1923. Jalmari Salminen had followed Kivi as the chairman of the SSTP in December 1920, but in order to avoid arrest, had to go underground and escape to Soviet Russia in January 1922. In the spring of 1923 he, however, returned to Finland in order to work as a member of the SKP leadership in Finland. (Saarela 1996, 165, 318–319, 328–329; Saarela 2008a, 45, 150).

Kivi and Salminen did not agree with Alanne on the composition of the new party and denounced the participation of left social democrats. (Saarela 2008a, 66–67) According to them, Finnish communism could not strengthen its position by planning a new party with the left in the SDP. They did not believe that the creation g of a new party would split the SDP; the 'centre social democrats' would not dare to do anything, when the new party would be branded as communist and Moscow-led in publicity. They were also afraid that the SKP would not be able to guide the new party in the discussions with the SDP-left about the platform or procedures. They believed there would be a danger that the 'Noskes' would capture the organization, if it were persecuted. That would reduce the influence of communism on the masses. Kivi admitted that the participation of the 'centrists' would calm the suspicion of the authorities but despite that he did not want to entangle them in the new party.

Jalmari Salminen did not like the idea of an independent workers' party because that would indicate independence from communists, and that independence

had been too large in the SSTP. Salminen thought that the leadership of the trade union movement longed for an independent workers' party but believed that the workers supporting class struggle would not be appealed for independence.

Salminen and Kivi had different opinions on how the new party should be founded. Kivi wished the foundation to take place quickly and suggested that the newly elected parliamentary group would take the initiative. Both Kivi and Salminen wanted to get more backing for the party and suggested the creation of new workers' local associations around the country. In order to connect the creation of a new party and the co-operation with the smallholders, Salminen suggested that a national smallholders' conference should be held during the spring of 1924. That conference would discuss the problems of the smallholders and the need for a real workers' and smallholders' party, as well as make a decision on the co-operation between workers and smallholders. At the same time workers' local associations would make decisions about the creation of a new party. A meeting of delegates from the workers' local associations would be summoned up later and a new workers' and smallholders' party would be founded. Salminen believed that the new party would above all be a party of the ex-members of the SSTP but he figured that there would be a significant number of smallholder- members.

Kivi and Salminen were right that Alanne was too trusting about the intentions of the leftists in the SDP. Rather than becoming part of a 'communist' party, they wanted members of the SSTP to join the SDP in order to strengthen their position within that party. This was evident in discussions that took place in December 1923 and even more evident in proposals to convince hundreds of ex-SSTP members to join Toveriseura, a social democratic association in Helsinki. Further evidence lies in the suggestion to appeal for economic support for the newspaper in Helsinki and in the reassurances that the left would conquer the majority in the next party congress. The SDP left's wish to discuss the co-operation with the 'most sensible communists' indicated an attempt to get them separated from the main members of the SSTP. (Saarela 2008a, 67).

## Severi Alanne and the social democrats

Although Alanne presented ideas about a re-organization of Finnish communism in Finland, organizing public communist activities was not his main task. Soon after his arrival in Finland he joined Toveriseuraat the instruction of the Communist International to the SKP; according to them, 'conscious elements' should secretly enter the Social Democratic Party and support its left wing. Alanne was supposed to get assistance from the new members of the same association. After being deported from the United States to Soviet Russia in 1922, William Tanner,

a former prominent member of the Industrial Workers of the World, turned to communism and joined Alanne in 1924.(Saarela 2008a, 180–181).[10]

Despite his colourful and suspicious past, Severi Alanne was given a warm welcome in Toveriseura; he was elected as its vice president at the annual meeting. Alanne was also able to speak in the events organized by the association. In these speeches he attempted to test the boundaries of the SDP. Those, however, proved to be narrow, as some old social democrats started to question whether Alanne was a communist. Alanne's status as a communist was also suspected by the SDP leadership, which demanded the association explain Alanne's true affiliations. . Alanne had to explain himself to the Detective Central Police – political police that had been created to keep an eye on the reds. He told them that he could be a left socialist in America and remain active in the Social Democratic Party in Finland without changing his opinions.

This was not accepted and suspicions about the character of those affiliated in Toveriseura did not cease. An example of this suspicion is evident from the attitude towards William Tanner's speech at the meeting of Helsinki metal workers. His claim that the behaviour of the Second International had been wrong during the break out of the First World War raised Suomen Sosialidemokraatti, the main organ of the SDP, to ask whether there were communist cells in Toveriseura. Tanner eventually withdrew from the association. Enthusiasm towards crossing borders within the labour movement was not prominent in other respects, for the leadership of Toveriseura did not consider it appropriate that Alanne would speak in the May-Day celebration of the local trade unions.

These events indicated the end of Alanne's attempts to have a 'conspirational' influence in Toveriseura. Alanne left Toveriseura and Finland by the end of May. The willingness of the SKP to let Alanne go, after half a year in Helsinki, proved that the SKP leadership or the Communist International, influenced by the ideas of the SKP leadership, had not properly thought out the task they had presented. But it also proved that the attitude of the International and the leadership of the SKP towards the social democrats had changed dramatically during the spring of 1924.[11]

## Niilo Wälläri and large associations

On the basis of Laukki and Alanne's proposals, the American impact on Finnish communism appeared rather insignificant and of short duration. These proposals, however, corresponded with the organizational traditions of the Finnish labour movement. Those traditions were strong also within Finnish communism in Finland. The result of these proposals was, however, not a new party; the SKP leadership was not satisfied with the independence of the SSTP and branded the

idea of a new party as 'right-wing deviation' during the spring of 1925. Those in Finland considered the creation of a new party dangerous, particularly after the court decisions on the SSTP case. Thus the result was a looser Socialist workers' and smallholders' electoral organization which appealed to both urban and rural workers and began to correspond with the Social Democratic Party-left about Finnish political life. (Saarela 2008a, 70–80).

In that sense the organization was closer to Laukki's than Kuusinen's proposal. The SKP leadership did try to create an independent peasant party but managed to create contacts only with a small opposition to the Agrarian Party within the Viipuri district. The financial support of the SKP did help in the establishment of a newspaper for that opposition group but the emergence of an independent party and to gain a following were not as successful. Finnish communists did not participate in this campaign but rather founded own workers' and smallholders' associations. (Lackman 1985, 107–139; Saarela 2008a, 331–339, 346–347).

Not even Santeri Mäkelä, the most prominent peasant agitator of Finnish communism in the mid-1920s, followed the SKP line, although, while living in the Soviet Union, he sent articles to Finnish communist newspapers between 1924 and 1926. Those articles, titled "Peasant's thoughts", became very popular in the northern newspapers in Oulu and Vaasa. Mäkelä did not consider it important to write about the finesses of communist peasant policy, he just tried to win the support of rural population by claiming that the interests of the rural people and the urban working class were similar and that other parties did not work for their interests. Although trying to compete with other parties for the support of rural population, Mäkelä was not guilty of simple labelling, which characterised the writings of the SKP leadership. Of communist declarations, he discussed with people and used popular or biblical phrases. Mäkelä's ideas reflected commitment to the traditions of the Finnish labour movement both in Finland and America; Mäkelä had worked in America between 1899 and1907 and formed his socialism there. (Saarela 1997, 54–78; Norrena 1993, 193–234).

Toivo Vuorela, who worked as a secretary of the socialist workers' and smallholders' parliamentary group from the summer of 1924 to the spring of 1925, strongly supported the creation of a looser electoral organization instead of a new party. (Saarela 2008a, 76–77). All the Finns with American background were, however, not satisfied with that organizational pattern. Niilo Wälläri, the ex-SSTP chairman, though in prison, wanted to present his opinion of the organizational structure of Finnish communism. His articles, in the prisoners' secret paper Elämää yössä Wälläri, criticised the idea of a party of professional revolutionaries as narrow. He did not agree that a small but well-organized and determined group could accomplish more than wide masses. In Finland the emphasis on secret organization had indicated condemnation and shunning of a mass party. Wälläri reminded that the revolution was made by the working class

and only a wide movement could bring the masses into the fight. In his opinion, this required large associations in residential areas, not in work places, as the communist doctrine indicated.

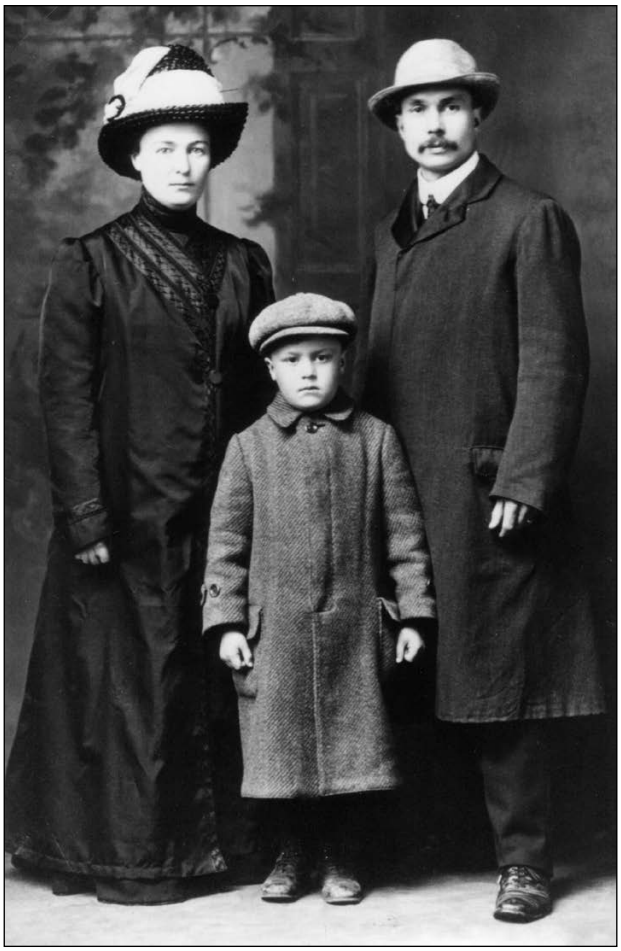
Wälläri and some other ex-leading SSTP-members considered the 'rigid policy' of the SKP to be the main reason for the loss of supporters and influence. They regarded it as odd that the elements presenting doubts within the movement had been pushed aside. They also demanded a change in the relation of the SKP towards social democrats; it was all right to criticise the right in the SDP, but, in order to be unified with the social democratic workers, it was necessary to have a moderate attitude towards the left. Wälläri and his companions also hinted that those living outside Finland did not entirely understand the situation in the country and should therefore not to have any absolute decision making power regarding Finland.

After his release in December 1926, Wälläri continued his fight for larger organizations. He considered the associations of the electoral organization too small and wanted to create larger associations. He received support from some leading members of the trade union movement, but those who had created the electoral organization or the SKP functionaries thought that Wälläri represented "the illusion of legalism". (Saarela 2008a, 110–118).

The condemnations of the SKP leadership intensified in the spring of 1929, and Wälläri and others in Finland dubbed "right-wingers" who created panic and spirits of surrender and did not care about the interests of the class struggle. The SKP leadership wanted to get rid of Wälläri who, despite this pressure, left the post of editor in Työväenjärjestöjen Tiedonantaja, the main organ of the movement in Finland, only in October 1929. Wälläri and his companions formed a loose organization, the Left group of Finnish workers which was regarded as a disruptionist group by many Finnish communists in Finland. It did not win much support outside Helsinki. (Hodgson 1967, 129–138; Saarela 2008a, 736–751).

## American impact?

The cases of Alanne, Laukki, Mäkelä and Wälläri seem to indicate that the traditions of the Finnish labour movement prior to the Civil War, were better preserved in America than in Soviet Russia, and perhaps only partly remained in Finland in the early 1920s. The American experience strengthened commitment to large workers' associations and bred an unwillingness to accept small cells as a principle of organization. It is also evident that those returning from America presented more open solutions than the representatives of Finnish communism in Soviet Russia. That is, their proposals were formed on the basis of achieving influence rather than on protecting orthodoxy. This may have reflected the American at-



Yrjö Sirola a Finnish leftist leader with his family in 1913, Hancock, Michigan. – Institute of Migration photo archive.

titude, although it was also the attitude of the Finnish labour movement before the Civil War. It is also evident that the American experience had taught flexibility, while living in Soviet Russia had narrowed the perspective among those who had escaped from Finland in the spring of 1918.

Mäkelä exemplifies that the American experience could survive even in Soviet Russia. Not even the bad experiences of the abortive revolution in Finland in 1918 could make him a strong supporter of Bolshevik organizational ideas. In this respect Yrjö Sirola, one of the prominent leaders of the Finnish revolution and the first chairman of the SKP, who also had American experiences from the early 1910s (Salomaa 1966, 149–169), represented a more typical example of those who had escaped from Finland in 1918 and forsaken the ideas of the Finnish labour movement and committed themselves to Bolshevik doctrines. It is obvious that as a leader of the revolution and a communist party, Sirola had to commit himself much more strongly to the Bolshevik ideas than Mäkelä, who

did not bother with the Bolsheviks or other international communists, but lived among the Finns throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

All the Finns with an American background and without the experience of the abortive revolution in Finland did not, however, prove eager to pursue loose and large organizational forms but committed themselves to the standpoints of the Communist International and the SKP. William Tanner, who remained in Finland in 1924, worked in 1925–26 as an organizer for the Socialist workers' and smallholders' electoral organization and for the rural workers' trade union movement in eastern Finland. This work won him popularity and he was elected as a member of parliament in Viipuri's eastern district in 1927. In his work as a member of parliament, Tanner manifested communist orthodoxy. (Saarela 2008a, 430, 609) Also Toivo Vuorela stayed loyal to the International, although he quarrelled with the SKP leadership in 1926 when he, in order to avoid the imprisonment in Finland, returned to America without the permission of the SKP. Although the SKP sent its reprimand to America, Vuorela rose to a lead position in the Finnish labour movement in America (Kostiainen 1978, 55, 114).

This was not the case with Severi Alanne, who after his return to the United States ran for governor in Wisconsin in the fall of 1924 and was shortly, thereafter, accused of right-wing politics and expelled from the communist movement, which remained loyal to the Communist International. (Kostiainen 1978, 184; Sulkanen 1951, 273). Leo Laukki remained in the International, although he had been ousted from SKP leadership as early as 1925. The conflict within the SKP in 1923 onwards, was mainly between those who had been leaders in the Finnish revolution: Kullervo Manner, Yrjö Sirola, Otto Ville Kuusinen – and Finns who were born in St Petersburg and joined the Bolsheviks in the first decade of the twentieth century. Although Laukki came to lead the SKP as a 'neutral' outsider, he joined Eino Rahja in the internal struggle. In that struggle it was easier for the Manner-Kuusinen-Sirola group to remove Leo Laukki from leadership than Eino Rahja. Thus Laukki was not re-elected in the central committee of the SKP in the party congress in 1925. After that he worked as a teacher at the Sverdlov University, at the Institute of Railroad Traffic at Dnepropetrovsk, and also as a newspaperman in Persia. Laukki was killed in the purges in 1938. (Paastela 2003, 132, 219–252 William Tanner, who had escaped to the Soviet Union in the early 1930s, was imprisoned in the Soviet Union in 1935 and also killed as a result of the purges(Rentola 1994, 29).

## The impact of Finnish communism?

During the latter half of the 1920s the impact of the American Finns on Finnish communism was diminishing. The direction of the impact was rather from Finnish

communism to the Finnish labour movement in America. This was evident through visits that the leadership of the SKP made to America from 1925 onwards. Yrjö Sirola spent a year in the United States from October 1925, in order to dissuade the Finnish socialist organization from language based organizational forms and to further its proper affiliation in the American Workers' Party. (Salomaa 1966, 296–297). The contradictions between the Communist Party of the USA and Finnish communists in America prompted Kullervo Manner and Aino Kuusinento travel to America in the spring of 1930. Manner's visit was short but Aino Kuusinen stayed over three years. (Kostiainen 1975, 234–254).

Vuorela's example proves that the SKP leadership wanted to control migration from Finland to America. Besides Vuorela there were, however, others who, under the threat of imprisonment or for other reasons, left Finland for America. For instance Bruno Tenhunen, a newspaperman from Kuopio returned to Canada, where he had spent his childhood in the spring of 1927 in order to avoid the imprisonment (Saarela 2008a, 125). Untamo Mäkelä, the son of Santeri Mäkelä, decided, to his wife and children's surprise, to leave Finland after having served his time in prison in 1928. (Lehto 2010, 11–14). Martta Lehtonen's decision to move to Canada in November 1927 was even more surprising; she had been elected as a member of parliament in the election that had occurred the previous summer and had barely started her career when she decided to leave for Canada. (Saarela 2008a, 159).

Although Finnish communism had a greater impact on the Finnish labour movement in America during the latter half of the 1920s, its direction was to change, as the recruiting of American Finns to Soviet Karelia began in the early 1930s. Thousands of Finns, who moved to Karelia in order to build socialism in Finnish colours, brought with them not only American technology, but also their way of thinking, which was not tolerated by the Soviet authorities. The discontent of the American Finns with the Soviet conditions couple with Soviet fear of foreigners soon led to disagreements.[12] The SKP leadership did not demonstrate an eagerness to defend the American Finns. Their fate became a sad experience over which the SKP leadership wanted to draw a veil. (Rentola 1994, 23–74).

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## Notes

1 On the revolution and its aftermath, for instance, Upton 1980; Alapuro 1988.
2 For instance, McDermott and Agnew 1996, 12–27.
3 On Finnish communism, Saarela 1996; Saarela 2008a; Saarela 2008b.
4 Valtavat työläisjoukot Helsingissä Saccon ja Vanzettin muistoa kunnioittamassa, Työväenjärjestöjen Tiedonantaja (TT) 25 August 1927; Pohjolan työkansa liikehti marttyyrien teloituksen johdosta, Pohjan Voima 30 August 1, 1927; Suuri vastalausekokous Turussa Vanzettin ja Saccon murhan johdosta, *TT* 31 August 1927.
5 On Laukki's background, Ahola 1973; Kostiainen 1978, 130–131.
6 National archive of Finland, Detective Central Police's archive, personal file no 730 (Toivo Vuorela). It is possible that Vuorela lied to the Detective Central Police and moved to America only after the Civil War, Kostiainen 1978, 55.
7 On Alanne's background, Kujala 1989, 190–191, 255–259; Heikkilä 1993, 56, 58–60.
8 On Federated Farmer-Labor Party, Carr, 1972 (1964), 246–249.
9 On Alanne's opinions, Saarela 2008a, 65–66.
10 On Tanner, Kostiainen 1978, 128–130, 136, 161.
11 On the change, e.g., Majander 1998, 73–77.
12 For instance, Kangaspuro 2000; Kero 1983; Sevander 1996.

# 4

# Finnish in the Communist Party in the Upper Mid-Western United States

— William C. Pratt —

*"This party organization has still another distinguishing characteristic – it is made up mostly of Finns, who make up no less than 70% of the entire membership . . ."* (Communist Party USA 1929, 38).[1] These words are from a 1929 Communist Party of USA (CP) report on District 9, which then consisted of Minnesota, northern Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The predominately Finnish makeup of Party membership was an ongoing feature in this district. Earlier, in November of 1924, a Party functionary had reported: Out of Minnesota's 34 branches, 19 of them were Finnish, while seven of northern Wisconsin's eight Party units were and 21 of the Upper Peninsula's 22 groups were (Hathaway 1924, 38). This pattern continued well into the 1930s. Although the CP grew significantly in the Twin Cities in the 1932–34 era, it continued to maintain a strong following in the Finnish sections of the district. A 1932 party report indicates substantial membership increases in northeast Minnesota and the Upper Peninsula. For example, the Iron Range section members increased from 212 to 317, while the numbers in the Hancock, Michigan, section went from 128 to 385 (RGASPI 1932, 131). For a number of reasons, the Finnish percentage of its membership would decline in the mid and late 1930s. Yet, that it remained as high as it did is noteworthy.

Historically, Finns were one of the most important ethnic groups in the U.S. Communist movement. Initially, with the founding of the Workers Party in 1921,

they made up approximately 40 percent of the membership and that remained the case for several years. The Finnish Socialist Federation, which dated to 1906, had been an important but distinct component of the Socialist Party. It had a full range of institutions, including "Finn halls," which provided for social and cultural activities, as well as a political meeting place and a Finnish language press. In the immediate post-World War I era, the Finnish Socialist Federation left the Socialist Party and initially remained unaffiliated with any political organization. Then, in 1921, it joined the Workers Party, which was the Communist group recognized by the Third International or the Comintern. Foreign language groups initially dominated Workers' Party membership, but in 1925 a concerted effort (at the Comintern's direction) was made to "Bolshevize" the party, a drastic move that required the different language federations to disband and have their members join local and workplace branches. In addition to creating a "Bolshevized" party, this reorganization sought to "Americanize" the membership.

There was a great deal of resistance and resentment created by this policy change, as many foreign language federation members refused to participate, and membership in the Workers' Party declined as a result. It has been estimated that the ranks of Finnish party members dropped from 7,000 or 8,000 to approximately 1500. Finnish Communist leaders then organized the Finnish Workers Federation or STY, a non-Party body to oversee the Workers' Clubs that had been cut adrift when the Finnish Socialist Federation disbanded.[2] The new Federation would play a key role in the history of Finnish-American Communism for the next decade and a half, but most of its members never became members of the Party.

A second incubator for controversy and Finnish estrangement from the Party appeared in 1929–1930, when Party leaders sought to coerce the Finnish co-operative movement into providing more financial support for Communist activities. By this time, left-wing Finns had built a co-op empire across the Upper Midwest, largely in the same territories that made up the Party's District 9. The Central Cooperative Exchange (CCE), based in Superior, Wisconsin, supplied numerous co-operative stores, which had an almost exclusive Finnish patronage (Alanen 1975). A majority of the CCE Board was made up of Party members and they often provided funds and loans to Party ventures. When the national Party leadership changed, a change that roughly coincided with the Comintern's adoption of the Third Period strategy, it assumed a tougher line with the CCE. It needs to be emphasized that when the dispute broke out, there were Communists on both sides, though ultimately some of them joined forces with non-Communist cooperators, breaking their connection with the Party in the process. The controversy wrecked long-standing personal relationships and divided families and, in the end, greatly weakened Communist influence in the co-op movement.

At one point, it even threatened Communist control of Työmies, the most important Finnish Communist newspaper in the U.S, which had been closely aligned


The building of the Central Cooperative Wholesale in Superior, Wisconsin in 1947. – Institute of Migration photo archive.


Employees of the Työmies Publishing Company. Photo published in “Työmies kymmenvuotias” (Hancock 1913). – Institute of Migration photo archive.

with the CCE. The co-op fight created a permanent breach, with one side charging "Communist treachery" and the other denouncing former colleagues as "social fascists," "renegades" and "Halonites" (after the name of the key CCE leader who himself had been a Party member at the outset of the split.) While Finnish Communists repeatedly sought to undercut the now anti-CP leadership of the CCE, they also formed a rival co-op federation, the Workers' and Farmers' Cooperative Unity Alliance. Much smaller than the CCE, it also was based in Superior, and at its peak, had over 30 co-op stores and branches affiliated with it (Kami 1975).

There is no question that the Communist following among left-wing Finns in the U.S. was not as numerous as it had been prior to "Bolshevization" and the co-op fight. Despite such setbacks, though, Finns continued to constitute a majority of Party membership in District 9 and remained a significant factor there for years to come. One of the most important protests of the Depression era was the farm revolt of the 1930s. Though the Farmers' Holiday of the corn belt has seized center stage in this discussion, the beginnings of the rural insurgency date to1930 and 1931, when farmers in remote locales stopped farm sales and marched on court houses demanding relief in one form of another.[3] Left-wing Finns in District 9 often led the way in these efforts. Angry farmers, under the auspices of the Communist-led United Farmers League (UFL), stopped sales on the Upper Peninsula in late 1931 and marched on the courthouse in Duluth the same year. Often, there was a tie-in between left-wing Finnish co-ops and the farm protesters. In Mass, Michigan, for example, the co-op provided transportation in its trucks for UFL activists (RGASPI 1932, 10).[4] A Hunger March was organized to descend on the St. Louis County court house in Duluth in early September of 1931. According to a Party report, 1200 farmers drove 250 cars and trucks to city limits and marched 4 miles to the courthouse, where they were greeted by as many as 5000 workers and sympathizers who then proceeded to demand relief from the county commissioners (RGASPI 1931, 88).

There is no doubt that in District 9 the UFL was primarily a Finnish affair, to the distress of CP leaders who sought to organize non-Finns as well. One CP document states: "*The present composition of the UFL being mostly Finnish, our task must be to draw in the non-Finnish elements into this activity.*" Two years later, a report on the Mesabi Range relates: "*The overwhelming majority of our Party membership on the Range is about exclusively young farmers. . . . The national composition of the CP membership is 90–95 % Finnish,*" (RGASPI 1934, 178). Early in the farm struggle of the 1930s, the CP orchestrated a merger between the UFL and a Finnish farm group, the Plowmen's Association, which had served Finnish farmers in northern Minnesota and northern Wisconsin (Martin 1931, 58).While the merger enhanced membership numbers for the UFL, it did nothing to help recruit non-Finns. Later, in 1933 and 1934, reports appeared that some Workers' Clubs or STY groups had been converted into UFL locals, perhaps causing them

to abandon their usual social and cultural activities for political action. One participant at a District 9 Buro meeting complained:

*The STYs are revolutionary organizations of long standing. It seems to me that our comrades are trying to step over the fence at its lowest point. Instead of going into Nebraska, they go to our STYs and turn them into branches of the UFL. . . The District here should take a definite stand on this question, that the UFL should not be built in places where the population is entirely Finnish and we already have the STY.* (RGASPI 1934)

In District 9, the Finnish connection was both an advantage and an obstacle, as it proved easier for Finnish activists to recruit other Finns to their cause than to bring in other nationalities. The UFL attracted a following in other locales, especially in northeast South Dakota, northwest North Dakota and northeast Montana, showing that it was not exclusively a Finnish operation. However the Farmers Holiday movement had more widespread appeal and was met with greater success across the Upper Midwest and Northern Plains. By 1936, the CP, shifting to the more flexible stance of the Popular Front, shut down the UFL and urged its supporters to join either the Holiday or the Farmers' Union. The farm revolt was over and had been for some time. In District 9, it should be noted that involvement in this episode brought some left-wing Finns in greater contact with non-Finns than had previously occurred and also led to their participation in other groups, including the Unemployed Council and the Workers Alliance, not to mention the mainstream labour movement.[5]

The single most disruptive episode for left-wing Finns in the 1930s may have been "Karelia fever," which swept across District 9 and other Finnish territories in the 1931–33 era (Kero 1975; Pogorelskin 1997; Hudelson 2002; Pratt 2008). Certainly no other event had such long-term negative consequences for the people involved. Between 1930 and 1933 or 1934, the Finnish leadership of Soviet Karelia had Moscow support to recruit North American Finns to migrate there and help build a new socialist society. Depression at home, the promise of socialist opportunity where workers and peasants were in charge, including free education and health care, or simply adventure in a new land all were motivations for American and Canadian Finns to pack up and move to Karelia. Ultimately, perhaps as many as 7,000 to 8,000 North American Finns left and most of them probably stayed there, whether they wanted to or not. The Communist Party was unenthusiastic about the enterprise and Finnish-American and District 9 functionaries bitterly complained about the loss of key people, worrying that their departure jeopardized Communist control of Finnish mass organizations, especially the Finnish Workers Federation and the left-wing co-ops. Clearly, the CPUSA wanted to discourage "Karelia fever."[6] However, at some point, perhaps in early 1932, the Comintern informed the American leadership that it had to cooperate with the Karelian recruitment and that was that.[7]

Finnish Americans Armas Hokkanen (left), Ansu Mäki, August Oksanen and two unknown men in the 1920's in Green, Michigan. Note the symbols of the Labour Movement. – Institute of Migration photo archive.

The longer-range negative effects of "Karelia fever" were not apparent immediately Finns. Some returned from the adventure disillusioned and quietly dropped out of left-wing Finnish affairs; while a few others were much more vocal in their complaints and criticisms and consequently were ostracized and denounced by the Party faithful. Alas for Finnish Communist fortunes, however, such negative reports by some returnees were picked up by the anti-Communist press, including Finnish-language papers.[8] After the purges began in Karelia in 1937 to 1939, however, a news blackout occurred and family members and friends of those who had remained in Karelia lost contact with them. This situation continued for decades and must have eroded faith for some in the Soviet Union. But it would not be until later that word of the multiple executions and sentences to the gulag got back to the U.S. By then, the world of Finnish-American Communism was extinct. Said one Finn whose stepfather and mother took him to Karelia in the 1930s: "*I think it was the biggest catastrophe in the history of American Finns*" (Nixon 25 November 1988).[9]

The command center of Finnish-American Communism was the Finnish Buro, whose membership was appointed by the CP's Politburo or Political Committee. Its charge was to oversee efforts of Finnish Communist functionaries in three basic areas–the cooperative movement, the Finnish Workers Federation and the


left-wing Finnish press. It was a constant concern that Communist influence in these institutions would be weakened, and with good reason, as from time to time, opposition to the Party line developed in the Finnish Workers Federation and in the Finnish daily, Työmies. In 1932 and 1933, opposition to CP leadership itself surfaced in the Finnish Buro, when the Party was preoccupied with the Depression and the challenges it presented. As American Communists were accustomed to relying upon the Comintern to resolve internal disputes, both sides turned to Moscow to fix this situation.

At the time of the co-op controversy, the Comintern had laid down the law with a long "Open Letter," criticizing the American Communist Party's handling of the controversy, especially the actions of key Finnish cadre, and established basic policy in regard to co-ops and the right-wing co-op leadership.[10] The Comintern also sent a representative to the U.S. to work with the Party on Finnish affairs in this era. She was Aino Kuissinen, the former wife of Comintern leader Otto Kuissinen, who was known here as "Comrade Morton." Her authority and specific mission remains unclear, but she stayed in the U.S. for several years and had great influence in Finnish-American Communist circles. Her base of support was in the Finnish Buro, and she used her Comintern connection as leverage in her dealings with both American Finns and CP leaders. In this effort, a "Comrade Allen," another Finn who was sent to the U.S. by Moscow (Klehr, Haynes & Anderson 1998). Generally speaking, the single most influential American Finn in the Communist Party at this time, Henry Puro, assisted her. A member of the Politburo since the mid-1920s, Puro played a key role during the "Bolshevization" struggle and was one of two American Finns who went to Moscow over the 1929–30 co-op controversy. Yet he was not exclusively involved with Finnish affairs; as he played a number of different roles in the late 1920s and early 1930s and head up the CP's agrarian commission.[11] He and "Comrade Morton" seemingly were able to work together until mid-1932 or so. By late 1932, however, it was apparent there was a great deal of turmoil in Finnish-American Communist circles, and elements led by Morton sought to remove Puro from Finnish affairs.[12]

But the "Puro-Morton war" was not simply a struggle for power within Finnish Communist circles.[13] Rather, it was apparently an effort to change Party policy on several fronts and perhaps replace key CP leaders, such as Earl Browder. The Politburo dealt with this controversy for months before ordering Morton out of the country in June of 1933. The Party leadership had sought Comintern intervention, as Morton and her ally "Comrade Allen" both claimed Comintern authority for their behavior. At one point, the Comintern ordered that both Morton and Puro be removed from Finnish affairs. Morton apparently continued her involve-

ment behind the scenes despite the Comintern decision, and she was ultimately informed in a short letter: "*The Political Buro has decided to instruct you to leave the U.S. within one week, to a destination you will determine in consultation with Comrade Johnson*" (RGASPI 1933, 21).

Though Morton left the country, turmoil within the Finnish Communist community continued, though after a few months, not at the same intensity. "Comrade Allen" was recalled to Moscow, and the Party leadership seemingly could breathe a sigh of relief (Klehr, Haynes & Anderson 1998, 179). Divisions within Finnish-American ranks persisted, however, particularly over the implementation of the "united front" strategy called for by the Comintern. Designed to break down Communist Party isolation, which typified the Third Period, the "united front" approach required experimentation and flexibility. For some red Finns who stuck with the Party through "Bolshevization" and the co-op fight, compromise seemed beyond their means and they continually denounced their opponents as right-wingers and appeasers of social fascism.

