

# A Dissenting Voice of Finnish Radicals in America: The Formative Years of *Sosialisti*—*Industrialisti* in the 1910s

**Auvo Kostainen**

University of Turku

On December 2, 1921, the Supreme Court of Minnesota reached the decision of the case "State v. Workers' Socialist Publishing Company et al. (No. 22440)." The court decided that the newspaper *Industrialisti*,<sup>1</sup> published by the said company, as well as its managing editor Tobias Kekkonen, had violated the laws of criminal syndicalism. The previous ruling from the St. Louis County District Court had also convicted the business manager, A.A. Toivonen, but the Supreme Court reversed that part of the decision.<sup>2</sup>

The decision ended an era of the Finnish-language radical press in Minnesota. At that time, in the beginning of the 1920's, the court cases or "red raids" were already slowing down, although they did not stop totally in the country. The greatest tide of anti-radicalism even in Minnesota was over.<sup>3</sup> The *Sosialisti-Industrialisti*, a newspaper, a radical dissenting voice of the Finnish-American workers in Minnesota of the 1910s, and a supporter of the IWW was among the casualties, although the paper survived until the 1970s.

1 Actually there have been three different titles for the paper: it was born as the *Sosialisti* in June 1914, changed to *Teollisuustyöläinen* in December 1916 and again to *Industrialisti* in March 1917.

2 Minnesota Supreme Court proceedings 1921, pp. 931-933.

3 See, e.g. the numbers of deportations year by year, William R. Preston, *Aliens and Dissenters. The Federal Suppression of Radicals. 1903-1933*. Forew. by Oscar Handlin (New York, 1966), p. 332, note 95. Cf. John Higham, *Strangers in the Land. Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925* (New York, 1973), pp. 254-263.

## 1. The Founding of the *Sosialisti*

Most of the hundreds of papers produced by the immigrant groups in America were short-lived with a few long-lasting exceptions. The various papers produced by immigrant groups were published by many organizations and ideological orientations. At its peak in the 1910s, the number of ethnic non-English periodicals in the United States (weeklies, dailies, monthlies) reached more than 1300 different titles.<sup>4</sup>

The importance of the immigrant press in regard to the Finnish-Americans as well as many other groups, may be summarized in the words of George Hummasti: the press was a kind of "daily bread,"<sup>5</sup> it served many kinds of needs for contacts and information, and thus extended the community network. In particular, the "labor" newspapers spread information for the benefit of the immigrant worker. The press educated the readers in matters relating to the conditions in the "new country." It provided information on current topics and gave helpful advice on many everyday problems. The press was a forum for training editors and writers, and educating community leaders. It has been said about the periodicals of protest in Swedish-America: while reading and expressing themselves, "they found windows of thought opening on a world beyond their daily toil."<sup>6</sup> In addition, many papers took the task of ideological education of their supporters.

Newspapers and periodicals served the Finnish-American community in many ways. But they also served as a forum for ideological warfare against American capitalism, especially the grievances of low wages, long workdays and poor working conditions. Although the Finns were late-comers in America, the Finnish immigrant group in Minnesota had grown to several tens of thousands by the early 1910s: there were more than 26,000 Finns born in Finland, and the Finns were the largest foreign-born group in the St. Louis County of Northern Minnesota.<sup>7</sup> The Finns had organized firstly into temperance groups, then into churches, and finally into workmen's associations. They

4 For details see, e.g., Dirk Hoerder, "An Internationally Mobile Working Class and Its Press in North America: A Survey," in *The Immigrant Labor Press in North America, 1840s-1970s. An Annotated Bibliography. Vol. 1: Migrants from Northern Europe*. Ed. Dirk Hoerder, ass. ed. Christiane Harzig. Bibliographies and Indexes in *American History*, No. 4. (New York, 1987), pp. 21-22.

