

nic tensions resulted in the Finns, led by those in Port Arthur and Fort William, to leave the Socialist Party of Canada. Desiring to provide socialists with a new national alternative, the former Port Arthur Finnish Socialist Party of Canada local called for a dominion convention to unite the various dissatisfied factions. Representatives met at the Lakehead on December 30 and 31, 1911 to formally discuss unity.

The nature of the location was symbolic. With its foot firmly in both the Eastern and Western Canadian socialist movements, the Lakehead was seen as a bridge for what many in attendance hoped was the beginning of a pan-national party. The goals of the newly formed Social Democratic Party of Canada were to educate workers "to consciousness of their class position in society, their economic servitude to the owners of capital, and to organize them into a political party to seize the reins of government and transform all capitalist property into the collective property of the working class."

The Finnish members of the new party wanted to ensure a level of independence and to avoid the problems that had led to the Socialist Party

of Canada's implosion. Following a plan first suggested by Port Arthur Finns in September 1911, they decided to form a separate yet affiliated organization of their own, headquartered in Toronto. By October, the Finnish Socialist Organization of Canada had 19 locals affiliated to the Social Democratic Party of Canada and a combined membership of 1,205. By 1914, this number had increased to 3,000 members in over 64 locals throughout the country.

The First World War years were not good for socialists in Canada. Increasingly, government agencies targeted them for their anti-war messages. The Finnish Socialist Organization of Canada in regions with a Finnish population became one of the most vocal in the protest of deplorable working and living conditions. Finnish workers soon found themselves the objects of suspicion and, particularly after the onset of the First World War, workers who had stood shoulder to shoulder in strikes before the war were divided further between those labelled "enemy aliens" and those who were not.

In response, Finns and other non-Anglo workers began to look for alternatives. They found it, for



Finnish Labour Temple. Donor: Mrs Anderson. Thunder Bay Finnish Canadian Historical Society Collection, MG8,D,1,1,A,12. Lakehead University Archives.