
Political and Labor Union Organization of Danish and Scandinavian Immigrants in the USA from the 1870s to the 1920s: A Survey.

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Introduction.

The article takes up an overlooked chapter in Danish emigration history, i.e., how Danish immigrants in the USA, usually in cooperation with workers from the other Scandinavian countries, became part of the American socialist and labor movement before the decline of mass immigration around 1920. The description of these activities is based on the following preconditions:

1. That the shift in the social composition of emigration, i.e. the growing number of journeymen, skilled and unskilled workers, meant the presence of an immigrant/workers’ culture in the larger cities or those cities in regions with a sufficiently large Scandinavian population.

2. That the scope and nature of the workers’ organizing allow us to operate with a (temporarily existing) political “counter culture” as a component of a significant workers’ culture within and in opposition to the wider ethnic culture and its political institutionalization and organization.

The description of the socialist immigrants can, as a case study seen in isolation, shed light on, for instance, the complex interaction between ethnic and class consciousness, but can also provide additional nuances to the nature of the Danish immigrant com-

munity in the USA during the era of mass immigration.

Chronologically, the description is circumscribed by the boundaries set by the split in the Socialist Party, which generally heralded the disappearance of Socialism as a factor in American politics; and more specifically for Danes and Scandinavians it meant that socialism was not only reduced, but was no longer specifically aimed at and incorporated in the ethnic community. The main thrust of the article is on political organization, a fact that is determined partly by the available material and partly by the nature of labor union organization among Scandinavian immigrants, as it was rather “diffuse” in its nature since it was not primarily based on ethnicity. Furthermore, especially Danish workers are at the center of attention; one reason for this is author’s wish to shed light on connections to the labor movement of their mother country. The source material is primarily newspapers complemented by archive material in the USA and Denmark. Much material has probably perished — thus it has not so far been possible to localize the archives of the organizations. It is true of immigrant workers as a group that their culture is primarily an “oral” culture, and for this reason they simply have not left us as much written material as their counterpart religious and “bourgeois” groups and organizations. A systematic collection of letters and similar material may in time re-

dress the balance. Newspaper material constitutes the most important material for illustrating socialist activities among immigrants. For the working-class immigrants as a whole the material that has survived and/or is available is scarce. The fact that the difference between the readers and the producers of this material consisted in the degree of their political involvement does, of course, make it problematic to draw conclusions from the contents of the newspapers and project these conclusions on to a wider group (the readers, "the worker immigrant," "working-class culture.") On the other hand it is fair to say that immediate social background of readers and producers was very similar, that the newspapers were highly dependant on volunteer work and consisted in readers' contributions. If for no other reason, the shortage of source material makes them valuable as sources for depicting living conditions, attitudes and patterns of experience that are representative of a group that goes beyond the group which produced and read these papers.

During the period under review, the working class became an "objective" reality in both the USA and in Denmark. In Danish society this constitutional period was accompanied by increased class awareness on the part of this group, something which in organizational terms ("subjectively") was reflected in the growth of the Social Democratic Party and the labor union movement, so that by the end of the period they had established and constituted themselves vis-a-vis employers and within the political system. The American working class became extremely heterogeneous and divided along ethnic, race, and occupational boundaries within a rapidly expanding economy and changing societal structure in which, by 1920, socialism had had its day as a challenge to the established political system. In the process, immigration constituted a paradox: many immigrants were active in the American unionization and political labor movement, but at the same time there can be little doubt that the structural effect of immigration was to split the American labor movement and that, thus, it came to have a negative effect on American labor union and political organization.

Danish and Scandinavian workers in the USA

were a heterogeneous group, socially and ideologically under constant change just like the working class in Denmark and the USA. Many of them took part in the "ordinary" ethnic organizations and did not become socialists or read socialist newspapers. It goes without saying that a more in-depth study of this group than the one intended here must include additional material. This is primarily true of those newspapers which despite a clearly more moderate and conservative attitude at later phases in their "lives" for a time entertained a certain amount of sympathy for the principal demands of socialism and the labor movement.

The Pioneer Generation.

Two exile immigrants, Louis Pio, and the Norwegian Marcus Thrane, were behind the earliest initiative to establish an unambiguously socialist press which did not exclusively address Danish/Norwegian immigrants, but immigrant *workers*. Marcus Thrane had been exiled as early as the late 1860s as a direct consequence of his leadership of the earliest attempts to organize Norwegian workers in labor unions and politically. The meeting between the founders of the Danish and the Norwegian labor movements took place at a time when the American labor movement, for the first time, manifested itself nationally, viz. in the Great Railway Strike in the summer of 1877. The establishment of the first socialist immigrant newspaper was one reflection of the conclusions which the American political and union movement as whole could or should have drawn from the experience gained in the strike, and was as relevant for organizing immigrant workers politically and in labor unions.

Without going into the grounds for and motivations behind Pio's emigration to the USA, it can be said that Pio considered emigration to be one solution to the "worker problem," more specifically the unemployment which set in together with the international recession in the late 1870s.¹ At the same time, the establishment of socialist colonies constituted an attempt to put socialist ideas into practice for which purpose the USA with her "surplus" of cheap land must appear as the ideal place. It remains uncertain whether Pio

1. See Pio's series of articles on Kansas in *Folkeviljen* No. 3, 4, 6-8, January-February 1877. On Pio in the USA see also Jens Engberg, *Til Arbejdet! Liv eller Død! Louis Pio og Arbejderbevægelsen* (Copenhagen, 1979), pg. 298 onwards.

had been inspired to do this by the religious colonies established by Danish emigrants, or by the long American tradition for utopian colonies of a radical and socialist nature. Pio shared the view of the latter group that farming was an industry upon which “anyone” without any considerable previous experience could embark. Similarly he seems to have taken the concept of “free soil” rather literally and to have overlooked that for a farm to yield any profit it would take a considerable capital outlay. Finally, the fact that he settled in Chicago prior to the final collapse of the colony experiment indicates that he expected others to carry out the hard labor while his own function could best be described as that of coordinator and “spiritual guide.”

Pio had several reasons for settling in Chicago in addition to the simple explanation that for someone with his background it was easier to make a living in a metropolis with a large Danish-Scandinavian immigrant community. In the presence of a fairly large Scandinavian working class the prospects for running a socialist campaign must, with a bit of luck, have appeared to be promising. Furthermore, during this particular period, Chicago, where especially a large contingent of German workers made their presence felt, had become the center for workers organizing politically and in labor unions.

