
Report by the Executive Committee, National Lettish [Latvian] Organization, SP to the National Convention, May 1912.

by C. Karklin

Published in John Spargo (ed.): *Proceedings: National Convention of the Socialist Party, 1912.*
(Chicago, IL: The Socialist Party, n.d. [1912]), pp. 244- 248.

A. Membership.

Our membership is scattered through twelve different states of the union, some of them are in Canada. It is a tremendous task to keep them together. In 1910 we had 27 clubs with a total membership of 1001; at the present moment we have 26 clubs with 983 good standing members, among them 210 women.

This decrease of membership is due to the fact that the Boston Lettish Workers' Association withdrew from our organization, as we have stated in our previous report to National Secretary Comrade J.M. Barnes. The BLWA with its 170 members, has remained, however, in the SP.

All our members are organized in branches and locals of the SP and are directly affiliated both with the state and local organizations of the party. They pay regular national, state, and local dues.

The vast majority of our members have applied for citizenship, yet few have obtained their second papers.

Last year our rival organization among the Lettish workers, the Lettish Federation of the SLP split up. Since then about 50 of its members as individuals have joined the SP, either through our branches or otherwise.

B. Finances.

During the two calendar years 1910 and 1911 our members have paid:

(1) Dues to the SP (national, state, and local)
..... \$3,272.00

(2) Dues to our branches for their local organization
..... \$1,097.37
(3) Collections and subscriptions for the Lettish Social Democracy in Russia \$1,093.35
This includes \$705.47 for the Relief Fund of political prisoners.
(4) Our branches have collected for the Political Refugee Defense League on various occasions \$244.13

C. Referenda.

In 1910 our membership adopted Referendum 1a, requiring that wives of our members not engaged directly in industrial occupations should be freed from membership dues.

For — 265; Against — 244.

In January 1911, this rule was reversed by another Referendum No. 2 vote, with 463 to 30.

Referendum 1b provides that the Executive Committee of our organization pay the printers of our semi-weekly *Strahdneeks* sick insurance of \$1 a month.

For — 279; Against — 201.

Referendum 2a provides that the accounts and funds of the Executive Committee of our organizations should be audited not by the Boston Branch alone, but by three auditors elected by our Boston, New York, and Lawrence branches, and that the auditing committee should report its findings in our paper twice a year.

For — 273; Against — 210.

Referendum 2b. That Comrades J. Klawa and J. Tomin be sent to the Chicago convention of the Socialist Party. Vote closed May 1910. Comrade Klawa elected with 345 votes, and Comrade Tomin with 234.

Referendum No. 3, Dec. 1910. Elections of New

Executive Committee.

In 1911 Referendum No. 1. Election of the editor of our semi-weekly *Strahdneeks*. In January 1911, Comrade John G. Ohsol elected with 427 votes.

Referendum No. 3. Amended slightly our constitution. Carried in May [1911] with 509 to 9.

Referendum No. 4, providing that the editor of the *Strahdneeks* be paid full wages (\$15 a week) also those weeks when, owing to holidays, only one issue of our paper is published, was rejected with 245 to 217 in September 1911.

Referendum No. 5a provides that 45 days time be granted for the discussion of proposed referenda instead of 30. Carried in September 1911, with 400 to 65.

Referendum No. 5b provides that our Executive Committee elections should be changed so as to make the committee serve for one year from April 1 to March 31, instead of the calendar year. Carried with 461 to 13.

Referendum No. 6. Election of the editor of the *Strahdneeks* for the year 1912. Elected Comrade John G. Ohsol with 437 votes.

D. Agitation and Propaganda.

The chief business of the Executive Committee of our organization is the publishing of the *Strahdneeks*, which is a 4-page semi-weekly (21 x 31 inches), and is being printed in Fitchburg, Mass. Since October 1911, once every two weeks it has a literary supplement. The number of its subscribers varies between 1200-1500, the price is \$3.00 per year. We employ two printers, two editors, and one mailing clerk.

