

United States Report of the Socialist Party

To the International Socialist Congress,
Vienna, Austria—Greetings:

This report covers briefly the period since the last meeting of the International Congress, in 1910.

Membership—The membership of the Socialist party has increased substantially since 1910. The average membership for that year was 57,383. The average membership for 1913 was 95,957, an increase of 67 per cent.

The population of the United States is very mixed in character, due to constant immigration from all parts of the world and particularly from the countries of Europe. For this reason our party has to face extraordinary problems of organization. The Socialist party has provided for the affiliation of non-English speaking Socialists as separate branches of the party. These branches are known as Language Federations, and within the past four years such affiliation has been accepted by federations in the following languages: Finnish, German, Jewish, South Slavic, Polish, Bohemian, Hungarian, Scandinavian, Italian, Slovak and French. The Roumanian and Lithuanian federations are about to request affiliation. About one-fourth of the total membership of the Socialist party is in such foreign federations.

The Vote in National Elections—The vote of the party as cast in its national elections, has shown a steady increase since the beginning. The vote of 1912 is particularly significant, for the reason that it was obtained in the face of

the fact that the "Progressive party," catering to the radical element, was organized that year under the leadership of former President Theodore Roosevelt, and polled over 4,000,000 votes. The steady growth of the vote of the Socialist party is shown by the following table:

VOTE

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| 1900 | 96,931 |
| 1902 | 223,494 |
| 1904 | 408,230 |
| 1906 | 331,043 |
| 1908 | 424,488 |
| 1910 | 609,674 |
| 1912 | 901,062 |

Suffrage—The above vote is based mainly on manhood suffrage, which is provided by the Constitution of the United States for all male citizens over the age of twenty-one years. However, a residence qualification of one year is required in most states before a citizen can vote, and thus many workers who are forced into a migratory existence are denied the ballot. If these were permitted to vote, the total in 1912 would undoubtedly have been more than one million.

Woman Suffrage—Prior to 1910, four states of the Union, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah and Idaho, had granted women full suffrage on the same basis as men. Since 1910 six more states have conferred the suffrage on women, namely, Washington, California, Oregon, Kansas, Arizona and Alaska. Many other states now permit women to exercise partial suffrage, such as voting in school elections, etc.

Needless to say the Socialist party has been a prominent factor in extending the suffrage to women.

The Party Organization—The supreme authority of the party is the membership, whose will is ascertained by referendum votes. The constitution of the party must be ratified by the membership before it becomes effective. The constitution itself provides the methods by which the membership may initiate legislation on any subject.

A National Committee, composed of one or more representatives from each state, according to membership, is the governing authority of the party.

An Executive Committee, elected by the National Committee, has direct control over the activities of the party between sessions of the National Committee. All acts of the Executive Committee may be reviewed or reversed by the National Committee.

An Executive Secretary is elected each year by the National Committee. He has charge of the National Office organization and is directly under the control of the Executive Committee.

Propaganda—The question of propaganda in the United States is a most difficult one to solve. The large extent of territory, the varied economic pursuits and interests in the different sections of the country, its numerous races and languages, require methods of propaganda such as few European nations have to face. Nevertheless, the problems are being gradually and successfully solved.

The Socialist Press—The Socialist party is supported in its propaganda by about three hundred papers and magazines published in different parts of the country. Of these about 247 are printed in English, while the remaining 43 are published in the following foreign languages: Bohemian, Croatian, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Jewish, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Polish, Servian, Slovenian, Slovak, Swedish and Ukranian. Of the English Socialist organs two are daily newspapers, THE CALL, published in New York City, and THE LEADER, published in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The others appear weekly or monthly. Of the non-English papers ten are dailies. The combined circulation of all such Socialist papers probably runs from a million and a half to two million copies. These papers are published by sub-divisions of the Socialist party, voluntary associations of party members or by individual Socialists. A direct and official organ of the Socialist party as such has been established by resolution of the National Committee in May of this year. This is an innovation in the policy of the Socialist party and is expected to lead to a large extension of the principle of direct party-owned press.

Relations with the Unions—The attitude of the Socialist party towards the economic organizations of labor is best

stated in the resolution adopted at the last National Convention of the party held in 1912 and which is herewith reproduced:

Resolution

Political organization and economic organization are alike necessary in the struggle for working class emancipation. The most harmonious relations ought to exist between the two great forces of the working class movement—the Socialist party and the labor unions.

The labor movement of the United States has of recent years made marvelous progress in all directions. It has steadily increased in numbers and has reached trades and industries which were before unorganized. It has in many instances concentrated its power and increased its efficiency by the amalgamation of related trades into federations and industrial unions. Many unions have opened their meetings and journals to the discussion of vital social and political problems of the working class, and have repudiated the demoralizing politics represented by the National Civic Federation. The organized workers are rapidly developing an enlightened and militant class-consciousness.

The reality of this progress is attested by the increasing virulence with which the organized capitalists wage their war against the unions. This improved economic organization is not a matter of abstract theory, but grows out of the experience of the wage workers in the daily class struggle. Only those actually engaged in the struggle in the various trades and industries can solve the problems of form of organization.