Already during decade prior to Pio’s arrival, Scandinavian skilled workers had begun organizing in guilds which, typically attempted to defend the interests of their members by regulating access to their trades, but which also extended their activities to education, training, and cultural activities.² In addition to this, there were purely Scandinavian sections within the major labor unions and organizations aimed at gaining political influence and “fostering the education of the working class,” e.g. the Scandinavian Laborers’ Educational Society. The only exclusively socialist association at the time was the Scandinavian International,

which was a branch of the First International and mainly numbered Norwegians associated with Thrane.³ On the occasion of the Great Railway Strike, Pio wrote a pamphlet in the fall of 1877, *To the Scandinavian Workers in America*, in which he advocated a break with the traditional guild-like organization of Scandinavian workers.⁴ As the outcome of the strike had proven that workers could count on neither Republicans nor Democrats they would have to establish a proper labor party. In the wake of the dissolution of the First International (IWA) in July 1876, the Working Men’s Party of the United States, which, in December 1877, was renamed the Socialistic Labor Party of America, was founded. Undoubtedly, this is the party Pio refers to in his pamphlet. Like Pio, the party supported Lassalle’s view that even though workers might be victorious in individual conflicts, they were bound to lose the war unless they formed an independent party and achieved political power through it. The main problem was that neither American workers nor the immigrants were aware of the potential power embedded in their votes, but at the same time Pio drew the conclusion on the basis of his observations of American workers, that an “exclusively” socialist party was hardly a viable notion at the time:

“Thus, just as impossible as it is for socialists to demand that their most extreme and least achievable demands should find room in it, just as impossible will it be for the most cautious among workers to make it a condition that the present powers that be should be handled with kid gloves.” [pg. 6]

He clearly saw the necessity of a compromise between the class-conscious, socialist immigrants and the American labor unions, which were in favor of “business-unionism” and preferred working within the established party system. At the same time he realized that the immigrant workers would have to begin setting up new labor unions and clubs within ethnical boundaries, if it were to become possible to transgress

2. See Ulf Beijbom, *Swedes in Chicago* (Uppsala), pp. 330-32. The scope of activities was sufficiently wide to make it possible for the Den Skandinaviske Arbejderforening in Chicago to have its own building for a few decades. Mentioned in the *Arbejderen*, June 14, 1898.

3. The Scandinavian International soon after its foundation in 1872 attempted to publish a newspaper. This is probably the paper to which Pio refers in a letter to Engels, March 24, 1872. Published in: B. Schmidt, *80 Louis Pio breve og en Pio bibliografi* (Copenhagen, 1950), pg. 33.

4. Louis Pio, *Til de Skandinaviske Arbejdere i Amerika. En Paamindelse i Anledning af den ved Jernbanestrejken vakte Arbejderbevægelse* (Chicago, 1877).

the political and social consequences that followed from the ethnic demarcation lines in the labor market. In continuation of this reasoning he called upon the existing labor organizations to establish themselves as political clubs and to contact similar clubs in other cities with a view to “form a politically organized political whole, both for the city in question, and for all of the country.”⁵ As a mouthpiece and contact body for this organization, which would of course be affiliated to the Socialist Labor Party, a workers’ paper would be published with the title *Den nye Tid* [The New Age].⁶

In Pio’s immigrant guide from 1879, *Den lille Amerikaner* [A Guide to being an American], *Den nye Tid* was advertised. The ad contains a description of the paper’s editorial, political line, shown *in extenso* below [in translation]⁷ as, so far it has not been possible to locate even a single ‘surviving’ copy of *Den nye Tid*:

The only Danish-Norwegian workers’ paper and organ for the Scandinavian socialists in the United States. Its purpose is to defend and work for workers’ interests and to disseminate socialist teachings among our fellow countrymen. It will strive to gather all workers in one single union to achieve a social order that gives the working man his dues. It works against corruption, sleaze, exploitation and capitalist domination. It fights against monopoly and rapaciousness and strives for the emancipation of workers from the yoke of the Capital.

There will be leading articles about social, political, and economic issues. It will provide news of the worker and the labor movement in various parts of the world — a subject which is scorned and neglected by all other Scandinavian papers in this country.

It is not written in an ostentatious and pompous language, but in a style than the plain man can understand. It is written and edited by workers.

Even before this, probably in May 1878, Pio had been dismissed as the editor as the other staff members considered his position as editor of a socialist paper to be incompatible with his job as a journalist at a Danish Methodist newspaper, *Den Kristelige Talsmand* [The Christian Spokesman]. Like other editors of the subsequent socialist immigrant papers, Pio had to face the fact that a position like that was not enough to provide him with a living. Already in 1878, he attempted to start another socialist paper, *Den nye Verden* [The New World], but the idea was probably never put into practice.⁸ During the following years, he worked for various non-socialist newspapers that were primarily of “liberal” views and took a positive stance to some of the demands of the labor movement, such as the demand for the 8-hour working day. The jobs he did, mainly had to do with the immigrant community, he was a land agent and a translator. When Pio died in 1894 he was deeply involved in founding a colony in Florida, White City, a project that did not include any socialist ideas.⁹

Den nye Tid was still being published some years after Pio’s ‘departure’, by Thrane and after him by other Norwegian editors. It is not known whether the paper under the new management remained closely associated with the Socialist Labor Party.¹⁰ A contemporary observer claimed that the paper became less socialist in its orientation when the editor was replaced, and that the anti-church and atheist element gained a higher priority.¹¹ The shift was probably due both to the Norwegian dominance among Scandinavian socialists during this time, and the fact that the immigrant church as the most powerful and unifying political and cultural force in the immigrant community

5. Pio, *Til de Skandinaviske Arbejdere*, p. 11.

6. Regarding data and a description of the papers and periodicals mentioned see Jens Bjerre Danielsen, “Bibliography of Scandinavian Immigrant Labor and Radical Newspapers,” in D. Hoerder (editor), *The Immigrant Labor Press in North America, 1840s-1970s: An Annotated Bibliography*, 3 vols. (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press).

7. L. Pio, *Den Lille Amerikaner. En Fører og Tolk for Skandinaverne i Amerika* (Chicago, 1880 [1879]), pg. XII. Pio, for example, published an account of a discussion he had with Marx and Engels in 1876 on the IWA, British Trade Unions etc., which was reprinted in a Swedish newspaper, *Öresundsposten* in 1878.

8. See, Schmidt, 80 Louis Pio breve, p. 102.

9. However, certain utopian ideas did form the basis of the project; these notions belonged to the ideology of the American ‘progressive’ middle classes in general. See Pio’s letters from White City in Schmidt, 80 Louis Pio breve, pg. 68 onwards.

10. In the following years, the SLP in Chicago moved towards a position incorporating anarchist elements in its labor union and political strategy. See P. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement* (New York), vol. 1, pp. 496, 498.

11. J.B. Wist, “Pressen efter Borgerkrigen,” in J.B. Wist, *Norsk Amerikanernes Festskrift* (Decorah, 1914), p. 93. In the early 1880s, the Dane Marius Jantzen, who became a pioneer in the Norwegian movement, arrived in Chicago where he made contact with Thrane. The latter “didn’t like Pio in Chicago.” Note in the Jantzen file, ABA.

was defined as the most obvious and immediate “chief enemy.”

In the USA, too, Pio and Thrane became pioneers in founding a socialist organization and press aimed at breaking the organizational and press monopoly of the religious and bourgeois groups. Like his successors, Pio became disappointed and disillusioned about the lack of responsiveness to the ideas of socialism on the part of both the immigrants and the American workers. However, at this time even the American labor movement was not sufficiently rooted to survive the downturns of a fluctuating economic development. In general the group of immigrant workers was also too small and unstable in social and cultural terms to form the basis of institutions capable of surviving a period of economic recession

Immigrants and Socialism in the 1890s.