Besides the subscriptions we have received towards the sustenance of the paper:

(1) Special dues from our members, 15 cents per capita per month, in

1910 \$1,378.76

1911 1,476.90

(2) Donations:

1910 \$250.00

1911 422.15

(3) From advertisements:

1910 \$600.00

1911 800.00

This paper is our chief propaganda and organiz-

ing medium. In fact it is the only means of keeping our members together. We are positively sure that the interest of our members in the English Socialist press is constantly increasing, as is witnessed by the discussions of our members in the *Strahdneeks*, on party tactics, and in the Haywood-Hillquit controversy, on law and order, and on our party attitude towards trade unions.

On January 1, 1912, there were 7 propaganda circles in our various branches with a total membership of 105. During the year 1911 those circles had 31 propaganda meetings.

Large agitation meetings are being held by our Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and San Francisco branches, every year on October 30th (in memoriam of the October Manifesto in Russia, 1905), on January 22nd (Red Sunday memorial), and in March (Commune memorial). Needless to add that our branches everywhere are taking active and energetic part in all propaganda and agitation work carried on by the English speaking locals of the party. Our members responded liberally to the McNamara defense fund, toward the support of the Lawrence strikers, etc.

Our Socialist book agency, now located at Fitchburg, Mass., has been in business since 1907. Its object is to supply our members as cheaply as possible with Socialist literature in Russian, Lettish, German, and English. At the present moment the total value of our book supply, both at Fitchburg and at the branches, is \$1,810.70, while in 1910 it was \$1,429.19. During the last three years (1910, 1911, 1912) we have published a fairly good sized (7 x 10 inch, 96-112 pages) Socialist Almanac, 1500-2000 copies. We hope to continue this line of work and may possibly publish some pamphlets also.

Some of our branches (Boston Lettish No. 2, New York, Chicago, Philadelphia) occasionally circulate special agitational leaflets.

One of the chief duties of our organization has been to introduce our members to the SP so as to make them permanent and active workers within the English speaking body of our party. To that end the Eastern Coast Agitation Bureau was formed by the end of 1909, comprising our ten branches in Massachusetts (Boston, Lawrence, Beverly), New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, with 536 members.

We hope to form a similar agitation bureau around Chicago before long. We have instructed our lecturer, Comrade J.G. Ohsol, to help organize such a bureau on his present lecturing trip in Chicago, Aurora, St. Louis, Cleveland, and Minneapolis. These five branches have a membership of 264.

Our Eastern Coast Agitation Bureau has arranged the following agitation trips:

1. Spring 1910, by Comrade J. Klawa, who lectured on

- (1) Darwinism.
- (2) Woman's suffrage.
- (3) Materialistic interpretation of history.

2. September 1910, by Comrade John G. Ohsol, who lectured on

- (1) New currents in the American trade unions.
- (2) The minimum wage.
- (3) The Constitution of the US vs. the working class.

3. February 1911, by Comrade K. Janson, whose topics were:

- (1) Cooperatives.
- (2) Intellectuals and Socialism.
- (3) Socialist attitude towards general strike.

4. May 1911, by Comrade G. Bernhard on

- (1) American literature.
- (2) Development of Capitalism in US.
- (3) Growth of Socialism in US.

5. In September 1911, by Comrade R. Hansen, on

- (1) Russian politics.
- (2) Socialist tactics in municipalities.
- (3) Social growth and natural growth.

6. In February 1912, by Comrade Sierin, on

- (1) The Chinese Revolution.
- (2) SP attitude towards trade unions.
- (3) Darwinism and Socialism.
- (4) Significance of Art in Life.
- (5) Materialistic interpretation of history.

Each agitation trip, including two weeks' wages (\$12.00 each) for the lecturer, has cost the bureau about \$60.00.

On December 24th and 25th, 1911, the Agitation Bureau called a conference in New York City, where among several technical details of organization and propaganda work, also some resolutions on general questions were adopted.

As the conference was merely a deliberative body, these resolutions were nothing but suggestions to our branches. All those resolutions were taken up by the branches, discussed at their meetings and in the *Strahdneeks*, and subsequently adopted as recommendations to our party institutions, subject to their consideration and approval.