5 P. George Hummasti, "'The Working Man's Daily Bread'. Finnish-American Working Class Newspapers, 1900-1921," *For The Common Good: Finnish Immigrants and the Radical Response to Industrial America*. Ed. by Michael G. Karni and Douglas J. Ollila, Jr. (Superior, WI., 1977), pp. 167-197.

6 Franklin D. Scott, "Literature in Periodicals of Protest of Swedish-America," *Essays on the Scandinavian-North American Radical Press 1880s-1930s*. Publications of the Labor Newspapers Preservation Project, Gen. ed. Dirk Hoerder (Bremen, 1984), p. 30.

7 See, The Census of 1910, population statistics, table 1, pp. 996-1013.

established many newspapers and periodicals of varying ideological orientations. Among the most visible papers were those of the labor movement.

The question of tactics was at an early stage discussed among the Finnish-American labor movement. At first ideological and organizational models were taken from Europe (social democracy) and the "Old Country." But soon the role of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), formed in 1905 as a kind of protest against the ineffectiveness of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), made an impact on the debates.

The increasing radical opinions were formed mostly on the basis of the experiences of the 1907 Mesabi iron ore miners' strike led by the Western Federation of Miners, a radical trade union, with strong Finnish and other ethnic participation. In this struggle, workers learned of the conflict with the employers and the unwillingness of the society to protect strikers. Many strikers were forced to move to farms because of blacklistings. Also, tension inside the Finnish community was intensified—the so-called church Finns put out statements to increase the reputation of the Finns as good workers. Bitter socialists, however, called them the "Judas resolutions."<sup>8</sup>

In the conventions of the central organization of the Finnish American labor movement, Suomalainen Sosialisti Jarjesto, The Finnish Socialist Federation (FSF), the ideological disputes of the American socialist movement came out. The moderates accepted the gradual political reforms, while the radicals advocated social and political revolution, overthrow of capitalism and organization of labor by industries at the Hancock, Michigan, convention of 1909. The moderates won, but the split developed further. The Duluth Work People's College (Tyovaen Opisto) was a center for ideological debate as well as an opinion leader. There IWW ideology was studied and leadership educated. It was the forum for intense debates. At one occasion, the College witnessed the moment in which one envelope full of Joe Hill's ashes were spread into the courtyard, "to be kissed by the flowers," as the reporter told.<sup>9</sup>

In the process a few personalities became notable. Leo Laukki directed the College for several years starting in 1907. He also was the editor of Työmies-newspaper (The Workingman) of Hancock. Yrjö Sirola was an important left politician from Finland who taught in the College from 1910 to 1913. Both promoted radical leftist ideas, Laukki even favored the idea of sabotage. Both of them moved later to Soviet Russia. John Wiita was a teacher in the College; he edited the Sosialisti and became an important figure in the American Communist movement. Santeri Nuorteva taught at the College in the early 1910's. He became a leading person in the Soviet Russian Information Office in the

8 Cf. Carl Ross, *The Finn Factor in American Labor, Culture and Society*, 2nd ed. (New York Mills, MN 1982), pp. 114-118.

9 Wm. Tanner, "Vielakin Joe Hillin muistolle," *Ahjo* 1/1917, pp. 39-42.

United States, and eventually moved to Russia to become the "president" of Soviet Karelia.

In 1912 the FSF convention met in the College rooms in Smithville, a suburb of Duluth. Radical industrial unionism was accepted, even though Laukki had to reverse his speeches on the acceptance of sabotage. It was not the same as the acceptance of the IWW, since warning was issued against anti-socialist movements, sabotage and anarcho-syndicalistic anti-parliamentarism.<sup>10</sup>

After the Smithville (Duluth) convention the popularity of the IWW in Minnesota increased. This was reflected in the founding of a newspaper, which was named the *Sosialisti* (Socialist). However, the split in the FSF developed after the Copper Country Strike of Upper Michigan in 1913-14. The employers used strike breakers, armed guards and "vigilante groups." The strikers accused the company officials of purposely causing the panic of the so-called Italian hall-disaster, where 73 adults and children, many of them Finns, died while having a Christmas party.

