

RED MINNESOTA

HOW COMMUNIST ROOTS GREW TO HARD LEFT
POLITICS TODAY AND PAVED THE WAY FOR ISLAM

An Occasional Paper for the
Center for Security Policy



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21 August 2018

Minnesota is one of the most Islamized states in the Union because it is one of the most socialist states in the Union. The red paved the way for the green.

The Red Finns

Minnesota's "progressive" bent owes much to Northern European, particularly Finnish, history.

Finns settled parts of America in several waves, mostly from rural and conservative Northern Finland. It was the immigration wave from the more urban and industrialized - and left leaning - Southern Finland beginning in 1892, however, which has had the biggest impact on Minnesota.

Why did Finns come to Minnesota? Mainly for the simple reason that Minnesota, especially the bleak Iron Range in the North, reminded them most of home.

Finland still belonged to Russia at the time. Rejection of "Russification" and a fear of conscription into the Czar's army drove immigrant numbers even higher after 1898. The failed Russian revolution of 1905 drove even more leftist Finns overseas, to escape Czarist retribution. The communist-influenced failed General Strike of 1917 sparked another wake of leftist Finnish emigration.

According to historian Marianne Wargelin:

Twentieth-century emigration from Finland is divided into three periods: before the General Strike; after the General Strike and before World War I; and between World War I and the passage of the Immigration Restriction Act. Before the General Strike, the immigrants who settled in the States were more likely to be influenced by the concepts of Social Democracy. After the General Strike, the immigrants were largely influenced by the use of direct force rather than political action to resolve social problems. Immigrants after World War I—now radicalized and disenchanted from the experience of the bloody civil war—brought a new sense of urgency about the progress of socialism.¹

According to Mary Losure and Dan Olson of Minnesota Public Radio:

By one estimate, a third of the Finns on the Iron Range in 1913 were socialists. In the 1930s, 40 percent of the total membership of the American communist party nationwide came from one small immigrant group - the Finns. Gus Hall, the longtime head of the American Communist party, came from a Finnish farmstead on the Iron Range.²

The Iron Range was dotted with Finn halls, centers for both socializing and political plotting. The famous Iron Range mining strikes were organized in the halls. Socialists newspapers such as *Tyomies* ("Working Man") were widely distributed.



The Finnish cooperative movement grew into the largest working retail cooperative in the country, lasting into the 1960s... Although it was eventually split by political differences, in its early years, the movement was unabashedly left-wing, as a glance at the goods lining the shelves showed. They had the red star, the blue star, and the yellow star and all of them had a sickle and hammer. The Central Cooperative Exchange truck had a big sickle and hammer on its side of the truck when it drove around Duluth and Superior.³

Conservative politicians were immediately at a disadvantage in Minnesota. While many big cities in the Midwest leaned left, conservatives in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois could usually rely on the rural heartland for votes. In Minnesota, a large chunk of the rural vote was further left than the cities. Even today, the very socially conservative rural northern Minnesotans still tend to vote for the Democratic-Farmer-Labor-Party.

Minnesota Socialist Party

The Socialist Party of Minnesota was founded in 1899. It was affiliated first with the Social Democratic Party of America, then the Socialist Party of America, and in more recent times, to the miniscule - but very militant - Socialist Party USA.

After 1905, the Socialist Party grew in Wisconsin, Oklahoma, Oregon, North Dakota, Washington, New York, and Minnesota. When Socialist Party leader Eugene Debs ran for President 1912, he got 6% of the vote. Half of the counties he carried nationwide were in Minnesota.

World War 1 split the Socialist Party into pro-war and pacifist factions. When the FBI exposed extensive Soviet-backed subversion in the US in the 1920s (the first “Red Scare”), it made it tough to be any kind of leftist. The party still survives as a militant sect but lost much of its membership to the Farmer-Labor Party in the 1920s.

Farmer-Labor Party

Founded in 1918, the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party grew to dominate Minnesota politics during the Great Depression. At its height, the party boasted three Minnesota Governors, four US Senators, eight US Representatives and a majority in the Minnesota legislature. The party campaigned for farmer and labor union protection, state ownership of some industries, and social security laws.⁴

At times, Minnesota’s Communist Party dominated the state through its heavy influence inside the Farmer-Labor Party.

According to leading historian of American communism, Harvey Klehr:

Minnesota was an important battleground, for in no other state did Communists and Communist sympathizers play so prominent a political role. Although Communist-party membership never went much above 2,000, it included key political activists and influential union officials, particularly in the CIO, and had an established base in the Finnish

communities of the Iron Range. Party allies included Governor Elmer Benson and the faction of the state Farmer-Labor party which he led.

Things really took off after 1935, when the Communist International's Seventh World Congress ordered communist parties worldwide to form common cause with moderate leftist parties to fight the growth of Fascism. In America this led to communist support for, and infiltration of, the Democratic Party and FDR's New Deal.