We quote these resolutions here:

On the Attitude of the SP Towards the Trade Unions.

1. Whereas, For the complete emancipation of the working class from its intellectual, political, and economic bondage, both the political and the economic struggle are equally necessary, and as for the successful conduct of this struggle in nearly all countries permanent relations between economic organizations of the workers and Socialist parties have been established.

2. Whereas, In the United States the existing relations between the SP and the trade unions are very weak and sporadic.

3. Whereas, The activities of the SP members among the trade unions are unsuccessful as long as those activities are not coordinated and led by the party institutions.

4. Whereas, The members of the SP often have turned over without fight the responsible posts in the trade unions to the agents of the Civic Federation and to other opponents of class struggle, who are tying up the trade unions with capitalist politics and are resisting the spread of Socialism among the organized proletariat.

5. Whereas, The trade unions, in denying the existence of class struggle, are upholding among their rank and file the craft spirit, which splits up the economic struggle, leads to civil strife among the craft organizations, and to many lost battles of labor.

6. Whereas, Such lost battles have forced some members of the trade unions to resort to desperate means (McNamara case) which, in the first place are a demoralizing influence upon labor organizations, and second, are helping along the crusade of the capitalist organization and the government against the proletariat.

We suggest:

1. That all members of the SP join their respective trade unions.

2. That the members of the SP in each trade union come to a better understanding among each other that under the guidance of the responsible party authorities they should be able more successfully to explain from the Socialist point of view all issues resulting from the economic struggle, and thus educate the members of the trade unions to a better understanding of the class struggle.

3. That the members of the SP nominate their own candidates for responsible offices in the trade unions, especially in the referendum elections and in conventions.

4. That our comrades strive towards uniting the various mutual independent economic organizations which are acting in one and the same establishment, in one and the same industry, or in the same territory, into such centralized bodies of economic organizations as in each given case the solidarity of all workers in the class struggle requires.

5. That the central institution of the SP have to take care of establishing relations with the central bodies of the unions both during periods of great economic and political battles, and during the regular parliamentary struggle for labor legislation with the ultimate end in view that permanent organized relations between both militant bodies of organized proletariat be secured.

Resolution on Party Central Organ.

1. Whereas, The central organ is one of the most necessary means of securing the party unit in its intellectual leadership, as well as in its organization.

2. Whereas, The lack of such an organ has led the SP to confusion in theory and practice (organization), as witnessed by:

- (a) The Arizona and Missouri controversies.
- (b) The syndicalist theories preached in the *International Socialist Review*, by the campaign of slander against party institutions and party officials carried on by the *Christian Socialist*, *Provoker*, and *The Militant*.
- (c) By the sudden change of the party program in regard to our agrarian policy.
- (d) By the too frequent and haphazard referenda

about the change of our party constitution.

3. Whereas, Nearly all Socialist papers are at the present time private concerns, which require large sacrifices from individual members as well as from party institutions, but do not feel obliged to stand up for the interests of the party as a whole in many important questions.

4. Whereas, The party, owing to the absence of a central organ, is unable to take a definite stand on many important political issues and questions of tactics, because the resolutions of the National Executive Committee often give only technical hints.

5. Whereas, The present Party Bulletin, owing to its limited and dry material, can not replace a party organ.

Be it resolved:

1. That a national referendum vote be taken in order to change immediately the respective sections of our national constitution so as to empower the National Executive Committee to establish a central organ.

2. That the National Executive Committee take immediately the necessary preliminary steps toward the creation of such an organ (gathering of necessary funds, etc.).

3. That the National Executive Committee submit a detailed project on the publication of a central organ to the coming National Convention.

Resolution on the Agrarian Question.

The Conference finds:

1. That the plank demanding the Socialization of all land, which was stricken out by a national referendum of the SP be reinstated into the platform of the party.

2. That we should strongly reject any attempt of the SP to voice the interests of the farmers or some other non-proletarian social group on points not identical with those of the working class, no matter whether this be done by putting up compromising demands or by using compromising tactics.