The Third Period mentality was hard to eradicate among many Finnish-American Communists. In 1935–36, some Finns and mainstream Party functionaries worked hard to break through Third Period sectarian barriers. Yet efforts to reach out to co-op members affiliated with the Central Cooperative Exchange often were thwarted by the old thinking. For example, Työmies proved very uncooperative at times, essentially sabotaging the project. Part of the problem was the relative, ideological and social isolation that afflicted some Communist Finns. Martin Young, a representative of the Party's Central Committee, reported on the Superior Workers Club in the Fall of 1935: It had 52 members, of whom 38 were Party members and 22 of them worked for Työmies. He wrote: "*Revolutionary Organizations: Finnish Workers' Club, Finnish Working Women's Club, Co-operative Unity Alliance, Communist Party, primarily of Finnish composition. Young Communist League of same composition. Membership of all these organizations is almost the same,*" (RGASPI 1935, 120). They seemingly only talked to each other rather than trying to reach out to the greater Finnish-American community. Young also complained about anti-religious play that offended non-Communist co-op people at a gathering where Communists had attempted to recruit them into a "united front" within the co-op movement and how Työmies refused to publish a critical review of it (RGASPI 1935, 118–119).

Despite the persistence of this Third Period mentality among some Finns, a breakthrough occurred in District 9. The Popular Front was the new approach decreed by the Comintern for Communists everywhere, and it had real appeal for many Party members and sympathizers. In Minnesota, for example, it meant that the CP sought to work with the Farmer-Labor Party (FLP), which it had castigated for years as being "social fascist." Discussions at the highest levels, between Party functionaries and the Floyd Olson administration, paved the way for cooperation.

In late 1935, the CP and its Finnish auxiliaries shifted gears and directed Finnish Workers' Clubs to affiliate with the FLP. Of the state's 42 clubs, 26 of them joined the FLP by April of 1936. Most of the clubs were in the northern part of the state, with 23 of them located in St. Louis County.

Left-wing Finns participated in the Eighth Congressional District FLP convention and helped nominate John Bernard as the candidate, who went on to win the fall election (RGASPI 1936, 40). FLP support was at floodtide in 1936 and the CP played a role in that development. In the Elmer Benson administration that followed, Communists would have both jobs and influence. Such gains, however, proved short-lived, as the FLP was routed in the 1938 election and never again won a statewide contest[14]

Communist Finns may actually have had a more lasting effect in the CIO organizing efforts of the late 1930s. In northern Minnesota, Ilmar Koivunen emerged as a leader of timber workers and became president of Timber Workers Local 29 of the International Woodworkers of America, while Martin Maki worked with the CIO's SWOC, organizing miners on the Mesabi Range and serving as a vice-president of the state CIO (Haynes 1981; Beck 1996; Mitchell 1999). The story on the Upper Peninsula, a separate Party district since late 1934, also included a major role for Finnish unionists such as Matt Savola and Martin Kuuisisto, both of whom also worked with timber workers (Lorence YEAR, 279). Their role should not be exaggerated, but Finnish organizers in this era showed a capacity to work effectively with non-Finns as well.

The ranks of active Finnish Communists declined by the end of the decade. But it was the Winter War of 1939–40 that isolated them from other Finns more than any previous episode. The Soviet attack generated massive support for Finland among Finnish-Americans, including those in communities that earlier had Communist reputations. Andy Johnson, a long-time CP supporter on the Range, later told of his isolation in his community, where he assumed outcast status. The exact level of Communist support for the Soviet Union during the Winter War is difficult to calculate, but most historians have assumed it was very high.[15]

The war was short, however, and after the U.S. and Soviet Union became allies during World War II, Finnish Communists in District 9 and elsewhere were not as isolated. There were not as many of them as before, but a 1943 FBI document reported ten CP branches in St. Louis County, not counting Duluth. Almost all the members of these branches were listed as Finnish (FBI 1943). Key functionaries in District 9 during the war and the postwar periods often were Finnish. Martin Maki served as Party chairman and secretary from 1942 to 1946 and then he was joined by Carl Ross, who served as secretary until both of them left the Party in 1958 (Romer 28 March 1958).[16] Later, in the 1970s, Matt Savola, no longer a co-op manager in Wisconsin, became District 9 secretary, a post he held until his death in 1977, when his widow Helvi Savola assumed the position.[17]

Finnish-American Communism had a long but troubled history. "Bolshevization," the co-op fight, on-going factionalism and disagreements on how to implement Party policy, "Karelia fever," New Deal programs, cooptation and absorption into the mainstream of the labour movement, especially CIO unions, and the "Winter War" of 1939–40 all took their toll. Then, there were the generational considerations that historians, sociologists and others have observed. Left-wing politics, particularly through the prism of an immigrant culture, did not have appeal for the second and third generations who grew up and were acculturated in twentieth century America. Even outside the European immigrant experience, there has been a missing generation on the left, the sons and daughters of radicals who came of age in the late 1930s and 1940s. The experience of World War II may have played a role here, with the vast mixing of people from different cultures and parts of the country, followed by a period of affluence and consumption. But, in regard to Finns, is there not an irony about the historic cultural isolation of their immigrant community? It helps explain the persistence of radicalism, yet involvement in left-wing and other causes promoted by the left resulted in a sequence of events, perhaps most pronounced in the decade of the 1930s, that ultimately led Finns to "deradicalization" and assimilation into the mainstream of American society and culture.

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## Notes

1 American Communist Party records were sent to the Soviet Union prior to World War II. In the early 1990s, they became available to researchers. These materials have been microfilmed and now are available at the Library of Congress and a few other research libraries. I have researched in them both in Moscow and at the Library of Congress. The CPUSA records that I have examined contain have very little information on District 9 after 1936.

2 For the history of U.S. Communist efforts in the 1920s, see Draper 1957 and Draper 1960; For history of Finnish-American Communism in this era, see Karni 1975a; Kostiainen 1978; Ahola 1981. See also Kostiainen, 1975, 171–85.

3 For the farm revolt of the 1930s, see Shover 1965; Dyson1982; Pratt 1988, 131–44.

4 The Hancock section organizer wrote: "*When the foreclosures and sheriff sales started, the Communist Party Hancock section began organizing those farmers into UFL committees of action and held several successful demonstrations in which the farmers stopped foreclosures. The Mass Cooperative Co. was utilized very openly, its trucks hauling farmers to demonstrations, and its stores also selling the Daily Workers and other working class newspapers and magazines.*" Martin Kuusisto to CPUSA CC and CPUSA DC #9, Oct. 12, 1932, RGASPI, 515-1-2892, p. 114

5 See Lorence 1996. This work has quite a bit of discussion on developments in the Upper Peninsula in the 1930s.

6 The head of the Party's Organization Department wrote: "*On the question of the Karelian migration, we had a meeting at which Comrades Maki and Puro were present. We adopted a number of decisions how to control this migration–at least to some extent. I have had no opportunity to bring these recommendations before the Secretariat, but I have no doubt they will be approved...*" He continued: "*One of our discussions is to start sort of unofficial and careful campaign in order to discourage this mass migration. . . .Of course, we have to be extremely careful of how we handle the question of workers desiring to get away from a capitalist country to live and work under the rule of the workers and peasants.*" [William Weiner] to A. Morton, Feb. 5, 1932, RGASPI, 515-1-2718, p. 7.

7 I have not found any specific directive to that effect in CP USA records, but such a directive is implicit in the text of other Party documents.

8 For an account of one disaffected returnee, see Hummasti 1979, 262–63.

9 For what happened to American Finns after they arrived in Karelia, see Sevander 1992; Sevander 1993.

10 For text of the "Open Letter," see Ahola 1981, 281–309.

11 Henry Puro was a Party name for John Wiita, who migrated to the U.S. from Finland in the early twentieth century and had long time involvement with

the Finnish-American left prior to the formation of the Workers Party. See Ahola, Finnish-Americans and International Comunism

12 For the Morton faction's criticism of Puro, see "Record of Discussion in the Meeting of the Finnish Bureau, C.P.U.S.A., Held November 19, 1932," RGASPI, 515-1-2763, pp. 1-11.

13 For reference to the "Puro-Morton war," see Carl Paivo to Polburo of C.C., April 14, 1933, 515-1-3317, p. 44. One Party functionary wrote: "*This is to inform you and protest against the unprincipled and factional methods in Dist. #9 under the pretense of defending correct Communist line and Communist International by the Finnish Federation against Comrade Puro and Schneiderman [who was the District 9 organizer] concerning the Työmies Annual meeting May 31st and previously April 15th, when also Comrade Hathaway was here.*" He went on to write: "*At first the question was supposed to be only about Puro and Morton. Now comrades Paivo, Siiri Anderson, John Miller and Elli Miller have been removed from their posts, and every comrade supporting the C.C. [Central Committee] is regarded as criminal.*" John Miller to CC, CPUSA June 4, 1933, RGASPI,, 515-1-3317, p. 74.

14 See Haynes 1984.

15 For Johnson comment, see Haynes 1984, 59.

16 Ross told me that he and Maki quit the Party at the same time.

17 For Helvi Savola, see Reckdahl, Oct. 6 1999.

# 5

# Forging a Unique Solidarity: Finnish Immigrant Socialists and the Early 20th Century Socialist Party of America[1]

— Gary Kaunonen —

Finnish immigrants are often portrayed as clannish outsiders and hesitant, maybe even resistant, acceptors of American culture, language, and society. While doing research for a recent book, I found the exact opposite to be true in the early "left" political and labour Finnish immigrant organizations. Finnish immigrants openly sought solidarity with the American working class. Not only did Finnish immigrants join and thrive as a group within the early American labour and socialist movements, such as the Socialist Party of America (SPA), but in many instances Finns provided leadership that helped to shape these organizations. This was a bold initiative for a group and individuals, who in many cases, had been in the country for less than a decade. This intrepid action perhaps speaks to the effectiveness of the Finnish immigrant labour and socialist organizations, and the strength of spirit in the membership. Finnish immigrants did, however, make a strident attempt to maintain a sense of ethnic identity in such American organizations through preservation of Finnish-language media forms and the treasured hall culture. This article explores the rather incredible immersion of the oft-described irascible "Finnish immigrant" into the American labour and socialist movements of the early twentieth century.

The prominence of Finns in the United States labour and socialist movements is displayed in numerous archival sources: English language print media dated 1908, which announces the creation of the Finnish Translator's Office located

in the Chicago, Illinois, national headquarters of the SPA; ascension of "Finnish" SPA members to positions of authority within labour and socialist groups; and the integration of Finnish immigrant cultural resources for use in times of crucial class struggle, such as the 1913–14 Michigan Copper Strike and the 1916 Minnesota Iron Ore Strike.

So, what may have prompted Finnish immigrants to seek solidarity with the men and women in the American labour and socialist movements? Many of the Finnish immigrants working in America were not United States citizens. Organizations such as the SPA and industrial labour unions, such as the Western Federation of Miners (WFM) and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), gave Finnish immigrants a proactive outlet to exhibit grievances with the often-dissonant material conditions of a new, unfamiliar industrial life. Proletarian organizations gave disenfranchised Finnish immigrant industrial workers a well-deserved voice in a wage system based on inequity and Finnish immigrants joined these working class organizations in large numbers.

Yet, to many outsiders, Finnish immigrants seemed to share a predisposition toward social and cultural like-mindedness. As Peter Kivisto (1983, 68) concluded in "The Decline of the Finnish American Left,":

"*Finns occupied the status of a definite 'out-group' even though they are White Protestant. They were depicted as 'Jack-pine Savages,' Mongolians (in 1907, an attempt was made to deny them citizenship by invoking existing anti-Oriental legislation), and violence prone revolutionaries*."

In the United States, the majority of Finnish immigrants settled in the isolated industrialized regions of the upper Midwest, in the states of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. Some Finns toiled for a time in America and then returned to Finland, but by 1920, there were some 150,000 foreign-born Finns in America (Kostiainen 1978, 19). Some worked for a time in American industry, and then moved to the industrial periphery to homestead, but experiences in America gave most at least a taste of what it was like to be American. Included in what must have been the overwhelming power to assimilate into United States culture and society, historian Michael G. Karni (1975, 12–13) hypothesized in his doctoral dissertation "For the Common Good" that Finnish immigrants were hoping to maintain and disseminate their values in America:

"*Most Finns were determined not to be passive recipients of American culture. Whether associated with the church, the temperance movement, the cooperative movement or the radical labor movement, they believed they could shape the American environment and shape it into what it was not.*" Finnish immigrants in American labour and socialist movements aimed to join in, but also challenge, influence, and shape aspects of such proletarian organizations.

## Birth of a Proletarian Finnish Movement in the United States

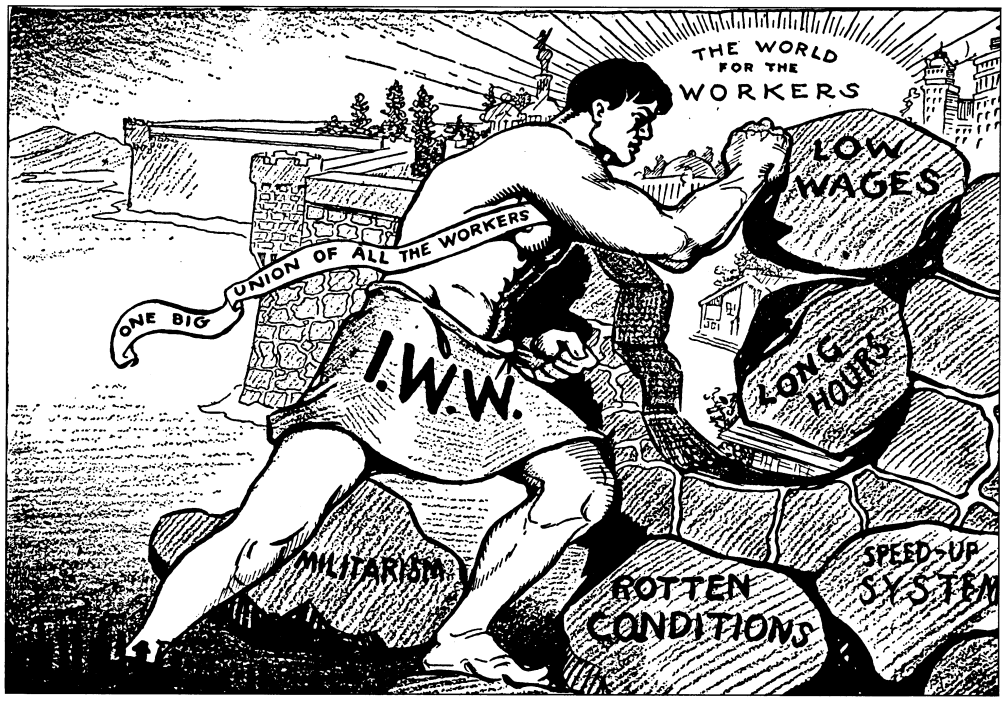
By the late 1890s, Finnish immigrant groups dedicated to the betterment of economic and moral conditions in the United States were in the midst of reexamining their place within the conservative Christian temperance movement because many felt that the spirituality of the temperance movement disregarded the tangible causes of intemperance. In industrial communities, working conditions and the industrial setting were seen by many as the root of intemperance. In the estimation of some, the temperance societies commonly did not address this fundamental problem. Workers' clubs developed and took issue with the social, economic, and working conditions of industrial America (Holmio 2001, 7–8).

During the early 1900s, the workers associations gained organizational momentum and strength while remaining in Finnish immigrant temperance societies. A loosely organized socialist-unionist movement grew from within these workers associations. Finnish immigrant publishing associations benefited the early Finnish immigrant socialist-unionist movement by hiring socialist-unionist writers to pen controversial articles and this gave the nascent movement a voice before it had anything resembling a following. A small number of Finnish immigrant socialist-unionists recruited from within the rank-and-file of the liberal press, from workers' enlightenment clubs, and from the temperance societies and grew in a short time. As these groups grew a number of local organizations made the decision to formally organize, which led to the formation of the Imatra League in 1903. Imatra locals, mainly located in the eastern United States, were essentially little more than benevolent, cultural, and fraternal organizations (Karni 1975, 112).

## Engaging Proletarian Movements in the United States

From the temperance societies and locally organized workingmen's groups, the Finnish American Workers League associated in 1904 at a meeting in Duluth, Minnesota. At that Duluth meeting, and later at yet another meeting in Cleveland, Ohio, a plan to join the SPA surfaced. This plan gained traction among the socialist-unionist element and affiliation with American socialism ensued at the Cleveland meeting. The outcome of the Cleveland meeting was a formal uniting of the fledgling Finnish immigrant workingmen's societies with the SPA as foreign-language members of the Party (Kruth 1988, 9; Kostiainen 1978, 29; Holmio 2001, 276–277).

Nineteen hundred and six was another important year for Finnish immigrant socialist-unionist locals in America. At a meeting in Hibbing, Minnesota, attending




The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) as seen in Ahjo magazine in 1919. – Institute of Migration photo archive.

locals voted to create and join a federation of socialist-unionist locals. The newly coined Suomalainen Sosialistijärjestö or Finnish Socialist Federation (FSF), a foreign-language section within the SPA, began with 53 locals and 2,622 members (Kostiainen 1978, 30–31) and functioned as such:

"*The organization is conducted by an Executive Committee of five members, who are elected yearly by a referendum vote; a general committee, in which each state is represented according to the number of locals and by a referendum of the membership…For agitation and organization purposes the country has been divided into three organization districts, and a steady organizer is kept in the field in each district. All propositions regarding the Finnish organizations only are transacted through the translators office, which also serves the purpose of the central office of the organization, but in compliance with the rules of the Socialist Party all party affairs are conducted systematically by the various county and state offices*" (Wage Slave 22 May 1908).

The FSF grew in leaps and bounds, and by 1907, the number of FSF locals was 133, with over 3,000 members. The association of the FSF with the SPA meant that there were around 3,000 Finnish members of the SPA. In this period, the ideology behind the movement drastically shifted away from more benign forms

of socialism to more revolutionary forms of socialism touted by immigrant Marxists, radical SPA members, and Finnish immigrant members of the IWW (Karni 1977, 70–71; Holmio 2001, 277–281).

In 1908, Hancock's Victor Watia, FSF secretary, wrote in a Socialist Party of Michigan newspaper: "*Today the movement among the Finnish population in the country is not the same trembling, weak organization that it was a short time ago*" (Wage Slave 22 May 1908). Watia wrote this report to the Michigan Socialist Party as the FSF's Finnish translator; as translator, Watia was an essential actor in the successful communication between Finnish immigrant socialists and the SPA. In the Wage Slave (22 May 1908) Watia described the work of the Finnish translator as such:

"*The activity of the Finnish comrades and the difficulties in the language compelled them to hire someone to do the translating. This was tried in the states of Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin, and on this practical knowledge was brought up the idea of establishing a National Finnish Translator's office for the benefit of every Finnish branch in the country, and locating the same at the National Headquarters of the Socialist Party…the National Finnish Translator's office was started at the National Headquarters on January 1, 1907…A number of books and leaflets have been distributed through the translator's office, and the party constitution, platforms and all national, state and county matters have been translated from English to Finnish and propositions from the locals for county, state or national offices formed into English*."

Not only did the Finnish members of the SPA advocate for establishment of a translator for "Finnish" party members, but also for the establishment of translators for other ethnicities and languages as well:

"*The necessity of establishing and maintaining a translator's office for every nationality should be apparent to everyone. As far as the Finns are concerned, there is no doubt that both the National and Finnish organizations are greatly benefited by the office, and I think the same result could be reached among other nationalities…this kind of work will require not agitators, but organizers who themselves are interested in the propaganda of forming one solid, unbreakable organization, and as long as there is a large number of persons in the party membership who are unable to speak and understand the prevailing language it cannot be done without establishing and maintaining national translator's offices.*" (Wage Slave 22 May 1908).

Although the FSF had been part of the SPA for less than two years, this act demonstrated that Finnish immigrant socialists were taking an active, perhaps even leader role in an American proletarian movement looking to create solidarity with their comrades and fellow workers. This was a clear declaration by the Finns that there was a desire to have a greater presence in an American political organization.

To be clear, the interaction between Finns and other ethnicities and American proletarian organizations did not occur solely on paper or at the administrative level. This commitment to join the American class struggle permeated cultural

realms as well, as evidenced by the 1910 opening of Negaunee, Michigan's Labour Temple. The Negaunee local advertised the opening of their new hall, the Työn Temppeli [Labour Temple] as nothing short of a gala affair, which included a multiethnic program. An ad in Työmies, a Finnish language socialist newspaper published in Hancock, Michigan, highlighted significant features of the Labour Temple's opening such as the singing of "The Internationale," performances by an Italian Brass Band, and speeches by WFM organizer Tom Corra and Emil Seidel, socialist mayor of Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Työmies, November 1910).

Immigrant socialist Finns were largely fervent supporters of their adopted American brand of socialism, wearing their political and organized labour convictions like a badge—and they could literally clip out and send off an order form printed in American Finnish-language newspapers, for a SPA badge that proclaimed for all to see the wearer's affiliation with an American political party. The association with the American socialist movement was prominent in many of the Finnish immigrant socialist-unionists' most important interactions. On Christmas, cards sent from Finnish immigrant comrades read, "*Iloista Joulua 1911,*

Ensimäinen myyjäispäivä

New Yorkin Työn Temppelillä

Avajais Näytäntö

VIERAILEE

WORCESTERIN TYÖV. YHDISTYKSEN NÄYTTÄMÖ

RAHA JA ONNI

Kolmessa näytöksessä

| HENKILÖT: | ESITTÄJÄT: |
|---|---|
| Jaakko Palomaa, liikemies | Antti Männistö |
| Mathilda, hänen vaimonsa | Anna Merisalo |
| Paula, edellisen tytär | Lempi Parta |
| Leena, Palomaan taloudenhoitaja | Elsa Halme |
| Liisa, palvelijatar | Violet Vainio |
| Pekka Roine, nuori insinööri | Albert Juhola |
| Martti Hartikainen, puutarhuri | Pentti Kukkola |
| Arnur Hartman, tyhjäntoimittaja | Väinö Järvi |
| Esteri | Aili Halme |

ESIRIPPU AVATAAN 8.30. SISÄÄNPÄÄSY 75c.

—x—

Tanssia Roof Gardenissa

SISÄÄNPÄÄSY 50c.

FINNISH PROGRESSIVE SOC., INC.

RAVINTOLA

tarjoaa parhaimman ja puhtaimman ruuan kaupungissa päivän halvimmilla hinnoilla

YLEINEN TYÖLÄISTEN RUOKAILUPAIKKA

15 W. 126 St., New York City

TOIMIHENKILÖITÄ HALUTAAN

Ryhtykää toimimaan huvitoimikunnassa tai ravintolassa. Tehkää päätös, että tahtonne on auttaa yhteistä asiaa eteenpäin. — Sipola huolehtii huvitoimikunnasta ja Lahti ravintolasta, heille voi ilmoittautua.

An anouncement of the first rummage sale and the opening drama "Money and Happiness" in the Finnish Labor Temple in New York. Date and source unknown. – Institute of Migration photo archive.

*Onnellista Uutta Vuotta 1912*," a traditional Merry Christmas and Happy New Year greeting in Finnish. This greeting was situated right next to the interlocking hands of the SPA logo and the slogan "Workers of the World Unite." Additionally, a yearly publication by the Työmies Publishing Company, Köyhälistiön Nuija [Proletarian Hammer], often featured season's greetings from Eugene V. Debs, SPA presidential candidate (Tianen, 1911; Köyhälistön Nuija 6, 1912).

While the seemingly euphoric romance with American socialism blossomed, Finnish immigrant socialist-unionists also sought to maintain a sense of ethnic identity, making strident efforts to guard the beloved cultural, language, and social traditions of Finland. Though guarding their ethnic heritage, Finnish immigrants did fervently work to create avenues of solidarity with the American proletariat, which ultimately meant learning English and becoming an American citizen. In Michigan, the FSF locals held two English-language courses that were attended by 45 people, counted 194 American union members in the ranks, and saw 158 members take out their first citizenship papers; 111 members became full citizens in 1912 (Suomalaisten Sosialistijärjestön Edustajakokouksen 1912, 40).

The move toward proletarian assimilation paid dividends for the Finnish immigrant socialist-unionist movement. Finnish immigrants were rising to positions of significance in a number of American labour and socialist organizations. In 1912, at the Western Federation of Miner's annual convention, delegate John Välimäki, of the Hancock, Michigan, union local, moved that Charles Moyer's, "President's Report," be "translated into the Italian, Finnish, and Austrian [Austro-Hungarian Empire] languages, and printed for distribution." Another "Finnish" delegate, John Mäki of Negaunee, Michigan's local, seconded this motion (Western Federation of Miners 1912, 27). Additionally, in 1914, of the six highest-level positions in the Socialist Party of Michigan, Finnish immigrants held half. Both Severi Alanne and Matti Tenhunen were on the board of directors and Frank Aaltonen (of Negaunee) was a national committeeman. Not coincidentally, by 1914 the Finnish Federation of Michigan's Socialist Party was the largest dues-paying entity, contributing roughly a quarter of all Party dues in the state of Michigan (Socialist Party of Michigan 1914, 1–2).

Especially influential within the Socialist Party of America, by 1912, were the Hancock and Negaunee, Michigan, and Hibbing and Virginia, Minnesota, locals of the Federation. All four locals had excellent cultural facilities, including large halls and rapidly growing memberships. Hancock had a first rate publishing company and an active membership, while Negaunee, Virginia, and Hibbing had especially extravagant and well-equipped halls, good membership numbers and energized locals. It was a time of great enthusiasm, leading Matti Tenhunen to state about the Negaunee Labour Temple: "*It is a building which the bourgeoisie and their stooges hardly can look at without sweat on their brow, but honest workers can step into it like into their home. It is cursed by the bourgeoisie, loved by the workers—a home for future fights, future victories, sorrows and joys.*" (Sulkanen 1951, 439–440).

Outwardly, the FSF was fighting fit, but this proletarian dynamism in the Finnish immigrant population was a fragile union between competing ideological entities. There was a growing divide between parliamentary socialists and direct actionists, which hung like a gray cloud over the FSF. For a time, however, the energy of Finnish immigrant labour and socialist movement was a guiding force of sorts for the Socialist Party in Michigan and the SPA in general. Finnish immigrant socialist-unionists had very adeptly joined and, in essence, thrived within the early American socialist movement. This devotion to the cause led membership numbers in the FSF to rise quickly. By 1912, the FSF had roughly 13,000 members in over 200 locals, which also meant that the SPA had approximately 13,000 members of Finnish background (Suomalaisten Sosialistijärjestön Edustajakokouksen 1912, 39–40).

## Työmies Publishes the American Class Struggle

The printed word was an incredibly important part of the Finnish American experience. Finnish immigrant "Lefties" were no exception. The early 20th century Finnish immigrant labour and socialist movement was the most prolific publisher of newspapers, periodicals, and books in Finnish American history. Due to the affiliation with the SPA, and later the IWW, the publications coming off the Finnish immigrant labour and socialist press were official publications of American socialist and labour movements.

Early in the affiliation with the SPA, the Party divided the circulation of Finnish immigrant socialist newspapers into three regions. Raivaaja [Pioneer] served the eastern United States and Toveri [Comrade] served the western United States. Työmies [The Working Man] was the SPA's Midwestern mouthpiece for Finns who settled around Michigan's Upper Peninsula, the Minnesota Iron Ranges, northern Wisconsin, Milwaukee, and the Chicago area, among other places in the Midwest. All three papers were of great importance to the Finnish immigrant community, but Työmies, arguably, had the most significance to the SPA and organized labour due to the location of the paper in the greatly industrialized Lake Superior basin area.

The evolution of Työmies from small, localized publication in Hancock, Michigan, to regional organ of the SPA represents the tangible growth of socialism in the Finnish immigrant population. In addition to publishing for the Midwest's large Finnish immigrant population, the Työmies Publishing Company also pushed hard to crank out English-language publications. This expansion of mission, from an isolated ethnic operation into a regional organ of the SPA, facilitated the rather meteoric growth of the Työmies Publishing Company's readership, impressive list of publications, and growth of publishing facilities (Holmio 2001, 276–278).


The building of the Työmies Publishing Company. Photo published in "Työmies kymmenvuotias" (Hancock 1913). – Institute of Migration photo archive.

Almost from the beginning in 1904, after moving from Massachusetts, to Hancock, Michigan, the Työmies Publishing Company began printing news and information not just about the Finnish immigrant community, but also about issues concerning the American proletariat. Periodicals such Vappu [May Day] and the Työväen Kalentari [Workers' Calendar] contained Finnish-language material as well as news from the greater front of American class struggle (Kolehmainen 1947, 91–94). Vappu, published for May Day, examined proletarian issues, including articles and poetry from around the world. A 1912 edition of Vappu included articles about the proletarian struggles in "Mexiko" and a summary of the IWW's Lawrence, Massachusetts, textile-mill strike. Darwin and discussion of evolution also found copy in the 1914 edition of Vappu's pages. The Workers' Calendar contained local FSF news and translated the SPA's English-language news into the Finnish language including photos and commentary about Party presidential candidate Eugene V. Debs.

The TPC further expanded its growing list of publications to include an English-language publication called the Wage Slave in 1908. A resolution printed in the Wage Slave (20 March 1908) indicated that the paper would be Michigan's Socialist Party mouthpiece, trumpeting all things SPA: "*Inasmuch as the Wage-*


A collection of Finnish American magazines in the beginning of the 1920s. – Institute of Migration photo archive.

*Slave is a Michigan paper…we deem it wise to call upon our party members to assist the Wage-Slave in every possible manner. Through this medium the State secretary may easily reach the members of our party and the growth of the paper will undoubtedly mean the growth of the organization and the progress of our movement.*"

The Wage Slave was a semimonthly publication, and readers could subscribe jointly to the Wage Slave and another socialist themed paper, the Vanguard, for $0.75 a year. In a May Day, 1908 article the TPC outlined a predicted bright future for the English-language Wage Slave, while reminding readers that the Finnish-language triweekly Työmies was the main paper of the publishing company, "*Our readers understand of course that the Finnish paper is the big paper in this establishment, a large, seven column paper, eight pages issued three times a week. The Wage Slave does not publish Työmies. Työmies Pub. Co. publishes The Wage Slave.*"

Publication of the Wage Slave signaled a new dawn for the TPC indicating another attempt to give direction to "non-Finns" in the American working-class struggle. The Wage Slave's multiethnic nature was certainly evident in articles, but also in its staff, as a "Finlander" named John Nummivuori managed the paper, while an "Irishman," A. M. Stirton, edited the paper. The Wage Slave's articles and

the TPC's support of its publication confirmed that the Wage Slave was an important radical, multiethnic mouthpiece for the Copper Country labour movement, Michigan socialists, and the SPA (Wage Slave 1 May 1908).

With an air of class confidence, the Wage Slave (20 March 1908) announced itself as a "Working-Class Weekly," stating, "*This paper will tell the Workingman's side of the story in case of a Strike*." Banner headlines on the Wage Slave's front page proclaimed, "*The Worst under Socialism Will Be Better Than the Best under Capitalism,*" "*Labor Produces All Wealth; Wealth Belongs to the Producers There Of*," and "*A Vote for Capitalism is an Endorsement of Its Every Crime*." An editorial even pondered "The Limitations of Political Action" giving print to the non-political, direct actionists in the Socialist Party at this time (Wage Slave 17 April, 1 May, 29 May, 1908). Along with publishing Party news and views, the Wage Slave printed schedules of notable socialist events and lecture tours that were happening locally, regionally, and nationally. As an English-language newspaper with direct ties to an established American proletarian organization, the Wage Slave gave the Työmies Publishing Company an immediate legitimacy in American working-class circles. The ensuing proletarian assault on the conditions of industrial America consumed the pages of Työmies, the Wage Slave, and the TPC's ancillary publications.