The first open split in the FSF occurred in Negaunee, Michigan from where the quarrels spread over the country. It became known that the Executive Committee of the FSF was controlled by the radicals. After a general ballot, the Executive Committee was reformed and the "moderates" were reinstalled. The Eastern district of the FSF was firmly controlled by the "moderates" with a good margin; in the Western District the moderates formed only a small majority. The Central District voted unanimously in favor of industrial unionism in this eight-day long convention.<sup>11</sup>

At that time, the FSF published *Tyomies* (The Workingman) in Hancock, Michigan. In the spring of 1914 the radicals of the Central District tried to seize the paper, but the Eastern U. S. socialists prevented the radical domination, purchased stock shares of *Tyomies* and started to support it financially. This actually marked the founding of the *Sosialisti*. The radicals selected the town of Duluth as its natural base; actually the paper was printed by the *Duluth News Tribune*.

The relation of *Sosialisti* to the IWW has been debated. It has been said that the paper immediately adopted the IWW line, but it seems more reasonable to think that it only gradually came to support the IWW.<sup>12</sup> One of the editors, John Wiita, for example, recalls that there were both syndicalists and those who favored political action among the editors. Wiita calls himself a "political

10 Cf. Auvo Kostiaainen, *The Forging of Finnish-American Communism, 1917-1924. A Study in Ethnic Radicalism*. Annales Universitatis Turkuensis, Ser. B, Part 147 (Turku, 1978), p. 39.

11 See, *ibid.*, pp. 40-41. Cf. Douglas J. Ollila Jr., "From Socialism to Industrial Unionism (IWW): Social Factors in the Emergence of Left-Labor Radicalism among Finnish Workers on the Mesabi, 1911-19," *The Finnish Experience in the Great Lakes Region: New Perspectives*. Eds. Michael G. Kami et al. (Vammala, 1975), pp. 163-164.

12 According to *ibid.*, pp. 165-176, this seems probable.

radical." He also recalls that the editors of *Sosialisti* were continuously criticized by the eager IWW supporters. In October of 1915 even a special board meeting of the paper was called, in which the syndicalists dominated and gained control of the newspaper on behalf of the IWW.<sup>13</sup>

## 2. Growth of Industrial Unionism

*Sosialisti*, however, continued to support more conventional political activities. Thus, in the sample copy of *Sosialisti* in the beginning of June 1914, the editors announced that the paper will "unconditionally support the line of political class-struggle." One and a half years later, while launching its program for the new year 1916, the paper announced its support for political activities while even radical IWW tactics were supported.<sup>14</sup> The political editors approved of the Socialist Party of America but cautioned that the Socialist Party should take a more radical line. It seems that the Party leadership at this stage did not actively interfere in the "Finnish schism."

The FSF leaders and the Central District Finnish radicals came into conflict. The Central District had accepted the *Sosialisti* as its paper and claimed the FSF to be petty bourgeois. As a consequence, the FSF banned the *Sosialisti*, and cut off its economic support. This led to the disruption of the FSF: about 3,000 of the 12,500 FSF members mainly from the Central District were expelled. Between 1914 and 1916 more than fifty radical socialist branches departed or were expelled from the FSF.<sup>15</sup> This was the "first great schism of the FSF," while the second came a couple of years later when the Communist movement was born.

It is also important to note that Minnesota had a considerable number of loyal supporters of the FSF with more than 30 active branches in 1916. Ideological leadership came from the paper *Tyomies* which in October 1914 was moved from Hancock, Michigan to Superior, Wisconsin just a few miles from the city of Duluth. The *Tyomies* adopted the line of radical socialism and soon became an open supporter of the American Communist movement.