Years of revolutionary posturing and denunciations of Farmer-Laborites as 'social fascists' gave way to an effort by Minnesota Communists to snuggle up to Governor Floyd Olson. After a secret meeting with party leader Earl Browder, Olson lowered the bars to Communists. Like John L. Lewis, who recruited Communist organizers for the CIO, he was convinced that he could use them for his own ends.

Had Olson lived, the Communists might have remained a very junior partner in his coalition. He died, however, in 1936 and within two years Communists had become a major force in the FLP. Elmer Benson, elected governor in 1936, was politically inept, personally sympathetic to the Communists, and much more dependent on them than Olson had been. Small Farmer-Labor clubs were overwhelmed by an influx of disciplined Communists. CIO unions led by Communists, including the United Electrical Workers and the International Woodworkers, provided another source of party influence.⁵

In 1944, Hubert H. Humphrey and Elmer Benson worked to merge the party with the state's Democratic Party, forming the contemporary Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party (D-F-L). The communists were really in the driving seat now.

It was not to last long. Appalled by President Truman's "cold war" policies after WW2, and under strong pressure from the D-F-L moderate wing, the communists made a huge blunder in 1948. En masse they left the D-F-L to support Henry Wallace's ill-fated Progressive Party. Wallace's party crashed in the 1948 election and the communists were out in the cold. The communists would return to the D-F-L over time, but never with the same influence they had in the immediate post-war period.

In recent years, the Communist Party USA in Minnesota has been whittled down to a few dozen members, with localized influence, but in the mid-2000s, CPUSA Minnesota chairman Erwin Marquit played a strong role in electing Congressman Keith Ellison.⁶

In recent years, Mark Froemke, a communist Minnesota labor leader has enjoyed good terms with Governor Mark Dayton and former Senator Al Franken.⁷

The Wellstone Movement

Though his career was cut short in an October 2002 plane crash, the late Senator Paul Wellstone had a great and lasting influence on Minnesota politics.

Wellstone is still an iconic figure in Minnesota, and not just on the left. He was populist, and popular, right across the state.

A college professor turned politician, the Minnesota senator's fiery speeches and dogged campaigning for progressive reform earned him the title 'the conscience of the Senate.' The first Senate vote he cast, in 1991, was to oppose U.S. military action in the Persian Gulf. Eleven years later, he cast his last vote against a resolution authorizing President George W. Bush to use force against Iraq.

Soon after he died, cars in Minnesota and elsewhere began sporting green bumper stickers that read, 'W.W.W.D. What would Wellstone do?'⁸

Wellstone was close to the Marxists of Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) throughout his whole political career.

In an article posted in 1990 from the DSA publication *Democratic Left*:

Twin Cities DSA in Minnesota continues its resurgence with ongoing support of Paul Wellstone's campaign for the Senate seat currently held by Republican Rudy Boschwitz. Local activists are doing literature drops and helping to raise money for this watershed campaign...As a professor at Carlton College, Wellstone has mentored many DSA Youth Section activists...Contributions, made out to Wellstone for U.S. Senate, can be sent to the DSA national Office and will be forwarded to the campaign.⁹

The Twin Cities DSA local put most of its time and energy in the Fall of 1990 into Paul Wellstone's successful campaign for the Senate and called him "explicitly democratic socialist in orientation." Wellstone was also the faculty advisor to the Young Democratic Socialists group at Carleton College.

In 1996 Washington DC DSA leader Christine Riddiough was dispatched to Minnesota to assist Wellstone's campaign:

Rudy Boschwitz, branded Wellstone 'embarrassingly liberal.' As the campaign intensified, Boschwitz became increasingly negative in his ads. In the last days before the election, he claimed that Wellstone had burned the American flag in the '60s.

Before I got to Minnesota, the race was neck and neck, but in that last week before the election-coinciding with DSA's active involvement-Wellstone pulled out to a strong lead, finally winning by nine percent. While I was there, I worked with the campaign's superbly organized grassroots efforts. I concentrated on organizing DSA members and members of the gay and lesbian community to round up volunteers for Wellstone. Then I rolled up my sleeves for endless rounds of calls to Wellstone supporters to make sure they got out to vote.¹⁰

In 2000 Minnesota DSA decided to focus:

All of its efforts as a group the next two years on reelecting Senator Paul Wellstone, who is closest to DSA's ideology. Although divided on Gore vs. Nader, they are 100% united

behind Wellstone. Wellstone is being targeted by the Republicans and Bush administration for defeat...¹¹

DSA's only national electoral project in 2002 was Wellstone's Minnesota Senate Election. Their partisanship actually got them in trouble with the IRS.

Together with YDS, DSA's Youth Section, we are mobilizing to bring young people to Minnesota. Minnesota is one of the few states that allow same day voter registration. We will focus our energy on registering young people. Wellstone will need a high percentage of young people to register and vote for him if he is to stave off the campaign that Bush and the Republicans have orchestrated against him. He is the right's number one electoral target.