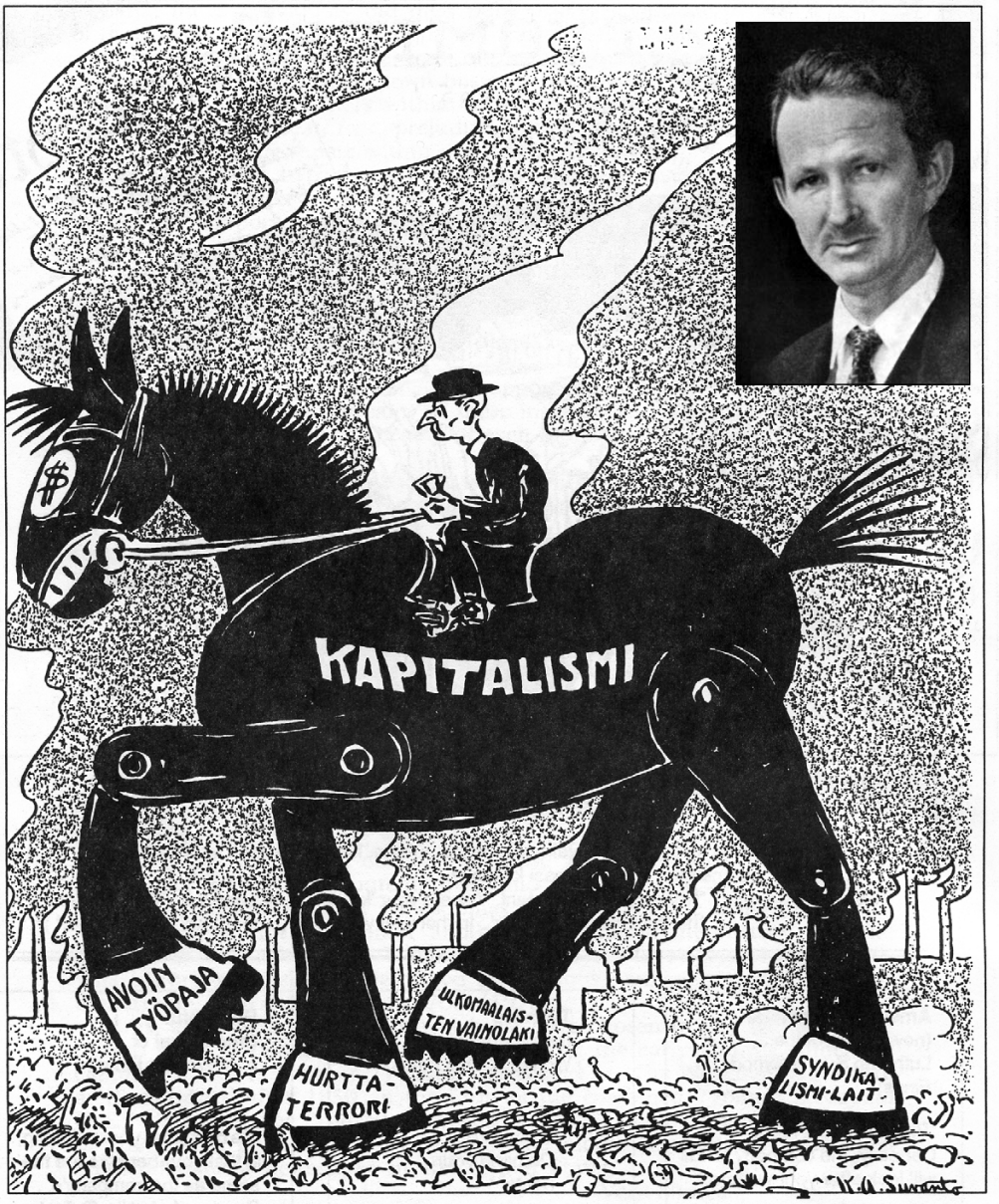
Yet another example of the TPC's desire to engage with the American proletariat through the printed word was, what could be described as the most important work to cement and declare the intention of Finnish immigrants to join the leftist movements in the U.S., V.S. Alanne's Suomalais-Englantilainen Sanakirja (Finnish-English Dictionary) which was published in 1912. At over nine hundred pages, this was the first truly and massively comprehensive Finnish-English dictionary. Alanne's benchmark linguistic work punctuated the move to join American culture through understanding and use of English. In addition The Työmies Publishing Company also had a store of plays, listing more than one hundred titles for sale in the Työmies, ranging anywhere between ten cents to a dollar per copy.

In addition to Finnish immigrant authored material in the TPC's publications, the company employed workers to translate English-language articles for the Finnish-language press. For many Finnish immigrants, the TPC's translations of English-authored articles, essays, poetry, and prose in newspapers and periodicals was the only link that the Finnish immigrant worker had with labour and socialist movements in the United States. In addition to getting the American message to readers in newspapers and periodicals, the TPC had a bookstore that served as an important liaison between the proletarian Finnish immigrant and the American working class. The publishing company had identified, as early as 1908, the need for translations in their work publishing books: "*Työmies Pub. Co. is now better prepared than ever to publish books. Heretofore our book publishing has been entirely in Finnish, but we intend soon to go into the business of publishing books in English pretty freely.*" (Wage Slave 1 May 1908).

With this mandate, the TPC's bookstore was home to a unique assemblage of books. From its earliest days, the TPC printed books that explored varied aspects of socialism, unionism, science, and revolutionary thought; they translated Marx and Engel's Kommunistinen Manifesti [Communist Manifesto], a number of titles by Maxim Gorky, and Alexander A. Bogdanov's Lyhyt Taloustihteen Oppikirja [Course of the Political Economy Textbook] as introductions to scientific socialism. Additionally, selections from American authors found space on the TPC's store shelves. Professionally translated books and treatises by lawyer Clarence Darrow, politico James H. Brower, agnostic Robert Ingersol, adventure novelist and socialist Jack London, and industrial unionists "Big" Bill Haywood and Charles H. Moyer introduced the Finnish immigrant to an American viewpoint on social, cultural, and political issues. A 1914 Työmies ad listed over 171 titles for purchase. In addition to the translated books, the TPC also published plays, which ranged from the very didactic, such as Socialism, A Slave's Education, and Struggle and Profit, to more amusement-driven plays such as Sherlock Holmes, The Workers' Wife, and Moses of Israel (Työmies 4 January, 1914).

While the articles, books, and plays were important connections for Finnish immigrants with the American proletariat, iconographic images in the form of cartoons and photographs constituted perhaps the most effective calls for solidarity between the TPC's Finnish language subscribers and American working class movements. At times, the TPC's cartoonists/artists Kalle Suvanto and Konstu Sallinen provided the iconographic images, but syndicated work of English-language publications often depicted regional or national happenings that were unknown to those at the TPC. Syndicated radical cartoonists such as Art Young and Ryan Walker were featured in the pages of the TPC's publications frequently. Perhaps the work by syndicated artists with non-Finnish names indicated to Finnish immigrant workers that they were not alone in their struggle against capitalism. These iconographic images created by non-Finnish artists created a sense of solidarity within the Finnish immigrant working class. The images visually portrayed the abuses against, and power of, a collective proletariat by displaying familiar themes of struggle, awakening, social consciousness, and industrial gluttony to Finnish immigrant socialist-unionists. These images displayed the plight of those exploited by capitalism, and solicited an emotional response to the inequality surrounding fellow workers of all ethnicities.

The TPC's engagement with American socialist and labour movements was not just in print media. As a publishing company that advocated an organized labour perspective, the TPC practiced what it preached. The TPC was a dual union shop, as workers at the publishing company belonged to both the Hancock Local No. 229 of the International Printing Pressmen and Assistants' Union, headquartered in Rogersville, Tennessee, and the Houghton Typographical Union No. 596. The TPC employees who belonged to the Houghton Typographical Union did so along




A cartoon by K. A. Suvanto. Published in Punikki 5/1925. Photo of Suvanto published in “Lehtipaja. Työmiehen neljännesvuosisata -julkaisu” (Superior, WI 1928). – Institute of Migration photo archive.

with employees of other Houghton Country newspapers, including the mining company–influenced Daily Mining Gazette, Evening Copper Journal, Calumet News, Keweenaw Printing Company, and the Scott and Roberts Job Printing Company. Union local meetings were likely an interesting affair as the workers of the socialist newspaper sat down to wax philosophic upon union ideals with the mining company newspapers either covertly or overtly controlled by the bosses (Työmies 14 May 1914).

Not only did the TPC participate in the American working class and socialist movements, they also paid the American price for such involvement as well. Lapatossu, a satirical comic magazine, had a run-in with the U.S. federal government in 1912. The conflict centered on the mailing of two 1912 Lapatossu issues. The TPC, business manager John Nummivuori, and editor John Salminen were charged with three counts of sending obscene literature through the mail. The first and second counts in the federal indictment before the grand jury dealt with the same issue, published on April 24, 1912. The second count translated the dialogue of the cartoon under scrutiny. The dialogue read, "*Hey, Jakko; why did you dirty teacher's chair? Careful, my man, everything comes to be blamed on the socialists.*" The cartoon graphically portrayed a man pulling up his trousers after defecating on a chair. According to the federal indictment the cartoon was "*contrary to the form of the statute in such case made and provided, and against the peace and dignity of the United States of America*." Count three was equally farcical, but the grand jury found there was enough evidence for a trial and in time, the defendants were found guilty on most of the original charges (United States Circuit Court of Appeals, 1914).

From 1910 to 1913, the TPC became the leading Finnish socialist-unionist newspaper in the United States, with over 12,000 subscribers. In this role, the TPC became the consummate mouthpiece not only for the Finnish immigrant socialist-unionists, but also for the SPA and organized labour unions such as the WFM and the IWW. The measure of the TPCand the FSF's incredible strides to join American proletarian movements was coming to a head as the Lake Superior basin was about to burst at the seams with proletarian discontent. Astoundingly, through hard work and deft socio-political maneuvering, the oft-described "clannish" Finnish immigrants had placed themselves as a crucial pivot in the struggle to organize workers in American industry.

## The 1913–14 Michigan Copper Strike

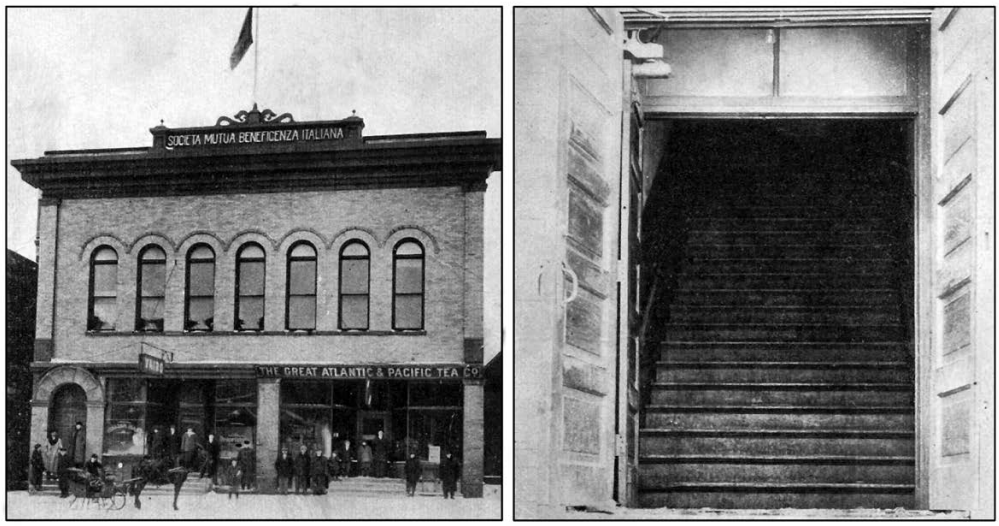
The 1913–14 Michigan Copper Strike was a monumental battle between the power of monopoly capital in the Copper Country and mineworkers represented

by the WFM. The strike began July 23, 1913, and would continue until April of 1914, through the long, cold, and snowy winter of 1913 well into the dawn of a new year. This was an epic nine month battle. At the onset of the strike, the WFM structured a central core of organizers that pivoted from a base at the home of socialist and labour Finns, the Kansankoti Hall in Hancock, Michigan.

Finns not only comprised a large number of rank-and-filers in the Copper Country WFM locals, they also occupied positions of influence within the WFM. Charles E. Hietala was secretary of WFM District 16, secretary-treasurer of the Hancock local, and a member of the TPC, and John Välimäki was a District 16 organizer for the WFM as well as secretary of the TPC. The concerted efforts of Finnish immigrant socialist-unionists to create a sense of solidarity with the greater American labour movement paid off as the FSF's Copper Country locals, the Kansankoti Hall, and the TPC became central parts of the WFM-led strike. The translations of labour and socialist books from English into Finnish and publication of English-language materials by the TPC ensured the Finnish immigrant labour and socialist movement's place among WFM leadership and as dynamic, informed members of the WFM rank-and-file (Kaunonen 2010, 116–124).

The red WFM union card became the symbol of worker discontent in the Copper Country. However, there was a strong undercurrent of rank-and-file IWW ideology driving the actions of the strike due to Finnish immigrant association with the ideals of direct economic struggle and industrial unionism. It had only been six years since the WFM left the IWW. Within this time, the WFM had then joined the American Federation of Labor (AFL). A large segment of the Finnish immigrant labour movement disliked the AFL and its craft unionism, registering the complaint that the AFL "groped after bourgeois support" and "opposed class warfare" (Ollila, Jr. 1975, 156–158). Regardless of the consternation with the WFM-AFL coupling, Finnish immigrants threw all they had into the strike: opening halls to act as WFM local headquarters and meeting places, walking hundreds of miles in strike parades, giving food and money for the strike, and operating the TPC's presses, which printed the WFM strike newspaper The Miner's Bulletin (Kaunonen 2010, 116–124).

Perhaps the most tragic evidence of the Finnish immigrant labour and socialist movement's commitment to class struggle during the strike was the death of Finns at the Italian Hall in Calumet, Michigan. In this horrific event, which occurred on Christmas Eve in 1913, a second floor hall full of WFM strikers' families were spooked by a mysterious alarm (perhaps a shout of "Fire" in the hall) and moved as a mass of bodies toward a stairwell. Many blamed an unnamed member of the pro-company group the Citizens Alliance for sounding the alarm. In the rush to get down the stairs and out the hall's double-doors, a pile of bodies began to clog the stairwell. People were crushed to death. The count of dead bodies for that mysterious night reached a gruesome estimated




The Italian Hall and the disastrous stairway in 1913, Calumet, Michigan. Original photos published as stereoview postcards. – Institute of Migration photo archive.

seventy-three to seventy-nine people, including almost sixty children. Of these people who died at this multi-ethnic Christmas event, approximately fifty or so were of Finnish background. Included in this were Mr. and Mrs. Niemalä who attempted to save their child by carrying the baby over their heads as they plunged down the stairwell. The baby survived while Mr. and Mrs. Niemalä did not (Kaunonen 2010, 150–160).

## The Great Finnish Immigrant and American Socialist Splits

Perhaps due to the perceived loss of the 1913–14 Michigan Copper Strike and the WFM's involvement in the failure, Finns in the American labour movement began to seriously question the course described by and power of the SPA sanctioned WFM. The annual Työmies Publishing Company and stockholder's meeting in May, 1914 resulted in fruitless exercises in arguing ideology. In dispute was a movement to align with and advocate for the radical, industrial union principles of the IWW. Minutes from a Duluth FSF meeting at this time recorded that the "*factionalism over the IWW question penetrated into branches of the Federation and even into the editorial staff of Työmies*" (Ollila, Jr. 1975, 71, 87–89).

The factionalism in the Työmies Publishing Company mirrored that of the FSF, and the FSF's arguing mirrored a burgeoning split in the overall SPA (Passi 1977, 11–12). Perhaps the most tangible element of this internal dissention

was the Negaunee Labour Temple schism. For a time in 1913, the Negaunee local became the center of attention in Finnish immigrant working class circles. As Auvo Kostiainen chronicled, "*The first open split came in the Finnish socialist branch of Negaunee, Michigan. The losers, those driven out of the meeting hall, soon started openly supporting the IWW and its ideas. From there the disputes gradually spread all over the United States to almost every Finnish worker's association.*" (Kostiainen 1978, 40). The "Negaunee Injunction," as it came to be known, transfixed FSF locals.

The IWW was only the name attached to the crisis. The actual problem in contention was that parliamentary Finns, who became known within the FSF as "Opportunists," passed resolutions condemning anarchist methods. Direct action Finns, known as the "Impossibilists," argued for one big industrial union and the right to impose direct action through strikes and sabotage. The Impossibilists saw politics as an impractical tool used by the bourgeois, while the Opportunists saw politics as viable part of class struggle (Ollila, Jr. 1975, 162–164).

This split between Opportunists and Impossibilists proved to be an irreconcilable difference of opinion and the two factions went on arguing into the proletarian night, eventually splitting in a rather bitter ideological divorce. The bureaucracy of the SPA could not help but weigh in on the question and recommended that the FSF solve the controversy internally. However, the SPA supported maintaining ties with the national socialist party. After attending this FSF Convention, the national leadership adopted a decision on the "Finnish Controversy" offering these rather remorseful remarks, "*In conclusion, we regret, more deeply than we can express, this bitter controversy in the ranks of our Finnish comrades. They have been an example to us and to all other federations of solidarity and wisdom, efficient in propaganda and in maintaining publications and gathering property.*" (Sosialisti 13 January 1915).

In a seemingly unrelated set of events, the SPA was also in the midst of a division in their membership. The SPA had always celebrated the notion that their organization was a highly diverse group of socialist adherents, which had good and bad aspects. One benefit of the SPA's diversity was pure numbers for voting purposes. The benefit of a large voting membership was also a detractor. The SPA, in order to remain politically viable, could not entertain dissention within its ranks and a dissenting faction within the ranks was the IWW. By 1915, the SPA had purged the radical, syndicalist IWW from its organization (Kostiainen 1978, 22). In an astounding turn of events in late 1914 and into early 1915, two radical socialist factions, members of the radicalized FSF and the IWW, were free from the bonds of their conservative socialist comrades. The two like-minded groups found each other quickly. This merger of radical union sentiment would be put to the test almost a year later on the Minnesota Iron Ranges.

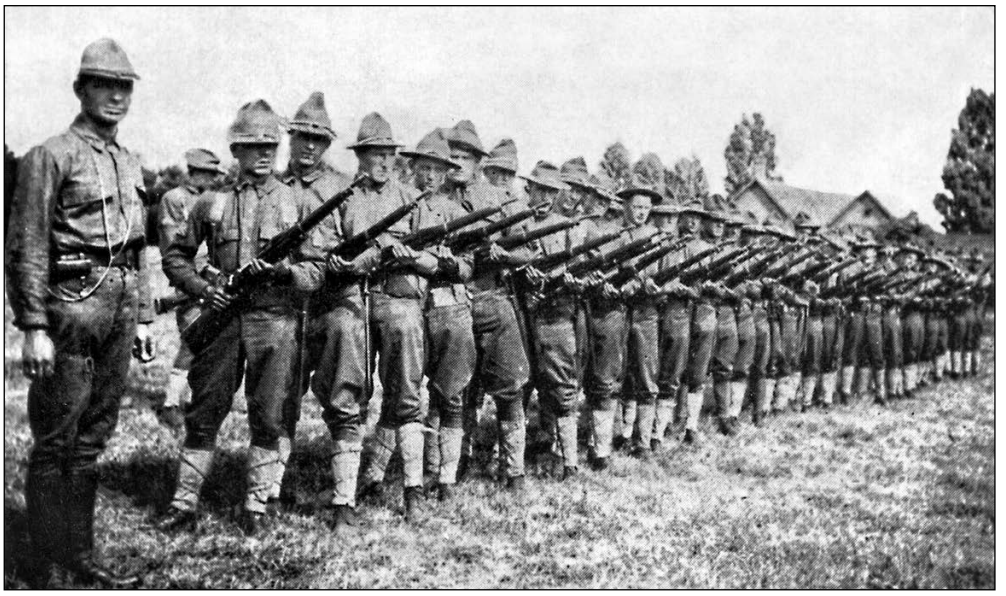
## The 1916 Minnesota Iron Ore Strike

Perhaps a radical extension of the 1913–14 Michigan Copper Strike, the 1916 IWW-led Minnesota Iron Ore Strike flared up in the northeastern mining regions of Minnesota. The Minnesota Ranges found the IWW, or Wobblies as they were colloquially known, dedicating some of its most talented leaders in the struggle to organize the iron mines, which were owned by the Oliver Iron Mining Company, a subsidiary of the gigantic, billion dollar U.S. Steel Corporation. The 1916 strike stretched over all three of the Minnesota Iron Ranges, the largest ore producer being the Mesabi Range, followed by the Vermillion and Cuyuna Ranges. Labeling the 1916 Minnesota Strike as an extension of the 1913–14 Michigan Strike is perhaps only possible because of the great influence of Finnish immigrant industrial unionists.

After the 1913–14 Michigan Strike wound down a great number of disenchanted Finnish socialists and unionists left the Copper Country. Some settled farms on the industrial periphery, some blacklisted mineworkers went to Butte, Montana's copper mines, and perhaps the greatest number moved west to continue the struggle for industrial democracy on the Minnesota Iron Ranges. Two things had drastically changed from 1914 to 1916 in the Finnish immigrant population: the first, many had become radicalized by the loss of the Michigan Strike, and secondly, many found new hope in the radical, industrial unionism of the IWW. Minnesota had been a hot bed of Wobbly activity, but one can speculate that after the loss of the Michigan Strike and the apparent failure of the WFM-AFL's running of the strike, radical industrial unionism was the next logical step in the class struggle for industrial democracy.

The strike started on June 2, 1916 at the St. James Mine in Aurora, Minnesota. The St. James Mine authorities tried to stop the strike from spreading but local mythology has it that an unnamed Finnish man ran from Aurora to Virginia and the strike spread westward across the Vermillion, Mesabi and Cuyuna Iron Ranges (Pinola 1957, 28–29). Local Wobbly organizers fanned the flames of discontent until regional and national leaders arrived on the scene. There is question as to whether the IWW planned the strike or if the strike randomly occurred and the IWW seized the opportunity to agitate. In either case, the 1916 strike was highly organized (Minnesota Department of Labor 1916, 168).

One of the 1916 strike's headquarters was at the Local No. 490 in Virginia, which was also known as the Socialist Opera House, financed and built by Finnish immigrants. The strike also had headquarters in Hibbing, Minnesota, at a large and commodious hall, built by Finns as well. Both of these locations were home to each mining community's FSF local. The original demand of the strikers was simple, the abolition of the detested contract mining system. As the national leaders of the



National guard in strike watch in Northern Minnesota mining strike in 1913. – Institute of Migration photo archive.

IWW got more involved, the duration of the strike lengthened and the numbers and demands of strikers increased The 1916 strike far surpassed all other previous attempts at organization of miners on the Iron Range. IWW officials claimed that approximately 15,500 miners walked out, and that over 7,000 of these walkouts joined the IWW. The mining companies' estimations placed the number of strikers at a significantly lower tally, estimating that 7,000 to 8,000 men participated in the walkout. The actual number of men who walked out is probably somewhere between these two figures (Minnesota Department of Labor, 1916 168–169).

The 1916 strike was the largest and bloodiest ever on the Iron Range. Both sides claimed atrocities. For the first time on the Minnesota Iron Range, mine-workers openly advocated meeting the physical force of the mining companies with physical force of their own. The FSF-IWW methods of combating the mining companies' exploitation are clear from a 1916 article from the Duluth News-Tribune (6 June 1916), "*Fifteen hundred striking iron miners held a meeting tonight in the Finnish Socialist Hall under the leadership of IWW agitators. They threatened a three-for-one retribution when informed of a resolution adopted at a citizens meeting ordering the strikers out of the city [Virginia]*." The IWW's commitment to direct action rang true. The militancy of a committed, revolutionary industrial union met the mining companies' hired guards.

The mining companies blamed the IWW for the bloodshed during the 1916 strike. An investigation of the 1916 Strike by Martin Cole and Don Lescohier

submitted to Minnesota Governor Burnquist stated differently, as reported by a 16 August 1916, article in the Duluth Herald, "*They [Cole and Lescohier] charge the misuse of police departments, declaring, 'We are entirely satisfied that the mine guards have exceeded their legal rights and duties, and have invaded the citizenship rights of the strikers.'*" Nothing, however, is mentioned about the rights of non-citizen workers, of which, Finnish immigrants were a small majority.

As had happened in the Copper Country, the Finnish immigrant labour and socialist halls of Virginia, Hibbing, and smaller cities across the Iron Range provided a staging area for agitation and organization. The FSF learned an important lesson from an earlier 1907 WFM-led strike on the Mesabi Range and carried the lesson into the 1916 strike. Working with the WFM had brought the Finnish immigrants to see their clannish reputation, deserved or not, as an obstruction to gaining concessions from capitalists. From the 1907 strike experience, according to Finnish historian Auvo Kostianen (1978, 36–37), the Wobbly Finns "*came into close contact with American labor organizations, and they stuck together with other nationalities on the Mesabi Range.*" The lessons of cooperative labour organization and the importance of working class solidarity became firmly entrenched in the collective consciousness of the FSF. The FSF's close association with the IWW led many Finnish Socialists to gradually become Finnish Wobblies. The unification of labour in the 1916 Strike occurred at several levels. On one level, the IWW operated as a national rallying institution and the Finn Wobblies provided a platform for effective local organization. In another way, the IWW provided the funds, muscle, and notoriety of a nationwide union, while the Finn Wobblies provided a local network for action and grassroots organization (Kostiainen 1978, 36–37).

Like the 1913–14 Michigan Strike, the 1916 strike ultimately ended with the mining companies breaking the strike. "*With the calling off of the Mesabi Range Iron Ore Miners Strike in the various range towns, and similar action on the Vermillion and Cuyuna Ranges, IWW leaders here today described their defeat as a temporary truce with the mine operators*" (Duluth Tribune 18 September 1916). The 1916 strike and the IWW had lost momentum in September due to the arrest of the IWW leaders, Red investigations and charges of subversion related to the onset of World War I (Pinola 1957, 37).

## Conclusion

While there seems to exist a notion that Finnish immigrants were clannish outsiders, Finnish and English language sources of the early Finnish immigrant labour and socialist movement do not support such a claim. In the identification and

struggle to fight the abuses of the capitalist system, Finnish immigrants stood as influential comrades and fellow workers in the toilers' rebuke of economic and social exploitation. Finnish immigrants sought solidarity with their fellow American toilers. The historical record indicates that Finnish immigrants very actively participated in the American labour and socialist movements in rank-and-file and leadership roles as early as the beginning of the 20th century leaving an indelible mark on the history of the American Left.

This rather impressive activity is not, however, greatly appreciated or chronicled for two rather specific reasons. First, labour history is not readily taught or appreciated in the United States' educational system. Often working class histories, or even the acknowledgment of a "working class," get lost in the American celebration of advance, industry, and progress. The academic and scholarly recognition of discontent and radical responses to hegemonic relations runs counter to conservative ideas of American exceptionalism and liberal privileging of middle class intellectual and social values. So, a group such as the Finnish immigrant labour and socialist movement receives little attention in contemporary academic circles. Secondly, Finnish immigrants were a small percentage of the overall American immigrant population, who spoke and wrote in a language unfamiliar or even unknown to English-speaking labour historians. This should not cause the experiences of Finnish immigrants in the American labour and socialist movements to go unnoticed in the work of American labour historians.

It is important to recognize the contributions of Finnish immigrants in the early American labour and socialist movements because the achievements of Finns in the American Left have the power to portray what effect a dedicated, well-organized immigrant group can have on dominant social settings. Finnish immigrants in the labour and socialist movements, and particularly in the early SPA, WFM, and IWW, had a proactive voice often as non-citizens in the conditions of their social and working environments. Instead of allowing themselves to be acted upon, Finnish immigrants in these movements chose to act up against the immoral actions of capitalist economic and social exploitation. These immigrants imparted a history of activism that inspired future generations to see themselves not as isolated social actors, but rather as engaged, integrated members of an American group that pursued constructive action toward economic and social justice.

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## Notes

1 Much of the research and writing for this article comes out of previous work done for *Challenge Accepted: A Finnish Immigrant Response to Industrial American in Michigan's Copper Country*, Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State University Press, 2010.

# 6

# Tanner, Pasanen and Laukki: Emissaries of Labour Reform and Ethnic Integration

— Paul Lubotina —

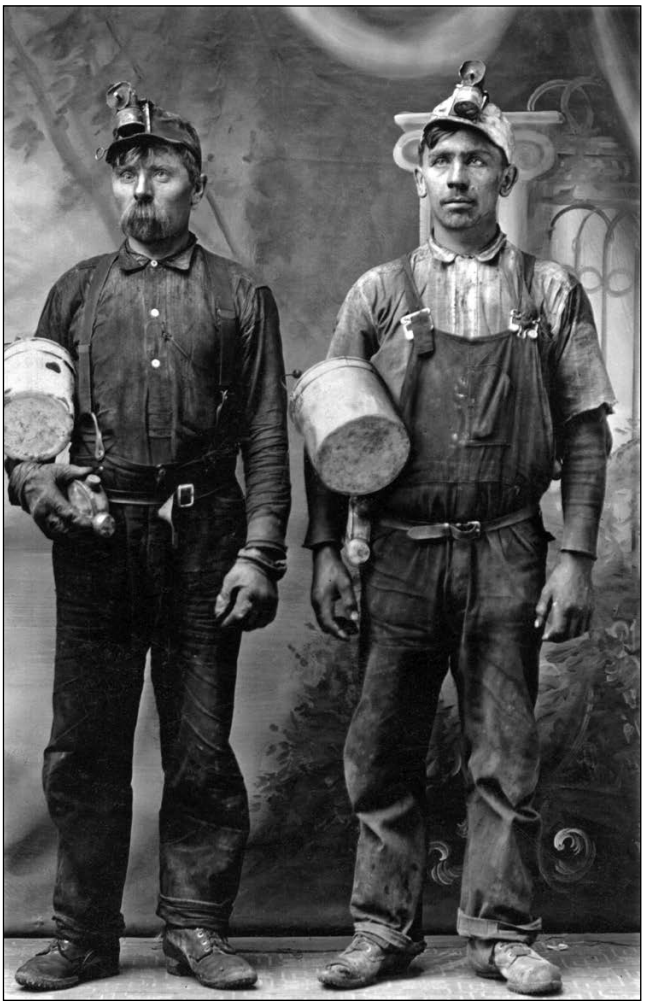
Since the 1980s immigrant historians such as John Bodnar and Lizabeth Cohen have emphasized that most third wave ethnic groups did not fully integrate into American society until the depths of the Great Depression. In his book Transplanted, John Bodnar examined kinship and familial relationships within ethnic enclaves as immigrant populations encountered American-style capitalism. Bodnar argued that middle class immigrant reformers led the integration process through educational programs to Americanize the working class populations. He also identified mass culture and the desire to acquire consumer goods as contributing internal factors for integration (Bodnar 1985). Lizabeth Cohen's Making a New Deal also emphasized mass culture as an important element in immigrants' assimilation process (Cohen 1990). Cohen argued that mass culture provided immigrants with points of commonality and therefore a reason to interact. She stated that the Great Depression placed massive strains on immigrant communities, which in turn caused a breakdown in the cohesiveness of ethnic enclaves. The declining economic situation also forced immigrants to move away from political apathy within their enclaves and joined the Democratic Party to support the New Deal legislation of Franklin Roosevelt. Similarly, immigrants also joined the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) for labour and wage reforms. As a multi-ethnic labor organization, the CIO sought to build a union-centered culture of workers who overlooked ethnic origins in order to unite all labourers in America.

In contrast to Bodnar and Cohen's emphasis on immigrants conforming to American society, Per Nordahl's Weaving the Ethnic Fabric: Social Networks among Swedish-American Radicals in Chicago 1890–1940, provided an alternative integration theory based on immigrant initiatives (Nordahl 1994). Nordahl postulated that Swedish immigrants transferred and then modified a political reform strategy called folkrörelsesamverkan in America. The term folkrörelsesamverkan denoted the interaction and cooperation among individuals involved in political parties, labour unions, and reform movements such as fraternal lodges, temperance houses, and educational organizations. Further, leaders often simultaneously associated with several organizations, which in turn stimulated cooperation and the integration of diverse groups in a common cause. In Sweden, the collaboration of Social Democrats, labour unions, temperance, and suffrage movements led to the formation of a modern, representative government that protected workers' rights, while also promoting industrial expansion. When Swedish immigrants arrived in Chicago, they continued the tradition of folkrörelsesamverkan but modified the strategy to include Americans. The Swedes cultivated political, labour union, and reform movement cooperation across ethnic lines. As a result, Swedish and American reformers exchanged ideas and adopted mutually beneficial strategies, which also conveyed cultural information, and contributed to the integration of both parties. Thus, Nordahl's theory illustrated how immigrants used folkrörelsesamverkan to both assimilate and modify American society at the local level.

In the case of Saint Louis County, Minnesota and its two major towns of Duluth and Hibbing, where Swedish immigrants lived in the highest concentrations of outside of Scandinavia, multi-ethnic folkrörelsesamverkan played a major role in shaping society at the state and local level (Blanck 2001, 317). For example, during the Progressive Era, Swedish-American Governors, John Lind and J.A.A. Burquist incorporated both immigrants and Americans in Minnesota's reform movements. Similarly, Bertha Berglin Moller, a leader in the Minnesota Woman Suffrage Association and National Woman's Party, led multi-ethnic coalitions of women's rights advocates in Minnesota (Stuhler 1995, 141–142, 224). Their work, plus hundreds of other Swedish immigrant reformers helped to transform the state as they added proven Swedish solutions to American problems.