From the mid-1880s and to the mid-1890s things had virtually ground to a halt as regards socialist activities among Danish and Scandinavian immigrants. However, from the 1890s the necessary conditions were present: the large immigrant contingents of the 1880s had become fairly settled so that a relatively stable immigrant community had evolved. Labor union activities among American workers were reflected in their joining the Knights of Labor, who advocated “One Big Union” encompassing all workers irrespective of occupation, race, and gender. Unlike the Industrial Workers of the World that would later adhere to the same idea on the basis of a socialist, or rather a syndicalist, concept, the Knights of Labor defined the working class as a group of “producers” in society. In other words, its fundamental philosophy was a secularized version of the Protestant work ethos, work as a vocation and, not surprisingly, skilled workers constituted the core of the Knights of Labor. In Minnesota alone, there were three different Scandinavian local branches of the Knights of Labor¹² which was reflected in the publication of a weekly paper, *The Arbeidets Ridder*, which primarily addressed and was

supported by Norwegian worker. The political stance of the paper can be characterized as belonging to the moderate wing of the organization. It had a certain amount of sympathy for Henry George’s ideas and avoided committing itself clearly to any political party.

As the Knights of Labor started to decline from the mid-1880s, skilled workers began organizing separately under the auspices of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), partly to be able to protect the interests of this particular group in a economy which — despite temporary recessions — was expanding, partly as a result of dissatisfaction with the unwillingness of the Knights of Labor to use industrial action in conflicts as well as its unwillingness to act a political pressure group. In the following, two aspects of the union policy stance of the AFL must be kept in mind, not least because of their implications for socialist organizing and agitation among Scandinavian immigrants. Despite the fact that many socialist workers were involved in the AFL and despite a lot of persistent pressure from various socialist parties and groups, they never succeeded in making the AFL accept a socialist platform or perspective to their labor union activities. This meant that the AFL considered a fairly high position within labor union activities as incompatible with a similar position in the socialist movement. In other words, at socialist worker would have to choose between the two types of activity.¹³ The other important aspect of the AFL’s labor union policy was that it was not in the least interested in organizing unskilled workers, that is, the majority of the “new” immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. The recruitment basis of the AFL was primarily skilled workers, whether they were Americans or immigrants from Northern and Western Europe. Not surprisingly, the AFL was far less ambivalent in its attitude to restricting immigration than were the socialist parties, and the organization was one of the prime movers behind the implementation of the Immigration Quota Act in 1924. Both of these aspects were sources of conflicts between the political and the labor union conduct in the American labor movement, whereas the immigration prob-

12. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 2 (New York, 1977), pg. 58. It is claimed that Pio joined the Knights of Labor as he was attracted by their Freemason-like nature. He will have sympathized with the organization’s general objectives, “one big union,” but hardly with their attitude to industrial and political action. Wiinblad and Andersen, *Det danske Socialdemokratis Historie*, pp. 353-354.

13. Henry Bengtson, *Skandinaver på vänsterflygeln i USA* (Stockholm, 1955), pg. 71.

lem seen in isolation gained the most marked disruptive effect in the socialist organizations.

Scandinavian Immigrants in the Socialist Labor Party.¹⁴

The political organization of Danish and Scandinavian workers before the turn of the century did, as already mentioned, take place within the framework of the Socialist Labor Party. The party had been founded by German immigrants and until well into the 1890s it was dominated by them, after which time also socialist workers from Eastern Europe joined the party. In particular, Jewish workers from New York influenced the party and the unions which the party established and controlled under the name of Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, which had been established as a socialist rival of the AFL in 1895. Under Daniel DeLeon's leadership from 1890 and until his death in 1914, the party became more disciplined and took on a clearer ideological profile which dictated an open conflict with the AFL (for "dual unionism") and rejected cooperation with the established parties, i.e. the traditional role as a third party and pressure group for the benefit of being an independent socialist party. DeLeon's ideology, strategy, and fairly autocratic leadership split the party, so that from 1897 it came to consist of two wings. This meant that the AFL under the leadership of Samuel Gompers finally distanced itself completely from the SLP in 1900, after which it followed a clear "strategy of adjustment" aiming at legitimizing the labor union movement and gaining political power within the "framework of the system." At the same time, most of the party acceded to the newly founded Socialist Party, following which the SLP was banished to the inferior position on the American left wing which it has been occupying ever since.¹⁵

The strongholds of the SLP were primarily on the East Coast where DeLeon's influence was felt. In Boston and New York, Scandinavian workers formed

clubs in the 1890s, but in an attempt to Americanize the party, DeLeon did not permit the establishment of separate ethnic organizations so that it was not until after DeLeon's death in 1914 that "purely" ethnic federations were formed. However, this did not prevent the local party organizations from primarily being recruited on the basis of ethnicity. In 1895 the clubs in Boston and New York started a Swedish-language paper, *Skandinaviska Amerikanska Arbetaren* (later: *Arbetaren*) [The Scandinavian American Worker, The Worker]. The initiators of this paper were chiefly Swedes and Danes. To begin with, the *Arbetaren* was subdivided into a Swedish and a Danish/Norwegian section with each its own editor. This job was in the hands of Hugo Ludwig, who had been an editor of the *Social-Demokraten* [The Social Democrat] (Copenhagen) before his emigration in 1885. In more than one sense he followed in the footsteps of Pio as his leaving his native country was a direct consequence of legal action having been taken against him as a consequence a number of critical articles he had written about the Danish military.¹⁶ During the following years in the USA he involved himself in organizing workers politically and in labor unions in close cooperation with, among others, a former party friend, Harald Neble. As a precursor for establishing proper party branches, they organized a sickness insurance fund for workers and a "Danish Socialist Club" in 1893. However, it soon became clear that the number of Danish-Norwegian workers and their organizations on the East Coast was insufficient to support a Danish-Norwegian socialist paper.

By contrast, these conditions were met in the Midwest, in Chicago, which was also far more centrally placed in terms of the distribution of these groups in America as a whole. In July 1896 the Danish-Norwegian clubs in Chicago set up a society, *Arbejderens* Publishing Association, with a view to publishing a weekly to be owned and controlled by the clubs.¹⁷ Already in December 1896 an organizational change was

14. Based on J.B. Danielsen, "Scandinavian Immigrants and the Socialist Party of America," unpublished paper, SUNY-Buffalo, 1978, and "The Early Danish Immigrant Socialist Press," in: D. Hoerder (editor), *Essays on the Scandinavian-North American Radical Press, 1880s - 1930s* (Bremen, 1984).

15. The SLP suffered a new split in 1919/1920 when the dissidents joined the Communist Party.

16. Wiinblad and Andersen, pg. 356. A third editor of the *Social-Demokraten* in Denmark, Saxo Wigell, suffered the same fate. *Ibid.*, pg. 355.