The Socialist party therefore reaffirms the position it has always taken with regard to the movement of organized labor:

1. That the party has neither the right nor the desire to interfere in any controversies which may exist within the labor union movement over questions of form of organization or technical methods of action in the industrial struggle, but trusts to the labor organizations themselves to solve these questions.

2. That the Socialists call the attention of their brothers in the labor unions to the vital importance of the task of organizing the unorganized, especially the immigrants and the unskilled laborers, who stand in greatest need of organized protection and who will constitute a great menace to the progress and welfare of organized labor if they remain neglected. The Socialist party will ever be ready to cooperate with the labor unions in the task of organizing the unorganized workers, and urges all labor organizations, who have not already done so, to throw their doors wide open to the workers of their respective trades and industries, abolishing all onerous conditions of membership and artificial restrictions. In the face of the tremendous powers of the American capitalists and their close industrial and political union the workers of this country can win their battles only by a strong class-consciousness and closely united organizations on the economic field, a powerful and militant party on the political field and by joint attack of both on the common enemy.

3. That it is the duty of the party to give moral and material support to the labor organizations in all their defensive or aggressive struggles against capitalist oppression and exploitation, for the protection and extension of the rights of the wage workers and the betterment of their material and social condition.

4. That it is the duty of the members of the Socialist party who are eligible to membership in the unions to join and be active in their respective labor organizations.

Since the adoption of the resolution the party has had several opportunities to demonstrate the sincerity of its professions.

It has shown its solidarity with organized labor in a number of important strikes. An epochal strike was called in Lawrence, Massachusetts, among the cotton mill workers. This was conducted mainly by the Industrial Workers of the World, a small organization of syndicalist leanings. The

Socialist party was the largest contributor of funds to this strike, and the local Socialists took an active part in its conduct and management.

Great coal mining strikes occurred in West Virginia and Colorado, and in each case the party contributed liberally in money, and supported the struggles of the workers by pen and word and by all means at its command.

A desperate struggle was fought in the copper district in Michigan. Here again the party was the largest contributor, aside from the union itself.

The three last mentioned strikes were organized by unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. Thus the party has shown a determination to help the workers in their struggles, no matter what their union affiliation may be.

This policy is bearing fruit and Socialism is beginning to make its way rapidly in the trades-union movement of the United States. Within recent years a number of important labor unions, notably the Coal and Metal Miners' Unions, the Brewery Workers, the Bakers' Union, who together represent several hundred thousands of organized workers, have officially endorsed the program and platform of the Socialist party, while in many other organizations a large portion of the membership is in sympathy with the general aims of the Socialist party.

Syndicalism—Since the last International Congress a lively syndicalist agitation has sprung up among the American labor unions and its influence is also extended to a large portion of the membership of the Socialist party. The movement attained its climax in the years 1912 and 1913. In the national convention of the Socialist party of 1912 the subject of syndicalism was thoroughly discussed. The party by a large majority rejected the philosophy and methods of syndicalism and closed its doors to all persons who opposed political action or "Who advocate crime, sabotage or other methods of violence as a weapon of the working-class to aid in its emancipation."

The syndicalist disturbances within the party now seem to have been abated, and the Socialist party of America has again settled down to work along the recognized principles and methods of international social democracy.

The High Cost of Living—The high cost of living is a problem in America as well as Europe. The capitalist political parties have dealt with the subject in the usual manner, without touching fundamentals. The present president was elected upon a platform pledged to reduce the tariff, which was supposed to be causing the rise in prices. The tariff was lowered, but no benefits to the working class have resulted. All political parties are helpless in the face of this problem, except the Socialist party.

In order to appease the demands of the working class, the Constitution of the United States has been amended to permit the levying of an income tax. This is a significant concession on the part of the ruling class, but the tax is paltry and has had no appreciable effect on the workers' condition.

War—A determined effort has been made to draw the United States into war with Mexico. Those interested in the profits derived from war believe that war would alleviate the present condition of the workers, by providing employment in the manufacture of war supplies.

The working class has shown no enthusiasm for war, and the Socialist party has been among the most active and progressive factors in the United States in opposition to the threatened war with Mexico. As subsequent events indicate, our protests have not remained unavailing.

Socialism Among the Farmers—The farming population of our country is not organized as a separate political party, and its political support is divided among the various contending parties according to the special interests of the various classes of the farming community. The vast majority of American farmers are leading precarious existences. The so-called "independent" farmers who own their land begin to be restless under the ever-tightening grip of the mortgage,

the railroads, the manufacturer of farm implements and other capitalist agencies by which they are indirectly but effectively exploited, and the number of tenant farmers who hire their farms, and of farm laborers, is rapidly increasing. As a result, the farming population of the United States is inclined to become politically more and more radical. The Socialist movement already numbers many adherents among them, and the indications are that its influence will extend very considerably in the near future.

Fraternally submitted,

NATIONAL SEC'Y OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY.

WALTER LANFERSIEK.

MORRIS HILLQUIT,

Delegate to the International Bureau.