The newspaper *Sosialisti* and its successors, as well as the *Ahjo* (The Forge) produced at the Work People's College, served as the major forum for ideological discussions. Participants included editors, agitators, organizers and ordinary workers from various locals. Certain American socialist leaders like

13 See the unprinted memoirs of Wiita at the University of Turku, General History archives, pp. 53-59. Ollila, "From Socialism to Industrial Unionism," 1975, p. 167, and Michael Karni, Yhteishyva - Or, "For the Common Good: Finnish Radicalism in the Western Great Lakes Region, 1900-1940." Ph.D Thesis (University of Minnesota 1975), pp. 177-184, state that by the end of 1915 *Sosialisti* had turned into a IWW paper.

14 See *Sosialisti*, Jan. 1, 1916.

15 Kostianen, *The Forging of Finnish-American Communism*, p. 42.

Eugene V. Debs were often cited and their articles reissued in Finnish-language translations.

The papers provided information for the immigrant readers about American society. The Finnish workers cooperated with other ethnic groups, for example in joint celebrations. An example of this was the summer festival held in Hibbing, Minnesota Iron Range, in June 1914. There were from 500 to 600 participants. The main speaker Leo Laukki gave his speech in Finnish and Swedish. Another speaker was Antton Malme who gave a speech in Slavonian and English. At the banquet, Laukki spoke for one hour about the nature of socialism. The celebrations were ended in a three-act play called "Duel" (in Finnish presumably).<sup>16</sup>

Women were also drawn into the labor movement. In Finland Socialist women had been active, and their sisters in America adopted similar activities, due to the migration of a number of Finnish female labor activists to America.<sup>17</sup> Finnish-American women did not act as ideological leaders but supported Finnish workers' clubs and the Work People's College, in which a few of them were enrolled as students. Women were also active in strike guard activities (picketing).

The Ahjo published a number of theoretical articles on women's questions. A male, Kalle Heino, for example, strongly argued that the education of children should be considered a social task based on "scientific methods." Mothers could not presently serve as good educators, since they had to toil for a living.<sup>18</sup> A feminist view on the same problem, was soon presented by Suoma Nordman. She argued that industrial woman-workers must fight male dominance while machines would allow her more time for her children in the future. In addition, she stated, the community-sponsored services (schools, kindergartens, organized sports etc.) would ease the task of women further as industrial society matured.<sup>19</sup>

During the years 1914-1916 an animated discussion went on in the pages of the *Sosialisti* in regard to the possibilities and means of affecting American society and politics. Among the editors and readers of the paper the more direct and radical methods of the IWW received increasing support. The inability of other parties or "conservative trade unions" to cope with the challenges of increasing hardships was seen as an important factor. Many newer immigrants had difficulties getting access to the English-speaking, "American" political system and welcomed IWW tactics and ideas.

16 "Vessu," letter from Hibbing. *Sosialisti*, June 11, 1914.

17 See esp. the publication called *Women Who Dared. The History of Finnish American Women*. Eds. Carl Ross & K. Marianne Wargelin Brown (St. Paul, MN., 1986).

18 See, Kalle Heino, "Lasten synnytys ja kasvatus...", *Ahjo* 211917, pp. 29-35.

19 Suoma Nordman, "Nainen ja koti," *Ahjo* 411917, pp. 63-67.

The *Sosialisti* advocated "economic organization," a codeword for IWW. For example, local news arriving from the Northern Michigan and Colorado and Montana mining regions told about the great strikes in the area. Especially, the *Sosialisti* correspondents from Butte, Montana, urged strong syndicalist measures and tactics.