## The Mesabi Range

Northern Minnesota also held a large concentration of Finnish immigrants. Historically, Sweden and Finland had shared a government for seven centuries before separating in 1811, resulting with the Finns adopting similar grassroots



Finnish American miners. Detailed information missing. – Institute of Migration photo archive.

approaches to reform in negotiating their new political relationship within the Russian Empire. One of Sweden's leading social democrats, Hjalmar Branting also helped to form a socialist party in Finland. By the late nineteenth century, Finnish nationalists formed a coalition of socialists, suffragists, and temperance supporters to oppose the Russification program of Czar Nicholas II. The Finnish coalition also formed a new representative government, including female members of parliament, which eventually led to the emergence of an independent Finnish state. When Finnish immigrants arrived on the Mesabi Range, they too established multi-ethnic collaborative efforts among socialists, suffragists, and prohibitionists to reform their newly established communities in Minnesota.

An examination of the interactions of Swedish and Finnish immigrants, along with Italian and Slavic populations, through Norhdal's paradigm of folkrörelsesamverkan, will illustrate the grassroots integration of diverse ethnic groups along

Minnesota's Mesabi Range during the Progressive Era, rather than the Great Depression as espoused by Bodnar and Cohen. The integration process began in two separate, but related arenas.

In the first, middle-class Finnish and Swedish, with a small minority of Italian immigrants gained social acceptance among their Anglo, Protestant American peers by quickly adopting republican virtues and supporting local government. In the early twentieth century, Hibbing's middle class population united in the Progressive Party under Mayor Victor Power, who built up infrastructure in the town, enforced prohibition, and expanded education by erecting one of the most comprehensive high schools in the United States.

In the second arena, working class immigrants rallied to socialism and later syndicalism in order to improve working conditions in the mines, increase wages, and provide a better life for their families. Here, Finnish immigrants such as Antero Tanner, Leo Laukki, and Ida Pasanen helped to unite the region's diverse working-class immigrant groups by leading them to challenge the power of the mining companies and local governments in order to build a new community that offered prosperity and opportunity to all citizens regardless of ethnic origins.

Between 1900 and 1907, Hibbing's immigrant populations joined the Italian Socialist Federation (ISF), Jugoslav Socialist Federation, (JSF), the Scandinavian Socialist Federation, and the Finnish Socialist Federation (FSF). Each federation began as an independent ethnic organization (Topp 1996, 123–124). However, the ethnic federations quickly joined Eugene Deb's Socialist Party of America(SPA) to increase their political power. In order to provide a basis for multi-ethnic cooperation, the (SPA) created foreign speaking subgroups that represented significant immigrant populations. Italian, South Slav, and Finnish Socialist Parties each received a Translator Secretary to represent the groups at national conventions (Hudelson 1993, 181–190). Even though the SPA represented the ethnic federations at the national level, Finnish members of the FSF led the expansion of socialist activities on the Mesabi Range through an extensive multi-ethnic organizational campaign.

## Antero Tanner

A Finnish physician and political exile named Dr. Antero F. Tanner, not only helped to organize the FSF, he also led the federation to regional prominence. From 1899 to 1905, Tanner tirelessly crossed the nation and addressed large crowds of Finnish immigrants on the merits of socialism. Tanner considered himself to be a socialist apostle who visited communities, then recruited disciples to continue the work while he moved on to the next town. In addition to proselytizing,

Tanner also established Myrsky [The Storm], the first socialist club for Finnish immigrants in the United States and a newspaper to spread propaganda (Spargo 1912, 237–241). Tanner's charismatic leadership and extensive organizational efforts helped to convert large numbers of Finns to socialism and then incorporate other ethnic groups into cooperative socialist agitation.

By 1906, the Finnish population of Hibbing responded to Tanner's agitation by forming a Debsian model Socialist Party. G. F. Peterson, a Swede and Western Federation of Miners (WFM) union organizer, formed a coalition of miners with the help of three Finnish immigrants named Otto Mattson, John Jaskari, and John J. Kulo. The four men ran for city offices but garnered only seventy-one votes in the election that included several thousand citizens (Karni 1977, 68–69). Despite the early political defeat, Hibbing soon gained national prominence as a center of Finnish socialism.

A few weeks later, in the summer of 1906, Doctor Tanner helped to organize a national conference of all Finnish socialist organizations in the United States. Members from numerous clubs and parties met in Hibbing to write a charter that united the various socialist factions into a cohesive organization. The convention, which would found the Finnish Socialist Federation (FSF), began with speeches by local socialists such as G. F. Peterson and Otto Mattson. Over the next seven days, the delegates discussed the role of women in the socialist movement, the church and socialism, unionism, and the possibility of joining the International Workers of the Word (IWW). By 1907, the Finnish Socialist Federation had grown nationally to 133 chapters with nearly three thousand members, and in 1914 the number increased to 227 chapters with over eleven thousand members (Kolehminen). More importantly, the FSF adopted a policy of multi-ethnic cooperation by training agitators to spread the socialist message among other foreign workers who did not speak English. Thus, within a year of its foundation the FSF initiated contacts to the SPA, WFM, and IWW, along with a program to recruit other immigrant groups to the socialist cause.

In addition to creating bonds with other immigrant groups and socialist organizations, the FSF spread folkrörelsesamverkan ties within Minnesota's Finnish community. In the major towns of Duluth, Hibbing and neighboring Virginia, Finnish immigrants established similar alliances to those described in Nordahl's Weaving the Ethnic Fabric, which illustrated how Swedish socialists forged coalitions with labour unions, temperance, and suffrage movements in Chicago that furthered the integration process. Moreover, the four thousand female members of the FSF played a key role in founding and expanding reformist networks amongst Finnish immigrants (Ross 1986, 77–78). These activities demonstrated Finnish women's efforts to integrate themselves into American society.

## Ida Pasanen

Specifically, individuals such as Ida Pasanen helped to unite both the women's rights and educational reform movements with the socialist cause. Ida Pasanen started her American career as a social reformer around 1904, when she began to edit the women's section of Työmies [Working Man], the official paper of Finnish socialists in America. Her articles identified suffrage, property rights, divorce laws, and the status of illegitimate children as the most pressing problems for Finnish immigrant women. Traditionally, Finnish women directed communal activities such as dances and concerts to raise funds for building projects, strikes, or recruitment campaigns to expand socialist doctrine. Conversely, men dominated the federation's leadership, while also enjoying greater freedom to join local politics or interact with individuals outside the Finnish community (Stjarnsted 1981, 259–263). Pasanen detested Finnish women's subservient position within the socialist movement, when reality contradicted Karl Marx's belief that socialism provided gender equality. To alleviate the situation, she proposed that socialism and suffrage offered women an opportunity to eradicate sex discrimination and promote equality. As both a socialist and suffragist, Pasanen sought to first reform voting rights in the Socialist Party before moving on to the broader problem of political exclusion in America (Wargelin-Brown 1986, 136–141).

In order to advance her reformist agenda, Pasanen helped to construct a workers' hall near Duluth, established a workers' club to promote socialism among Finnish immigrants, and embarked on a lecture tour of Mesabi Range communities. Her activities in Northern Minnesota gained recognition by leading Finnish Marxists, such as Dr. Tanner, who wanted to include women in the growing socialist movement. In 1906, the confluence of interests led to Pasanen's appointment as one of three female delegates to the founding convention of the Finnish Socialist Federation. At the convention, Pasanen helped Finnish women gain a representational victory when they received the right to vote for leaders in the organization. Even though women constituted nearly a third of the federation's membership, they rarely elected female delegates at national conventions (Wargelin-Brown 1981, 213–223). As a result, Pasanen recognized the need to better organize female participation in the FSF, so that their special needs as wives, mothers, workers, and social reformers could be met by the organization.

However, by lobbying for greater female participation in the FSF, especially in leadership positions, Pasanen sparked a major debate about the role of women in Finnish-American socialism. In the debates, Pasanen demanded more female political inclusion in the FSF rather than the propagandistic gender equality found in Marxist ideology. In order to achieve her goal of increased female representation in the FSF, Pasanen sought to create of a separate socialist organization for

women, founding a Marxist institute of higher learning, and publishing a newspaper dedicated to feminist social reform.

Between 1906 and 1912, Pasanen gradually attained many of her objectives over stiff opposition from party conservatives. Her campaign began at the FSF's founding convention, where she first proposed to divide delegates along gender lines, thereby allowing women to act independently to pursue a feminist agenda. Pasanen argued that only through a separation from the male dominated party could women gain control of their economic and social rights. However, both male and female delegates rejected the plan as too radical because it conflicted with the Marxist idea that socialism resolved any disparity between the sexes. By 1910, Pasanen gained enough grassroots support to establish women's committees at all Finnish socialist locals, which in turn communicated with the Women's National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party. Thus, female Finnish socialists committed themselves to women's rights and joined the broader suffragist movement in Northern Minnesota (Stjarnsted 1981, 271–272).

In order to circulate feminist literature and gain additional support for both the socialist and suffrage movements, Pasanen wanted to publish a newspaper devoted to the needs of Finnish socialist women. She believed that the existing feminist paper, Naisten Lehti [Women's Paper], did not meet the requirements of working class socialists. Rather, Naisten Lehti appealed more to middle class immigrants who emphasized affiliations with the Women's Christian Temperance Union and gradual social change, instead of a Marxist revolution (Wargelin-Brown 1986, 26–31). In 1909, Pasanen convened a meeting of women which voted to publish a socialist newspaper called Tovaritar [Comrade Woman] over the objections of the Duluth Socialist Club. The interference of the socialists' parent body prevented the publication of the newspaper until 1911, when Pasanen finally overcame internal resistance.

Initially, Tovaritar attracted three thousand subscribers, though membership failed to grow because the emphasis on socialist theory alienated many readers. Therefore, the leaders of the FSF sought a new editor to enhance the appeal of Tovaritar, by making the paper accessible to a broader spectrum of women. In 1915, Selma Jokela McCone, known locally as "Selma-Täti" (Aunt Selma), took control of Tovaritar and began to reshape the paper. McCone modeled Tovaritar after the contemporary American socialist paper, The Progressive Woman. The revised paper taught women to work in groups as a means to assimilate American culture through repeated calls for freedom of choice, liberation from oppression, and the fulfillment of self. Additionally, the paper kept readers informed on labour issues, improvements in childcare and the suffrage movement. McCone's improvements stimulated subscription to over five thousand readers within a few months of the change in format. The changes helped to propel Tovaritar to the forefront of Finnish feminist literature, thereby fulfilling Ida Pasanen's desire to

disseminate ideas of socialism and feminism among Finnish immigrant women (Karvonen 1977, 195–214).

The newspaper Tovaritar only partially fulfilled Pasanen's desire to educate Finnish immigrants in America. With a highly literate immigrant population, the FSF assuaged their thirst for learning by providing lecture rooms in workers' halls. Socialist educators and entertainers routinely presented lectures or performed dramas to stimulate discussions on how Marxism could change America. Children also attended special Sunday and summer school classes, where they studied socialist primers such as A. B. Makela's Socialist Child's Ten Commandments (Ollila 1977, 88). Ida Pasanen wanted to build on the early educational successes by creating a socialist institute of higher learning to prepare agitators for the arduous task of transforming America into a Marxist country. She felt that socialism would sever immigrants' reliance on "old world," religious-based education, thereby freeing Finns to learn methods to redress deficiencies in American capitalism.

Ida Pasanen found an outlet for her educational platform when Finnish religious leaders opened a theological seminary near Duluth, Minnesota. The seminary lasted only a few years before a protracted debate over the school's religious curriculum left the institution leaderless and vulnerable to acquisition. In 1905, a group of socialists gained control of the seminary and turned the building over to the Finnish Socialist Federation. By 1907, the FSF changed the name of the seminary to The Work People's College and appointed Pasanen to the Board of Directors. She helped to establish a new socialist curriculum that taught Marxism, including class-consciousness, to people regardless of their gender. With both male and female educators along with a co-educational student body, the school ensured the propagation of socialism throughout the region (Ollila 1977, 99–100). By 1912, the school recruited nearly one hundred sixty students who returned to their homes and helped spread socialist doctrine amongst the miners of the Mesabi Range (Kostiainen 1980, 302–308).

Thus, the work of Ida Pasanen and Dr. Tanner exemplified the concept of Finnish folkrörelsesamverkan on the Mesabi Range. While both Finnish leaders helped to establish and propagate the Finnish Socialist Federation in Northern Minnesota, each concentrated on different aspects of the organization. Dr. Tanner emphasized direct cooperation with the American Socialist Party, along with organizing and invigorating ties with other immigrant groups. He also began to coordinate activities with labour unions such as the Western Federation of Miners and Industrial Workers of the World.

In contrast, Ida Pasanen's work within the FSF to promote feminism and socialism resulted in the creation of independent women's caucuses in workers' halls, the feminist-socialist newspaper Tovaritar, and a co-educational curriculum at the Work People's College. Each of these institutions provided secondary venues through which Finnish women initiated contacts with other ethnic

# EDUCATION

## ORGANIZATION—EMANCIPATION

The Work Peoples College at Smithville, Minn., near the city of Duluth, is the only institution in the United States that gives instruction in industrial unionism and also in all such theoretical and technical subjects that are necessary in the industrial labor movement.

This school is controlled entirely by members of the I. W. W. which is a full guarantee for the fact that this institution is serving the purposes of the organization of the I. W. W. and its membership by teaching various subjects pertaining to social sciences, economics, and technical matters which all are useful in the revolutionary labor movement.

KNOWLEDGE IS THE MOTHER OF PROGRESS

The Thirteenth annual convention of the I. W. W. fully endorsed in principle this college and promised its moral support and publicity through the various publications of the organization.

All this shows that the Work Peoples College is the only place of learning for revolutionary workers, that it serves the revolutionary labor movement, and is, so to speak, one of the necessary organs for building up industrial democracy.

In order to emancipate ourselves from industrial slavery we must know our aim. Taking this into consideration the Board of Directors for the Work Peoples College sends an appeal to workers who wish to obtain education that they would make use of this in satisfying their desire for learning.

Following courses are offered:

### COURSES OF INSTRUCTION

1. Scientific department.
2. Technical elementary sciences and practise.
3. English department.
4. Organization bookkeeping department.

### SCIENTIFIC DEPARTMENT

Lectures in this department will be given on the following subjects: The construction and procedure of industrial unionism, commencing with the preamble of the I. W. W. and concluding in industrial society. Economics, Sociology, Geography and Biology.

### PRACTISE DEPARTMENT

Among other work in this department, two hours per week will be devoted to correct pronunciation, reciting poetry, reading and platform department.

Two hours per week will be given to public speaking and presentation, debate, parliamentary drill, and organization work.

In addition to these hours the student body will arrange for two meetings per week in which subjects of the hour and other discussion will be carried on so as to give the students practise in speaking and conducting meetings according to parliamentary rules.

### DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

The teaching of English language is divided into four classes. The first class learn the fundamentals of grammar, pronunciation and the diacritical marks.

The second class goes through the grammar thoroughly and in detail. Considerable attention is given to composition in connection with the points raised in the grammar. Attention is also given to sounds and the pronunciation.

The third class concentrates on composition with reviews now and then in grammar. Considerable time is given to reading.

The fourth class gives most of the time to the study of rhetoric; several long themes are written.

### DEPARTMENT OF BOOKKEEPING

I. The duties of a delegate.

II. The duties of a secretary.

III. Fundamentals of double entry bookkeeping according to the Rowe system. The student can take up the work where he had formerly left off, or depending on his former preparation.

Additional information regarding the school year, fees, etc., may be obtained by addressing THE WORK PEOPLE'S COLLEGE, Box 39, Morgan Park Station, Duluth, Minnesota.

An advertisement of the Work People's College in 1920. – Institute of Migration photo archive.

Finnish miners in Smithmine, Michigan 1910. – Institute of Migration photo archive.

groups, including Americans. For example, the women's caucuses collaborated with Minnesota's suffrage movement, while the ideology of freedom of choice, liberation from oppression, and the fulfillment of self found in Tovaritar helped to integrate Finnish women in American society. Furthermore, The Work People's College trained agitators of both sexes to propagate socialism throughout Northern Minnesota.

Therefore between 1907 and 1912, Dr. Tanner and Ida Pasanen constructed a complex web of affiliations with diverse groups and movements. Each new relationship induced Finnish immigrants to cross ethnic boundaries and interact with their neighbors, which in turn stimulated integration. The folkrörelsesamverkan activities of Ida Pasanen, Dr. Tanner, and the FSF expanded to other ethnic groups as labour unrest increased on the Mesabi Range. Fueled by a litany of complaints, immigrant miners increasingly turned to labour unions and socialism as means to redress their grievances. At the time, the FSF comprised the largest and best organized socialist federation in the region, thereby becoming a regional power in the labour movement, along with the WFM and IWW. In the summer of 1907, the FSF had only begun to establish relationships with the labour unions and the diverse immigrant populations in Northern Minnesota. These weak ties among socialists, labour unions, and ethnic groups began to solidify as working condi-

tions in the mines worsened. The abysmal situation in the mines not only led to a massive strike that rocked the Mesabi Range, it also became the catalyst for multi-ethnic cooperation.

## Mesabi Strikes

Regardless of ethnic origins, the immigrant labourers who worked in the Mesabi Mines endured numerous hardships. Workers complained that only the Cornish and English speaking populations had any chance for advancement in the mines. The non-English speakers wanted to obtain more lucrative positions as heavy machine operators, but mining officials relegated the immigrants to low paying positions in labour intensive operations that included ditch digging and clear cutting trees. Furthermore, the mining supervisors instituted a system of petty graft whereby labourers had to pay money to first obtain employment and then keep their jobs. Once a labourer gained a position in the mines, they risked their lives daily due to unsafe working conditions. Between 1905 and 1909, explosions, rock slides, and accidents claimed the lives of nearly 300 miners on the Mesabi Range (Karni 1977, 74–75). The combination of heavy work, racist attitudes, low wages, and unsafe conditions antagonized the immigrant labourers into joining unions and the Socialist Party.

In the spring of 1907, the Western Federation of Miners, under the local direction of the Italian immigrant named Theofilo Petriella, began a recruitment drive throughout Northern Minnesota with the full cooperation of Finnish socialists. Petriella, who also had ties with the Industrial Workers of the World, came to the region with the specific tasks of organizing Italian immigrants and forming an effective coalition of miners to stage a strike. Additionally, the WFM sent Vincent St. John and C. E. Mahoney to assist the recruitment efforts in the region. Amongst Hibbing's socialists, John Maki and John Kulo, who had run on the Socialist Party ticket for public office in 1906, led the unionization drive in the city. The Finnish socialists also provided temperance and workers' halls for both recruitment and organizational activities (Karni 1977, 74–75). Thus, the WFM, IWW, and FSF began to coordinate activities that united Swedish, Finnish, Italian, and Slovenian miners in the single cause of improving conditions in the mines across the Mesabi Range.

Within a few weeks of arriving in Northern Minnesota, Petriella established Hibbing as his operational headquarters. He then drafted a constitution for District11 of the Western Federation of Miners to unite the diverse factions of unions, socialist parties, and ethnic groups (Hibbing Tribune 20 July 1907; The Mesaba Ore 20 July 1907). In the polyglot organization each ethnic group elected

representatives, based on the number of participants, to essential meetings. A spy working for the mining companies identified the central leadership as the immigrants, "*Petriella, Koln, Lucas, McGuire, Kovish, Antimacki, Macki, Anderson, Roseman, Tromfors, and Mahoney.*" These union leaders also established a paramilitary force under the direction of Pater Masianovich, to help protect miners from the strikebreakers who would inevitably arrive to quell the forthcoming labour unrest. Furthermore, the leaders coordinated activities with national events. For example, Petriella decided to wait until after the conclusion of Bill Haywood's murder trial in Boise, Idaho before embarking on a strike, while FSF leaders coordinated strike activities with miners in Northern Michigan (Bayliss, 1907). The combined efforts of unionists and socialists led to the recruitment of approximately twenty-five hundred new members, though the number swelled to twenty thousand once the strike began (The Labour World 27 July 1907).

The huge number of angry labourers, combined with the untried coalition leadership, led to a series of events that neither Petriella nor Doctor Tanner controlled. Both leaders realized that strike preparations had not been completed as they still needed to raise additional funds and store food supplies. Nevertheless in July 1907, lumber jacks in Cloquet began a wildcat strike, which quickly spread to the ore dock workers in Duluth and then to the mining camps of the Mesabi Range. Caught off guard by the rapid turn of events, the Western Federation of Miners decided to represent and direct the Mesabi miners with every available means. Strike leaders presented a list of demands to the Oliver Mining Company, the local subsidiary of the United States Steel Corporation. They asked for a pay raise, along with the abolishment of petty bribes and the corrupt contract labour system used in the mines. The Oliver Mining Company rejected the demands, refused to negotiate further, and then fired three hundred union workers (Pinola 1957, 21). Immigrant labourers responded to the impasse by walking out en masse, thereby shutting down all mining operations on the Mesabi Range.

With the strike underway, the FSF and the WFM attempted to unite and coordinate strike activities among the various ethnic groups in the region. For example, the FSF supported the efforts of Slovenian socialists by publishing Slavic newspapers on the Mesabi Range. They also helped the Slovenes to establish their own socialist societies and allowed the activists to meet in Finnish Halls. The generosity of the Finnish socialists helped establish close ties between the two ethnic communities. Finns and Slovenes jointly celebrated May Day and continued to work together in subsequent socialist electoral campaigns on the Mesabi Range (Gedicks 1979, 152–157). Despite the early organizational successes of the FSF and WFM, the strike began to lose momentum after the Oliver Mining Company called several hundred Pinkerton Detectives to work as strike breakers.

Ostensibly, the Oliver Mining Company hired the detectives to support local peace officers protecting the ore fields from possible attack. Instead of protecting

the mines, the detectives began to suppress the strike through threats, intimidation and outright violence (The Labour World 13 August 1907). In August, the miners and their leadership faced new strike-breaking tactics adopted by local officials. In Hibbing, Mayor Wierick forbade any demonstrations in the city, while merchants cut off store credits to the miners. City officials also encouraged deputies to make mass arrests of strikers on a variety of charges, regardless of validity. As a result, deputies arrested Theofilo Petriella on the charge of carrying a concealed weapon as he traveled to a strike conference, even though most people in Hibbing carried weapons (Hibbing Tribune 3 August 1907; The Mesaba Ore 3August 1907). The violence and intimidation continued when deputies shot three strikers in the city, while Judge Brady and Sheriff Bates charged three other immigrants for "timidity" after they refused to take vacant positions in the mines (The Labour World 24 August 1907). As the number of men in jail increased, the court system bogged down and those men unable to make bail were sent to Duluth for trial (Hibbing Tribune 10 August 1907; The Mesaba Ore 10 August 1907).

Despite the brutal actions of the peace officers, the WFM counseled miners to refrain from acts of violence (The Labour World 13 August 1907). Rather than confronting the detectives, the miners resorted to peaceful demonstrations and propaganda campaigns to garner public support for their actions. Strikers gathered at Finnish halls for fund-raising meetings or to hear anti-"steel trust" speeches. The miners then marched through Mesabi cities to outlying locations and around mining properties while others distributed hand bills and strike newspapers. Women also supported the movement by organizing food cooperatives and accompanying their husbands during strike parades in an attempt to garner sympathy from fellow citizens of the region (Fetherling 1974, 83).

The fortunes of the Mesabi miners continued to decline throughout August as the repressive measures of mining and city officials forced immigrants to return to their jobs or face imprisonment. Governor Johnson attempted to mediate an agreement between the two parties but the Oliver Mining Company refused to negotiate with the union (Day & Knappen 1910, 162–163). Further, the strikers' lack of funds and food forced most of the men back into the mines in order to feed their families. The final decision to stop the strike came when the mining companies imported hundreds of Montenegrin and Croatian men to replace the men who left their positions. The Western Federation of Miners' key leaders, C. E. Mahoney and Theofilo Pietrilla, then fled the region and left thousands of angry miners to continue their struggles under the more militant leaders of the Socialist Party (Hibbing Tribune 7 September 1907; The Mesaba Ore 7 September 1907).

As result of the union's betrayal, the mining companies felt free to "black list" a large portion of the Finnish miners who led or participated in the strike. Suddenly, twelve hundred men found themselves unemployable on the Mesabi

Range, which only fueled the apprehension of workers and led to a mass exodus of nearly five thousand miners (Lamppa 2004, 208–209). However, the miners who remained continued to interact with each other in the Socialist Party.

Hibbing's Socialist Party followed the Debsian reform model by forming heterogeneous tickets for local election (The Daily Hibbing Tribune 6 November 1912). Rather than representing a single ethnic group, the party relied on a core of American, Finnish, and Swedish socialists who spoke English and could fully participate in the electoral process. Over the next seven years, from 1907 to 1914, the party expanded membership and repeatedly attempted to gain public office (The Hibbing Daily Tribune 7 February 1913). For example, the Hibbing Finnish Socialist Chapter nearly tripled its membership from approximately sixty to nearly one hundred eighty people. New members then built their own Workers' Hall in 1909, to provide a base for further action (Wasastjerna 1957, 518–520). The working women of Hibbing followed the example set by the socialists when they organized a union affiliated with the Associated Trades Assembly in order to improve wages and working conditions (Hibbing Tribune 21 September 1907; The Mesaba Ore 21 September 1907). While unsuccessful in their independent bids for office, the local Progressive Party courted the Socialist Party to unite their organizations and strengthen local opposition against the United States Steel Corporation.

In 1912, progressives under the leadership of Victor Power and Dr. Butchart, invited the socialists to join their movement since both parties shared a similar agenda. The Hibbing Socialist Party had circulated fifteen goals that included good government, weekly paychecks, eight-hour workdays, publicly-owned coal and wood yards, improved streets and lights, public parks, public swimming pools, and public gardens (The Hibbing Daily Tribune 25 January 1912). Given that both parties agreed on the majority of issues, with the exception of the eight-hour workday, the unification of the organizations seemed like a logical choice to the progressives.

However, the socialists rejected the progressives' offer because of fundamental divergent approaches to reform. The socialists claimed that the progressives promised unoriginal and moderate change from the "branches" of a capitalist government. Socialism however, represented the "roots" of the American working class, which needed immediate and significant improvements to their living conditions. The Socialist Party recognized that any short term gains from the election would not change the current political system but could strengthen working class opposition to the abuses of capitalism in Hibbing. The progressives responded that they also wanted to improve the lives of workers through evolutionary, not revolutionary reform (The Hibbing Daily Tribune 27 February 1912). As a result, the Socialist Party remained independent from the Progressive Party during the First World War era. Thus, as more labourers joined unions, the Finnish Socialist

Party, and the American Socialist Party, the town of Hibbing and the immigrant populations on the Mesabi Range radicalized to support drastic changes to the region's political and economic systems.

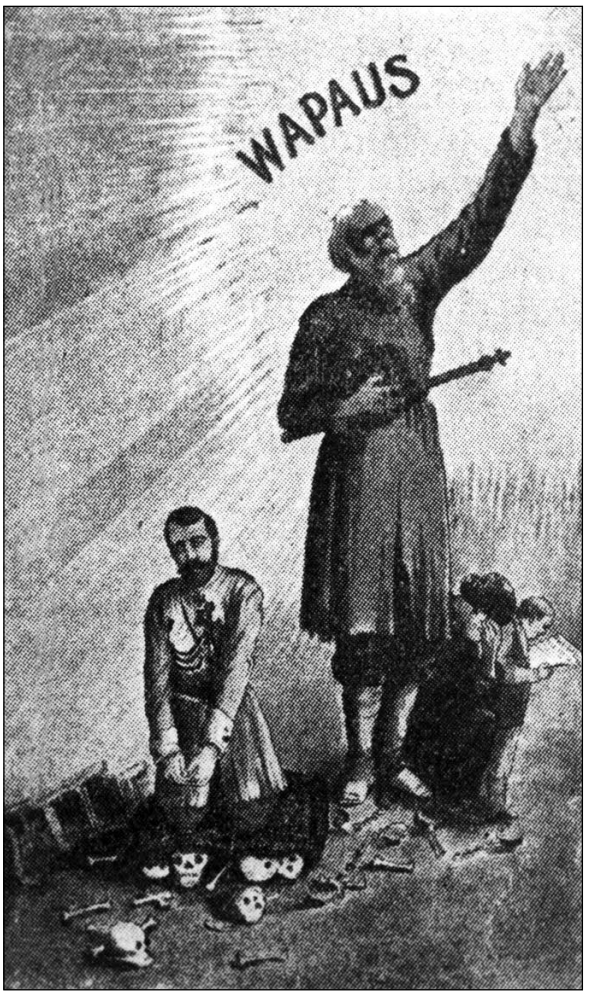
The defeat of the miners in the 1907 strike, combined with the inability of the Socialist Party to gain power led to the rapid rise of syndicalism in Hibbing and across the Mesabi Range. The failure of the Western Federation of Miners left the Hibbing Socialist Party, the Finnish Socialist Federation, and the American Socialist Party as the primary representatives of workers' interests with both the United States Steel Corporation and local politics. Since the socialist parties relied on political participation to enact reform, then refused to cooperate with the much larger Progressive Party, the socialists remained a largely ineffectual organization. The reliance on political participation also limited the number of immigrants who could actively support socialism through the electoral process. Most of the labourers who worked in the region's mines had not yet achieved citizenship, therefore they could not vote.

The situation resulted in widespread dissatisfaction with the impotent Socialist Party and the miners turned to syndicalism as a means to overcome their plight in a capitalist society (Winters 1985, 120–121). The Industrial Workers of the World provided an outlet for the marginalized Finnish, Italian, and South Slavic miners that the Socialist Party failed to adequately represent. Moreover, the IWW's strategy of "direct action," without political participation, appealed to many miners, which in turn led to the exponential growth of IWW membership in the years before the First World War.

In addition to the lack of political inclusion, Finnish, Italian, and South Slavic miners had several other reasons to support syndicalism. Primarily, conditions in the mines remained unchanged with low wages, petty graft, and the contract system still accepted business practices of the Oliver Mining Company. The Montenegrin and Croatian strikebreakers brought in to replace striking miners also encountered the same problems when they began to work in the mines. As a result, the diverse ethnic groups of Hibbing and the Mesabi Range continued to interact after the 1907 strike, through their affiliation with the Industrial Workers of the World.

## Leo Laukki

Among the immigrants who flocked to the IWW, a Finnish teacher named Leo Laukki gained prominence as a local leader. Leo Laukki rose to power as the primary syndicalist ideologue at the Work People's College. Educated in Finland and at Valparaiso University in Indiana, Laukki joined the staff at the college in 1908,




An illustration of the "freedom" (Wapaus) in Russia after the 1917 revolution. Published in Ahjo magazine 1917. – Institute of Migration photo archive.

but soon began to work on his own political agenda. As one the most popular teachers at the college, he gathered a large following through his fiery speeches and organizational activities. He also helped to transform the college from an organ of the Finnish Socialist Federation to one of primary educational institutions of the Industrial Workers of the World. In the process, Laukki became one of the primary radical leaders among Finnish immigrants as he orchestrated a rift with moderates in the Finnish Socialist Federation (Heinila & Riippa).

By 1914, the crisis among Finnish socialists reached a critical stage as Laukki continued to erode membership in the FSF through a continuous recruitment campaign among fellow socialists. During a conference held in Hancock, Michigan the syndicalists finally achieved their goal and broke away from the moderate socialists. Thus, Laukki gained total control of the Work People's College and became one of the primary leaders of the IWW on the Mesabi Range.

Between 1914 and 1916, Laukki helped to forge another folkrörelsesamverkan coalition among the diverse immigrant populations in a renewed attempt to stage a major strike (Hibbing Tribune 8 May 1915; The Mesaba Ore 8 May 1915). The IWW's message of "direct action" attracted large numbers of Finnish, Italian, and Slavic miners and helped to change the ethnic structure of the Mesabi labour movement. In 1907, Finnish miners made up most of the strikers and consequently endured most of the repressive measures perpetrated by special deputies. By 1916, many of the Finns had been "black-balled" from the mines, while others, such as Leo Laukki, had risen to organizational positions. Therefore, the majority of members consisted of former Slavic strike-breakers and unskilled Southern Italian miners. The South Slavs, especially the Serbians and Montenegrins came from societies steeped in military traditions and the use of violence to settle differences, which nearly assured that the strike Laukki planned would turn into a bloody confrontation.

While strike preparations progressed, war broke out in Europe and significantly changed the situation in Hibbing and the Mesabi Range. Economically, the war led to massive orders for steel among the Triple Entante countries. In order to meet production demands, the mines needed additional labourers to dig out the iron ore. Yet, the war cut off European immigration so labour shortages became a critical problem for the United States Steel Corporation. Additionally, the war caused many Montenegrin and Serbian workers to return to their homelands to protect their country from an Austro-Hungarian invasion (The Hibbing Daily Tribune 22 October 1912). Many of the remaining Slavs then joined the ranks of the IWW and worked in conjunction with the better organized Finnish members. As a result of the existing conditions, labour shortages, and increased demands on remaining miners, the syndicalist movement intensified among the region's immigrant populations.