17. The *Arbejderens*, March 11, 1897; July 6, 1899. Ludwig stayed on as the editor of the New York Section followed by Neble and Emil Olsen, *Arbejderens*, November 16 & 23, 1899.

effected for political as well as for financial reasons. The financial problems were solved for the time being by expanding the right to take up shares and by establishing support groups. The political problem arose in connection with the election in 1896 when the members of the SLP clubs and some of the shareholders disagreed about the political line in the presidential election. The mere fact that the issue of whether to support the Democrats or SLP was even raised in the paper gave rise to protests. The solution was a reorganization of the company under the name of *Arbejderen* Publishing Company so that in future, through an editorial committee, the clubs could make sure that the party line was followed. However, the conflict was not so deep as to prevent one of the leading “dissenters,” Christian Bunck, from holding shares in the “new” venture.¹⁸

Surprisingly, in the early issues of the paper we find no indication of it being associated with any party. It was merely stated that the *Arbejderen* was published by “Scandinavian, social democratic workers” and that it “defended the interests of workers.” Political and ideological adherence to the social democratic parties in their homelands was quite pronounced accompanied by a skeptical attitude to the rejection of the SLP towards cooperating with other parties and an unambiguously negative attitude to the established labor unions. Towards 1900 this ambivalent stance vis-a-vis DeLeon’s political line was replaced by a more clearly critical position. On its part, the party recognized the *Arbejderen* as the official organ of the Danish-Norwegian members, but because of the huge geographical distances, it was in no position to exercise any direct pressure on clubs or the paper. The fact that the shareholders were so widely dispersed also made it difficult for the Chicago clubs to control the contents of the paper, and its dependence on voluntary contributions and labor also had this effect. Without things ever coming to a head, the paper and the clubs gradually moved away from the party line, particularly because of the influence by Eugene Debs’ Social Democracy and the social democratic parties back home. The influence of the latter became clear in particular in the criticism of

DeLeon’s “dual unionism” strategy which only contributed towards splitting the emerging labor movement in New York and Chicago. To the Scandinavian workers, the news about the progress made by the labor movement at home, on which the *Arbejderen* reported extensively, seemed to be clear evidence of the failure of the SLP (i.e. of DeLeon). The solution must be to take over the labor union movement that was independent of the party “from within” (the “boring from within” strategy) and then to establish fixed cooperation between the labor union and the political components of the labor movement.

In this internal conflict, the Swedish clubs on the East Coast and

Arbetaren sided with DeLeon,¹⁹ one reason for which was that they were more subjected to the control of the party leadership. Nevertheless, it is a striking fact that this division followed ethnic boundaries so that the Danish-Norwegian clubs and party members left the party in 1899/1900, while the Swedish clubs in both Chicago and New York stayed in the fold. Thus, the existence of Swedish SLP clubs in Chicago restricted the success of the Socialist Party in recruiting Swedes during the first decade. The Swedes continued to dominate the Scandinavian sections on the East Coast (New York and Boston), and in districts with many Swedish industrial workers the SLP was able to maintain many strong local branches, for instance in Jamestown, N.Y., Waltham, and Worcester, Mass. After 1900 there were only a few Danes and Norwegians in the SLP; one Dane, Arnold Petersen, was National Secretary for several decades after DeLeon’s demise (1914-1969). The split in the party resulted in a decline of the readership, and in April 1900, the *Arbejderen* closed down. The Danish-Norwegian clubs left the party and, later, affiliated to the Socialist Party. Later in the year, they were expelled from the party,²⁰ a fate which, at the same time, also overtook the Polish and Hungarian clubs and their papers. It was to be a decade before the political organization among Danish-Norwegian workers had reached such a level that a new attempt to start a newspaper could be made.

18 Ibid., March 11, 1897.

19 Ibid., January 11, 1900.

20 Socialist Labor Party. *Tenth National Convention of the SLP 1900: Report of the National Executive Committee*, pp. 43-44.

***Arbejderen* and the Immigrant Community.**

On the basis of information found in the *Arbejderen* it is possible to make an approximation of the scope and nature of activities within the immigrant community (primarily aimed at protecting the interests of immigrants in their capacity of workers). As already mentioned, the clubs were already established locally before they obtained any official status in the SLP. The largest clubs were in Chicago, Minneapolis, New York, and Boston whereas a number of smaller clubs were to be found in states with a reasonably large group of Danish and Norwegian immigrant workers.²¹ In the list of shareholders, the majority lived in the Midwestern region (Illinois and Minnesota) whereas the dissemination of agents for the *Arbejderen* is far more pronounced. The number of agents and their geographic position changed considerably from one year to the next, except for the local strongholds on the East Coast and the Midwest something which in turn indicates that the rate of mobility in this segment of the Danish (and Norwegian) immigrants was high which, in turn, precluded the emergence of stable local communities a necessary factor for achieving continuity in any political organization endeavors. In other words, what happened was political organization carried out by forces within the local communities as distinct from organization resulting from political agitation originating from without or from above (from the SLP). Characteristically the early steps towards political organization was the formation of “apolitical” institutions like health insurance funds and choral societies that, in turn, took the initiative to form political clubs that were integrated into a political structure. Thus, the Socialist Book Club in Chicago and the Socialist Choral Society in Boston were among the most important shareholders in the *Arbejderen*. These organizations that had primarily been established to cater for the interests of the immigrant worker outside of his job and the political system to provide financial security, education, and leisure time entertainment

were, in other words, the infrastructure in local immigrant culture and were a prerequisite for political organizing.

The function of the *Arbejderen* was to ensure communication between the widely dispersed clubs and the different “internal” organization levels and between these and a wider “external” readership. The limited success in the respect can be deduced from the fact that the *Arbejderen* was only published for four years, and its circulation never exceeded 2,800,²² which was far less than the circulation figures for the largest Danish-American papers. Thus, the *Den danske Pioneer* [The Danish Pioneer], published in Omaha, Nebraska was the most important Danish-American newspaper also in Chicago. Before the turn of the century, this newspaper took a very positive stance to the most important demands of the American labor movement (the 8-hour working day, the right to organize, etc.). The editor of the *Pioneer*, Sophus Neble, had by marrying the daughter of “Black” Hansen who had accompanied Pio to America, close contacts with radical and labor friendly circles within the immigrant community and the Danish labor union movement. Thus, Neble was the prime mover behind the large-scale fundraising that took place for the benefit of Danish workers during the Great Lock-Out in 1899. Apparently, the circles behind the socialist clubs and the *Arbejderen* never succeeded in setting up close cooperation with the party or the labor unions in Denmark. The *Arbejderen*’s most serious competitor for the worker readers was, in addition to Neble, Christian Bøtker, who in Chicago published a paper with a far more mellow socialist line called the *Revyen* [The Review].²³

In all essentials, the *Arbejderen* was dependant on volunteers. The regular work force consisted of the editor and two typographers. During most of its life, the editor was John Glambeck. It is not known whether changes of editors were due to political differences, but they certainly had a lot to do with the pay conditions.²⁴

21. List of shareholders in the *Arbejderen*, March 11, 1897. List of agents were published regularly.

22. *Ayer’s Directory of Newspapers* (Philadelphia, 1899, 1900, 1903 (!)).

23. See *Arbejderen*, September 21, 1899 (Neble); January 5 & 19, 1899 (Bøtker).

24. Later Glambeck acquired a large farm in Canada. Christian Nielsen, *90 Aar i Chicagos Danske Koloni, Den danske Pioneer*, pg. V (cutting in the Udvandrerarkivet, Aalborg).