In May of 1915 *Sosialisti* criticized the Upper Michigan Copper Country where 10,000 Calumet and Hecla Mining Company workers had written a letter to the owners, thanking them for a bonus. According to the *Sosialisti*, it was no wonder that the "Judas Leagues" and "Citizen's Alliances" survived in the area, "since in the Copper Country there lives so cowardly a bunch of slaves, who are willing to lick the hands of those who whip them. We feel very sad and desperate when we hear that workers are so unaware of their actual position in the twentieth century."<sup>20</sup>

*Sosialisti* tried to expose the real nature of the American capitalist society. In June 1915 it was pointed out that big industrialists such as John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie were financing the American Boy Scout movement in order to foster future capitalists and mercenary murderers.<sup>21</sup> The IWW also blamed capitalism for race problems by keeping blacks under inhuman conditions with pitiful wages.<sup>22</sup>

The IWW became well-known in the Masabi Range during the strike of summer 1916. The strikers' headquarters was located in the Virginia Finn Hall, and strikers included Finns, Serbians, Montenegros, Italians and others. The *Sosialisti* had daily reports about the strike from the beginning of the strike in early June. Finally, in late June, the headlines over the front page revealed that the strike was "total"—all the Mesabi Range was on strike. The violence of the strike was reported including the arrests of the agitators, mass meetings of the workers, and the massive flow of new members into the ranks of the IWW. The strike went on, but gradually optimism withered away; towards the fall the headlines became shorter, and in September 1916 the strike was lost.<sup>23</sup>

The strike strengthened the image of the IWW as the union on the workers' side. The strike moved the *Sosialisti* towards industrial unionism. Electoral activity had again shown its uselessness, it seemed, and Finnish support for the IWW grew, as successful strikes organized by the IWW in the Western parts of the country were reported.

To mark their changing political philosophy, the editors changed the name of the *Sosialisti* to the *Teollisuustyöläinen* (The Industrial Worker) on Decem-

20 "Kaivosorjat nuoleskelevat ruoskijaansa," *Sosialisti* May 31, 1915.

21 "Ketka pitävät yllä partiopoikaliiketta," *Sosialisti* June 16, 1915.

22 See, e.g., "Tummanvärinen luokkasoturi," *Ahjo* 3/1919, pp. 54-56.

23 See *Sosialisti*, June-September, 1916; and Neil Betten, "Riot, Revolution, Repression in the Iron Range Strike of 1916," *Minnesota History*, Vol. 41, No 2 (Summer 1968), pp. 82-94.

ber 20, 1916. The publisher continued to be the Socialist Publishing Company. Leo Laukki was the chief editor and co-editors included notables such as John Wiita, Fred Jaakkola, Taavi Heino, and William Risto, an anarchist. On March 19, 1917 the *Teollisuustyöläinen* changed its title once more, to the *Industrialisti* (The Industrialist), because of a dispute with a minister of the Finnish Unitarian Church.<sup>24</sup> But from now on there was no doubt about the close connection between *Industrialisti* and the IWW.

### 3. Industrial Unionism and Communism

The ideological lines in the American labor movement were tested after the outbreak of the Russian Revolution in 1917. American socialists were enthusiastic about the Bolshevik takeover in the fall of 1917 and debated the tactics used by the Bolsheviks.<sup>25</sup> The Wobblies were initially most ardent supporters of the Bolsheviks. Many readers of the *Industrialisti* stated that the Bolsheviks were the real revolutionaries, and imagined that a new "industrial society" was organized in Russia.<sup>26</sup> When it became clear the Bolsheviks had organized a political revolution many American Wobblies withdrew their support of the Bolsheviks.

The communist movement in America was born out of the so-called Left-Wing of the Socialist Party of America, and in the fall of 1919 two parties, the Communist Party and the Communist Labor Party, were formed. The result was due to the disagreements about the importance of the Russian Bolshevik ideas as the model in America. Also, there was some difference between the parties in regard to their membership. The CLP mostly recruited English-speaking workers. It emphasized mass action of the working class and promoted "American workers' movement." The CP emphasized international perspectives — American problems were a part of the whole world. Its supporters were mostly ethnic Eastern Europeans. The CP was stronger in the Eastern and Central states, while the CLP had mostly its supporters in the West.<sup>27</sup> According to Theodore Draper the disorganized American communist movement had its roots in the old American socialist and syndicalist movements,

24 Minister named Risto Lappala sued the newspaper company a few days after the start of *Teollisuustyöläinen* for a total of \$15,000. To escape this the company quietly dissolved and a new one was formed. The information is based on the minutes of the publishing company. See Ollila "From Socialism to Industrial Unionism," 1975, p. 165, note 47.

