
Työmies Reply to Sugarman.

by Eemeli Parras †

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Superior, Wis., August 17, 1918.

Mr. Jack Carney,
Editor of *Truth*,
Duluth, Minn.

My dear Comrade:

I am asking for space for the following in your esteemed paper. Kindly grant it just as noticeable a position on the first page of your paper as you so willingly granted to Mr. Sugarman's campaign boost in your issue for the 16th inst. The article by Sugarman to which we refer contains, in addition to all the campaign boosting selected according to Sugarman's particular taste, a gross charge against the *Työmies* and it is our duty as socialists to take the very keenest interest in it. No one in the organized socialist labor movement should cast about such irresponsible charges of [such] nature — not even in the heat of a campaign.

Mr. Sugarman in his article concerning the *Työmies* — which is a newspaper owned and controlled by the Finnish Socialist locals — says, among other things, the following:

An alleged socialist newspaper called *Työmies*, a rag which gained considerable notoriety during the great Mesaba strike a few years ago by advocating scabbery, in its issue of July 23rd [1918] carried a story denouncing the State Secretary of the Socialist Party [A.L. Sugarman], the Party itself, and devoted considerable space to urging the

election of Anna Maley, one of the most reactionary socialists in the movement, to the position of State Secretary.

This paragraph contains the gross charge against our paper. Mr. Sugarman contends that *the Työmies* advocated scabbery during the Mesaba strike.

Mr. Sugarman, kindly introduce without further delay the competent proof that has entitled you to express in public such a charge! Do it in the coming issue of the *Truth*. Do it just as openly as you made the charge. Publicity is the most beneficial for a socialist labor paper in matters of this nature. We have faith in it. Therefore, do not delay, Mr. Sugarman.

Or, if you do not present the proof, then rescind the charge immediately!

We do not desire to pay attention to the other portions of Mr. Sugarman's letter. We shall simply point out that the *Työmies* for its own part has not said a word in reference to Mr. Sugarman's heated campaign for his candidate as State Secretary. Individual comrades, we admit, have written concerning it, but their articles have been accompanied by their own signatures. Comrade Askeli, Secretary of the Finnish Socialist Federation also wrote. Sugarman, therefore, should have used his staining brush against these comrades and not commenced to paint up the *Työmies*.

We have not, as we said, taken any part in the campaign, which appears to be such a sorry affair for Mr. Sugarman. We have not had the time for it. We

†- Eemeli Parras (Feb. 18, 1884-Jan. 23, 1939) was at the time of this writing an editor at *Työmies* ["The Worker": Superior, WI]. Over the course of his career, Parras also worked as an editor at the radical Finnish newspapers *Raivaaja* ["The Pioneer": Fitchburg, MA] and *Toveri* ["The Comrade": Astoria, OR]. According to historian of 20th Century Finnish North American radicalism Auvo Kostaianen, Parras was "one of the most active Finnish-American proletarian novelists and playwrights." In 1931, during his time at *Toveri*, Parras was one of several editors who was arrested and deported to Soviet Russia. This action, combined with a declining readership of the Oregon Communist newspaper, led to the termination of the publication at that time. Parras was arrested by the NKVD in 1938 on the fabricated charge of being a participant in a nationalist counterrevolutionary organization. He perished on Jan. 23, 1939.

have had more important duties. We have not even known for very long that there was a certain Mr. Sugarman. May Mr. Sugarman excuse us for that. We have just learned during the past year that the socialist labor movement in Minnesota has been ennobled with the accompaniment of Mr. Sugarman. It has given us pleasure and certainly nothing else. And then we have noted by the way that Mr. Sugarman is apparently an enthusiastic young comrade in the party. Saying it frankly, we have much sympathy toward Mr. Sugarman. We do not hesitate to admit it openly whenever the occasion arises. We have formed the opinion that Mr. Sugarman may still be a socialist sometime in the future, when he matures and is schooled. But such young and promising material should not be spoiled — by placing it in the wrong place in the activities of the party.

When Mr. Sugarman now takes up for honest consideration the charge that he has made — for one reason or another — and explains it as requested heretofore, he will show by that that he is a young man who possesses the capability to learn and understand, which, as already mentioned, gives much reason for hope.

Fraternally,

Eemeli Parras,
Editor of *Työmies*.

P.S.— I shall also take advantage of this opportunity to express a friendly request to the Editor of the *Truth*. You also, dear friend and Editor of the *Truth*, desist from the boyishness that is befitting only to a youngster, that special desire to peck which you have expressed toward the *Työmies* and which is also expressed in the remarkable willingness you have rendered in the noticeable publication of Mr. Sugarman's article. For some reason — we do not know what — the *Truth* has written against the *Työmies*. And the *Työmies* has not given any reason for it. If our paper has contained polemic articles against the *Truth* which have been provided with the signatures of the writers, then, our dear friend, the Editor of *Truth*, should not reply to the *Työmies*, but to the writers. An editor should by this time learn to comply with that most general custom in journalism. For, see here, we really have no

time to pay any interest to a “controversy” of that nature, which, on the part of the Editor of *Truth*, arises from the incomplete assimilation of the doctrines and theories of scientific socialism. We realize the paroxysm arising from that and our sympathy generally is for a patient of that kind, but we regret that we have not the time to extend it our special attention. We console our friend, the Editor of the *Truth*, in the same manner as Mr. Sugarman. The doctrines of socialism will certainly clarify themselves when you possess sufficient zeal for this endeavor.

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We leave Comrade Sugarman to supply the evidence that will sustain the charge he made against Työmies. A perusal of the columns of Työmies will bring forth ample evidence to justify the assertion made by Sugarman.

As far as our boyishness is concerned, we trust that we shall remain so for many years to come. We would most certainly dread being one of those wise old sage philosophers that hang to our movement like barnacles to a ship. We have too many in our movement whose only qualification for their job is their long membership. It is the youth of our movement that acts as a spur to the wise old men, who want to keep us where our grandfathers stood during the Civil War. Youth has its faults, it is at times impetuous, but after all, youth with all its mistakes advances farther along the road to freedom than the wise old men who are afraid to take a step.

Työmies has been criticized by us when criticism was needed, and not before, because we have more important work to do. Työmies attacked us and asked where did we come from? The reason why they ask such a question was to cause a feeling of suspicion to be levelled against us and so make our lot all the harder. We may be young, but our membership in the Socialist movement dates back to 1905. We have nothing to be ashamed of during the many years we have been with the movement.

We further criticized Työmies when they allowed Feidias to scoff and jeer at Leo Laukki when he was being persecuted by the government. We wonder how low a man can sink when he will deliberately, with malice and forethought, scoff and jeer at a man who is being persecuted for the work he has done in behalf of the workers? Feidias wrote the scurrilous attacks upon Comrade Laukki, and Comrade Parras is responsible for their being printed. We

may be boyish, but we have never been guilty of making sport out of a comrade who is in prison: Työmies some-day will recognize the fact that the members of the IWW are members of the working class, and they will also understand that the basic principle of the Socialist Party is: AN INJURY TO ONE IS THE CONCERN OF ALL. Until they recognize the foregoing, let them forever hold their peace.

*[Jack Carney],
Editor, Truth.*

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