***The Socialist Party and
the Scandinavian Immigrants.***²⁵

Internal Conflicts.

The Socialist Party was the central political expression of the organization of the American left in the two first decades of the 20th century. A motley crew founded the party in 1900: Debs' American Railway Union and Social Democracy, populists, Christian Socialists, German social democratic immigrants and their descendants, the intelligentsia of the cities, and the American worker aristocracy. Until 1914 the party grew steadily, after which time the Wilson brand of liberalism overtook the party. Its opposition to the USA's entry into the World War I boosted membership temporarily, but also contributed towards making the party less legitimate. The outcome of this was political persecution on the part of the Federal Government, and together with latent conflicts within the party, this led to a final split in 1919.

These conflicts had many sources: reformist policy or revolutionary policy (the "immediatists" versus the "impossibilists"), relations with the AFL and the American worker aristocracy, relations with the Industrial Workers of the World (syndicalism and industrial unions), the position on the labor union and political organization of the "marginal" groups like blacks, immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe as well as mineworkers and farmhands in the West, cooperation with Wilson progressivism, the position on American participation in the war, and finally the stance vis-a-vis the Russian Revolution and the political and strategic consequences to be drawn from it. Before 1917, the Left Wing of the party did not have much influence, and although from 1917 the socialist profile grew stronger ideologically speaking and reflected in a stronger internationalist position it was the center and the right, i.e. the reflection of the American worker aristocracy, which dominated the party: the party intended to participate within the framework of the established system and to ensure gradual reforms and refrained from attacking the AFL at the same time as it neglected the immigrants who formed the large majority of the American industrial working

class.

The SP and the "Immigrant Issue."

Thus, the party chose not to take a showdown with the Gompers line in the AFL although numerous elections in the AFL had demonstrated that the organization numbered quite a lot of socialists among its members. For instance, Max Hayes who as a socialist was running against Gompers obtained one-third of the votes at the AFL Convention in 1912. The party had no countermove to the labor unions' collaboration with the Wilson administration and the employers after 1916. As early as in 1910, the party had chosen "the parliamentary route" at the expense the endeavors to organize industrial workers. No attempt was made to translate the strong unrest characterizing the American labor market among both skilled American workers and unskilled immigrant workers into political action. On the contrary, by being silent and thus assenting, the party came to be seen as having an attitude to immigrants and blacks which did not differ much from that of the AFL. To be sure, there were many German, Jewish, Irish, and Scandinavian immigrants in the party, but the support from the other ethnic groups to a large extent came from immigrants who had already been involved in socialist activities back home and who joined the party on their own initiative. No attempt was made to attract the great majority of immigrants to the party which tacitly gradually came to endorse the AFL line in favor of limiting immigration.

These views necessarily brought the party into conflict with its ethnic branches. Unlike the SLP, the SP had from the outset realized the necessity of organizing the immigrant workers in separate sub-organizations. By 1912 the party had seven ethnic branches (Foreign Language Federations). They were relatively autonomous organizations with many local sub-organizations and had their own press, health insurance funds, book clubs, etc. Contact with the party was handled by a representative at the party headquarters. In 1912, they accounted for one-sixth of the party membership, which in 1919 had increased to one-third mainly because of the growing Eastern European Fed-

25. Based on J.B. Danielsen, *Scandinavian Immigrants in American Socialism* (SUNY-Buffalo, 1978; unpublished MA thesis).

erations. Their independence of the party was strengthened by the fact that, in financial terms, they were better off than the parent party in terms of earning from their presses, subscriptions, publishing activities, etc. As early as in 1912, the Wobblies (IWW) and the big Finnish Federation left the party, without this threatening the unity of the party. After 1917 the opposition came to be more or less identical with the ethnic organizations and moved in a clearly Bolshevik direction, particularly following the Russian Revolution and with the Russian Federation as the prime mover. However, it would be wrong to focus exclusively on the Revolution as the fundamental cause of the split.²⁶ It only triggered the latent conflicts concerning all of the organizational and political strategy which the Center-Right faction had so far disregarded or reacted to by expulsions. Subsequently the Left Wing organized in two communist parties, one the Communist Party in which the Eastern European Federations and Russian inspiration was dominant, and the Communist Labor Party which was more “American” and influenced by the IWW. Scandinavian socialists were more in tune with the latter. The SP never recovered from the drastic remedy constituted by the expulsion of the ethnic federations. By 1919 identical conflicts had been played out in the Scandinavian and Finnish Federations (the latter was expelled twice, in 1912 and 1919, respectively).²⁷

The Scandinavian Federation was founded by Swedish and Danish clubs in the Chicago area, and to begin with it recruited its members among journeymen and skilled workers who had arrived in the USA in the 1880s and '90s. Many of them had been activists in the labor union and political movement back home, something which before 1900 made them join the SLP and leave it later as a result of DeLeon's policy. These social democratic workers categorically preferred the “soft” line of the SP vis-a-vis the labor unions to DeLeon's policy of labor unions controlled by the political party; the primary effect of which had been a split in the already weak movement. Against the background of their experience in their home countries the American pattern with a total division between labor unions and party policy must have appeared artificial,

but — like the SP — they hoped to be able gradually to push the AFL in the right direction, not least by ensuring that the SP grew stronger and left its political mark both locally and nationally. This position seemed justified by the growth of the SP throughout the period before 1912 also among Scandinavian workers, one symptom of which was the fact that the Dane Christian Madsen was elected for the SP to the state legislative assembly in Illinois, as well as having a number of Scandinavian socialists elected to city councils, e.g., Rockford, Ill. and Racine, Wisc.

After 1914 the Scandinavian organization too moved towards the Left Wing of the SP. One explanation of this is that newly arrived immigrants who became activists in the clubs and in the press arrived in the USA in possession of experience gained as industrial workers and remained industrial workers in the USA. As newly arrived immigrants and industrial workers they also attributed less importance to achieving socialism through participation in the political system. Furthermore, judging by the articles they published in the press, several of them had belonged to the left wing of the movement back in Denmark. Consequently, the experience they made on arrival in the USA must have made them sympathize with the political strategy of the SP left wing, namely that of mobilizing the immigrants politically *and* in labor unions. In labor union terms, the solution would be to set up industrial unions on the IWW model, but without distancing itself from political activity in the way that this organization did. However, there was no vehement clashing with the SP leadership until a short time before the final split-up in 1919, but in the period leading up to this, the views of the Left Wing became ever more pronounced in articles and interventions and, indirectly, this position was reflected by criticism being more frequently leveled at the social democratic policy back home.

The Scandinavian Socialist Federation.

In the course of the first decade after the turn of the century socialist agitation and activism grew among Scandinavian worker immigrants so that the SP pe-

26. See James Weinstein, *The Decline of Socialism in America, 1912-1925* (New York, 1967). He especially emphasizes the Russian Revolution as the cause of the split.