25 See e.g., Irwing Howe and Lewis Coser with the assistance of Julius Jacobson, *The American Communist Party: A Critical History* (New York, 1962), p. 25 and James Weinstein, *The Decline of Socialism in America* (New York, 1967), p. 179.

26 See, K.A. Rasanen in *Industrialisti*, Apr. 4, 1918.

27 Cf. Theodore Draper, *The Roots of American Communism* (New York, 1963), pp. 187-188; Weinstein, *The Decline of Socialism in America*, p. 212-213.



which saw the class struggle essentially as a political conflict and promoted new radical trade unions. Draper also states that the CLP was close to the IWW.<sup>28</sup>

The Finnish-American left-wingers and IWW supporters accused the communist parties of theoretical obscurity. Still, the CLP tried to contact the Finns and the CP leadership also wanted to enroll the Minnesota Finns, apparently mainly because of their large numbers and active participation in the labor movement. As early as the fall of 1919 a small number of Finns from Virginia, Palisade and Gilbert joined the CP and the CLP.<sup>29</sup> At least one CP-organizer, Alfred Tiala, of Finnish background worked to convert Finnish radicals to the CP.<sup>30</sup> He was a former secretary of the Twin Cities (i.e. Minneapolis-St. Paul) Left Wing Group.<sup>31</sup>

The radicals in the United States became the target for more careful supervision in 1917 and the IWW was suspected of sympathies with Germany. In 1917 the *Industrialisti* with other IWW organs became known for their opposition to the United States participation in the war. For example, the first issue of the *Industrialisti* in March 1917 presented anti-war opinions. It compared the attitudes of the AFL and IWW towards the war: while AFL was seen as a "nationalistic" supporter of war, the IWW was praised for its international stand.<sup>32</sup> These attitudes as well as the organization of strikes, made the IWW a target for repression. In September 1917 the government launched a special operation against IWW headquarters in Chicago. Even the office of the *Industrialisti* in Duluth was raided twice. Public attitude in the United States thus became hostile to immigrants and radicals. The "Red Raids" culminated under Attorney-General A. Mitchell Palmer in 1919-1920.

The situation became more difficult after the end of the war, because of the economic depression and growing number of strikes. Thousands of radical workers and aliens were arrested charged with criminal syndicalism and anarchism and in 1920-21 760 were deported. One of the most dramatic episodes was the deportation of 249 Russian immigrants to Soviet Russia, via the port

28 Draper, *The Roots of American Communism*, pp. 185-186.

29 See Kostianen, *The Forging of Finnish-American Communism*, esp. pp. 81-82.

30 See notices in the CLP paper the Truth Oct. 10 (Virginia English and Finnish...) and Nov. 21, 1919 (And They Still Come); local letter from Palisade in *Työmies* Nov. 22, 1919 and Nov. 28, 1919 (Vetoomus Mesaba-alueen s.s.osastoille).

31 See, the "Call for a Conference of the Left Wing of the State of Minnesota," *The Truth*, May 23, 1919. Carl Ross recalls that Alfred Tiala from the late 1920's served as an agricultural organizer for CP in Midwest. Interview with Carl Ross, St. Paul, MN May 19, 1989.