With the increased demands placed on the miners by military orders, and the corresponding rise in corporate profits, the men of the Mesabi Range expected more pay for their work. Instead of a pay raise, immigrants found that inflation, caused by the war, further depleted their buying power. By June 1916, the situation was reaching a boiling point. An Italian miner working near the small town of Aurora, near the city of Virginia, set into motion the second great strike on the Mesabi Range when he led four hundred men out of the mines after a dispute over wages (Dubofsky 1969, 322).

The first walkout set into motion a chain of events similar to those that occurred in the previous strike. For the second time in a decade the spontaneous actions of men, not affiliated with a union, began a strike without the necessary organization to succeed. Within two weeks nearly twenty-five thousand miners left their jobs on the Mesabi and Vermilion Ranges. Since the strike began without any union representation, the task of leadership fell to the men who had

already begun to organize in the region. The IWW, under the leadership of Leo Laukki, took up the cause of miners. Already at a disadvantage because of the lack of forethought, local syndicalist officials called for additional support from the IWW's national offices to help organize the strike. The IWW sent Carlo Tresca, Sam Scarlett, Frank Little, and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn to assist Laukki. Once again, the Finnish halls of the Mesabi Range served as strike headquarters. From the halls, local and national IWW leaders began the difficult task of uniting the diverse immigrant groups into an effective force able to oppose the impending reaction of the United States Steel Corporation.

The IWW overcame several difficulties caused by the previous strike defeat and economic conditions on the Mesabi Range. Foremost, the IWW needed linguists to address all the different nationalities that participated in the strike. While Leo Laukki or William Wiertola addressed the Finnish crowds, Carlo Tresca worked among the Italians, and George Andreytchine helped to direct the Slavic populations. In order to effectively organize the five thousand members, the IWW set up a Central Strike Committee where representatives from each ethnic group met in Virginia to coordinate activities. Further, each town collected their own strike funds to preclude any possibility of theft and provide food for the strikers. As a result of the impromptu planning, the ethnic groups worked together throughout the strike (Foner 1980, 495–501).

The mining companies responded to the IWW's activities by contracting over five hundred "special deputies" to supplement local and county police departments. Almost immediately violence broke out as deputies sought to suppress the strike (Strikers' News 4 August 1916). The deputies concentrated their efforts on the militant Slavic population who fought back with great ferocity. In one of the first major skirmishes, deputies barged into the home of a striking miner near Virginia and touched off a fierce gun battle. The Slavic residents, John Alar, Mrs. Nick Rosandich, plus several others fired back at deputies who in turn killed Alar and wounded two other men (The Labour World 24 June 1916). After the battle ended, a local Catholic priest refused to say mass for Alar, so the Finnish Socialists and several thousand striking miners held a funeral in Virginia. In the aftermath of the funeral, the IWW leadership gave a fiery speech in Hibbing's Finnish Workers' Hall where they warned that any further attacks would result in widespread violence (The Hibbing Daily Tribune 22 June 1916b).

Rather than allow the crisis to devolve into civil strife, Hibbing's Mayor Power sought to defuse the situation. First, he sent a city council member to meet with the strikers for their list of demands. A coalition of Finnish, Italian, and Slovenian miners met the city's representative. They wanted an eight-hour day, wages dispensed twice a month, a raise to three dollars a day, abolishment of the contract labour system, no reprisals against strikers, and their freedom to return to work (Strikers' News 1916). While Mayor Power sympathized with the

miners, he objected to the use of the IWW as strike leaders because of the violent history of the organization. As a result, he and the Progressive Party's middle-class supporters wanted to remain neutral in the conflict and work as mediators (The Hibbing Daily Tribune 27 June 1916). They felt that by circumventing the IWW and negotiating directly with the strikers and the Oliver Mining Company representatives they could achieve positive results.

When Governor Burnquist sent state mediators to the Mesabi Range, Mayor Power worked with functionaries to end the strike. Unfortunately, the mining companies refused any sort of mediation with Victor Power. Instead of cooperation, Power encountered substantial resistance from both conservative citizens who blamed him for the strike and from the mining companies for not supporting the "special deputies" in the town (The Hibbing Daily Tribune 22 June 1916a). In spite of the criticism, Power decided to allow the strikers to conduct marches through the city's streets since they had not violated any local laws.

While Power called for peaceful demonstrations, incidents of violence against Slavs culminated in the death of two special deputies who barged into the home of a Montenegrin miner near Virginia, ostensibly to search for illegal alcohol. Philip Masonovitch, his wife, and their boarders fought back against the deputies who accidentally killed two of their own men in the melee. Deputies immediately arrested everyone in the house and charged them with murder. Additionally, local officials used the crime as an excuse to arrest all of the key IWW leaders for the murder of deputies. They argued that the IWW had incited the incident through their fiery speeches that urged the strikers to violence (Foner 1980, 501). Throughout July 1916, nearly every IWW leader who attempted to rally the miners ended up in Duluth's jails on a variety of charges. Without any leadership the strike broke down by the end of August and ended when the IWW finally called off any further action (The Hibbing Daily Tribune 26 August 1916).

With so many organizers in jail, and others leaving the Mesabi Range, leadership fell to local miners. Immediately after the strike ended, Italian miners called a meeting in Hibbing's Finnish Hall in an attempt to hold the IWW together after the recent defeat (The Hibbing Daily Tribune 21 September 1916). However, the lack of core leadership proved insurmountable, which led to many Italian and Slovenian miners distancing themselves from the syndicalist union. The mining companies further eroded the immigrants' support for the IWW by providing a ten percent raise for workers and initiating night classes to make miners better citizens. With their key demand of a pay raise met, many immigrant miners returned to work and eschewed further affiliation with radical unionism.

Even with support for the IWW waning across the Mesabi Range, the primary strike leaders still faced repercussions of their earlier actions. Carlo Tresca, Frank Little, and James Gidey sat in jail on charges of murder for the deaths of deputies in the Masonovitch shootout. Even though the IWW provided legal representa-

tion, under the direction of Judge Hilton from Denver and Arthur Le Seuer of the Work People's College, Mayor Power decided to assist Carlo Tresca's defense trial. Power, a trained lawyer, had already gained a great deal of legal experience in his struggles with the Oliver Mining Company over Hibbing's finances. As a result of his earlier victories, Power knew how to fight effectively against the overwhelming strength of mining companies. If Power lost, he understood the mining companies would be able to crush any further union activity in the region through the use of similar tactics. While Power abhorred the IWW, he still wanted to see the average miner receive a livable wage through unionization, so he assisted with the case (Strikers' News 15 September 1916).

During the trial, Victor Power provided an excellent defense strategy. He argued that all the evidence had been obtained illegally by Sheriff Meining and also threatened to expose the fact that special deputies killed each other during the Masonovitch raid (The Hibbing News 16 September 1916; The Mesaba Ore 16 September 1916). With the lack of legal evidence exposed, county officials offered a plea bargain that allowed the defendants to accept the charge of manslaughter instead of murder. Masonovitch accepted the compromise to keep his wife out of jail and spent the next three years in a Minnesota prison. Tresca refused to plea bargain and subsequently won his freedom with Power's assistance. As a result of the victory, Carlo Tresca, Joe Schmidt, and Sam Scarlet visited Hibbing after their release to thank Mayor Power for his help (The Hibbing Daily Tribune 15 December 1916).

## Conclusion

The case proved to be a double-edged victory for Mayor Power and the leadership of Hibbing. By successfully defending Tresca and the IWW leadership, they gained fame and adulation among the immigrant populations of the region. The city's officials had supported the miners during the strike and tried to help them achieve better working conditions. Even when that failed due to the intransigence of the mining companies, Victor Power defended the IWW leaders and preserved the possibility of further unionization of the workers. Conversely, Governor Burnquist and county officials brought corruption charges against Mayor Power and Hibbing's government as punishment for defending Tresca. After several months of legal action, the charges proved unfounded, and the city's officials acquitted on all counts (The Labor World 24 June 1916). As a result of the strike and subsequent court cases, former members of the IWW edged closer to cooperation with Hibbing's Progressive Party.

While the socialist and syndicalist political activities amongst the diverse immigrant groups precluded cooperation with mainstream American political parties, the trial of IWW leaders attracted the attention of Victor Power, the primary Progressive Party leader on the Mesabi Range. Power, who had sought a political alliance with the Socialist Party since 1913, successfully defended the IWW leaders at their trials in Duluth. As a result of Power's support for the IWW during the 1916 strike and his defense of the organization's key officials, he gained the respect of the miners. As both the Socialist Party and the IWW lost leaders, such as Debs, Haywood, and Laukki during the First World War the organizations began to breakdown. The situation resulted with numerous leaderless miners who still wanted to affect changes, thereby setting the stage for a new coalition of the IWW, Socialist Party, and the Progressive Party in the emerging Farm-Labor Party in post-war era.

Between 1906 and 1916, both Swedish and Finnish immigrants built extensive multi-ethnic folkrörelsesamverkan ties with the Italian, Slovenian, American populations in Northern Minnesota. Individuals such as Dr. Tanner, Ida Pasanen, and Leo Laukki each established extensive feminist, socialist and syndicalist networks as they united and organized immigrant miners across the Mesabi Range during the period surrounding the 1907 and 1916 strikes. These activities helped to forge new multi-ethnic relationships as immigrants sought an effective way to improve their living and working conditions.

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# 7

# A. B. Mäkelä as a Political Commentator in Early Twentieth Century Canada

— J. Donald Wilson —

Two decades ago, two excellent accounts of early twentieth century radicalism in Canada appeared one after the other: A. Ross McCormack's *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899–1919* (1977) and David J. Bercuson's *Fools and Wise Men: The Rise and Fall of the One Big Union* (1978). Both books demonstrated, among other things, that the presence of immigrants from the United Kingdom and elsewhere in Europe was the main reason for the high degree of militancy and radicalism to be found in Western Canada before 1920. They pointed to the need to understand that these European immigrants, whether from the United Kingdom or from the continent, often brought with them their trade union and socialist experiences. In many cases they did not seek to apply this knowledge until they became disenchanted with economic life in Canada, with its low wages, long hours, industrial "speed ups", lack of safety in the mines and forests, strike-breaking scabs and militia.

Both books also served to underline the fact that Canadian radicalism and socialism became, in the twentieth century, integral parts of Canada's political culture, thus challenging the established mainstream liberal and conservative viewpoints of the day. This latter point is set forth in greater detail in another book of the same era: Norman Penner's The Canadian Left: A Critical Analysis (1977). Penner is at pains to establish that the role played by radicalism and

socialism in this country's political culture ought to be considered more seriously by historians. Likewise, he emphasizes the role played by immigrants of non-British origin, side by side with the Anglo-Celtic majority. Non-Anglo-Celtic immigrants were indeed very prominent in the ranks of the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC), the Social Democratic Party of Canada (SDPC), and the Communist Party of Canada (CPC). To take, as an example, the last named party, for the year 1928, out of a CPC party membership of 4400, fully 2 640 (or 60%) were Finns, 500 were Ukrainians, 200 were Jews, while the remainder were Anglo-Celtic and other nationalities (Communist International 1928, 359). Looking at the Social Democratic Party of Canada for 1914, Finns made up 55 per cent of its membership and had 64 locals across Canada with 3 047 registered members (Lindstrom 1998, 656 ). However, the leadership in all three parties was solidly Anglo-Celtic, and these leaders – whether Victor Midgley, W. A. Pritchard, R. B. Russell, or Tim Buck – naturally tended to steal the limelight from the rank and file. Consequently, not much has been written about the majority membership of each party, or about their views.

## Early Life in Finland

One person representing the rank and file of the left-wing parties was the Finnish Marxist and newspaper editor, A. B. Mäkelä, who spent almost half his life in Canada living mostly at Sointula on Malcolm Island on Canada's west coast, 300 kilometres north of Vancouver. Mäkelä can be numbered among the 12 621 Finns who came to Canada in the first decade of the twentieth century (Lindstrom-Best 1985, 7). Most of these Finns were farmers or farm labourers looking to improve their economic lot and some were artisans. They came primarily from Finland's western and Northern provinces. As with many Scandinavian immigrants to Canada, some had originally emigrated to the United States and for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was the prospect of good, cheap land or jobs in railway construction, decided to move northward. Others came directly from Finland as part of that vast trans-Atlantic traffic in human cargo at the turn of the century. Editor of the Helsinki working class newspaper, Työmies [The Worker], Mäkelä came to Canada in 1901 at the request of his close friend Matti Kurikka who, the previous year, had established a utopian socialist settlement at Sointula (Wilson 1998, 363–365).Born on 12 July 1863 in south-western Finland near Turku, Augusti Bernhard Mäkelä had established a reputation for himself as a radical and supporter of working-class causes before leaving Finland to join Kurikka in Canada[1]. Like his friend Kurikka, Mäkelä attended gymnasium and then University of Helsinki where he studied history and linguistics. He wanted to become a law-

Residents of Sointula, BC 1904. The founder, Matti Kurikka, may be seen fifth from right in the back row. His colleague, A.B.Mäkelä, was absent from Sointula on a business trip when this photograph was taken. – Institute of Migration photo archive.

yer but his studies were interrupted by his father's death in 1887. To support the family, he agreed to take his father's place as an elementary school teacher near Kuopio in eastern Finland. Here he became associated with the salon of Minna Canth, an early Finnish feminist and playwright. She had considerable influence on the young man. One scholar even credits Canth with leading Mäkelä to accept socialism (Salomaa 1967, 209). There is no denying Canth's early influence, for the same year she arrived in Kuopio, Mäkelä published, with her, a Tolstoyist magazine entitled Vapaita Aatteita [Free Ideas].[2] In 1889 he joined the Kuopio Workers' Association. Three years later he moved to Viipuri in south eastern Finland near the Russian border (now part of Russia) where he joined Kurikka on the editorial board of Viipurin Sanomat [Viipuri News]. In 1897 he returned briefly to teaching, but finding it lacking in stimulation, he left for Helsinki where he joined forces once again with his friend Kurikka on the staff of Työmies, the workers' daily. When Kurikka left for Australia in 1899, Mäkelä took over as editor until his departure for Sointula in 1901 at Kurikka's invitation.

Contemporary observers seem to agree that Mäkelä made a major contribution to the success of Työmies wherein he showed his commitment to the workers' cause. He was, according to one commentator, "*much more dangerous to his opposition than the shifting and inconsistent Kurikka*" (Salomaa 1967, 222). Already Kurikka had acquired a reputation for chiliasm, a characteristic soon to become obvious both in Australia and Canada. Unlike Kurikka, Mäkelä was reluctant to promote his own ideas but rather saw the paper as a vehicle for the expression of workers' views. In 1899 he was present at the founding of the Labour Party of Finland, whose platform followed the Marxian creed formulated by the socialists at the Erfurt Congress in 1891 (Wuorinen 1965, 199). In 1901 he was chosen to be a member of the party's leading council.

It was during this time that Mäkelä became an enthusiastic participant in what Michael Futrell has called "the northern underground," a network of revolutionaries (1963). Because of its strategic geographical position between Russia and Sweden and its autonomous position within the Russian Empire (the Grand Duchy of Finland was part of the Russian Empire between 1809 and 1917), Finland proved an ideal place for Russian revolutionaries in hiding or in transit to or from Western Europe. Through his brother-in-law, the Finnish revolutionary Johan Kock, Mäkelä was drawn into this network. Together with a Russian revolutionary, Vladimir Smirnov, who was head of the Russian Department of the Helsinki University Library, he organized shipments of subversive books from Sweden through the Turku archipelago to Finland and thence to Russia. He also arranged safe passage for Russian dissidents fleeing the Czar's secret police. In his own memoirs, Mäkelä states he left Finland in such apparent haste because he got word the Russian secret police were about to nab him for his involvement in the distribution of underground literature.

## Life in Canada

At Sointula Mäkelä's more pragmatic outlook complemented well the mercurial and temperamental Kurikka who was under the influence of utopian socialist thinkers such as Robert Owen, Charles Fourier and Henri de Saint-Simon. Late in 1901 the first settlers began to arrive on Malcolm Island.[3] They formed the vanguard of an eventual population of 238 inhabitants, including eighty-eight children, by 1903, who lived and worked communally. Even though most of the settlers were young – in their twenties and thirties – and male (men outnumbered women at least two to one), not all were able to cope with the rugged pioneer conditions of the isolated island. There was a lot of coming and going and a few were even forced to leave the island as undesirables. One scholar estimates that over the colony's

Finnish Canadian loggers. Other information missing. – Institute of Migration photo archive.

four year existence more that 2 000 people came (Woodcock 1958, 212), but that estimate may be a little high. For various reasons, both economic and ideological, the colony experienced difficult days. Its demise may be dated from October 1904 when Kurikka and half the members departed for elsewhere in British Columbia.

It was Mäkelä who attempted to rally the remaining population, but the Colonisation Company, Kalevan Kansa, held its final meeting on 5 February 1905. Those people who remained purchased land on the island, built their own homes (there had been communal living before) and formed the basis for a settlement which has continued to this day. Mäkelä remained and became a lighthouse keeper at Pulteney Point. Then at his (second) wife's urging, because of her homesickness, he decided to return to Finland. Being out of money, he stopped off at Fitchburg, Massachusetts where he stayed for eight months as editor of the socialist newspaper Raivaaja [The Pioneer]. In July 1907, in a speech prior to his departure for Finland, Mäkelä underlined his continued devotion to Marxian socialism.

*"Socialists in each country must be prepared for armed struggle against the capitalists. This is the same all over. Of course, we do not want armed struggle; on the contrary we would like to avoid civil war. But the only way to avoid it is to be prepared for it. Not a single struggle for existence has yet been won (either in human society or in nature) with spiritual weapons – discussing, debating, voting – and I cannot believe it is possible even today [ ... ]. We know very well that we cannot ex-*

*pect the slightest mercy from the capitalists; the capitalists have no right to expect us to show mercy either."* (Raivaaja kymmenen vuotta 1915, 45–46).[4]

On his return to Finland, Mäkelä first settled in Turku near his birthplace. Although he should have felt happy here, he later explained, "*I felt myself completely estranged from the City*" (Vapaus 1932, 2). He never found his feet again in the Finnish labour movement. It seems events had bypassed him (Palmgren 1965, 108–109; Häkli 1962, 65–66). The Social Democratic Party founded in 1899, just before Mäkelä left for Canada, scored a stunning triumph in the 1907 elections. Proclaiming its adherence to Marxist ideology, the party won 80 seats in the first Finnish Parliament. Such success marked the start of a new era for socialism in Finland and seemed eons removed from the first struggling days with which Kurikka and Mäkelä were most familiar. The new Social Democratic leaders were unknown to Mäkelä (Salomaa 1967, 32). 17 At the 1909 party convention in Kotka, he criticized the party for getting bogged down in parliamentarism. He defiantly declared he belonged "*to the generation which set its task to overcome obstacles thrown in the way of the workers' movement*." He decried the spread of parliamentarism which he predicted would push the party toward revisionism and the making of compromises (Salomaa 1967, 233; Palmgren 1965, 109).

Even though elected to the party executive (he finished second behind O. W. Kuusinen who later distinguished himself as the head of the Finnish Communist party in exile, a ranking member of the Comintern, and afterwards in the Communist party of the Soviet Union itself), Mäkelä again showed his restlessness by returning to Canada the very next year. That marked the end of Mäkelä's career in the Finnish labour movement. He was completely disillusioned with the country, which he described as a land of "spies and cordwood dealers" (Salomaa 1967, 232). Back on Malcolm Island he took up his former job as a lighthouse keeper, a position that eventually brought him a small government pension. He also became a justice of the peace.

In 1911 Yrjö Sirola, a leading Finnish socialist of the day, founder of the Finnish Communist Party and émigré leader in the Soviet Union until his death in 1936, visited Mäkelä at Sointula. He tried to stir him from his political lethargy into action, but to no avail. Mäkelä preferred to confine his efforts on behalf of socialism to the pen, to newspaper articles and tracts and periodically to the assumption of editorial duties with Toveri [The Comrade] in Astoria, Oregon and Vapaus [Freedom] in Sudbury, Ontario (Hummasti 1975; Karni & Ollila 1977, 167–194). In this capacity he acquired a considerable reputation as a political satirist, humorist and biting political commentator.

While Mäkelä was an effective writer, he seemed content to avoid any long term responsibility or to take any direct action in support of his socialist beliefs. He never, for example, went on speaking trips to promote the cause as Kurikka had done before him. He lent support to the Bolshevik Revolution from the

The board of the Kalevan Kansa Colonization Company in 1904. A.B.Mäkelä sitting left from the table a pipe in the hand and Matti Kurikka center in the back row. – Institute of Migration photo archive.

pages of Toveri in Astoria, Oregon, which he edited from 1917–18 and advocated adoption of Trotsky's position on world communism rather than communism in one state. According to Mäkelä, one could not expect to reform modern society "piece by piece," as Kurikka had advocated. The modern industrial world bound the developed countries more and more into an organic whole. As much as one might wish to escape capitalism, one must always be prepared to relate to the "outside" capitalist world. "*Not even a single individual can [do it], not to say anything about larger groups and nations*." Important social changes, therefore, were bound to appear first within world-wide industrial production and some group of thinkers who try to escape from phenomenon (Mäkelä 1912, 32–44). Such views led Mäkelä to share, with the opposition in the Soviet Union, doubts about the possibility of bringing about a lasting revolution in one single country (Mäkelä 1928, 154).[5] True socialist society can only be attained and preserved, he maintained, "*when the production of the whole country – industry, transportation and trade – is controlled by the society, not only in one country, on one continent, but on the globe as a whole*" (Mäkelä 1912, 40). The "ingeniousness of capitalism" forced him to conclude as late as 1928, that revolution on a worldwide scale was essential (Mäkelä 1928, 154).

In Canada, Mäkelä joined the Social Democratic Party of Canada and later the Communist Party but never became a leading spokesman, even among Finnish

party members. Lacking confidence in the English language, and Canadian customs generally, Mäkelä may well have preferred to stay out of the limelight. His published writing was all in Finnish. Among Finnish Canadian communists, A. T. Hill and J. W. Ahlquist were much more prominent.[6] On the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday, Mäkelä admitted that his participation in workers' associations including the CPC had not been very active. "*I went to meetings, sometimes served on executive boards, but was not really an active participant*" (Vapaus 1932, 2).
Political Commentator and Satirist

After periodic sojourns in the "real" world, Mäkelä retreated to his hermit life on isolated Malcolm Island. In these peaceful surroundings he found ultimate happiness far removed from the class struggle his Finnish colleagues were waging elsewhere in Canada. To people such as Hill and Ahlquist, Mäkelä must have seemed a disappointment. He never returned to the level of political activity he had reached in Finland at the turn of the century or at Sointula in its heyday. He never went on speaking trips to promote the cause as Kurikka had done. Mäkelä may have unwittingly offered an explanation of his own inaction in an article he wrote criticizing a group of Finnish American migrants who had gone to Soviet Karelia in 1922–1923. The venture failed miserably and Mäkelä wondered aloud: "*The fault I suppose lies in the fact that we American Finns have been Americanized to the point of being spoiled."* In his mind the prime motive for migrating to Karelia had been personal gain, not the desire to advance socialism (Toveri 1923). One is reminded of Leon Trotsky's observation during a brief stay in New York: "*I smile as I recall the leaders of American socialism. Immigrants who had played some role in Europe in their youth, they very quickly lost the theoretical premise they had brought with them in the confusion of their struggle for success.*" (Trotsky 1930, 274).

Basically, Mäkelä did not feel himself to be "Canadian". When asked in 1912 to write an article on Canadian affairs for the Työkansa [The Working People, based in Port Arthur], he replied cynically: "*You could hardly find a less suitable person. What do I know about Canada? What do I care about Canadian affairs? [... ] I get some Canadian papers, and reading them I have followed their affairs to some extent, but while always feeling they do not touch me one bit."* (Mäkelä 1913, 67).[7]

Many immigrants in fact found themselves in, but not of Canada. Studies of British immigrants abroad, even in English speaking countries such as the United States and Australia, emphasize the importance of cultural shock and the prevalence of a sense of dislocation among first-generation immigrants (Richardson 1974; Erickson 1972). It is not surprising, therefore, that a person like Mäkelä who never became fluent in English and lived in relative isolation did not feel fully integrated into Canadian society. He did, however, serve throughout his life in Canada as an effective spokesman for the Marxian socialist position and he was hailed by Vapaus at his death on 28 February 1932, as "*one of the most faithful members of the Communist Party of Canada*" (Vapaus 1932,2).

The accompanying article "Something from Canada" was written by Mäkelä in 1912. Typical of Mäkelä's writing and of leftwing opinion at the time, it was written for Työkansari kalenteri, the annual of the Port Arthur Finnish socialist newspaper Työkansa. Formerly the Thunder Bay socialists had lent financial support to Työmies [The Worker], the Finnish socialist paper, published since 1903 in nearby Superior, Wisconsin. In 1907, however, they began publishing their own newspaper Työkansa and also a satirical weekly Väkäleukä [The Babbler]. Originally published twice a week and eventually, in 1912, becoming a daily before bankruptcy closed its presses in 1915, Työkansa became a focal point for the Finnish socialist movement in Canada.[8]

"Something from Canada" constitutes a wide-sweeping denunciation of capitalism as practiced in British Columbia and Canada at the time. Finnish socialist rhetoric was often directed against the Lutheran Church (the state church of Finland), the virkavalta [bureaucracy] and the herravalta [gentry], and Mäkelä was no exception. He spares no scorn for Canadian politicians whom he terms "*worse criminals than highway robbers.*" Mäkelä is also critical of the media of the day, that is, the newspapers, which came to the support of politicians and capitalists alike. He is particularly critical of the plundering of natural resources in British Columbia. *"I surely see how the bandits around here tear up, damage, and rape nature*,"


Tyokansa Finnish Publishing Co. ca. 1910s (Labour Temple, 314 Bay Street, Port Arthur, Ontario). J. Kannasto (publishing editor) standing in front of window with arm crossed. Lakehead University Library Archives, Thunder Bay Finnish-Canadian Historical Society Collection.

he raged. "*Only the stumps are left from the valuable primeval forests.*" "*Fish are killed to extinction*," a statement that today doesn't seem so hyperbolic. He is also disturbed about the whale hunt. A new railway, the Grand Trunk Pacific, would only serve to speed up these ravages and further "*screw the public and the state*."

Like many other European immigrants to British Columbia at the time, Mäkelä expresses concern about "the Oriental menace" or "the yellow peril." This piece was, after all, written only five years after the violent anti-Asian riot in downtown Vancouver in 1907.[9] Mäkelä shares the perspective that "Oriental" immigration was contributing to unemployment among whites, who in their street protests, were beaten up by Vancouver police. He concludes by predicting increased "slavery" for "white and yellow" British Columbian workers alike.

Even though Mäkelä may well have represented "*a case study in futility*" (Whitfield 1975, 254), the fact remains that his observations on the extent of capitalist exploitation of British Columbia in the early twentieth century were, although unwelcome, certainly perceptive as we look back on those days with hindsight. In fact, many environmentalists active today, such as Greenpeace, would concur with his conclusions about the way Big Business is "*screwing the public and the state*." As E. P. Thompson, in writing of other working people, reminds us *"[ ... ] they lived through these times of acute social disturbance and we did not. Their aspirations were valid in terms of their own experience; and if they were casualties of history, they remain condemned in their own lives, as casualties. Our only criterion of judgment should not be whether or not a man's actions are justified in the light of subsequent evolution."* (Thompson 1968, 13).

A word about Mäkelä's use of political satire, for which style of writing he was best known (Rissanen 1923, 112): There is no doubt that among Finns in North America at this time satire was much more popular than serious literature or Schönliteratur. This phenomenon is explained by the Finnish scholar Esko Häkli in this way: "*After a long working day the workingman was unable to read heavy, ideological explanations [ ... ]. If he read anything, it was easier for him to read light and entertaining literature which very often was strongly socialistic and was used to serve the purpose of ideology.*" (Häkli 1962, 49). The following article is a good example of this type of writing.

## Excerpt from His Writings

A. B. Mäkelä, "Jotakin Kanadasta" (Something about Canada), *Työkansan Kalenteri*, 1913 (Port Arthur: Työkansa Press, 1913), 67–98.[10]

*You wanted for this publication to have something from* me *on Canadian affairs! You could hardly have found a less suitable person. What do I know about Canada? What do I care about Canadian affairs?*

*Even though one has here at the lighthouse [on Pulteney Point} a wider scope than in a bushcamp, one still only sees a tiny bit of Canada.* [. .. } *I get some Canadian papers and reading them I have followed their affairs to some extent, but always feeling that they do not touch* me *a bit. In connection with my* or *other people's business, I have sometimes got in touch with their [Canada's} laws and institutions, and I have thereby had a chance to experience once again what everybody knows from before, namely, that this country has been organized for the most reckless robbery. The governments at all levels, whether that of the Dominion, of the provinces or most important of the cities, are in the hands of the most dangerous bandits you can imagine. The politicians from the smallest to the biggest are worse criminals than highway robbers.*

*For the most part, the population of the country is completely under the rule of religious darkness, stupid racial pride, and a burning desire to become rich. Moreover, it is ruled by the media [news papers] which know how to take advantage of these weaknesses. The people are always ready to be robbed by the capitalists, and they rage with patriotic ecstasy the more they get pulled by the leg. It would be a sin to disturb their well-being. And it is impossible for me to try if only because of the language. I surely see how the bandits around here tear up, damage, and rape nature. Only the stumps are left from the valuable primeval forests, and after the fires in the woods there will no longer be stumps either, only naked rocks. Fish are killed to extinction, and caribou are murdered, just for the fun of it. Not even the corpses of these animals are taken away. And just at the moment they are starting to work on the whales. So, after a while this wild coast will become as empty and barren as the other "civilized" countries* [...]. *Many species have been killed to extinction, but new millionaires are replacing them quickly, and by the time the land will be completely empty, there will still be a nice collection of a few really rich people.*

[After a diatribe against the Hudson's Bay Company and the Canadian Pacific Railway, Mäkelä continues:] *The Grand Trunk Pacific is coming to British Columbia too. But it is hopeless to imagine that these [railway} companies will start to compete against each other. That sort of childishness is over. They seem instead to cooperate in charming agreement, screwing the public and the state. The only competition is over which one is best able to oppress the workers. This is a rich and fast developing*

*country; there is enough room here for one* or *two robbers and masses of slaves are pouring in from east and west [...].*

*There is lots of space in Canada and it is not astonishing that many see the country has a rosy future. Now that the Panama Canal will soon be finished, it is said that the whole west coast will change. The Pacific Ocean will become a British Sea in the* same *way that the Mediterranean was for the Romans. Vancouver Island will become another Great Britain* or *at least Japan. There will be a great harbour in every gulf. Likewise the mainland coast will be full of big cities.*

*The spirit of crystal-ball gazing takes hold of* me *too. There was a time when I asked the Finns to settle on this coast [...]. The response was not very good. But those few who came have not regretted [it] [...]. They have lived easier here than workers in many other countries.*

*But a lot has changed in the meantime. The Chinese, Japanese and Hindus have taken over more and more jobs. Last winter the Vancouver police beat the jobless whites just to keep warm, and the unemployed numbered in the thousands. Even those jobs which the whites still hold have worsened badly.* So *at the moment I do not ask anybody to come over, Finn or otherwise, who wishes to make a living doing honourable work. When the Panama Canal opens, this coast will become a harbour of hope for all that garbage from Europe which till now has stopped in New York, and this will be the greatest dump in the world for both white and yellow slaves.*

*At Pulteney Point Lighthouse on Malcolm Island, 1912.*
*A.* B. *Mäkelä*

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## Notes

1 Some sources in Finland incorrectly give 1862 as Mäkelä's birthdate, but both the Vapaus obituary and his gravestone at Sointula make it clear that he was born in 1863.

2 Arno Nokkala says the principal aim of Vapaita Aatteita was to make known the teachings of Tolstoy (Nokkala 1958, 423).

3 For details on the utopian settlement of Sointula, see Wilson 1981, 131–153.

4 Passage translated by Maria Kainulainen, M.A., Ruotsinsalmin lukio, Finland.

5 In 1924 Mäkelä was brought to Sudbury to edit the Communist newspaper Vapaus by Onni Saari who was trying at the time to change the editorial direction of the paper toward a Trotskyite position (Vapaus 1932, 2).