27. See, Danielsen, “Scandinavian Immigrants,” pp. 31-39 (Finnish Socialist Federation).

riod was the high point of both the existence of a working-class culture among urban immigrants as of the extent of political activity formulated on the basis of the interests of this group as workers, and not just as immigrants. Both the Socialist Party and its Scandinavian Federation had their headquarters in Chicago, the center of American radicalism until the early 1920s. Many Scandinavian socialists were members of the SP itself and read its English-language press. To them, apparently, the language barrier cannot have been a problem, or if it had been one they had overcome it soon after their arrival in the USA. Thus, Scandinavians (and Danes) were well represented among the agitators who made the socialist weekly *Appeal to Reason*, the weekly with the highest circulation figure in the country around 1911.²⁸

The primary functions of the Federation were agitation and socializing for which purposes various bodies and institutions were set up. In a few big cities, and especially in Chicago, these bodies collectively constituted a political subculture in the Scandinavian immigrant community and the institutional core and the political expression of working-class immigrant culture which saw the light of day in the first few decades prior to the cessation of mass immigration which was a result of the Immigration Act of 1924. In other words the Federation was a "network" in which a number of activities were organized on the basis of a fundamentally socialist position, which had as its immediate objective the protection of the interests of immigrants in their capacity of workers vis-a-vis both the American as the Danish-American ethnic community.

As had been the case in the 1870s it was the Norwegians who set up the first socialist club, the Skandinavisk socialistisk Klub for Chicago og Omegn [Scandinavian Socialist Club for Chicago and Environs] in September 1904. The initiators, Adolph Bay, Claus Nicoll and Martin Tranmæl had been active in the labor movement in Norway (Bay and Tranmæl returned to Norway where they were to take up prominent posts in the union movement and the Labor

Party). The Danes followed suit in 1907 with the establishment of Socialistklubben Karl Marx [the Socialist Club Karl Marx], which (probably) had been independent since the split with the SLP. In addition to these, there were clubs in Kenosha, Wisconsin (Danish-Norwegian), Duluth, Minnesota and Rockford, Illinois (both of them Swedish) that convened the congress in Chicago in July 1910 at which the Skandinaviske Socialistiske Forbund (SSF) [Scandinavian Socialist Federation] was formed. It was only after 1910 that the Swedish SP-clubs in Chicago became dominant in relation to the surviving SLP-clubs. Thus, the Swedish newspaper *Svenska Socialisten* [the Swedish Socialist] was launched in Rockford, but moved to Chicago on the foundation of the Federation.

The majority and the biggest branches of the Federation were concentrated in the Midwest, in Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.²⁹ Thus, in 1911 there was only a single branch on the East Coast (Kearney, New Jersey) and on the West Coast (Tacoma, Washington). In the course of the next decade several branches were founded in these regions, but many of them only survived for a short time, and it was primarily in these geographical areas that membership rapidly declined in 1917-18, when because of its opposition to the USA entering into the war, the party was subjected to serious repression. From having six branches at the time of its establishment, the SSF gradually grew over the next few years so that in January 1917 it had 69 branches with a total of 2,297 members. During 1917 the number of branches stagnated, but the number of members kept growing to 3,735 which is primarily attributable to opposition to the war.³⁰ The same year saw an actual decline of the organization on the East and West Coast, especially in smaller towns, where the socialists were most vulnerable to the activities of patriotic activists. In the bigger cities they must have felt less isolated. Furthermore, the Midwest was generally inclined to be more pacifist. The year 1918 saw a further, general decline, which seems to have been reversed by the turn of the year

28. See James R. Green, "The Salesmen-Soldiers of the Appeal-Army," in Bruce M. Stave (ed.), *Socialism and the Cities* (New York, 1975). SSFs Annual Reports, 1911 and 1912, also note good results in getting new subscribers to the English-language press. LO Archive, ABA.

29. See Appendix.

30. Monthly Reports of Membership of Foreign-Language Federations, January 1917-March 1919. Theodore Draper Papers, Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

1918/1919, but then the internal strife set in with a vengeance.

The Press.

Naturally the printing press was the most important organ for internal communication within the "network" and externally with a wider readership. Initially, the Federation attempted to take over already existing newspapers, but only the *Svenska Socialisten*, Rockford, did so successfully. The Danish paper, the *Revyen*, in Chicago which was doing acceptably in financial terms demanded an amount which was beyond the Federation's means. As had been the case in connection with the *Arbejderen*, the editor, Christian Bøtker, soon became one of the favorite targets of the socialist newspapers. In October 1911 when it was clear that negotiations with the Norwegian paper *Gå På* [Forward] had not yielded a positive result either, the Federation resolved to launch a Danish-Norwegian *Socialdemokraten*. Both papers were launched under very primitive conditions and were totally dependent on voluntary work. Actually, the *Socialdemokraten* ran at a deficit until 1917 whereas the *Svenska Socialisten* had consolidated its financial footing by 1914. From 1917 the problems encountered by the papers were of a political nature as well as a financial. The postal authorities increased postage considerably, something which hurt small papers without their own distribution net and with a geographically widely dispersed readership. When the USA entered the war the foreign-language socialist press was encompassed by the Espionage and Trade with the Enemy Act which meant that they would have to hand in translations of all articles touching upon the war; it was left to an individual, local, politically appointed Postmaster as a representative of the Federal Government to determine whether the paper should be seized. Both the *Svenska Socialisten* and the *Socialdemokraten* were seized several times. Growing expenditure was not offset by growing earnings at a time when climbing expenses for working-class families may have affected the number of readers negatively.

Both papers predominantly depended on their sales revenues as their earning from advertising and announcements were fairly modest. The money for running the presses came from voluntary contributions that went into a Press Fund; from parties and picnics organized for the benefit of the press and, of course, from the Federation's own finances. As activities grew with book clubs, lectures, etc. and not least with the establishment of a fully owned printing house from 1914, profits made in these connections could be used to alleviate the constantly strained press.³¹

In the difficult start-up period, neither the *Svenska Socialisten* nor the *Socialdemokraten* could afford paying their editors or contributors. When it moved to Chicago, the *Svenska Socialisten* managed to employ an editor, whereas the *Socialdemokraten* was run by a committee consisting of Claus Nicoll, Otte Swensen, N. Stenhill, and K. Wittrock. The paper was completely dependent on volunteers and began publishing under very primitive conditions. However, a few months later, it became possible to appoint Frands (Ferdinand) Hurop as the paid editor. Hurop had had a long career in the labor movement (the Metal Workers Union) and in the Social Democratic Party before he emigrated in 1893.³² He practically worked his way across the American continent and finally settled as a farmer in Washington. Before becoming an editor, he had been an industrious contributor to the *Socialdemokraten* and the prime mover in a number of attempts to establish a formalized relationship between The Danish Confederation of Trade Unions back in Denmark and the immigrant organizations (see below). His arrival gave the paper a more professional look and a qualitative lift.

Hurop remained the editor until November 1916, interrupted by a year's stay in Denmark, 1913-14. He was given a job in the social democratic press, but despite his plans to remain in Denmark, he found it difficult to put up with conditions there, and returned to his position as an editor in Chicago. In subsequent letters and newspaper articles, Hurop explained the increasing split with the left wing of the Federation, which made him leave the position in order to

31. Approximately 40 to 45 per cent of the printing house earnings were derived from commercial activities, see *Svenska Socialisten*, February 14, 1919.