Comment:—

Some people think that the change from private to corporate ownership of land to common ownership under the present capitalistic organization of so-

ciety necessarily involves socialization of the land.

In fact, this demand aims only to do away with speculation in land rents and proposes to pass over the rent from private landowners and corporations to social institutions. This may be realized either through nationalization of land or through municipal ownership of land. In the first case the whole nation takes over the land and manages it through its representatives; in the second case states, towns, or municipalities become landowners. In any case this measure does away with the landowning class, under whose grip whole nations are suffering at the present moment.

At the SP Congress at Chicago, [May 15-21] 1910, the farmers' committee and some speakers opposed the socialization of land, because they confused the issue. They stated that it was the duty of the Socialist Party to support the farmers as a subjugated social group. The support of the farmers, however, means the defense of their private ownership and artificial maintenance of their small households, which can not stand the competition for a large one. The farmers' committee draws no line just where the support should cease.

In the first place, this is not the duty of the SP, since it is the party of the working class and not a farmers' party. In the second place, such aim is a utopia which can never be realized. The farmers' committee at the Chicago Congress formulated not the demands of farm laborers, but those of the farmers. The so-called problems of rural development, the irrigation of farm lands, insurance of livestock, improvements, etc., are entirely out of place in a Socialist congress. Farmers' societies or agricultural development companies have to deal with those problems. We have to be on the lookout that our party should not be tied up with the demands of an economically decaying class of small bourgeoisie.

Resolution on Our Attitude Towards the Church.

The conference finds:

1. That our members ought to be enlightened about the evolution of the universe, development of mankind, and other important matters of natural science in order that any kind of superstition may be eliminated from amidst our ranks.

2. That the church and its teachings should be directly opposed where it tries to take a hand in the class struggle with attempt to bridge over the class conflict, that is:

(a) We should oppose the teaching of religion in the schools in any masked or unmasked form, since it is calculated to cultivate the spirit of serfdom among the young generation.

(b) We should oppose the mixing of religious questions into the economic strife, in the strikes, in the trade unions, at their conventions, etc.

(c) We should denounce the reactionary conduct of the servants of the church, of the Catholic bishops, of the priests of the Civic Federation, and other Socialist eaters, who are opposed to the democratization of our political institutions, who are fighting against the initiative, referendum, recall, against women's suffrage and other urgent and timely reforms.

3. The conference advises the members of the party to abstain from any anti-religious agitation within the parishes or similar religious bodies.

Comment:—

It is not our task to investigate the evolution of religious views. All we have got to state is how to carry out the plank of our party program which requests that religion be a private affair of the individual.

While large masses of the people are in complete ignorance about the most elementary parts of natural science, it is an easy task for the church to beguile the workers and to make them intellectual cripples. Once they have become such, they gladly accept the spiritual crutches extended to them by the servants of the church and thus religious beliefs gradually become a public concern, a social necessity.

In order to put a check upon the deadly influence of the teachings of the church upon men's minds, it is necessary to disseminate knowledge about nature — a task which has been entirely neglected in this country. In destroying man's superstition about nature we take away one of the foundations on which every religion rests.

The complexity and the uncertainty of our social life under capitalism breeds timidity of intellect, it furthers fatalism, which is another pillar of the church. Man has ceased to be ruler of his destiny under capitalism. To be sure there are a few gods among men,

whose purses control the destinies of millions of toilers.

Science is the best antidote against religion. Where science comes in, beliefs and creeds must give way. Instead of belief and faith we put conviction, based on freedom of conscience. Freedom of conscience is broader than freedom of belief. It includes both freedom of belief and freedom of non-belief. A man can believe what he will. He may not believe anything. Similarly, freedom of speech includes both the right to speak and the right to keep silent. Freedom of assemblage includes both the right to speak and the right to keep silent. Freedom of assemblage includes freedom to stay from meetings which you do not approve. Some members of the party (Comrade Shier in the SP Bulletin) seem to have confused notions about the task of the Social Democracy. They do not yet realize that Social Democracy has not undertaken to defend any religion, not even the Christian faith. Scientific Socialism can not be Christian or pagan, just as there is no Jewish arithmetic or Catholic astronomy.