6 Regarding Ahlquist's prominence, the story is told of a Finn attempting to cross the border to the United States. He was halted by the U.S. immigration officer and asked if he knew Ahlquist or Karl Marx. "*Yes,*" he answered "*I know Ahlquist all right, but I don't know that Karl Marx. If he is anyone of importance, he must be one of the Toronto tailors" [from the "Big Shop"]* (Lindström-Best 1974, 10).

7 After arriving in this country, Mäkelä admitted we "bastard foreigners hardly knew in which city the government of this country was located. Only later have we learned to know by name some of the people who hold the real power in this country (Mäkelä 1928, 156).

8 Copies of Työkansa obtained from Helsinki University Library are available on microfilm at Lakehead University Archives.

9 For details on this riot, see Ward 197), 67–70, and Roy 1989.

10 Translated from Finnish by Maija Kainulainen, M.A., Ruotsinsalmen lukio, Kotka, Finland.

# 8

# "A socialist movement which does not attract the women cannot live": Finnish Socialist Women in Port Arthur, 1903–1933

— Samira Saramo —

## Introduction

In August of 1902, an editorial in the Canadian Socialist proclaimed "*a socialist movement which does not attract the women cannot live*" (quoted in Kealey 1998, 89). This statement confronted an important issue facing the Canadian socialist movement in the early- twentieth century. In general, English-speaking Canadian leftists struggled to draw mass support while simultaneously building barriers to women's participation. However, Finnish-Canadian socialists managed to rally the support of a majority of their ethnic peers, including a significant number of women, whose roles ranged from the auxiliary to active organization and agitation. This paper aims to tell the story of some of these women, considering women's involvement in early-twentieth-century Port Arthur and asks how they came to hold socialist convictions and how these political beliefs were expressed. The findings clearly refute suggestions that immigrant women, and women in general, were, by nature, more conservative than men, but also show that women's participation was not always easy.

Historians like Ian Radforth[1] and Donald Avery[2] have recognized the important contributions of Finns to Canadian socialist movements but have not considered the role of Finnish women. Joan Sangster, Linda Kealey[3], and Janice Newton[4] have brought Finnish women's participation to light, but, due to the

scope of their works and inability to work with Finnish language sources, they have not paid significant attention to the activities of Finnish women. The work of Varpu Lindström has made significant contributions to the study of Finnish women. In building the foundation, Lindström's wide geographic, temporal, and thematic scope has left room for an in-depth examination of Finnish women in socialist organizations in specific communities.[5]

To demonstrate how Finnish women adopted socialist outlooks and how they contributed to the greater Canadian leftist movement, both the 'cultural baggage' accompanying women to Canada and the conditions that strengthened radicalism in Port Arthur are explored. An examination of the venues women used to fight for improved conditions for workers and themselves begins with a general look at the prevalence of 'sewing circles' among Finnish socialist women. This discussion is followed by a look at their roles in socialism, unionism, and communism, specifically in the Socialist Party of Canada, the Social Democratic Party of Canada, the Finnish Socialist Organization of Canada, the Industrial Workers of the World, and finally the Communist Party of Canada.[6] However, a look at why Finnish women came to Canada and Port Arthur must first be provided.

## Finns in Port Arthur

Finns, like other immigrant groups, came to North America in search of a better life. Reino Kero's study of Finnish emigration to the United States before the First World War found that Finnish women tended to migrate to North America more frequently than women from other countries. For example, in 1907, the year Kero considers Finnish migration to have been most male-dominated, men accounted for 69.5% of the emigrants, compared to 96.5% men among Greek emigrants for the same year. (Kero 1974, 93). In the early stages of Finnish emigration, many young, single Finnish women and men travelled alone to North America in search of improved opportunities for employment or even just adventure. While an exact calculation of how many women came alone is unknown, statistics for the United States suggest that between 1900–1914, 74.6% of all Finnish immigrants came individually, showing the prevalence of solo migration even for women (Kero 1974, 125). In addition, many married women came to Canada either with their families or following an already emigrated husband. Between 1901 and 1911, over 13,000 Finnish women came to Canada (Lindström 2003, 28). Between 1911 and 1921, almost 10,000 more women arrived, to be joined by an additional 37,000 Finnish women in the following decade (Lindström 2003, 32 & 35). The overwhelming majority of women who left Finland for Canada settled in Ontario (Lindström 2003, 29, 32 & 35). Many Finnish women found

work in Canada's metropolitan centres, like Toronto and also Montreal. Other Finnish women made a new start in the Lakehead region.

The last years of the nineteenth century signalled a time of renewal for Port Arthur, not only economically but also socially. In the first years of the twentieth century, Port Arthur was transformed from a desolate locale to a bustling town. New opportunities in railway construction and the lumber and mining industries brought many newcomers to the region. Grain handling and shipping ventures were also proving very lucrative by 1905 (Mauro 1981, 209). This business influx brought people from all walks of life to Port Arthur in hopes of sharing in the newfound wealth, among them a large concentration of immigrants from Scandinavia and Southern and Eastern Europe.

The arrival of new immigrants changed the social makeup of Port Arthur. The town's elite, since their settlement, had worked tirelessly to uphold the values and traditions important to wealthy, white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants (Frenette and Jasen 1995, 146–147). In "Twin City Ethnopolitics," Anthony W. Rasporich suggests that the era of early settlement at the Lakehead was characterized by "ethnic exclusion and factionalism" (Rasporich 1990, 213–218). In response to the newcomers, the town's social and political leaders made every effort to keep the immigrants downtrodden (Mauro 1981, 230). Instead of realizing their dreams of a better life, many Finnish women faced deplorable conditions in the Lakehead. Tyyne Pennanen, who left Finland alone just days before her seventeenth birthday, felt immediately disappointed by Canada and Port Arthur (Campbell 1975, 6–7). Tyyne had expected to be met with great beauty and wealth in Canada, but instead found Port Arthur dirty, largely without indoor plumbing, and with livestock roaming the streets. Beyond the local aesthetics, employment opportunities also left much to be desired by Tyyne and other Finnish immigrants.

The work encountered by Finnish immigrants at the Lakehead was gruelling and the pay meagre. Unlike their sisters in urban domestic service, women in Port Arthur worked primarily in the service sector, catering to the hordes of men moving in and out of town in search of work (Lindström 1998, 168; Kouhi 1975, 65). Finnish women found employment primarily as hotel staff. While this categorization accounted for 40.3% of the women included in the 1911 Henderson Directory, the job description is unclear. It likely included work as cooks, laundresses, and cleaners (Kouhi 1975, 65). In addition to other jobs as clerks, bath attendants, and dress makers, Finnish women found work in lumber and mining camps outside of the Twin Cities working as cooks and laundresses. There, isolation could be severe. Women's wages, less than half of men's in equivalent jobs, left many in poverty, especially those without the financial support of a man. A 1910 publication of the Finnish Airue, featuring Finns in Canada, offered an example of Port Arthur wages (Airue 1910, 78–80). Whereas male shop workers earned $12–16

per week (or $48–$64 per month), women employed in the same job earned only $20–30 per month. Realizing the harsh life confronting them in Port Arthur, many Finnish women soon turned to socialist philosophies.

## 'Cultural baggage'

Whether socialist beliefs were formulated before or after emigrating from Finland, events and traditions of the Homeland often promoted their adoption (Avery 1979, 120). The impact of industrialization, Russification campaigns, and commercialization of agriculture led to the prominence of the Social Democratic Party in Finland and the popularity of socialist ideologies (Radforth 1998, 296). Women were eager to join the cause, especially with the encouragement of people like feminist Minna Sillanpää, whose thirty-seven years as a Member of Parliament began in 1907 (Lindström 2003, 17–18). While many Finnish women had already been involved in a wide range of socialist activity before emigrating, those who settled in Port Arthur following Finland's independence and the Russian Revolutions held their political convictions even dearer (Lindström 1989, 199). Following the bitter Civil War that tore Finland apart, the victorious 'Whites' (conservatives) systematically terrorized those who had been sympathetic to the 'Reds' (socialists or social democrats) (Upton 1980, 312). Many escaped to North America in search of freedom, bringing their heightened class consciousness with them. The remarkably high rates of literacy among Finns also allowed many to become well versed in contemporary socialist literature (Lindström-Best 1981a, 65; Sangster 2005, 17). Political experiences and traditions of the Homeland accompanied Finnish immigrants to North America in the form of "cultural baggage" (Kivisto 1984, 16).

## The seeds of socialism

Many Finns were sorely disappointed when the new lives they sought in Canada proved ripe with injustice and oppression. Auvo Kostiainen offers two explanations for why so many Finnish immigrants in North America were drawn to socialist organizations (Kostiainen 1978, 191). Firstly, socialism and communism offered Finns an opportunity to fight for improved living and working conditions within the political realm. It can also be argued that the international focus of revolutionary organizations proved very appealing for many Finnish immigrants in Canada. Fighting for change in their adopted homeland was only one aspect of socialism; through the movement, Finnish immigrants could toil to change conditions for


Photo taken on stairs of Finn Hall circa 1910, men and women on steps. Sign on balcony reads "Stay Away from Porcupine Ont. .... Don't be a Strike Breaker .... Away from Porcupine Ont. The Strike is Still On." Lakehead University Library Archives, Thunder Bay Finnish-Canadian Historical Society Collection.

workers everywhere, including family and friends remaining in Finland. In addition, affiliation with socialist organizations allowed Finns to come together to share cultural traditions and practices.

In Finland, socialists emphasized the importance of community and stressed the need for the involvement of all workers (Lindström 1989, 199). This cry resonated with Finnish immigrants in the Lakehead, as evidenced by the popularity of socialist cultural halls. The forging of close ethnic communities did much to encourage Finns in Canada to develop their class consciousness. Edward Laine argues that Finnish halls fostered a highly developed sense of collectivization by simultaneously creating the appearance of alienation from the greater Canadian society and building strong community ties (Lindström-Best 1981b, 96; Sangster 1981, 49). Community support encouraged Finnish women to fight for improved work and social conditions (Kealey 1998, 54). At the halls, Finnish women were introduced to the plight and politics of other women, not only in their own community but also internationally (Sangster 1981, 49).

In addition to the rise of socialist halls, the decline of the church's role in the lives of many Finnish women contributed to the popularity of socialism in Port Arthur (Radforth 1998, 297). Despite the strong anti-clerical stance promoted by Social Democrats in Finland and the official separation of church and state in 1865, the Finnish Lutheran Church still held great sway. After all, in order to be granted the required papers to emigrate, Finns had to seek permission from the clergy (Lindström 1981a, 65). It was not until they were in Canada, freed from the watchful eye of the church, that many women recognized their new opportunities (Lindström 1989, 199). These opportunities often materialized in the form of socialist organizations and vows to disregard the "hocus pocus" words of "sky pilots'' (Davies, quoted in Sangster 1985, 45; Western Clarion 15 February 1908 quoted in Laine 1981, 116).[7] Many women even chose to forgo church marriage, opting to live in common-law with their partners. In fact, Finnish cultural halls predated a Finnish Lutheran church in Port Arthur. Even women, like Tyyne Pennanen, who had grown up as church-goers had few opportunities for religious involvement; the socialist hall functioned as the predominant venue for Finnish community life (Campbell 1975, 8). As late as 1930, the minutes of the Tarmola Communist Women's Bureau reveal the women's fight to free their children from religious indoctrination in public schools (Tarmola Women's Branch 7 May 1930, item 7). While some freedoms were gained upon arrival in Port Arthur, others were lost.

All women who emigrated from Finland following 1906 left behind, not only their kin and the life they had known, but also their right to vote. Universal suffrage had empowered Finnish women to take an active part in political and social spheres. The speed at which women joined socialist organizations after settling in Port Arthur suggests two things: Firstly, women, having been denied their basic political right, were determined to be involved in the public-political sphere. Secondly, these women's groups provided an opportunity for Finnish women in Port Arthur to collaborate efforts to pressure their adopted government to grant women the right to vote. In the words of Joan Sangster, Finnish women had their "own species of feminism" (Sangster 1985, 53). Finnish women who joined the socialist cause were often committed to the class war rather than the 'sex war' so prevalent among middle-class suffragists (Sangster 1985, 32). Class war recognized the need for equality of citizens. While still failing to recognize real gendered inequalities, Finnish men in early-twentieth century Canada did not need to be convinced of women's right to the vote. Many Finnish socialists were surprised by how contentious the 'woman question' was in Canada (Kealey & Sangster 1989, 175–176).

Although the socialist movement of the early-twentieth-century attracted many Canadian women, the appeal proved strongest for Finnish women: their participation rates were the highest among all women in all socialist organizations in North America (Newton 1995, 15; Kealey 1998, 130). In a 1910 survey

of Finns in Toronto, 57% self-identified as 'socialist,' outnumbering those who identified themselves as Christian by four to one Sangster 1985, 51; Kealey 1998, 131). Even among Finnish immigrant socialists, women proved a major force. Over 35% of the Finnish socialists in the United States were women (Lindström 2003, 142; Kealey 1998, 130). This American figure is likely comparable to that of the Canadian socialist movement, based on available information about Finnish women's activism and it is estimated that at least 30% of socialist organizations' members in Port Arthur were women.

## Sewing circles

While Finnish socialist women found a variety of ideologies and outlets for their differing political identities, a common thread of activism united them. One consistent feature of Finnish immigrant women's lives was the prevalence of 'sewing circles.' As Varpu Lindström has pointed out, sewing circles were standard for just about all organizations, religious and political, in both Finland and Canada (Lindström 1989, 204). In Port Arthur, however, sewing circles became closely tied to the socialist movement. These clubs, which were active in Port Arthur prior to 1910, brought many women into the socialist movement (Kahara 1989, 53).[8] With the establishment of sewing circles, women found an opportunity to take their political passion into their own hands. On one level, these groups promoted the male conception of women as auxiliary to men's organizations. The sewing circles produced handicrafts and baked goods to raise funds for the male-dominated socialist organizations and to aid impoverished Finnish families.[9] In addition, the women also staged iltamat or evenings of entertainment, that featured a variety of activities ranging from dances, musical acts, and guest speakers, to dramatic performances.[10] The minutes of the Port Arthur One Big Union Support Circle's Sewing Society reveal a wide array of activity from dances to auctions to craft sales and pledge drives (10 December 1923– 23 March 1927). Like many English-speaking middle-class women's organizations, Finnish socialist women used their discretion to determine who was worthy of their hard-earned funds.[11] Instead of searching for recipients who met the ideals of respectability, however, Finnish sewing circles supported those loyal to the socialist and labour movements.

Not only did the sewing circles function as fundraising limbs of the men's organizations, the groups also provided women with opportunities for self-improvement. This personal development was attained through debates about the latest social and political issues, discussion of women's roles, oration practice, poetry recital, and music (Lindström 2003, 143–144).[12] Women took turns acting as Chair in order to learn how to conduct meetings effectively.[13] Discussions of

Lumber camp crew and cooks, early 1900's, Northwestern Ontario, Canada. Lakehead University Library Archives, Thunder Bay Finnish-Canadian Historical Society Collection.

Lenin's On the Emancipation of Women were very popular along with the writings of other socialist thinkers like August Babel. In addition to the benefits of self-improvement, involvement in the sewing circle allowed Finnish immigrant women to foster a community, where commonalities in language and political convictions united. Remembering her life in Timmins, Miina Knutila realized:

"*At first I could only think of how to get away from Timmins...But now when I think of it, the beauty of the town did not lie in its buildings, in the mineshafts or in the muddy, impassable roads; it was in the hearts of the spirited workers and the women who worked so hard together. We all shared everything. We cried together, we laughed together, we marched together, and we stuck together to the bitter end...I never did find the gold I came to look for, but I did find a life full of purpose.*" (Quoted in Lindström 1989, 213).

## Barriers to women's involvement

However, familial obligations and male chauvinism often held back women from full immersion in socialist organizations. Finnish men espoused the merits of involving women, encouraged their wives and daughters to become educated in

socialist philosophy and world affairs, and advocated their right to the vote and to fair employment opportunities. Nevertheless, women were often belittled by men. For example, reporting on a trip to a new socialist branch in Hearst, John or Jussi Wiirta described some of the members (Wiirta 1931). While many of the men were described as fully committed and educated, Hilja Kurki was said to be "active definitely, but otherwise just a woman." Wiirta's statement reveals an underlying assumption that women, while important, simply could not match the position of men in the socialist movement. In addition to being implicitly treated as unequal, women were still expected to take care of the household and children. Recognizing the irony, Tyyne Latva recalled: "'*go to the meetings, go to the meetings,' my husband used to say as he was going out the door leaving me home with a young baby. How do I go when he is attending meetings every night?*" (Lindström 2003, 144). Although becoming and staying active proved very difficult for Finnish women, Finnish sisu, or perseverance, certainly seemed to be at play in their dedication to the movement. The minutes of the Port Arthur One Big Union Women's Auxiliary reveal a true commitment to the workers' cause: nearly every night of the week offered a chance to attend meetings and events of committees, subcommittees, and groups formed by socialist women (1920–1922). By working together to improve their knowledge of socialist issues, Finnish-Canadian women became comfortable in their sense of self and intellect and were able to insist upon their inclusion in the larger, male-dominated socialist movement.

## Socialist party of Canada

One of these movements was the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC), formed in 1903. In the words of Varpu Lindström: "*The SPC did not 'organize' Finns; rather, it was Finns who 'organized' a significant section of the Socialist Party of Canada*" (Lindström-Best 1981b, 113) By 1910, Finnish branches of the SPC could be found from Toronto to the West Coast, and the Finnish membership constituted approximately two-thirds of the total party membership (Kealey 1998, 115; Lindström-Best 1981b, 113). In Port Arthur, the Worker's Association Imatra became the Port Arthur Finnish branch of the Socialist Party of Canada in February 1908 (Metsaranta, 1989, 77).[14] Although some Finnish women did answer the call of the new Socialist Party, women of all ethnicities never exceeded 10% of the Party's total membership (Kealey 1998, 113). The Socialist Party advocated the preservation of traditional gender roles and proved unwilling to embrace women as true revolutionaries (Kealey 1984, 78). Women, according to the Party, were to support their husbands' political involvements and raise their children according to socialist principles (Kealey 1984, 83 & 87). Women's role as workers was viewed

as secondary, and, therefore, the Socialist Party continuously neglected the needs of women in the working class. The SPC's platform and rhetoric was ripe with the promotion of masculinity (Newton 1995, 43). In a 1908 editorial in the Western Clarion, the SPC's official organ, editor D.G. McKenzie stated: "*as a general rule, a woman who is a socialist is a socialist because some man is*" (Quoted in Kealey 1984, 89). Women who longed to be active in the Party were often discouraged from participating by the displays of manliness in the meetings, evidenced by reports of vulgarity and harassment (Newton 1995, 43–44). Yet the Socialist Party discouraged the organization of separate women's branches.

The Finnish branches, however, did allow women to organize and also allowed women opportunities to be involved in Party leadership and organization (Lindström-Best 1981b, 116). In Port Arthur, membership records provide an indication of women's involvement. For example, in 1908, 57 out of 250 members can clearly be recognized as women, and 78 women stand out among the 279 members in 1909 (Socialist Party of Canada 1906–1910). The SPC's controlling body often criticized the Finns for focussing on women's issues, let alone allowing women's branches (Newton 1995, 42). To prove the advantages of their involvement, more women were needed to act as organizers and agitators for the Party, a task very difficult to balance with full familial responsibilities. However, one remarkable figure emerged from the Finnish ranks: Sanna Kannasto.

## Sanna Kannasto

Sanna Kallio, later Kannasto, a Finn who made her Canadian home North Branch, just outside of Port Arthur, become the first paid organizer and agitator in the Canadian socialist movement. Kannasto encouraged socialist action among all Finns, and paid special attention to politicizing women and youth.[15] Kannasto travelled across North America numerous times, often largely on foot, was subject to surveillance, interrogation and arrest, all while being a sole-support parent. Kannasto's position often matched her against chauvinistic men who doubted her place, but she quickly won over her opponents. In a July 1919 letter, Kannasto exclaimed: "*I will never again bind*

Sanna Kannasto. Photo published in William Eklund, Canadan Rakentajia 1983.

*myself to a man. I have wed myself to revolution*" (Kannasto 1919). Kannasto not only talked the talk; she embodied what many Finnish men and women strived to be. She was a fierce orator who could easily captivate her audience, and there was no doubting the sincerity of her commitment. She remained active in radical politics for over 50 years. Kannasto proved to be an important negotiator and organizer for the Finns when they ran into problems in the SPC.

## Social Democratic Party of Canada

By 1910, Finns had come to find working within the Socialist Party of Canada nearly impossible (Pilli 1981, 21). The Party's sole focus on the long-range goal of Marxist world revolution, paired with an inability to embrace female socialists, meant that the immediate needs and demands of workers, both men and women, were continuously neglected (Newton 1995, 142). In 1911, the new Social Democratic Party of Canada (SDPC) emerged. In this new party, women were welcomed and meeting times for the now encouraged women's branches were held at times that better suited the needs of mothers and wives (Newton 1995, 95). The SDPC aimed to free women of their immediate burdens (Sangster 1989, 15). However, the official Party platform, in its emphasis on equality, paid no specific attention to the plight of women. Instead, the focus was on liberating the "whole human race" (Social Democratic Party of Canada 1919, 7). Overall, however, Linda Kealey argues that the Social Democratic Party proved more open and appealing to women than its predecessors (Kealey, 1989, 186). For Finnish women, who had already enjoyed the right to meet among women and to work to alleviate their own concerns, the new SDPC meant freedom from the constant pressures by the SPC leadership to toe the discriminatory Party line.

## Finnish Socialist Organization of Canada

At the same time as the Social Democratic Party was emerging, Finns were involved in the establishment of their own organization which would serve as both a cultural and political outlet: the Finnish Socialist Organization of Canada (FSOC).[16] The FSOC connected Finns to the most popular Canadian socialist organizations, first affiliating with the SDPC, then the Industrial Workers of the World and the One Big Union, and finally the Communist Party of Canada.

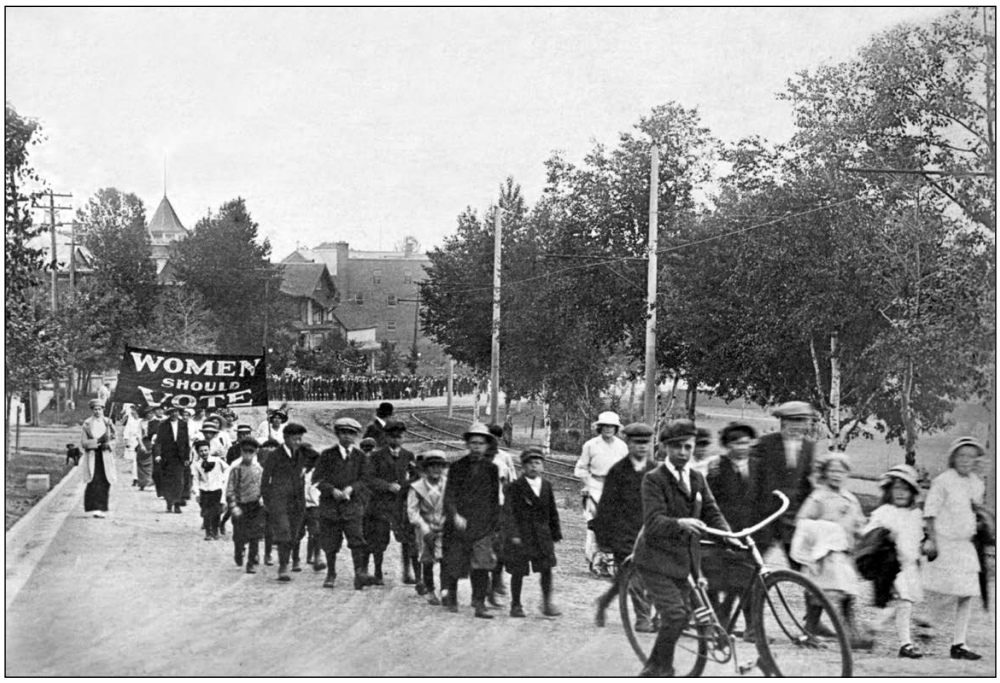
In a 1936 publication commemorating twenty-five years of the Finnish Socialist Organization of Canada, founding member and long-time National Executive

Chair J.W. Alqvist estimated that the FSOC, in its first ten years, contributed at least $30,000 to the Canadian socialist movement, with an additional $10,000 sent to Finnish 'Reds' following the Civil War (Alqvist 1936, 39 & 42). Finnish women undoubtedly played a key role in raising these funds. While wartime government regulations greatly limited overt involvement with the FSOC, letters and organization minutes reveal women still active in socialist work. Women sent letters to the FSOC's main organizational body, the työnpaneva kometia, on subjects ranging from the supportive to the critical, seeking clarification of directives, and requesting material assistance.[17] When the FSOC was beginning its re-emergence as a legal organization in late 1918, 21 of 78 members in the Port Arthur branch were women. Also, the minutes of the Port Arthur branch's meetings in the years 1918 and 1919 show a significant number of women joining the organization each week (Finnish Socialist Organization of Canada 1918–1919). These numbers are significant because they contradict the popular early-twentieth century notion that women were more conservative than men (Sangster 1985, 32 & 37; Newton 1995, 25; Kealey 1984, 88). The Finnish women's continued ties to the Finnish Socialist Organization may suggest that their commitment to the class struggle exceeded their commitment to the demands and needs of their adopted country.

## Unionism

While the Finnish Socialist Organization of Canada continued its work in Port Arthur, the arrival of many displaced leaders of the Wobbly movement from the United States to Northwestern Ontario led to a resurgence of union activism among Finns (Campbell 1998, 3).[18] Finnish women, either workers themselves or with husbands or fathers who were labourers, turned their efforts to unionism as well. Women in the early twentieth century struggled to find a place within the trade union movement. Often women's roles as 'reproducers' limited their ability to join the ranks of 'producers' and denied them a place in union work (Sangster 1985, 30). As a telling indicator of this struggle, in the mid–1920s, only 1% of women workers were unionized (Sangster 1985, 34). Therefore, finding women in the historical records of union organizations proves difficult, but their supportive role in unions like the Industrial Workers of the World is undeniable (Lindström 2003, 5).

The ideals of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or 'Wobblies'), which was founded in Chicago in 1905, resonated with the Finnish immigrants of Port Arthur. The focus on direct action to meet immediate needs, with a long-term goal of revolution, appealed to many Finns who had felt crippled by the vagueness of earlier socialist organizations (Radforth 1998, 301). A section of the IWW was or-




Parade of people with sign "Women should vote", Port Arthur 1911 or 1912. Lakehead University Library Archives, Thunder Bay Finnish-Canadian Historical Society Collection.

ganized in Port Arthur in 1915. Peter Campbell argues that Finnish women played a crucial role in IWW organization in northwestern Ontario (Campbell 1998. 3). Since the Wobblies paid little attention to building up funds in times of labour peace, women were integral to the success of strikes. Among the responsibilities of Wobblies women during strikes, Campbell lists: "*feeding striking workers, picketing, selling pamphlets and newspapers, and organizing fund-raising involving dances, plays, recitals, and political speeches*" (1998, 3). Reflecting on her work with Finnish Wobblies in Minnesota, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn stated: "*among [the Finns] the women are truly equal, participating in plays, meetings and all affairs, side by side with their menfolk*" (quoted in Campbell 1998, 2).

Only a few years into Wobbly organization in the Lakehead, the One Big Union appeared in 1919 (Radforth 1998, 302). However, the new union's success proved limited and, within three years, national membership fell from 41,000 to 5300 (Lipton 1967, 220). Strangely, while the Wobblies were practically non-functional elsewhere in North America, the IWW experienced resurgence in Port Arthur in the mid–1920s as the OBU declined (Radforth 1998, 307). In other areas, the OBU was replaced by the new Worker's Party of the Communist Party of Canada (Lindström 1989, 205). Likewise, Port Arthur's renewed commitment to Wobbly

unionism was challenged by the establishment of the Communist Worker's Party and the FSOC officially affiliated in February of 1922 (Rodney 1968, 51).

## Communist Party of Canada

From the point of affiliation, all members of the Finnish Socialist Organization of Canada were required to become members of the CPC (Avery 1981, 70). This automatic membership proved very significant, considering the FSOC boasted over 6000 members by 1930 (Avery 1981, 70). Well over half of the members of the Communist Party of Canada in the 1920s came from the membership of the Finnish Socialist Organization of Canada (Avery 1979, 120). The Party's Women's Bureaus and Labour Leagues began to mirror the ethnic composition of the greater CPC (Sangster 1985, 31). In the 1920s, Party statistics reveal 857 women involved in Canada; in Port Arthur, forty-seven of the 127 Finnish members were women (LAC MG 28 V 46, Vol. 13, File 31: Statistics of the Finnish Communist branches unknown).

Finns became the financial backbone of the CPC. With 2028 members out of the reported 4808 in 1923, the Finnish elements contributed approximately two thirds of the Party's total revenue through dues payments and fundraising (Rodney 1968, 55 & 68). At times Finns, through the FSOC, supplemented the Party even further. In 1922, Finnish Communists donated $2000 to enable the Party to launch the English language Party organ, The Worker (Avery 1979, 120). As has been demonstrated in the histories of the SPC, SDPC, and IWW, Finnish women were instrumental in the fund-raising efforts of Finnish leftists, and this tradition continued in the communist movement of the 1920s.

The first platform of the Communist Party of Canada did not mention of the role of women in revolutionary work nor issues directly pertaining to women (Sangster 1985, 25–26). The reason can be attributed to the 'emancipation' of women in Russia following the Bolshevik takeover of 1917 and the rhetoric of 'equality' being espoused from Moscow down to Canadian Bolsheviks.[19] Yet, with the establishment of Communist Women's Labour Leagues (WLL), the aims set out for women closely resembled the attitudes of the earlier socialist parties: "*protection of womanhood, care of motherhood, protection of childhood, the general welfare of the workers, co-operation in place of competition, [and] a new social order*" (LAC MG 28 V 46, Vol. 141, File 32: Aims of Women's Labour Leagues, unknown). Still, Joan Sangster argues that the Communist Party was more interested in the women's issues often ignored by the earlier Socialist Party and Social Democratic Party, because of the CPC's emphasis on working women. Varpu Lindström's work demonstrates how the continuation of gender-segregated Party work suited the

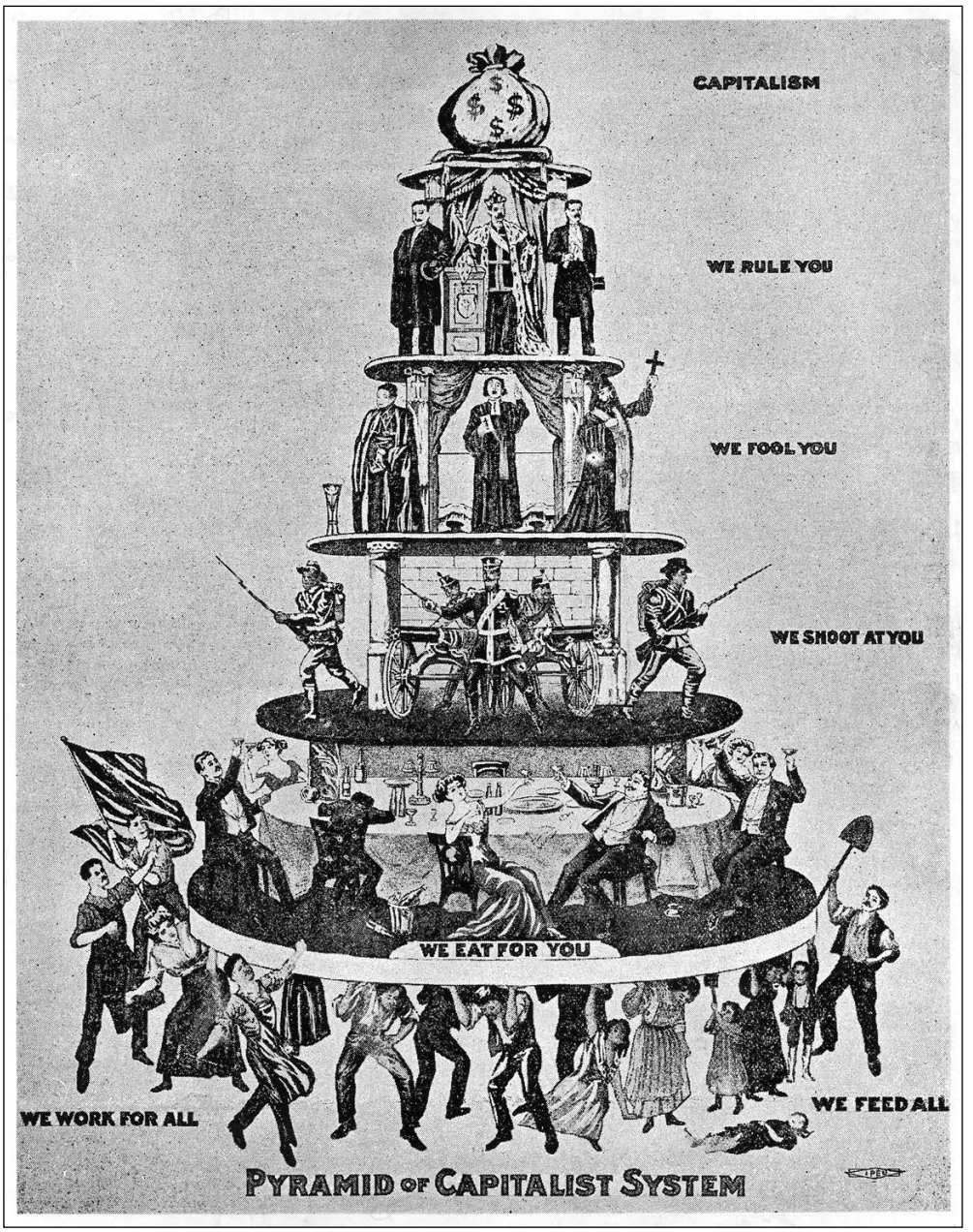

Parade on Bay Street, Port Arthur 1912 or 1914. Lakehead University Library Archives, Thunder Bay Finnish-Canadian Historical Society Collection.

needs of Finnish women in the mid–1920s (Sangster 1989, 18; Sangster 1985, 26 & 32; Lindstrom 1989, 206).