32. Regarding Hurop: "Oluf Bertolt" in *Dansk Biografisk Leksikon*; Wiinblad and Andersen, pp. 357-59.

be in charge of founding a farming cooperative in Virginia. After this, the views of the Left Wing gained prominence in the paper, but at the same time stability and continuity came to suffer as a result of the constant changes of editors that was primarily a result of the fact that the paper simply could not pay a living wage (when Hurop left his job he was owed several months' salary).

Agitation and Policies.

The primary task of the Federation was to agitate in favor of socialism among Scandinavian workers.³³ This appears clearly from the more programmatic contributions to the paper, the annual reports and the reviews of party activities published in 1920 in connection with the 10-year anniversary of the Federation. Participation in local and national election campaigns was largely left to the parent party. After Hurop's departure this practical division of labor developed into a conflict concerning the political and labor union strategy to be followed, something which, in the following years, was reflected by the fact that political matters were given a lower priority accompanied by a more critical attitude to party policy and a more favorable attitude to organizing workers in labor unions ("industrial unionism"). However, in those cases where a Scandinavian socialist was a front-runner and had a realistic chance of being elected, the Federation and its press took an active part in campaigning for him. Before the major elections every fourth year, the papers were issued in more copies than normally, and election campaigns were covered extensively, but in its day-to-day activities, the Federation focused on giving immigrants an opportunity to work politically despite the language barriers, in other words, it acted to promote the assimilation process under socialist auspices. At least a few times a year, agitators were dispatched on months-long journeys, especially to the East and West Coasts to recruit members and to assist in setting up local branches. In the sphere of educa-

tion and leisure time activities, the Federation itself organized various activities or collaborated with the following types of associations: choral societies, lecture associations, health insurance funds, women's and youth associations, etc.

Among individual branches attracting an interest, there are the Danish-Norwegian branches in Chicago. In 1914 these two merged and became "Afdeling Nr. 1 Karl Marx" [Branch No. 1 Karl Marx] which was followed by an increased level of activity. Together with the branches in Rockford, Ill. and Duluth and St. Paul, Minnesota, this branch was among the largest. It is described both as the best organized, active, and politically aware of the Chicago branches,³⁴ which was due in particular to the influence of the veterans from the SLP days. For instance, it set up its own (alternative we must assume) Sunday school, theater club, and women's association. Some years later, the branch acquired its own building, Folkets Hus, [House of the People] which hosted the activities of the branch as well as many Federation activities during the following years.³⁵ 'Karl Marx' survived the split of the SP and was only dissolved in 1941.³⁶

The definition of their tasks as seen by the Federation and the press inevitably brought them into conflict with the "bourgeois" immigrant organizations and the majority of Danish-American papers. In comparison with the time before the turn of the century, conflicts between them seem to have been accentuated so that there was less cooperation between socialist and "bourgeois" organizations, and the tone between the two groups became more acrimonious in their respective publications. The *Socialdemokraten* was explicit in its criticism of the picture painted by the Danish-American press both of American and Danish society. More specifically, criticism was leveled at its failure to bring any news about the labor movement in Denmark, something for which the immigrants who had been active in the movement back home felt a need. The conflict was not only a result of the separatist policy for which the socialist themselves had opted,

33. The *Socialdemokraten* and the *Svenska Socialisten* brought numerous articles on the rights (and the lack thereof) of the immigrants accompanied by appeals to acquire citizenship, vote at elections, and join a labor union as well as warnings against employers who were known as exploiters of newly arrived immigrants.

34. Bengtson, *Skandinaver på vänsterflygeln*, pg. 94.

35. See the *Socialdemokraten*, September 6, 1918.

36. According to Bengtson its archives were shipped to Stockholm. It has not been possible to verify this claim.

but also a result of the “socialist scare” which the more conservative organizations and press had taken over from the surrounding society.³⁷ Socialism was not only “un-American,” it was also “un-Danish/Swedish/Norwegian.” Behind the vehement attacks against socialism, one is aware of a fear on the part of leading Danish-American circles that this ethnic group as a whole would be identified with “radicalism” and lose its status in the ethnic hierarchical system, its hard-won respectability as “good Americans.”

This intra-ethnic conflict having been mentioned, it should also be mentioned that conflicts within the socialists’ own ranks did from time to time assume an ethnic expression. Thus, Bengtson, who for several years was the editor of the *Svenska Socialisten*, as well as Hurop indicate that ethnic boundaries could contribute towards accentuating political differences. In his memoirs Bengtson states that the Danish-Norwegian clubs tended to be more radical in their views than the Swedish, while Hurop, several years later, in the Danish *Socialdemokraten* states that the fact that the *Socialdemokraten* was written for both Norwegians and Danes did cause problems.³⁸ In neither the *Socialdemokraten* nor in the *Svenska Socialisten* did these conflicts caused by ethnicity ever surface.

Links with Denmark.

Many of the workers which were active politically and in the labor unions were, however, also members of ethnic organizations just as circulation figures clearly indicate that the majority of the immigrant workers must primarily have been readers of the liberal Danish-American press. *Den danske Pioneer* (Omaha, Nebraska) was the most important Danish-language newspaper in Chicago. However, from 1910 endeavors are made to channel workers’ interest through the ethnic organizations. Frands Hurop was the prime mover behind a proposal to establish regular cooperation between the Danish Brotherhood as

the largest Danish-American organization and the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (DsF). According to the proposal, the Brotherhood were to set up a committee which, on the basis of reports received from its 300 branches, was to keep the DsF informed (i.e. potential immigrants among its members) on job possibilities, wages, etc. If they produced their union card, immigrants in the USA would be given assistance and advice from the Brotherhood, just as the DsF undertook to assist the members of the Brotherhood. In his recommendation to the congress of the Brotherhood in 1910,³⁹ Hurop stated that most of the immigrants coming from Denmark were workers, and that the influx of them would strengthen the Brotherhood and disprove the image that the Danish public had of the Danish-American community, which was primarily based on the Danish American Society (The Rebuild Festival, etc.). In the letters he wrote to the DsF to obtain their sanction of his endeavors he also states that another motive of his was to strengthen a social democratic influence in the Brotherhood which already organized a considerable number of social democrats, and to reduce the influence of church organizations over newly arrived workers.⁴⁰ However, the proposal was not adopted as those opposing it demanded a two-thirds majority in favor, and because “a great deal of anti-Socialist sentiment was generated because of the proposal,”⁴¹ which had been adopted by a simple majority in the first instance. Later on, when Hurop moved to Chicago he initiated similar contacts with the Scandinavian Socialist Federation so that a list of its branches and the organizations with which it cooperated was published in the labor union journals.⁴² At the annual meeting of the Brotherhood in 1915 its board was finally authorized to initiate cooperation with the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions.⁴³ The World War and the changing patterns of immigration following in its wake probably prevented any further expansion of this cooperation.