32 See *Industrialisti* March 19, 1917. The development of pacifism and the Finnish IWW was studied by Pekka Nevalainen, *Tuplajuon tiella. Sodanvastaisuus amerikansuomalaisessa anarkosyndikalismissa vv. 1914-1919 lehdiston valossa*. MA thesis, Univ. of Joensuu, Finland 1986.

of Hanko, in early 1920 on the old ship Buford, called the "Soviet Ark." Two well-known anarchists, Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, left the U.S. on that ship.<sup>33</sup>

The Minnesota Public Safety Commission watched the radical elements, under the guise of seeing that industries worked properly in wartime. For example, in November 1917 the Commission sent a circular to the labor unions stating that suspicious personalities were moving around the state. The Commission warned of "non-resident agitators and professional disturbers of the peace ... it is not a convenient time for agitation about abstract principles like Unionism or non-Unionism or the closed shop and the open shop. The great thing now is to have the work done."<sup>34</sup>

The Commission received letters from individuals and societies, many of them complaining about un-American activities in Minnesota. Letters dealt with Hobo camps and suspicious people in the neighborhoods, accused of sympathies with the IWW. Certain Finnish-American temperance groups declared to the Commission that they were loyal citizens. The German-Americans were under special surveillance, since Germany was now an enemy nation. The Commission also used the services of private detective agencies to spy on ethnic groups.<sup>35</sup>

The Commission delivered materials to the immigrant groups: Finnish translations of the laws regarding syndicalist activities in Minnesota were distributed to several mining locations. Officials also worried about the educational level in lumber camps. Thus a certain R.A. Hunt of Pine City, stated that not all the Finnish lumberers and farmers of the region knew English: "I find that the camps are well supplied with posters pertaining to food conservation but find no literature of an educational matter."<sup>36</sup>

War-time and post-war raids were directed towards the the Socialist Party members, the communists, the IWW- supporters and others in the West, in the

33 See, e.g., Preston 1966, esp. information on the deportations on p. 332, note 95; see also Draper 1963, pp. 203-205; Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All. A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (Chicago, Ill., 1969), pp. 423-437; David Brody, *Steelworkers in America. The Nonunion Era* (New York, 1969), pp. 231-262. A good overview of the political climate in Minnesota in those years is given by Hyman Berman, "Mr. Wilson's War and Mr. Lenin's Revolution: Minnesota Labor and Radicals Enter the Twentieth Century." Paper presented at the conference "Voices of Dissent," May 20, 1989, Landmark Center, St. Paul, MN.

34 Minnesota Commission of Public Safety to Labor Unions, Nov. 11, 1917. File no. 59. Minnesota Commission of Public Safety papers (MCPS), Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

35 See file 116 (secret) for contacts with the Pinkerton's Wm. J. Bums detective services in 1917. MCPS, MHS.

36 R.A. Hunt to the Public Safety Commission on Aug. 3, 1918; see also letters regarding the distribution of materials to e. g. Mr. Adam Saari of Crosby Mine, Crosby, MN from July 23, 1917. File 171, MPSC, MHS.

East (e.g. New York City), and in the Central States. Most Finnish-American labor papers were under surveillance—this was the case with the *Toveri* (Comrade) of Astoria, Oregon, its companion the *Toveritar* (Woman Comrade) and even moderate the *Raivaaja* (Pioneer) of Fitchburg, Massachusetts.

*Industrialisti's* office in Duluth was raided in January 1920, three editors were arrested, and a legal showdown took place in the St. Louis County court. The case went to the Supreme Court of Minnesota. A number of Finnish and Scandinavian immigrants were arrested in Minnesota, mainly in the Twin cities and in northern Minnesota.<sup>37</sup> Other radical Finnish-Americans were rounded in the "red raids," but the cases and court sentences in particular, were still relatively few if we consider the active participation of the Finns in radical activities in North America. In this respect the best known is the Chicago 166- trial in 1918 with five Finnish IWW leaders. Leo Laukki got a sentence of 20 years for espionage and conspiracy.<sup>38</sup>

Many Finns found a way to escape to the northern woods, and perhaps several hundreds went to remote mining and lumbering towns of Canada. Many Finns were simply ignorant of their military obligations and of the possibility that they could be drafted into the army. Others were all too aware of the draft, and many radicals escaped before being drafted. Perhaps hundreds of Finnish-Americans were arrested because they did not register properly. In July-August, 1917 more than one hundred Finns were tried in the St. Louis District Court in Duluth, and 106 were sentenced. Twelve of them went to jail.<sup>39</sup>