Looking for references to women in the official conference reports of the Finnish Socialist Organization of Canada reveals the organization's turn towards Communism. At the first conference of the FSOC, held in Port Arthur in 1914, when the organization was affiliated with the Social Democratic Party, no specific mention of women in the organization is made (LAC MG 28 V 46, Vol. 1, File 7: Minutes of the First Conference of the FSOC, 1914). This absence suggests that the Organization aimed to focus on equality issues without directly mentioning sexual inequality, like the Social Democratic Party. However, in later conference reports, from the Communist period, women do become the subject of debate. The third conference of the FSOC, held in Toronto in February, 1922, considered women's role in the revolutionary movement and in the upbringing of socialist youth and children (LAC MG 28 V 46, Vol. 1., File 10, 44 & 9–10).

## Decline of the left

However, the Finnish Organization's commitment to the Communist Party quickly turned sour. In 1924, direction from the Communist International led the CPC to adopt a 'bolshevization' policy which, in part, meant the abolition of all language




"The Pyramid of Capitalist System". Lakehead University Library Archives, Thunder Bay Finnish-Canadian Historical Society Collection.

federations. At the end of the 1920s, after years of struggling to maintain their original position within the Communist Party of Canada, less than 10% of the Finns who had aligned with Communism at the beginning of the decade remained members (Kostiainen 1978, 192; Kivisto 1984, 172). Additionally, the Communist Party of Canada experienced another great loss of Finnish members due to the "Karelian fever" that swept North America in the early 1930s. The establishment of the Worker's Republic of Soviet Karelia offered Finns an opportunity to return to the site of their national epic to build a utopian communist community. Women proved invaluable to raising money for the new Worker's Republic; some advocated and organized in Port Arthur, and others still left everything behind to start a new life in Karelia. An estimated 7000 Finnish men and women from Canada and the US migrated to Karelia between 1931 and 1935.

With the onset of the Depression in 1929, the Finnish exodus to Karelia, and the Canadian government's increasing intolerance of 'Reds,' Finnish involvement in Canadian leftist politics declined. The vibrant era of the socialist movement, as experienced in the first three decades of the twentieth century, has never been repeated.

In the words of Varpu Lindström, radicalism for Finns "*was not a philosophy abstracted from the experience of the ordinary people, but was an integral part of the day-to-day life*" (Lindström 1981b, 119). Looking at the involvement of Finnish women in leftist organizations ranging from the Socialist and Social Democratic Parties and the Industrial Workers of the World to the Communist Party of Canada reveals that radicalism was indeed a part of their everyday lives in Port Arthur. Whether the seeds of socialism were planted in the Homeland or blossomed in Port Arthur, Finnish women had many factors encouraging this growth. Mainly it was the belief that life could be better for them and their families that led to a lifetime of socialist conviction. Finnish women were encouraged to actively participate in socialist organizations and responded energetically to the call, for they knew that "*a socialist movement which does not attract the women cannot live.*"

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## Notes

1 Radforth pays homage to the unique position of Finnish women in Northern Ontario bush camps as cooks and laundresses. However, these women are only considered at a superficial level: they were great cooks, commanded respect, and were fastidiously clean. Their role as another form of 'bush worker' is ignored. Radforth does not consider whether these women struggled for better wages or improved working conditions. (Radforth 1987, 101–102).

2 Although the place of Finnish women is acknowledged in passing, *'Dangerous Foreigners'* offers no real insight into the role of women in labour and radical politics in Canada. (Avery 1979, 30).

3 See Sangster, Joan (1989): Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left, 1920–1950. McClelland & Stewart Inc., Toronto; Kealey, Linda (1998): Enlisting Women for the Cause: Women, Labour, and the Left in Canada, 1890–1920. University of Toronto Press, Toronto; and Kealey, Linda & Sangster, Joan (eds.) (1989): Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics. University of Toronto Press, Toronto.

4 See Newton, Janice (1995): The Feminist Challenge to the Canadian Left 1900–1918. McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal & Kingston.

5 Primarily, Lindström, Varpu (2003): Defiant Sisters: A Social History of Finnish Immigrant Women in Canada. Aspasia Books, Beaverton.

6 In order to offer new primary research, this paper utilizes Finnish-language documents from the Lakehead University Archives' Finnish Collection and the Library and Archives of Canada's Finnish Organization of Canada collection. Where information about Port Arthur is unavailable or too sketchy, sources for outlying areas and larger centres have been used as a supplement.

7 As recalled by prominent Finnish-Canadian socialist Taime Davies.

8 Kahara mentions sewing circles active as early as 1904 in relation to the New Attempt Temperance Society. This period was characterized by a strong overlap between Port Arthur's Finnish temperance and socialist organizations.

9 As an example of just how fruitful the sewing circles' fundraising efforts were, between August 1912 and January 1913 the Toronto sewing circle raised $395.30. LAC MG 28 V 46 Vol.36, File 30.

10 The women in the sewing circles often overlapped with the members of a particular organization's Entertainment Committee, so the iltamat were often

joint productions. See for example, LAC MG 28 V 46, Vol. 35 File 39 Minutes of the Toronto Socialist Sewing Circle, 1 January, 1904, Item 1. For an example of itinerary for an early iltama see Entertainment Committee (1906–1907): Minutes, January 7, 1906 - September 29, 1907. LU MG 3 VII B i) 2.

11 Lindström discusses the role of women as the "social conscience" (Lindström 2003, 143–144).

12 Women from sewing circles also joined general Finnish socialist oration groups, as evidenced by participation in the Toronto Speaker's Club. See Toronto Speaker's Club (1905–1905): Minutes, 1904–05. Library and Archives of Canada, MG 28 V 46 Vol. 35 File 43.

13 See Port Arthur Finnish Women's Labour League (1926–1931): Minutes of the Port Arthur Finnish Women's Labour League. LU MG 8 C 7 7; Toronto Women's Group (1925): Year-end Report. Library and Archives of Canada, MG 28 V 46 Vol. 43, File 6; Lindström 2003, 204.

14 The branch was officially entitled the Port Arthur Finnish Socialist Local #6.

15 For more detailed information on Sanna Kannasto see: Saramo, Samira (2008): An 'Iron Woman' at Heart, Flexible in Life: A Look at the Letters of Sanna Kannasto. Journal of Finnish Studies 12/1 August 2008, pp. 48–61.

16 For a good history of the origins of the FSOC see Eklund, William (1981): The Formative Years of the Finnish Organization of Canada. . In: Karni, Michael G. (ed.): Finnish Diaspora I: Canada, South America, Africa, Australia and Sweden. The Multicultural Association of Ontario, Toronto, pp.49–59.

17 For example, see TPK (1916): Minutes of the TPK, 3 December, 1916. Library and Archives of Canada, MG 28 V 46, Vol. 1, File 15.

18 See Ollila, Douglas Jr., (1975): From Socialism to Industrial Unionism (IWW): Social Factors in the Emergence of Left-Labour Radicalism Among Finnish Workers on the Mesabi, 1911–19. In: Karni, Michael G., Kaups, Matti E., & Ollila, Douglas J. Jr. (eds.): The Finnish Experience in the Western Great Lakes Region: New Perspectives. University of Minnesota, Vammala, pp. 156–171. Ollila discusses how the US equivalent of the FSOC adopted a compromise with regard to the growth of industrial unionism, deciding to support those unions that stayed true to Marxist ideology (157–58). The FSOC seems to have adopted a similar stance in Canada.

19 Although the Bolsheviks granted "equality" to women, traditional gender roles were paired with the obligation of women to also pursue full time work outside the home.

# 9

# Between Minnesota Rock and a Hard Place — Matt Halberg as an Example of Southern Ostrobothnian Immigration to the United States

— Tuomas Savonen —

One of the most striking features of Finnish immigration to the United States is the geographical concentration of the emigrants. Out of 303,000 emigrants who left Finland between 1870 and 1914 more than half – 158,000, to be more exact – came from Southern Ostrobothnia in Western Finland (Kero 1996, 58). Among these immigrants were the Halberg family who, migrated to Minnesota's Mesabi Range from Lapua. The Halberg family would perhaps not be very interesting if one of their ten children, son Arvo Kustaa Halberg, had not become the general secretary of the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) in 1959. By then he was already better known as Gus Hall. In order to understand the origin of Gus Hall's political ideology, a study of the Halberg family, in particular, that of his father, Matt Halberg, may be useful.

## 1. Economic Upheaval in Southern Ostrobothnia

Life was not easy for Kustaa Mikonpoika Halperi and his family in the late nineteenth century Lapua. Kustaa's wife, Susanna Vappu Matintytär had given birth to ten children between 1867 and 1885. Kustaa was a so-called cottager, so the family had very little arable land of their own, forcing Kustaa to gather a meager

income by working for the large farmers in the area. In addition to that, he received some income by working as a tailor.[1]

Living conditions in the small hut of Halperi family were far from ideal, as demonstrated by the fact that four of the ten children died before their second birthday. Kustaa Jr. and Heikki died in 1877, Johannes in 1880 and Iisakki in 1881Raising such a large family in the late nineteenth century Lapua was especially challenging when one considers the changes that were taking place in local economy.

Tar burning had dominated the economy for more than two centuries in Southern Ostrobothnian. However,t in the late nineteenth century, ships were increasingly built of metal which stalled the demand for the black gold of pine woods. According to Toivonen, the decline of tar burning started in the 1860s and by 1910 the once flourishing industry had almost completely withered away (Toivonen 1963, 93–95).

The collapse of the tar economy hit landless cottagers like Kustaa Halperi hard. Tar burning had required a great amount of manpower but now this source of income had dried up. At the same time, the spread of modern agricultural technology diminished the need for outside workforce on Southern Ostrobothnian farms. In addition, the value of forest land and wood rose, causing landowners to be less eager to have cottagers and crofters on their land. The situation worsened because many other once profitable industries like shipbuilding also faded away. (Toivonen 1950, 256; Toivonen 1963, 95–100).

Thus, Southern Ostrobothnia experienced a major structural change. Prior to the collapse of the economy, partly because of favorable conditions created by tar burning and shipbuilding, the population of Southern Ostrobothnia had grown massively during the beginning of the nineteenth century. Between 1805 and 1880, the population of Southern Ostrobothnia almost tripled from 74, 000 to 200, 000 (Toivonen 1963, 76). At the same time, the amount of agricultural land only doubled, which resulted in a lack of food (Toivonen 1963, 80). Southern Ostrobothnia had a massive surplus population which, to a large extent, explains why its inhabitants emigrated so eagerly.

In Lapua, the Hlperi family's home parish the situation was even more difficult. The population almost quadrupled from 3, 100 to 11, 600 during this time (Toivonen 1950, 253). Farmers did clear large areas for agricultural use by the end of the century, especially in Alajoki and Tiistenjoki. The clearing work offered income for many landless dwellers but after the largest clearings were finished they were again unemployed. According to Toivonen, many of those who had been swinging the hoes and digging the ditches later immigrated to America (Toivonen 1950, 255).

Not surprisingly, the largest social group to join the emigration were the cottagers and dependent lodgers, or "parasites" as they were called in Finnish. The end of tar economy, spread of modern agricultural technology, rise of value

of wood and forest land and massive population growth all made the lives of landless inhabitants of Southern Ostrobothnia increasingly difficult. According to Toivonen, 40 percent of all immigrants in the late nineteenth century belonged to this group (Toivonen 1963, 42). Not owning anything but clothes on their backs and with no bright prospects for the future, they had nothing to lose when leaving for America.

## 2. Family on the Move

Like many Southern Ostrobothnian families, almost the entire Halperi family moved to the U.S. ,but not together. According to their family history, Kustaa, who is supposed to have left for the United States in 1892, was the first to leave.[2] He was, by then, already almost 50 years old, clearly older than average immigrant. The next member of the family to leave was Kustaa's eldest son Matti who followed his father's footsteps in 1896.[3]

Before his emigration Matti Mikko Kustaanpoika Halperi had worked as a farm-hand on several farms in the Lapua parish since he was 17. In 1892 he worked at J. A. Lundqvist's farm called Härsilä, alongside Sanna Kaisa Juhontytär Hautakangas whowas employed as a maid. It is unclear how their relationship developed but in August 1895 the young couple was married. Three months later their first son Juho Kustaa was born.[4]

It may well be the birth of a son promted Matti Halperi to search for better surroundings in which to rais a family, and therefore spurred his emigration to the United States. According to the passport database of the Finnish Migration Institute, he received his passport on June 4, 1896.[5] Ellis Islands records tell us that he arrived to New York from Southampton with the steam ship Saint Louis on June 20. By the time Matti Halperi arrived to Ellis Island his family name had already found a more Anglo-Saxon form, for the ship register page states his name Matte Hallberg. The page with Matti's information on it is unfortunately torn but it seems that he was on his way to Eveleth, Minnesota – perhaps to meet his father.[6]

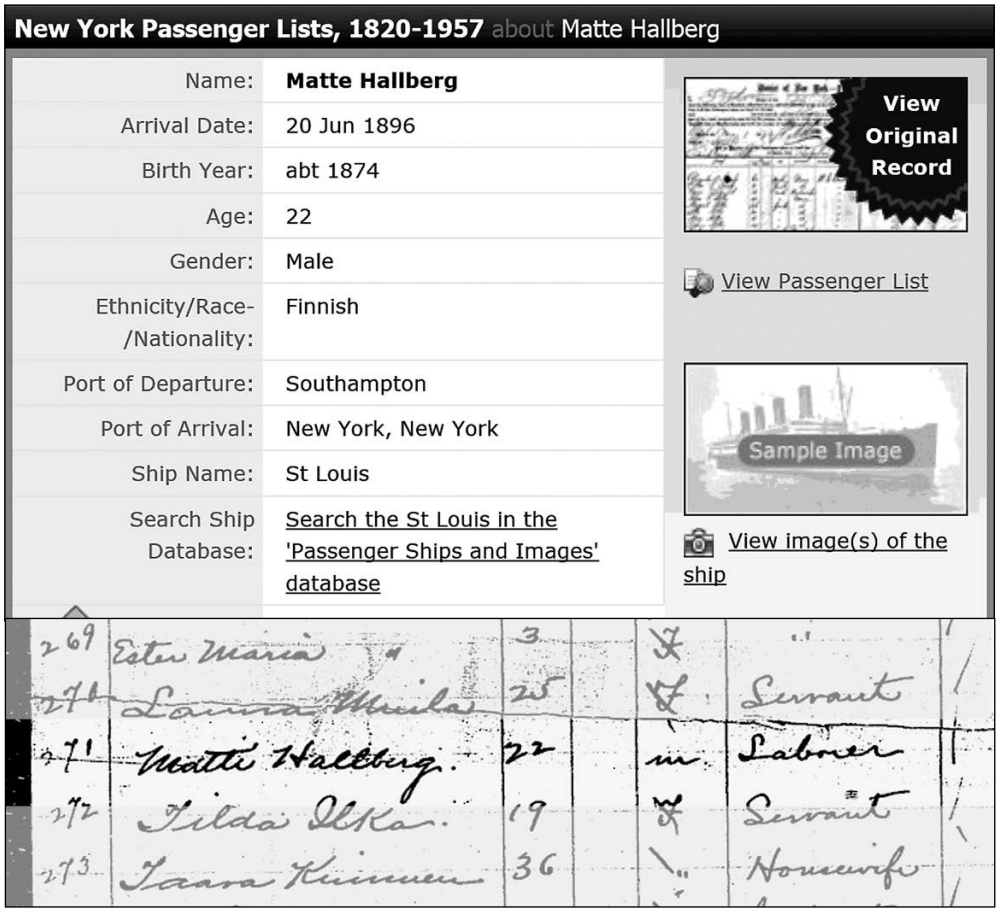
In his autobiographical writings Gus Hall always proudly states that his parents were charter members of American Communist Party. Not only were his parents revolutionaries but his father "came from a long line of rebels and radicals". Gus Hall writes:

*My parents and family were co-workers in the class struggle. They inspired me. They set example. They were the critics. It was easy for me to become a revolutionary. In becoming a radical and a rebel I simply followed a family custom of some generations. Even going to prison for political reasons was following a family tradition of*

*long standing. I am the proud recipient of the only material family heirloom. It is a wooden sugar bowl carved in prison by a great-great-grandfather. He was the one who wasn't hung… (Bonosky 1987, 10).*[7]

The biography of Gus Hall that was published in Soviet Union in 1985 states that while still in Finland, "Gus's father and mother worked energetically in the socialist and working-class movement" (Lapitsky & Mostovets 1985, 10). This is an interesting claim since it would seem to contradict the studies about the spreading of socialism in Finland.

There has been diverging views among the researchers about when socialism spread to Finland. Peter Kivisto writes in his article "Pre-Migration Factors Contributing to the Development of Finnish-American Socialism" that "[w]hile the earliest immigrants exhibited some kind of non-ideological discontent, those




According to Ellis Island passenger records Matti Hallberg arrived in New York from Southampton with the steam ship Saint Louis on June 20, 1896. New York passenger lists 1820–1957, www.ellisisland.org

who arrived from 1890 onwards, no matter where their point of origin in Finland, had been exposed in varying degrees to socialism; socialist ideas, quite simply, were in the air." (Kivisto 1983, 27).

However, when one looks more closely at the research done on the spreading of socialism in Finland, one can quickly come to a solution that Kivisto's timing is not correct. For example, in his classic study "Sosialismin tulo Suomeen" ["The Arrival of Socialism to Finland"], Hannu Soikkanen states that in the 1890s socialism was still only a phenomenon of the few large industrial centers of Finland and it spread to the countryside only during the first decade of the 20th century – especially after the general strike of 1905.(Soikkanen 1961, 391–393).

Lapua was not an exception in this sense. Its workers' association was founded only in January 1903 (Vattula 1976, 62; Lehtinen 1984, 553). Not even the fact that the Hourunkoski sawmill with its almost 90 employees made Lapua one of the biggest industrial centers in Southern Ostrobothnia had helped to build an association any earlier (Vattula 1976, 15). In the very beginning socialism did not seem have a large supporter base in Lapua – for example the Työmies newspaper had only one subscriber in the parish in 1903 (Vattula 1976, 60) – but the association grew rapidly. In the end of 1905 it was already the tenth biggest in rural Finland with its 200 members (Soikkanen 1961, 207).

Considering all this it would have been surprising if Matti Halperi would have been a socialist before his emigration in 1896. He could of course have been a self-educated socialist since he surely was able to read – that was, after all, a prerequisite for getting married. That, however, was not very likely since a farm-hand usually did not have too much extra money for buying literature. Also, socialist literature was not easily available in the 1890s Lapua.

## 3. Philippine Interlude

There is also another detail that would suggest that Matti Halperi was not yet a socialist in the 1890s. Hans R. Wasastjerna's "Minnesotan suomalaisten historia" ["The History of Finns in Minnesota"] tells us that among several others a man called Matt Halberg from Virginia, Minnesota took part in the Spanish-American War in 1898–99. Wasastjerna's source for this information is "Siirtokansan Kalenteri" ["Immigrants' Calendar"] of 1945 which indeed lists 24 Finnish-American men from Ely, Eveleth and Virginia who took part in the war. (Wasastjerna 1957, 508; Siirtokansan Kalenteri 1945, 181).

This information is confirmed by Franklin F. Holbrook's book "Minnesota in the Spanish-American War and the Philippine Insurrection". In his thorough examination Holbrook studies carefully all units where Minnesotans served dur-

ing the war. In the Forty-Fifth Volunteer Infantry Regiment we can find a Virginia resident Mathew Halberg who enlisted in September 1899 in his home town and was mustered out in June 1901 in San Francisco. (Holbrook 1923, 465).

According to Wasastjerna, the men who volunteered to the U. S. Army were paid relatively well.[8] This – together with possibility to experience a fascinating adventure – surely attracted many young men frustrated by the dull, arduous and poorly-paid work at the Mesabi Range mines. The fact that Matt's and Sanna's first child Juho Kustaa had died because of throat disease in September 1897 – two months before his second birthday – may have eased Matt's decision to enlist in the Army.

To be exact, the Forty-Fifth Regiment did not take part in the actual Spanish-American War but rather in the Philippine insurrection that followed it. The war had ended already in August 1898. As a result of the war, the United States ended up buying the Philippines – a country with around eight million inhabitants – from Spain. The Philippine people had rebelled already against the Spanish rule and this continued during the American ownership. Philippine leader Emilio Aguinaldo declared the country independent in January 1899, but the United States was not ready to recognize the new republic. This led to a war between the two countries.

The 20-month term in the Forty-Fifth Regiment must have been an exotic experience for Matt Halberg who before coming to America most likely had never left Southern Ostrobothnia. The regiment left Minnesota in late October and travelled to San Francisco from where they sailed to Manila in the Philippines. They arrived to the Philippines few days before Christmas in 1899 (Holbrook 1923, 105).

The regiment was first stationed near Manila but in February 1900 it was moved to the south-eastern peninsula of Luzon Island where the insurgents from the north had fled. There the regiment stayed for more than a year, hunting down the insurgents who were hiding in the mountains and dense forests. This required a lot of marching around the peninsula. According to Holbrook, one company claimed having marched more than 5 600 miles during their stay in the area (Holbrook 1923, 160–107).

By April 1901 the guerilla bands had been broken up and order in the area had been secured so the fatigued regiment was transferred back to the United States. The regiment arrived to San Francisco in mid-May 1901 and two weeks later it was mustered out. Out of 198 Minnesotans who served in the regiment nine died during the campaign. Only three of them, however, were killed in action. Diseases like dysentery and typhoid fever proved to be bigger problems for the soldiers than the enemy. Mathiew Mikkula, for example, died of typhoid fever in Nueva Caceres in April 1900.[9]

In his autobiographical writings Gus Hall never mentions his father taking part in the Philippine campaign. This is not surprising considering how Hall represents

his father. In his son's writings Matt Halberg is always pictured as an unwavering communist and a relentless revolutionary. The fact that this man volunteered to take part in a clear-cut imperialist war was sharply incompatible with the picture that Gus Hall wanted to draw.[10]

It is also possible – or even likely – that Matt Halberg never told his children about his adventures in the Philippines. After becoming a socialist he may well have been ashamed of his ignorant odyssey and kept completely silent about the journey.[11] He may well have been able to hide the error of his youth because not everybody read "Siirtokansan Kalenteri" or "Minnesotan Suomalaisten Historia" in the 1940s and 1950s.[12]

## 4. Rough Life in a Mining Town

There is very little information available about Matt Halberg's whereabouts after his adventure in the Philippines. He seems, however, to have visited Finland in 1903. Ellis Islands Records tell us that a Minnesota resident called Matt Halberg arrived to New York in late November 1903.[13]

Did he travel to Finland with the capital he gathered during his imperialist Philippines adventure? This we will never know, just like we will never know whether he used these funds to buy a ticket to the United States for his wife Sanna whom he had not seen since 1896.

Be as it may, but Sanna Halberg seems to have arrived to Ellis Island on early January 1905 on steam ship Lucania from Liverpool.[14] Once being together again, the couple did not waste time before having children. Their second child – son Onni (the name could be translated in English as "Happiness") – was born in late October in Virginia, Minnesota almost exactly nine months after Sanna's arrival to Mesabi Range. Matt and Sanna – or Susanna, as she was now called in the New World – were indeed somewhat productive when it comes to having children. Although Susanna was already 29 years old when Onni was born, she and Matt would have eight more children during the next 15 years.[15]

After Sanna Halberg's arrival to the United States Gus Hall's parents lived in Virginia, Minnesota.[16] Virginia had been founded only little more than ten years earlier in 1892 when a promising vein of iron ore was found in the area. Railroad connection to Virginia was built already in 1892 and quickly a saw mill, hotel, bank and a newspaper started operating in the small town. The very beginning was difficult, however, since a forest fire destroyed the town already in the summer of 1893. Another fire destroyed the city in 1900 but again it was rapidly rebuilt. In 1905 it already had 6 000 inhabitants thus being the second biggest town in Mesabi Range after Hibbing. Finns were the biggest nationality

in Virginia where almost every fifth inhabitant had been born in Finland (Kaups 1975, 75–77).[17]

Life in newly-born mining towns was rough. Community planning, sewerage and garbage disposal were unheard of in the Range. Cowsheds in the backyards and cows grazing freely added to the symphony of smells. The landscape was barren and ugly after almost all trees had been fallen in order to get building material and firewood. Only hundreds of stumps reminded of the once handsome Minnesota pine woods. In the winter lightly-built houses offered only meager protection against the freezing Minnesota weather. During the spring and fall months the streets turned all muddy and in the summer the ferrous red dust was everywhere. (Alanen 1981, 39–43). As one witness tells us:

*We rode the train with others going to the North Country, and I looked out the window and saw what I would never forget – the red Mesabi! Everything was red – the roads the water in the ditch, the miners' clothes, the big open pit, the sidewalks, the skin of the people. The red ore seemed to penetrate, to drive into everything. I came to know it stood for U. S. Steel, that claimed our lives, our thoughts and our allegiance. Father worked in the red mine, my mother would cry when she tried to wash off the red dirt from my father's clothes and body. The neighbors around us spoke a strange language – my mother would wash the clothes and cry for Finland. (Paull quoted in Karni 1977, 72).*

The saloon was the place where many immigrant men extinguished their longing for homeland and lightened the stress caused by the heavy work. Information on photo missing. – Institute of Migration photo archive.

Many immigrants escaped all this to the comforting world of intoxicants. According to Wasastjerna, there were more than fifty saloons in Virginia. In addition to them, there was also a number of gambling halls and brothels. In order to fight the evils of alcohol and moral decay, Virginia's Finns founded a temperance society Valon Tuote ("Product of Light") which at its best was able to attract almost 400 members. In addition to the temperance society there were also many Finnish choirs, bands and religious congregations in the town (Wasastjerna 1957, 471–476).[18]

Virginia's Finnish workers' association was founded in 1904, and in 1905 it joined the American Socialist Party. The association had several meeting halls during its first years but before its tenth anniversary the workers built themselves a building which was one of the finest Finnish workers' halls in the United States. Virginia's Socialist Opera – a three-story stone building with elegantly decorated festival hall – was completed in 1913. (Wasastjerna 1957, 484–490; Roe 1992, 37–43).

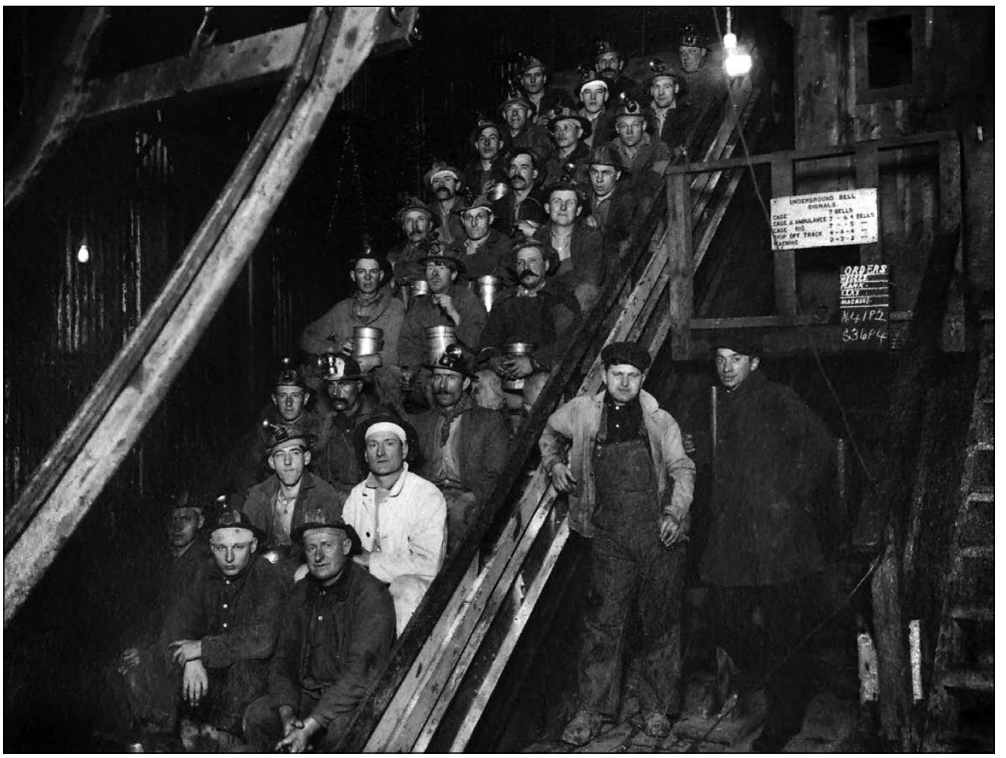
## 5. Miners Go Out on Strike

The workers of Virginia were not only interested in choirs, bands and theatre groups operating at the local Finn hall, but they also wanted to improve their own plight. There was lot to improve. Besides being exhausting and poorly paid, work in Mesabi mines was highly dangerous. During 1905–06 the death rate on the Mesabi was about 7.5 workers per thousand employed. Between 1905 and 1909, 277 workers were killed in St. Louis County alone.[19] The amount of people who were injured in the everyday mining accidents was surely even higher. (Karni 1977, 74; Ross 1977, 109–110).

Because the work of a basic open pit miner did not require in-depth education and workforce was amply available, the wages of immigrant miners were deplorable. The cost of explosives, fuses and caps were deducted from miner's pay and – in addition to that – the worker had to pay petty bribes to his bosses in order to get better assignments. The wages with American-born workers were usually much better since they often worked as steam shovel operators, supervisors and railway workers. (Ross 1977, 108–109).[20]

Considering all this, it was not surprising that the Western Federation of Miners – which originally had been formed in 1893 after a violent strike in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho – could gain ground among Mesabi's immigrant workers.

As Neil Betten writes, the syndicalist WFM was far from the conciliatory world of the American Federation of Labor and its leader Samuel Gompers. Swearing in the name of class struggle, it wanted to seize the industries to the hands of the



Finnish American miners. Other info missing. – Institute of Migration photo archive.

workers. In order to achieve this end, the best strategy was to form "one big union" which in this case was called Industrial Workers of the World. WFM was one of the organizations that founded the famous IWW in 1905 (Betten 1967, 341).

WFM started really gaining ground in Mesabi Range in 1906 when the union sent an Italian-born organizer Teofilo Petriella to the area. He divided each local into three sections – Italian, Slavic and Finnish – and placed a man of corresponding nationality in charge of each group.[21] Many Mesabi Finns were already thoroughly familiar with the idea of class struggle since the Finnish Socialist Federation had been founded in Hibbing, Minnesota in August 1906.[22] By June 1907 a sizable organization with fourteen locals and around 2 500 members had taken shape. The main ore producer on the Mesabi Range, Oliver Iron Mining Company, had now a weighty adversary and it was only a matter time when a conflict would break out. (Betten 1967, 341; Ross 1977, 112).

WFM had planned to organize at least fifty percent of the workers on the Range before presenting demands to the companies. This could not be done, however. In July 1907 a wave of strikes hit northeastern Minnesota. The railway workers and dock workers in Duluth and Two Harbors were striking and agitation for action was spreading on the Range. WFM had no choice but to join the strike

wave before wildcat strikes would start taking place. On July 19 Teofilo Petriella presented Oliver Company a list of demands which included wage increases and an eight-hour working day. In addition to these, the union wanted to end the system of petty bribes paid to the bosses (Betten 1967, 342; Ross 1977, 112).[23]

Oliver, however, was not willing to negotiate with the union. WFM had no choice but to proclaim a strike on the Mesabi Range on July 20 (Ross 1977, 112).