The ethics of socialism and religion are directly opposed to each other. Christianity preaches brotherly love for all, Socialism discriminates among social classes. It preaches the class struggle among those whose interests are opposed. It does not create the class war, but it does explain it, while the church tries to conceal it. Socialism maintains that through class struggle the workers will eventually win and do away with class differences. Socialism bases all its ideals on this "sinful world;" the church can not help preaching about some other world. Socialism condemns what hurts the working class, it commends what helps to improve the conditions of the working class. The church puts its stamp of approval (good) or disapproval (bad) according to some superhuman ethics, dictated by being unknown to mankind.

The church tries to organize strikers according to their creeds, as was seen in the recent Illinois Central Railroad strike. Thus the class solidarity of the workers is impaired and their enemies triumph. The dragging in of the Carpenter of Nazareth into discussions at trade unions conventions is a silly attempt to distract the worker's attention from the main issues. The "Militia of Christ" has become an active enemy of the workers and is helping the state militia to crush the strikers. The role of the church as a strike-break-

ing agency should be made plain to the workers.

It is true that the church is struggling hard to save its vanishing power. It promises the workers to help them. We should refuse such a help. In a land where the organization of political parties and the participation in political action is free to everybody, we can not recognize any intermediaries for the attainment of our political ends.

Party members should not tolerate any political censure of their churches over their political action, and they should withdraw from such religious bodies who are opposing the decisions of our party.

Our party should not waste any time or money on anti-religious agitation within the church organizations. Where religion has really become a private affair, there is no need for our agitation. As long as the gods remain confined to their temples, they can cause no direct harm to the class struggle.

Resolution on the SP's Tactics in the Legislative and Executive Institutions.

I.

1. Whereas, The demands of the working class can best be realized and defended when the largest [possible] masses of the population are involved in the struggle for those demands.

2. Whereas, The employers in different states of the union are refusing to comply with the demands of the workers on the ground that progressive labor legislation restricting the exploitation of workers will make them unable to compete with employers in similar industries in other states; such motives are often endorsed by the people and are a stumbling block against necessary labor legislation.

3. Whereas, The centralized class struggle of the proletariat needs a broader basis in order to facilitate the conquest of the central political powers in the US for the establishment of the cooperative commonwealth.

We declare:

1. That all legislation having any bearing upon the people of the United States as a whole should be concentrated in the Congress at Washington, while at the same time the state legislatures and other legislative bodies should be made use of.

2. That it is unbecoming to reserve the right to sign the petitions of the SP solely to the citizens of the United States, since a large portion of the workers of the United States are not yet citizens.

3. That such petitions in places where there are already representatives of the SP should be presented only through those representatives.

II.

Whereas, The experiences of the proletariat in the class struggle up to the present time have demonstrated:

1. That any success in the labor legislation is directly dependent upon the organized power of the masses.

2. That the elections, generally speaking, are helpful to the organization work of the Social Democracy, but that the parliamentary struggle in a more restricted sense, is chiefly a means of agitation.

3. That the activities of representatives of the SP in legislatures are only one part of our party action, and that only the respective central institutions of the party can successfully coordinate and lead this action.

4. That in all cases the action of the SP represen-

tative in those institutions fails if it is not backed up by political action of the workers outside the legislatures.

We regard as indispensable:

1. That all steps of the representatives of our party in the said institutions, except in unforeseen cases, be taken in full accord with the decisions of the party.

2. That the leading institutions of the SP have to use all means in order to back up each important measure of the working class by mass action: by meetings, demonstrations, petitions, and similar means.

3. That all SP factions in the legislatures have to use their positions in the interest of the revolutionary agitation of the SP in presenting its demands uncompromisingly and in criticizing unreservedly the measures of the bourgeois parties and the government.

4. That any attempt of the representatives of the bourgeois parties to propagate their measures through compromising bills and through surrender of the workers' demands be condemned as being opportunistic and harmful to the class struggle.

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Edited by Tim Davenport.

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