37. Bengtson, *Skandinaver på vänsterflygeln*, p. 61

38. Ibid., pp. 72-73. *Social-Demokraten*, (Copenhagen), December 1, 1933.

39. *Uglen*, April 1910 (Cutting in the Archive of the Danish LO, ABA: Danish Brotherhood in America).

40. Hurop to P. Knudsen, February 20, 1909; to C. Gran, July 24, 1910. Ibid.

41. Hurop to Carl Madsen, October 16, 1910. Ibid.

42. The SSF (N. Juel Christensen) to the DsF, March 8, 1912. Ibid. DsF requested more information and practical suggestions concerning the establishment of an information agency for immigrant workers. This seems to be the last letter in that correspondence.

43. Hurop to Carl Gran, May 2, 1913. Ibid.

The Split and What Followed.

The internal split that led to the expulsion of the Left Wing from the SP in June 1919 at which time the Danish Federation was expelled together with several other ethnic federations was not caused by the Russian Revolution as far as the Scandinavian Federations were concerned, but with the party's stance on "industrial unionism."⁴⁴ Concurrently with this, official as well as unofficial repression of socialists (and communists) was intensified and culminated in the so-called Palmer Raids in January 1920. In the Scandinavian immigrant community a rabid campaign against socialists and communists was the equivalent of this.

In January 1920 following a ballot, the Federation decided with a great majority to remain independent as a propaganda organization within the Scandinavian immigrant community and affiliated to the 3rd International. Several of the leaders, however, were involved with the Communist Labor Party for which they were given prison sentences in May 1920. When the Federation congress had adopted the policy formulated by the Executive Committee, more and more members left the party, and when the Left Wing took over the press, it began to lose readers. In March 1921, the *Socialdemokraten* closed down, and it was decided to publish an English-language paper instead as the Scandinavian workers were already so assimilated that a Danish-Norwegian paper was superfluous.⁴⁵ It was published under different names (*New Age*, *New World*, and *Voice of Labor*) until 1924 and before it stopped was associated with Workers Party. However, the Scandinavian Federation which joined the Workers Party had shrunk considerably.⁴⁶

From the 1920s onwards, the typical pattern was for Scandinavian activists in the American communist party not to have any very strong affiliation to

their ethnic community.⁴⁷ In the 1930s the center of the activities of Scandinavian immigrant workers moved to New York as the Federation itself, its propaganda organization the Scandinavian Educational Society, and the successor of the *Svenska Socialisten*, the *Ny Tid* [The New Age] which was published until 1936 moved there. At the same time, another attempt was made to launch a Danish-Norwegian paper. In the late 1930s, the highest rate of activity among Scandinavian workers based on ethnic criteria was to be observed among (mainly Danish and Norwegian) seamen (Scandinavian Seamen's Club).⁴⁸ At the outbreak of World War 2, the Scandinavian Workers Federation consisted of a handful of clubs.⁴⁹ The Danish-Norwegian Karl Marx Club in Chicago dissolved itself in 1941, after which the Arbejdernes Sangforening [Workers' Choral Society] in that city was the only trace of a socialist presence in the immigrant community before World War 1 and the immigrant-worker culture from which it had sprung.

Thus, it was primarily during the two decades prior to World War 1 that we can speak of a separate working-class culture finding different organizational expression in the Danish-American immigrant culture. Structural factors can be attributed to this fact, such as geographical and social mobility as well as the cessation of mass immigration which impacted on the assimilation pattern of the ethnic groups. To this must be added more specific factors like political repression, the markedly negative attitude of the surrounding society to radical activities, the uncertain legal position of the immigrant workers, and internal dissension. Despite a certain degree of personal continuity, discontinuity in the political organization of Danish and Scandinavia workers is a far more conspicuous feature. This is particularly striking for the periods before and after World War 1. When Paul Rasmussen, a second generation Danish American, embarked upon his long

44 A more detailed description of the course of events, see Danielsen, *Scandinavian Immigrants*, p. 60 onwards.

45 Arne Swabeck to Michael Brook, 12 January 1972.

46 1923: 243 members (1.6 per cent of the party membership); the WP was the lawful entity of the Communist Party and had been established in 1921. Aivo Kostianen, *The Forging of Finnish-American Communism, 1917-1924* (Turku, 1978), p. 126.

47 This does not apply to N. Juel Christensen, but to the other prominent Danish agitators in the Communist Party, D. V. Aagaard, Arne Swabeck, Niels Kjær, Anders Overgaard.

48 See, Christian Tortzen, *S-folk og skibe 1939-45. Den danske handelsflådes historie under anden verdenskrig. Vol. I*, p. 165 onwards and 757 onwards; Vol. III, p. 46 onwards.

49 Bengtson, *Skandinaver på v%onsterflygeln*, p. 185.

political history on the American left and in the labor movement in the 1930s and 1940s, any memory of the existence of these activity had all but vanished in what still remained of a Danish-American immigrant community.^{50, 51}

50. Paul Rasmussen, Interview with Jens Bjerre Danielsen, May 22, 1980 (Copenhagen).

51. This article was first published in 1985. Since then, several new studies have been published, including some on the socialist workers in Chicago, a stronghold of Danish-Scandinavian workers. Although for this reason the article is not up to date, it remains the best overview of the activities of Danish workers for the period covered.

Appendix

I. Scandinavian Branches in the SLP (and affiliated clubs)

East:

Scandinavian Socialist Club of North NY
 Scandinavian Socialist Section of Greater NY
 Dansk Socialist Club
 Branch 2, Brooklyn
 SLP Scandinavian Section, Fordham
 Boston Section No. 7
 Scandinavian Socialist Club, Cambridge, Mass.
 Scandinavian Socialist Club, Boston
 Philadelphia

Midwest and West:

Scandinavian Branches 1, 2, 3, Chicago
 17th Ward Scandinavian Section, Chicago
 Lemont, Ill.
 Clinton, Iowa
 Racine, Wisc.
 Greenville, Wisc.
 Brainerd, St. Paul, Minn.
 Omaha, Nebraska
 Denver, Colorado

II. Skandinavisk Socialistisk Forbund (SP)

Geographic Distribution

<i>Region</i>	<i>State/City</i>	<i>1910</i>	<i>1911</i>	<i>1917 (Nov.)</i>
Midwest:	Illinois	5	18	31
	Chicago	3	-	13
	Wisconsin	1 (2?)	2	5
	Minnesota	1	-	7
	Ohio	-	-	4
	Iowa	-	-	1
	Michigan	-	-	1
East:	New Jersey		1	-
	New York		-	5
	Massachusetts		-	9
	Pennsylvania		-	1
	Rhode Island		-	1
West:	Washington		1	5
	North Dakota		-	2
	Utah		-	1
	Idaho		-	1
	Oregon		-	1
	Montana		-	1

Membership:

<i>Year</i>	<i>No. Branches</i>	<i>Members</i>	<i>Source</i>
Jan. 1911	7	216	
Jan. 1912	20	748	<i>SSF Annual Report 1911-12</i>
Jan. 1913	39 †	1012	
Jan. 1917	69	2297	
Dec. 1917	68	3735	<i>Svenska Socialisten</i>
Dec. 1918	65	2211	

†- 5 dissolved.

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