According to Betten, the strikers numbered somewhere between ten and sixteen thousand. The exact figure is hard to estimate because at same time many miners were being laid off. A clear majority of the strikers were Finns, the rest being mainly Slavs and Italians. Word of the stoppage was spread by bands of workers marching from mine to mine and persuading the men to quit their work. This tactic, however, was soon forbidden by St. Louis County Sheriff. (Betten 1967, 343–344).

The situation started turning bad for the strikers in early August when the Duluth port strike was defeated and ore shipping was restored to normal. In order to produce the ore, Oliver Company started recruiting strikebreakers. Hundreds of so-called deputies were brought in to protect the strikebreakers. The situation got tense and some violent clashes occurred. Although there were several minor violent scuffles, Betten estimates that the Mesabi strike remained relatively peaceful compared to other mining strikes (Betten 1967, 344–345).

The peacefulness can be partly explained by the tactics advocated by Petriella. He demanded that the strikers follow the law and "behave with respect to all men". Petriella believed that the strikers can win their struggle without impeding the strikebreakers entering the mines. This, of course, calmed down the situation remarkably. Because of the relative calmness, no state troops were ever sent to the strike sites – unlike in so many other mining strikes (Betten 1967, 346).

Petriella's peaceful tactics did not bring victory to the strikers, however. The Oliver Company brought in trainloads of strikebreakers, with whom the mines could resume to business. The strikers tried, of course, to persuade the strikebreakers to join their ranks. In most cases the strikebreakers were fresh immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe recruited in New York and other big cities in the East. Often they had no idea that they were going to be used as strikebreakers. Sometimes WFM succeeded turning the heads of the newcomers, as Betten tells us: "Another group of 175 men hired in New York City and also ignorant of the strike became aware of the labor trouble when people along the tracks shouted "scab" as the train traveled from Duluth to Hibbing. The New Yorkers refused to work and joined the strikers. In return the union paid their passage farther west." (Betten 1967, 347).

Such occurrences were exceptions, however. With hundreds of strikebreakers flowing to Mesabi Range every week, the strikers could not keep up their fight infinitely. Hiring the strikebreakers and deputies cost Oliver more than 250 000 dollars, but for a subsidiary John Pierpont Morgan's U. S. Steel this was not an

impossible investment (Karni 1977, 75). In late August strikers began returning gradually to work. Their decisions may have been spurred by the fact that some Range businessmen decided to deny the strikers the credit necessary to wait out the companies. (Betten 1967, 347; Karni 1977, 76).

According to Betten, the socialist Finns held out longest with the strike. Actually, many of them never returned to the Mesabi mines because of employer's blacklisting system. Not surprisingly, the mining companies no longer wanted to hire Finnish hot-heads and troublemakers who had joined the strike. Before the strike about 18 percent of Oliver's work force were Finns but after the strike the figure was only eight percent. This means that more than 1 200 Finns were now cut off from the major source of employment in northern Minnesota (Karni 1977, 78).

The blacklists were not circulated only in Minnesota but across the country from Pennsylvania and West Virginia in the east to Montana in the west (Ross 1977, 113–114). According to Lapitsky and Mostovets, Matt Halberg was among the blacklisted workers (Lapitsky & Mostovets 1985, 12).

## 6. A Miner Becomes a Farmer

There were not many alternatives for blacklisted miners to make a living. For many the only choice was to move into the wilderness and start their own farms. Because of this, a number of small townships populated by Finns was born in the countryside near the Mesabi Range towns. One example of these is Alango – located about twenty miles north of Virginia – which in 1905 had only 32 inhabitants. However, in 1910, three years after the Mesabi strike, Alango had 335 inhabitants of whom almost all were Finns (Karni 1977, 82).

Another example of such townships is Cherry which lies about ten miles southwest of Virginia. Cherry was originally called Alavus since many of the first settlers came from Alavus in Southern Ostrobothnia. The Finnish-language name, however, never received recognition outside the Finnish-American population so the name remained what Matti Kaups calls an "in-group place name" (Kaups 1966, 392–393).[24] According to some, the official name Cherry has its origin in the wild cherry trees growing in the area (Mesabi Daily News 21 February 2003).

First Finns came to Cherry already in the early 1890s but most of them moved in during the next decade. According to "Siirtokansan Kalenteri 1958" and "Minnesotan Suomalaisten Historia", Matt Halberg moved to Cherry sometime after 1906 (Wasastjerna 195, 670; Siirtokansan Kalenteri 1958, 42).

Cherry – like most areas in northeastern Minnesota – was far from being ideal farmland. Unlike the fertile prairies of southern and western Minnesota, northeastern part of the state is covered mainly with coniferous forests. The conditions

were not suitable for grain farming but fields were growing hay for the few cows of the families. The small farms available could not offer a very good living so farmers often had to work also as lumberjacks, road builders and – those who were not blacklisted – as miners.

In addition to small-scale farming, Matt Halberg made his living as a carpenter. According to Gus Hall, carpentry was not a flourishing business in rural Minnesota in the 1910s and 1920s, so Halberg family lived in "semi-starvation". Matt Halberg seems to have been a crafty woodworker, however. According to his son, he could build everything, including family's two-story and four-bedroom house and the sauna building where Arvo – the fifth child of the family – was born on October 8, 1910. Matt Halberg was specialized in building staircases – according to Gus Hall, people in Cherry still pointed to the staircases built by his father as he visited the area decades later (Bonosky 1987, 8).[25]

Not all Cherry residents were blacklisted former miners. Lutheran congregation – founded in 1906 – seems to have been the biggest social organization in the township, but the workers' association – founded in 1912 – gathered also a good crowd. In 1913 the association built itself a hall where numerous activities – library, gymnastics club, brass band, theater club, singing society and clubs for farmers, youth and women – took place (Mattson 1946, 145–146).[26]

According to Gus Hall, his father was a central character in building the hall. He writes:

*Father was an activist all his life. In the early years he got a committee together that built a Communist Hall on the piece of land he owned. It was a political, social and sport center. The group around this center produced revolutionary plays, year in and year out. There were lectures, mainly by followers of Marx, Engels and Lenin. But there were also speeches and lectures by IWWs, syndicalists and others. I sat through some of the longest lectures of my life in that hall, on hard wooden benches. (Wasastjerna 1957, 672; Siirtokansan Kalenteri 1958, 48)*.[27]

According to Wasastjerna and Siirtokansan kalenteri, Matt Halberg was one of the founders of Cherry co-op store in 1919 (Wasastjerna 1957, 672; Siirtokansan Kalenteri 1958, 43). He was also involved in community administration. According to Cherry Town Records, Matt Halberg served as town board supervisor in 1925–27. There are no signs of Matt Halberg's revolutionary political views in the Cherry Town Records – unless erecting billboards for posting notices is considered revolutionary. Matt Halberg was made responsible for this task in April 1925 and in August he was paid $12 for his services (Cherry Town Records 1925–27).[28]

In addition to founding a workers' association and a co-op store, Matt Halberg was also active in building a working-class recreation site Mesaba Park near Cherry. According to Gus Hall, his father was part of the group that bought North Star Lake and its surroundings in 1928 and 1929 in order to create a co-op park for Finnish-American workers. Matt Halberg convinced the sellers that the land

was mere swamp, so the workers could buy it with a lower price. Hall writes that he and his father were also actively involved in building Mesaba Parks's large dance pavilion which was finished in June 1930 (Hall unknown, 21; The Community Dispatch July 1999).[29]

Despite their stark ideological differences among Cherry inhabitants seem to have got along relatively well. According to Hall, religious and non-religious families were able to be in friendly terms (The Community Dispatch July 1999).[30] Many religious families took part in founding the co-operative store and the gymnastics club Reipas – in which the Halberg boys were active – attracted young men from all kinds of families.[31] Mesaba Park, however, was not visited by the church Finns – some even called it "the valley of sin" (Tamminen 27 September 2008).

The older generation spoke Finnish together, and while children spoke English among themselves they communicated in Finnish with their parents. The Halberg children learned Finnish also through reading their father's subscription of radical weekly newspaper Työmies and leftist humor magazine Lapatossu. Living mainly in Finnish-speaking surroundings for most of his life, Matt Halberg never learned English well and thus he had no common language with his grandchildren who no longer spoke Finnish (Tamminen 27 September 2008; Dultuth News-Tribune 2 November 1980; Interview with Koskela 29 July 2008).

The Cherry children went to School #96 which was located about a mile away from the Halberg farm. The one-room school house with a porch and small bell-tower was built around 1912. The school system aimed at Americanizing the youth, which partly explains why the children spoke English among themselves:

*Wearing hand-me-down, surge dresses, knickers, baggy pants and suspenders, the majority of the two or three dozen pupils in grades one through eight were of Finnish extraction, many not knowing how to speak a word of English when they first arrived. The motto on the blackboard read "Speak English", and the teachers would become furious at the recess time when the foreign tongue, which they could not understand, was all that was heard. (Cherry High School All Class Reunion 1977, 11).*

When Gus Hall describes his family and his childhood in Cherry, he paints a highly idealized and unrealistically flawless picture – in a way it is close to a painting of the so called socialist realism which was the leading art style in Stalin's Soviet Union: "Recalling his home, Hall speaks of what was especially typical of it: "It was the most radical in the area; it was the poorest and it was the house with the biggest library" (Lapitsky & Mostovets 1985, 10): *"My very first childhood memories are political… I was a very much involved 8–10-year-old in the political storm and hysteria that followed the first socialist revolution."* (Lapitsky & Mostovets 1985, 15).

Nevertheless, Hall's childhood was by no means a gloomy one. Deprived though the children of the Halberg family were of what's called "creature comforts", and

as often as they had to stint on this and that, there was always plenty of food for the mind. The Halberg household was a kind of way-station for working-class militants passing through who stopped over for a meal and a place to spend the night – but who brought with them the latest news hot from the class struggle fronts. Ideas flourished, arguments back and forth rocked the calm of the neighborhood. (Bonosky 1987, 8).

And as Gus was educated not only by books but by practice, he learned from the talk around the dinner table, from his parents' comments on the political scene, and there was always a book by Marx or Engels or Lenin, by Eugene Debs, or any of the other radical writers of the day, within easy reach. (Bonosky 1987, 10).

Perhaps the best example of Hall's idealization of his childhood is his autobiographical description of a Mayday in Halberg family:

*Matt, the iron miner and a lumberjack, never worked on May Day. He lost jobs because of this. But for Matt it was a matter of working-class principle.*

Instead of going to work, Matt would get a clean shave and put on his one good shirt without any fuss or planning because in a sense May Day was a special family day. Susan, his wife, who was fully conscious of the political meaning of the day, would add an extra egg for breakfast and a few extra pieces of meat to the stew for dinner. But more than anything else, it was a day when the family conversation invariably drifted to political matters. It was a day when, more than at other times, Matt would talk about his experiences in strikes and other mass actions of the workers.

As he related his experiences it seemed that the workers had lost most of the struggles. But Matt never referred to them as defeats. He would mention with obvious pride how he had been arrested for his strike activities and with a mixture of anger and sorrow he told of the time when the National Guard broke into the home of strikers and bayoneted them to death in their beds. They had been friends of Matt's. After 25 years he still refused to have anything to do with those who had scabbed during that strike.

May Day was a day when socialism and the first working-class state, the Soviet Union, were the centrepiece of family conversation. Racism was also a subject that was discussed on this day more than others – racism and its effects on the nearby Indian Reservation. (Hall 1987, 369–370).

Matt Halberg seems to have moved from IWW-style syndicalism of 1907 to mainstream communism during the following decade. Gus Hall tells us that his father was a friend of IWW leader Big Bill Haywood and that he acted as a security guard for young IWW orator Elizabeth Gurley Flynn – who later was one of the top American communist leaders together with Gus Hall – when she was visiting Mesabi Range during the 1907 strike. (Bonosky 1987, 8; Hall unknown, 19).[32] However, by 1916 – when another IWW-led strike took place in Mesabi Range – he seems to have moved away from syndicalism. According to Hall, his father was

in disagreement with the Wobblies – as the IWW organizers were called – during the 1916 strike (Duluth News-Tribune 2 November 1980). He emphasizes his parents' orthodoxy also when he writes about his childhood home: "This was a place where workers and farmers who were members of the IWW and syndicalists would come to discuss and debate questions with father and mother, who always defended the positions of Marx and later of Lenin. At times the discussions became rather loud and heated." (Hall unknown, 18).

According to Gus Hall, both of his parents were charter members of the American Communist Party. Matt Halberg also served as a chairman of the Communist Party branch of Iron, Minnesota which also included Cherry township (Jackson 1970, 42). Of his children, only Arvo followed his footsteps into the party. Also Arvo's older brother Urho (b. 1907) seemed to have believed in the communist ideals since he left for Karelia in the Soviet Union in the late 1920s or early 1930s like many other Finnish-Americans. Urho Halberg never returned to the U.S. – what happened to him is still a mystery to his relatives (Duluth News-Tribune 2 November 1980; interview with Koskela 29 July 2008).[33]


Gus Hall (born Arvo Kustaa Halberg, 1910–2000), was a leader and Chairman of the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) and its four-time U.S. presidential candidate. The poster from the 1976 presidential campaign. – Library of Congress Digital Collections, www.loc.gov.

Arvo's two younger brothers Toivo (b. 1912) and Veikko (b. 1914) became "the wealthiest capitalists in Cherry" since they were running a local grocery and gas station in their hometown. In addition to that, they also had their own construction company. Their grocery store had a wide selection of products available, everything from farm equipment to televisions. (Interview with Koskela 29 July 2008; Tamminen 31 August 2008). They also bred prize-winning Arabian horses which they imported from Poland (Duluth News-Tribune 12 March 1967).[34] While being successful entrepreneurs, they remained sympathetic to their father's and brother's political thinking (interview with Koskela 29 July 2008; Tamminen 31 August 2008).[35]

Matt Halberg died on October 8, 1955. The date happened to be the 45th birthday of his famous son Arvo. The son, however, could not take part in his father's burial since he was locked away in Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary for conspiring to teach and advocate the overthrow of the U. S. government by force.

## 7. The Usual Story

Matt Halberg is in many ways a stereotypical Finnish immigrant in the United States. He came from Southern Ostrobothnia from where the most emigrants left for the New World. He was a son of a cottager and worked as a farm-hand before his emigration to the United States. He thus represented the social group from which the most emigrants came from.

When coming to the United States, Matt Halberg ended up going to Minnesota which after Michigan was the most popular destination for Finnish immigrants.[36] In Minnesota's Mesabi Range he became a miner which was probably the most usual profession among Finnish immigrants. And when working in the Mesabi mines he became a union activist and a striker, like thousands of his countrymen. As a consequence of this, he was blacklisted by the employers which happened also to hundreds if not to thousands of other Finns.

What makes Matt Halberg unique, however, is the fact that he produced a son who became one of the most prominent communist leaders on the western hemisphere and one of the most well-known Americans with a Finnish origin. In his autobiographical writings Gus Hall describes his father with a great admiration, stating that Matt Halberg was his example and role-model. Therefore we have to look closely to Matt Halberg's life and his development if we want to understand Gus Hall's life and his choices.

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## Notes

1 The details of Halperi family history have been gathered from an account to the author in October 2008 by Lapua-based genealogist Pauliina Talvitie and Leskelä-Lescelius-Lescell-Lesell family history.

2 There is no sign of Kustaa Halperi's arrival to the New World in the Ellis Island Records which are available in the internet. These records however start only in 1892 so he may have arrived before the commencement of the records.

3 According to Halperi's family history account Matti left already in 1895 but Ellis Island Records and Finnish passport records tell us that he emigrated only in June 1896.

4 When the couple got married Matti was working for Hantula farm and Sanna for Alasaari farm. These farms were – just like J. A. Lundqvist's Härsilä farm – in the village of Lapua. See Suomen maatilat V, 721–726. Interestingly, in the same village there was also the farm of Vihtori Kosola (b. 1884) who in the early 1930s became the leader of the so called Lapua Movement, a far-right alignment which in many ways was close to Italian fascism.

5 The passport holder's name is Matts Michael Hallberg, but being born in Lapua in 1873 he is undoubtedly Gus Hall's father. See www.migrationinstitute.fi

6 See www.ellisisland.org. After arriving to Minnesota, Matti seems to have used Halberg as his family name. Such a form is not very usual in Finland or in Sweden where the form "Hallberg" is much more usual. Halberg seems to be more usual name in Norway and Germany.

7 Unfortunately Hall does not provide us more information about his great-great-grandfather's political imprisonment. Such sentences – not to mention death sentences – were not very usual in 19th century Finland.

8 In "Minnesotan Suomalaisten Historia" Wasastjerna tells us about a Finnish company that was recruited in Ely, Minnesota. Although this company also fought in the Philippines 1899–1901, it should not be confused with Matt Halberg's unit. See Wasastjerna 1957, 455–458.

9 Holbrook 1923, 107 and 462–470. Out of the nine deceased soldiers, Mikkula is the only one with a clearly Finnish name. Being a resident of Virginia, Minnesota he was most likely a close acquaintance to Matt Halberg.

10 Best example of how Hall described his father is Hall 1987, 369–370.

11 When I interviewed Gus Hall's two nieces and his nephew in July and August 2008, none of them had ever heard that Matt Halberg could have taken part in the Philippine expedition. Also the son of Halberg's neighbors, Armas Tamminen, has no recollection of hearing about Matt Halberg's journey.

12 The possibility that the Matt Halberg of Forty-Fifth Regiment would have been different person from Gus Hall's father is very little. It is very unlikely that there would have been two Finnish-American young men with the same name living in a small town like Virginia, Minnesota in 1899.

13 See www.ellisisland.org.

14 See www.ellisisland.org. According to Institute Migration's passport database, Sanna Kaisa Halperi from Lapua received her passport on December 16, 1904. See www.migrationinstitute.fi

15 In his autobiographical writings Gus Hall often mentions that he comes from a ten-child family. This information is correct if Juho – who died in Finland in 1897 – is included in the figure. Of the nine children born in the United States, seven were sons (Onni, Urho, Arvo, Toivo, Veikko, Oiva and Taisto). The daughters were called Sivia and Hilia. Their birth certificates can be found in Minnesota Historical Society's data base in www.mnhs.org

16 Gus Hall's autobiographical writings do not mention exactly where his parents lived in Mesabi Range, but Sanna Halberg's Ellis Island ship register page tells us that she was on her way to Virginia, Minnesota. Gus Hall's niece confirmed that they lived in Virginia in an interview with the author in July 2008.

17 After the Finns the biggest immigrant groups were Croats, Serbs, Slovenians and Swedes.

18 According to Ross, Minnesota's Finns established twenty temperance societies between 1885 and 1902. See Ross 1977, 110.

19 About one half of the Mesabi Iron Range is in St. Louis County. The western half of the range lies in Itasca and Cass counties.

20 Syrjälä states that the main reason for 1907 strike was the deterioration of miners' wages after the steam shovels became more common in the Mesabi Range. Before the breakthrough of steam shovels in 1901 a worker earned $2.25–$3.00 a day but in 1906 the wage was only around $1.25 a day. See Syrjälä 1926, 70.

21 Finnish leaders of the strike were John Välimäki and John Kolu. Just like Matt Halberg, Välimäki was born in Lapua but eleven years later in 1884. He originally worked as a miner in Hibbing but after the 1907 strike he worked as strike leader and journalist and chief editor in the Finnish-American socialist newspapers. See Sulkanen 1951, 502–503.

22 The Federation grew rapidly. At the time of its founding, it had approximately 2 600 members but six years later the figure was already almost 13 700. See Karni 1977, 70–71.

23 WFM demanded a $2.50 daily minimum wage for open pit workers and $3.00 minimum for underground workers.

24 The Finnish name is still visible in Cherry where there is a road called Alavus Road

25 According to Kristin Koskela, Matt Halberg was also known as a skilled builder of barns. Those skills he had very likely learned in the plains of Southern Ostrobothnia which are known for their numerous barns. Interview with Kristin Koskela, May 23, 2010.

26 Most of the Halberg boys played in the brass band Kaiku (meaning ”Echo”). Onni played the tuba, Urho the trumpet, Veikko the baritone and Oiva played the snare drum. Interview with Kristin Koskela, May 23, 2010.

27 Hall claims his father was the leader in setting up the co-op store but Wasastjerna and Siirtokansan Kalenteri only list him as one of the founders. See Gus Hall's autobiographical manuscript, 18.

28 During these years the main topic of discussion in the town board was the contamination of the river that runs through Cherry. This caused diseases to the cattle that was drinking from the river. Cherry's town board decided to send representatives to neighboring towns to protest the polluting of the river.

29 In his article about Mesaba Park's history, Arnold Alanen mentions that Matt and Arvo Halberg took part in the building work, but he does not say anything about Matt Halberg's leading position in the project. See Alanen 2004, 70–71.

30 Gus Hall's childhood neighbor Armas Tamminen confirms this. According to him, his mother and Susan Halberg were good friends although the Tamminen family was actively involved in the church activities. See Armas Tamminen's letter to author, August 31, 2008.

31 The gymnastics club's name Reipas could be translated as “Brisk” or “Cheery”.

32 A claim that Matt Halberg and Big Bill Haywood were personal friends is surprising if Matt Halberg's command of English language was a poor as his relatives say.

33 According to Koskela, Urho Halberg may have fought in the Red Army in WWII and died in action, perhaps fighting against Finns in the Winter War of 1939–40.

34 In the 1960s FBI suspected that Halbergs' Arabian horse business was linked to CPUSA finances and was therefore planning to sterilize the imported horses at the U. S. Quarantine Station in New Jersey. Toivo Halberg later obtained copies of the documents related to the planned FBI operation under the Freedom of Information Act. The copies are now in possession of Toivo Halberg's son, Dennis Hallberg.

35 Rest of the Halberg children led less colorful lives mainly in the Great Lakes area. Oiva (b. 1916) died in a car accident near Cherry in the early 1930s.

36 In 1930, there were 74 000 people of Finnish extraction in Michigan and 61 000 in Minnesota. These two states were by far the most popular destinations among Finns. Third popular was New York, which had only 27 000 people of Finnish extraction. 42 percent of all Finnish-Americans lived in Michigan and Minnesota. See Kero 1996, 131.

# 10

# Conclusion

Arguably not since the 1970s has there been a renewed interest by academics on both sides of the Atlantic in issues relating to Finnish migration. In his introduction to the two volume Finnish Diaspora published in 1981, Michael Karni made the observation that the work presented at the FinnForum of 1979 could only have been possible because of the "*collecting efforts which have provided scholars with the sources necessary for their work*" (Karni 1981, xii). Since then, the collecting efforts of individuals and archives have been augmented by a blossoming of scholarship using these and other materials. The field has now, to echo the contribution made by Gary Kaunonen's recent work, moved beyond the traditional realm of the written record and become truly interdisciplinary in scope.[1]

What the work of scholars in the 1980s and 1990s (for example Auvo Kostianen, Michael Karni, Reino Kero, Varpu Lindström, Douglas Ollila, Donald Wilson) and the more recent contributions of a younger generation, such as many of those found in this volume, have revealed is that a lot has changed within the literature on Finnish emigration since Kero wrote in 1974 that "this field has generally been of poor quality and the number of research studies written has been rather small compared to some other areas of historical study" (Kero 1974, 3). What used to be the purview of a few smaller publishers has in recently become, thanks to the pioneering efforts of many, an important element of global immigration studies

and an ever increasing aspect of national histories in North America and an integral part of the tapestry of Finnish history. In essence, it has become much more transnational in scope.

The chapters in this volume have been selected, to borrow from Marcel van der Linden and Lex Heerma van Voss, to provoke further questions and study. The issues presented by the contributors are, in most cases, attempts to go far beyond merely exploring "whether working-class solidarity was in fact self-evidently a logical phenomenon." Each work has revealed that any study of the Finnish worker's experience must have a transnational element in order to even begin to understand the complexities of what is ultimately a shared past. Some of the selections, such as Aappo Kähönen's chapter, does what many collections fail: to establish the necessary background in Finnish society and political systems during the late nineteenth and early twentieth that is crucial to any complete understanding of the Finnish involvement in the North America labour movement.

Moving beyond, the contributions by Paul Lubotina, Ralf Kaurenen and Mikko Pollari, Gary Kaunonen, William Pratt, Tauno Saarela, Tuomas Savonen all demonstrate, the transnationalism associated with the Finnish workers' experience within organized labour and socialist organizations. They all provides a lens into the unique and integral role that Finnish immigrants played in the early American socialist and labour movement. Although dealing with Canada, Samira Saramo's exploration into the role of Finnish women in the Canadian left goes even further and explores the unique and important contribution by Finnish women – an area of study largely unexplored aside from the work of Varpu Lindström. The chapters by Donald Wilson and Tuomas Savonen narrow the approach further, using individual life histories and experiences in an attempt to make sense of, in some respects, the larger social and political issues addressed by the other contributors.

By exploring merely one aspect of the Finnish Diaspora – issues surrounding the Finnish workers' experience – in Finland, Canada, and the United States, the FinnForum held in Thunder Bay in May 2010 revealed the depth and richness of scholarship currently being undertaken around the world.[2] Labouring Finns is part of this new beginning, and hopefully has offered a variety of entry points into the world of class struggle and its impact on the transnational politics of the Finnish Diaspora.

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## Notes

1 In Kaunonen's recent study Challenge Accepted: A Finnish Immigrant Response to Industrial America in Copper Country (2010) he utilizes for example material culture as a main source to build upon the written and oral records.

2 Two additional volumes have also resulted from the conference. See Harpelle & Beaulieu 2010; Harpelle & Beaulieu Forthcoming.

# Contributors

**Michel S. Beaulieu** is Director of the Centre for Northern Studies and Associate Professor of History at Lakehead University. A specialist in the history of labour and socialism in northern Canada, related publications include *Labour at the Lakehead: Ethnicity, Socialism, and Politics, 1900–35* (UBC Press, 2011); *North of Superior: An Illustrated History of Northwestern Ontario* (Lorimer, 2010), and *Essays in Northwestern Ontario Working Class History* (CNS Press, 2008). Forthcoming works in 2012 include *Pulp Friction: Communities and the Forest Industry in Global Perspective* (Laurier University Press) and *Northern Ontario: A Pocket History* (Fernwood).

**Ronald N. Harpelle** is a Professor of History at Lakehead University and an accomplished filmmaker. An expert in Latin American and Caribbean History, his books include: (with Bruce Muirhead) *The IDRC: Forty Years of Research for Development* and *Le CRDI: quarante ans de recherche pour le développement*, *Long-Term Solutions for a Short-Term World: Canada and Research for Development*, *The West Indians of Costa Rica: Race, Class and the Integration of an Ethnic Minority*, *The Lady Lumberjack: An Annotated Collection of Dorothea Mitchell's Writings*, and *Karelian Exodus: Finnish Communities in North America and Soviet Karelia during the Depression Era*. Ron Harpelle is also the producer and director of "In Security," a documentary film about barbed wire, people and spaces, he participated in the production of a six-part series called "Citoyens du Monde" as a researcher and sound recordist, he is the producer of "Under the Red Star," a docu-drama about Finnish immigration and settlement in Canada, and he is the producer and co-director of "Banana Split," an award winning documentary film about Canada's favourite fruit.

**Paul Lubotina** was born and raised in suburbs of Minneapolis, Minnesota. After graduating from high school in 1985, he attended the University of Minnesota where he majored in history and anthropology. Receiving his bachelor's degree in 1991, Lubotina moved on to the University of Helsinki, Finland. While in Helsinki, Lubotina studied European political history, Russian history, and international relations under the tutelage Professor Jukka Nevakivi. After obtaining a master's degree in 1997, he moved back to the United States and entered into the doctoral program at Saint Louis University with the help of Jesuit scholars Fr. Robert Graham and Fr. Brian Van Hove. While in St. Louis, he worked with Professors Lewis and Elisabeth Perry, along with Michael Ruddy. Upon completion of the doctoral

program in American history, Lubotina worked briefly at Northern Michigan University and then Middle Tennessee State University where he currently teaches American and European History classes.

**Gary Kaunonen** is a social and labor historian and Assistant Coordinator of Michigan Technological University's Writing Program. He is currently working on a PhD in Michigan Tech's Rhetoric and Technical Communication program. He received a Master's in Industrial History and Archaeology from Michigan Tech in 2007, and for a while worked as an archivist in the Finnish American Historical Archive at Finlandia University in Hancock, Michigan. He is the author of two books published by Michigan State University Press. *Finns in Michigan* was the first published in 2009, and the latest, *Challenge Accepted*, won a 2010 Michigan Historical Society Book Award.

**Ralf Kauranen** is a sociologist working at the Department of Social Sciences at Åbo Akademi University. In 2008 he defended his dissertation on the debate about children›s comic book reading in Finland in the 1950s. In his post-doctoral research he has been involved in a project focused on the political imagination in Finland in the early 20th century.

**Aapo Kähönen** is a researcher in the Aleksanteri Institute, Helsinki University. Recent publications include "Sovjet Unionen och konkurrensens nyaarenor under det kalla kriget 1957–1973," *Nordisk* Östforum, vol 25, 3/2011.

**Jaimi Penney** hold an HBA in Political Science and History and a BA in Philosophy from Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, Canada. She is currently a MA student in the Department of History at Lakehead University studying post-war Canadian labour history.

**Mikko Pollari** is a historian currently working on his Ph. D. dissertation at the School of Social Sciences and Humanities at the University of Tampere, Finland. His research tackles the intellectual history of the early Finnish working class movement from a transnational perspective. Pollari has both an academic and a personal interest on past transnationalism: Even though a native of Tampere (born 1979), Pollari represents a bloodline of transnational actors stemming from the migration-rich province of Ostrobothnia. In the near future he is planning to go

transnational himself by complementing his studies in the US. His other research interests include marginal and especially biographical history.

**William C. Pratt** is a Professor Emeritus in the Department of History at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. He received his Ph.D. from Emory University in 1969. His research interests include the American left, farm movements and labor history, and his work has appeared in a range of publications, including *Labor History*, *Agricultural History*, *The Historian*, the *Journal of the West*, the *Great Plains Quarterly*, *Political Power and Social Theory*, *Novaia i Noveishaia Istoria* [*Modern and Contemporary History*], state journals, and chapters in Thomas G. Paterson, ed., *Cold War Critics*; Bruce Stave, ed., *Socialism and the Cities*, and Richard Lowitt, ed., *Politics in the Postwar American West*. He was the Distinguished Fulbright Lecturer in American History at Moscow State University in the spring of 2000, and a Senior Fulbright Lecturer in American Studies at the University of Warsaw in the spring of 2007. He was the president of the Nebraska State Historical Society in 2011.

**Tauno Saarela** is Senior Lecturer in Political History, Department of Political and Economic Studies, University of Helsinki. He has published widely on communist history, and is the author of *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty 1918–1923* (1996), *Kansan Tahto. Pohjolan työtätekevien lehti* (2006), *Suomalainen kommunismi ja vallankumous 1923–1930* (2008) and co-author of *Communism: National & International* (1998, with Kimmo Rentola) and *"Kallis toveri Stalin!" Komintern ja Suomi* (2002, with Natalia Lebedeva and Kimmo Rentola).

**Samira Saramo** is a PhD Candidate at York University, currently writing a social and cultural history of Finnish North Americans in Soviet Karelia, based on personal letter collections. This study also explores identity negotiations, letter narrative constructions, and community legend and myth-making. Saramo's Master's work at Lakehead University focused on Finnish immigrant and revolutionary Sanna Kannasto and Finnish socialist women in Port Arthur. Saramo is the co-editor and contributor of a new collection on Finnish Canadians in Karelia, based on the Missing in Karelia Research Project, due for release in late 2011.

**Tuomas Savonen** is is a Finnish journalist and graduate student of history at the University of Helsinki. He graduated from the University of Helsinki in 1997 and has since then worked as a journalist. Since 2005 he has worked on a PhD concerning the political thinking of Gus Hall. He has made several research trips to the United States, especially to Minnesota and New York University's Tamiment Library where the archives of the American Communist Party are currently located. He lives in Brussels, Belgium.

**J. Donald Wilson** is Professor Emeritus of History of Education at the University of British Columbia. His special field of interest includes Canadian educational history and immigration and ethnic history of Canada. He has published 10 books on Canadian history and education, the latest of which is *Children, Teachers and Schools in the History of British Columbia* (Calgary, 1995). In 1979 he was visiting professor at the Department of General History, University of Turku.