

Socialist Labor Party Seattle Section records, 1930-1962

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Socialist Labor Party (Wash.). Seattle Section
Title	Socialist Labor Party Seattle Section records
Dates	1930-1962 (inclusive) 1930 1962
Quantity	2.73 cubic feet (7 boxes)
Collection Number	3180 (Accession No. 3180-001)
Summary	Records of a Seattle political labor organization
Repository	University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections Special Collections University of Washington Libraries Box 352900 Seattle, WA 98195-2900 Telephone: 206-543-1929 Fax: 206-543-1931 speccoll@uw.edu
Access Restrictions	Open to all users.
Additional Reference Guides	View inventory/container list
Languages	English
Sponsor	Funding for encoding this finding aid was partially provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Historical Note

The Seattle Section of the Socialist Labor Party (SLP) was founded in the early 1890's as a branch of the Socialist Labor Party of America. The SLP was founded as a Marxist political party in 1876, the first nationwide socialist party in the United States. The party promoted the doctrines of Daniel DeLeon, theorist of the SLP, which advocated a classless, stateless, industrial democracy in which private property would be abolished and all natural resources and means of production would be operated by the workers through Socialist Industrial Unions. The SLP planned to achieve its goals through national and local elections and by capturing the trade union movement. However, the party's narrow sectarian ideology, its insistence on doctrinal unity and party discipline, together with its rejection of social reform alienated it from the trade union movement. After modest success in the 1890s, the party declined and never numbered more than a few thousand. It survived however, and continued to run candidates for national and state office.

The Socialist Labor Party was the first socialist organization of any importance in the Pacific Northwest but it never established ties with the labor movement and never developed beyond a small cadre. During the period documented by these papers, 1930-1962, the Section frequently consisted of fewer than six active members and at times, particularly in the early 1950s, nearly ceased to exist. Section

Seattle experienced frequent internal dissent, occasionally expelled members and was, in 1944, itself censured, expelled from the Party and reorganized. The business of the Section was carried on by an organizer who was democratically chosen and who reported to the secretary of the State Executive Committee. The State Executive Committee answered to the National Executive Committee which was headed by the National Secretary, an office held by Arnold Peterson throughout this period. The official organ of the Party was the *Weekly People*, which the Section sold through subscriptions and newstands. Its other activities included the sale of SLP pamphlets, distribution of leaflets, lectures, classes and social activities. The SLP in Washington held an annual convention and also conventions to nominate candidates for state elections.

Content Description

Correspondence, minutes, financial records, conventions and ephemera of the Seattle branch of a Marxist, socialist political party; 1930-1962 (bulk 1943-1962).

Includes records of the Washington State Executive Committee (SEC)(1944-1962) and the Spokane Section (1943-1944). The records of the SEC Secretary consist primarily of SEC Minutes and the 1949 correspondence of Theodore Bossie, who was then SEC Secretary but also a longtime member and former organizer of Section Seattle. Bossie apparently kept his SEC files at the Seattle Section, and his correspondence coincides with a gap in the Seattle correspondence.

Major correspondents and approximate dates of service:

Section Seattle:

- George Bennett - section organizer, 1940-November 1943
- Oscar Lindberg - section organizer, November 1943-January 1945
- Ray Solie - section organizer, January 1945-July 1945
- Erven O. Hebert - section organizer, July 1945-1949
- Alexander Merson - section organizer, October 1950-August 1951
- Ray Berner - section organizer, January-July 1957
- Jack Ceder - section organizer, July 1957-July 1959
- Donald Orcutt - section organizer, August 1959-1960
- Charles W. Turner - financial secretary, 1957-1960

State Secretary:

- Frank Daniels, 1943-1944
- Al Meenk, 1944
- Theodore Bossie, 1944-1949
- Ernest O. Sturm, 1951-1957
- Henry Killman, 1957-1960

National Socialist Labor Party:

- Arnold Peterson - National Secretary
- Herb Steiner - Regional representative circa 1944

Use of the Collection

Restrictions on Use

Creator's literary rights not transferred to the University of Washington Libraries.

Administrative Information

Arrangement

Arranged in 4 series:

- Administrative records
- Primary conventions
- State Executive Committee
- Spokane Section

Acquisition Information

Gift of Budget Rent-A-Car, May 8, 1981.