In general Finnish-American radicals obeyed the law, as their leaders urged. They had many legal social activities, and lots of property (halls, newspapers, cooperative stores etc.) that would suffer from official harassment.<sup>40</sup> The Finns knew that other ethnic groups, like the Germans, the Russians and the Slavs, were under suspicion, but on a nation-wide scale, the Finns held few positions of leadership, which could draw attention to them.

In the early 1920s, then, two radical groups were strongly supported by the Minnesota Finns. On the one hand there were the Finnish communists, an important part of the legal communistic Workers Party of America, founded in

37 See the Immigration and Naturalization Service papers, microfilms at the IHRC, University of Minnesota, reels 1, 2; and news picked from local letters in Kostiaainen 1978, p. 92, note 134.

38 The persons were Fred Jaakkola, Charles Jacobson, Leo Laukki, William Tanner, and Frank Westerlund. In the IWW-papers at the Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs at Wayne State University, Detroit, we find a list of more than 500 persons (mainly IWW-members, organizers etc.) who were arrested and convicted in the courts during those years. See Box 135, file 2, "Jail and Penitentiary Calendar."

39 See the reports published in *Industrialisti*, Aug. 4, 1917. Cf. Nevalainen 1986, pp. 95-98.

40 See Kostiaainen, *The Forging of Finnish-American Communism*, p. 92.

December 1921. The Finns formed about half of the Party's membership in its early years. In Minnesota the communistic Finnish Socialist Federation had more than 20 branches and 600 registered members.<sup>41</sup>

On the other hand, the Wobblies with the newspaper *Industrialisti* remained the strongest radical Finnish group for some years, even though several of their leaders and rank-and-file members turned to communism. Even the famous IWW leader Big Bill Haywood turned to communism and went to Soviet Russia. These defections were a blow for the IWW's future. Towards the middle of the 1920s the communists were taking over the Finnish Wobblies of Minnesota.

However, the Finnish IWW still had the ability to function for decades. It had strong centers of support among the Finns, and the Finnish IWW halls were also important for social and cultural activities. The circulation of the *Zndustrialisti* reached in the beginning of 1920s more than 10,000, a large number for an immigrant paper. Its center of support was in Minnesota where it is estimated that *Industrialisti* had more than 3,000 active subscribers in the early 1920s. *Industrialisti* ceased publication in the middle of the 1970s.<sup>42</sup>

In conclusion, the task of the Finnish radical press in Minnesota was not an easy one in the 1910s. Ideologically the radicals in America faced two splits of the socialist movement: the first was caused by the growing influence of the IWW and the second by the Russian Bolsheviks. The radical Finnish-American press suffered both from international and American events. The pressure from the host society was strong, especially in the war years. The newspapers had to tread a narrow line to avoid legal prosecution, while still successfully serving their readership. However, they seemed to do this quite well, for even in the hostile atmosphere *Industrialisti* managed in the early 1920s to increase its circulation. Although the IWW itself was losing support during the 1920s, the newspaper fulfilled the need for a Finnish-language labor paper in the Midwestern and Northwestern United States, and even in large areas of Ontario, where many Finnish immigrants had settled.

41 *Ibid.*, Appendix 3, pp. 218-219.

42 The circulation is revealed by, e.g., the traditional greetings of the paper for Christmas, New Year, May Day etc. In 1919 the *Industrialisti* published about 10,200 Christmas and New Year's greetings, of which from Minnesota 3,800. In 1924 there were about 14,800 greetings, of which from Minnesota 3,900. *Industrialisti* listed on Dec. 6, 1918 locations of major support of the paper. Minnesota had 19 locations, Michigan 7, Washington 6, Massachusetts 4, and Montana 4.