The records of Section Seattle of the Socialist Labor Party were discovered in a closet of the International Order of Good Templars Hall by members of the lodge and were offered to the Library. After approval was granted by Budget Rent-A-Car, the purchaser of the property, the material was transferred to the Library in May 1981, shortly before the building's demolition. Why or when the records were abandoned is not known.

Processing Note

The records had no discernible order when they were received. During processing, records of the State Executive Committee (SEC) Secretary were discovered and were separated as a series. All the SEC minutes were put into this series.

There are unaccountable gaps in all the record series; the period 1933-1937, 1953-1956, as well as pre-1930 are completely undocumented. The records end abruptly in June 1962 without explanation. At one point, in 1952, the Section sent some of its "historical" records to the national headquarters and this may have been its practice at other times.

Separated Materials

Issues of the *Weekly People* which were received with the papers were relocated to the University of Washington Libraries' Microform and Newspaper Collection. Books from the SLP library were added to the University of Washington Libraries' main collection.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Administrative records

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		

Socialist Labor Party Seattle Section records, 1930-1962
<http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv47555>

Container(s)	Description	Dates
1/1	Organizational features	1943, 1945
1/2-2/7	General correspondence	1933, 1942-1962
	Intra-organizational correspondence	
Box/Folder		
2/8-3/20	National Executive Committee (Arnold Petersen, National Secretary)	1938-1962
3/21-25	<i>Weekly People</i>	1943-1961
	Minutes	
Box-folder-box-folder		
3/26-4/7/4/7	Section Seattle (bound volumes)	1930-1952
Box/Folder		
4/8	Washington State Convention	1943-1962
4/9	National Convention	1948, 1950, 1951, 1960
	Financial records	
Box/Folder		
4/10-5/5	Audit records (bound volumes)	1940-1964
5/6	Annual reports	1942-1961
5/7	Membership dues	1941-1949
5/8	Membership contributions	1937-1943
5/9	Miscellany	undated
	Reports	

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
5/10	Local organizer report	1943
5/11-15	Section activity report	1943-1961
5/16	Grievance committee	1949
5/17-19	Miscellany	1943-1961
Box/Folder		
5/20	Speeches and writings	undated
5/21-6/2	Newsletters	1943-1962
	Elections	
Box/Folder		
6/3	Vote tally	1943-1960
6/4	National Party Constitution	1942-1960
6/5	National Executive Committee	1942-1962
Box/Folder		
6/6-7	Clippings	undated
6/8-11	Ephemera	undated

Primary conventions

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
6/12	Minutes	1942-1948
6/13-15	Certificates of nomination and related papers	1944-1948

State Executive Committee

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
6/16-19	General correspondence	1944-1949
6/20-24	Intra-organizational correspondence - National Executive Committee	1949
6/25-7/4	Minutes	1943-1962
	Reports	
Box/Folder		
7/5	Section activity reports	1949
7/6	Biennial convention	1958-1960

Spokane Section minutes, 1943-1944

Box-folder7/7

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Political conventions--Washington (State)
Political parties--Washington (State)
Political parties--Washington (State)--Seattle--Archives
Socialism--Periodicals
Socialist parties--Washington (State)
Socialist parties--Washington (State)--Seattle--Archives

Personal Names :

Bossie, Theodore--Correspondence
Petersen, Arnold, 1885-1976--Correspondence
Socialist Labor Party (Wash.). Seattle Section--Archives
Steiner, Herbert--Correspondence

Corporate Names :

Socialist Labor Party (Wash.). Spokane Section
Socialist Labor Party (Wash.). State Executive Committee
(creator)

Geographical Names :

Spokane (Wash.)--Politics and government
Washington (State)--Politics and government--1889-1950

Washington (State)--Politics and government--1951-

Form or Genre Terms :

Correspondence

Ephemera

Financial records

Minutes

Proceedings

Titles within the Collection :

Weekly People

Other Creators :

Corporate Names :

Labor Archives of Washington (University of Washington)
(creator)

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Personal Papers/Corporate Records (University of Washington)

2007 (Last modified: 4/19/2018)



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