Because we are focusing on issue-based voter registration, this electoral work can be supported by tax deductible contributions and the DSA FUND is soliciting such contributions to support this project.¹²

After complaints from conservative groups, both DSA and the DSA Fund received IRS letters threatening their tax-exempt status.

In our case, the right-wing Minnesota Tax Payers League charged that the small non-partisan voter registration drive we organized actually consisted of an attempt to bring out-of-state students to Minnesota to illegally vote for Democratic Senate candidate Paul Wellstone. The Drudge Report ran with the charge, and Fox News spread it further ...Other right-wingers then tried to stir up more controversy, charging that we organized an illegal partisan voter registration drive.

DSA members around the country contributed thousands of dollars to pay Harmon, Curren, Spielberg & Eisenberg, a Washington, DC firm to defend the charges.

After more than a year of filing, responding and waiting, we finally have received our closure letters. The IRS has accepted our 2002 returns and our explanation of the voter registration project. They also said formally that our tax-exempt status was not in jeopardy.¹³

After Paul Wellstone's death, his legacy continued through Wellstone Action,

Founded in January 2003, Wellstone Action's mission is to honor the legacy of Paul Wellstone by continuing their work through training, educating, mobilizing and organizing a vast network of progressive individuals and organizations.¹⁴

And organize they did!

Wellstone Action's Advisory Board included DSA members Frances Fox Piven and Deborah Olson. Actors Robert Redford and Warren Beatty also served, as did economist Robert Reich, labor leaders Andy Stern (SEIU), Gerald McEntee (AFSCME), and Richard Trumka (AFL-CIO). Leading Democrats included Heather Booth, Donna

Brazile, Wisconsin Senator Russ Feingold, Iowa Senator Tom Harkin, former Presidential candidate Bill Bradley, and Georgia Congressman John Lewis.

Also, on the roster was a Who's Who of Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party heavy hitters:¹⁵

- Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton
- Minnesota Senator Al Franken
- Minnesota Congressman Keith Ellison
- Ellison's chief of staff Kari Moe
- Former Presidential candidate Walter Mondale
- Minnesota State Representative Mee Moua
- Minnesota Secretary of State Mark Ritchie
- Minneapolis Mayor RT Rybak

Pre-congress, Keith Ellison was a Wellstone Action trainer. Among the thousands of Wellstone Action graduates were former New York Congressman John Hall, a still-serving Iowa Representative, Dave Loebsack, and Minnesota Representative Tim Walz – who is now standing for Governor of Minnesota.¹⁶

A few years ago, Wellstone Action merged with the very well-funded non-profit Progressive Majority to become simply “Wellstone”.

Freedom Road Socialist Organization

Freedom Road Socialist Organization is based in Illinois and Minnesota. Confusingly, it sprang from a 1999 split in the original Freedom Road Socialist Organization (now known as Freedom Road Socialist Organization /Organizacion Socialista del Camino para la Libertad). While still calling itself the Freedom Road Socialist Organization, it publishes a magazine called FightBack! and is sometimes referred to as Freedom Road Socialist Organization/FightBack!.

Freedom Road FightBack! is strong in Minnesota student and labor politics. It also has successfully infiltrated the nearly 40-year-old and very influential Minnesota “peace” organization, Women Against Military Madness (WAMM).

According to the Committee in Solidarity with the People of Syria, writing in 2015:



For the last three years, the presence of members of the Freedom Road Socialist Organization, a dogmatic Stalinist sect, on WAMM's board and the influence of their ideology has resulted in increased intolerance from the WAMM board towards anyone with a differing viewpoint.

Freedom Road has publicly taken a position in support of the Assad government in Syria. FRSO leader Joe Iosbaker has stated that "the Syrian government ought to be defended". He traveled to Syria in June as part of a delegation to certify Assad's fraudulent re-election in the midst of the bloodiest war on the planet. Iosbaker returned to claim that he had witnessed democratic elections where Assad was "given the mandate by the people of Syria".

While WAMM for decades was a respected democratic, feminist organization, its recent actions have abandoned those roots and generated discord within the Twin Cities peace community.

Through WAMM, Freedom Road/FightBack! has access to many "mainstream" Minnesota politicians, including Senator Amy Klobuchar (another Paul Wellstone protégé). Freedom Road FightBack! has long been supportive of the terrorist/communist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), so reducing US support for Israel is high on their agenda.

In 2009, Roxanne Abbas, of Women Against Military Madness, helped found the Minnesota Peace Project.

Several WAMM members are leading the development of a statewide network of peace activists and groups with the working name "the Minnesota Peace Project" to influence foreign policy through their elected officials in the U.S. House and Senate. The group, which is organized by Congressional district, plans to use dialogue techniques to build a mutual understanding of each other's views and to present documented information from reliable sources to build credibility...

Keith Ellison and Wellstone Action have both offered to conduct a training session on lobbying techniques for group members.

A meeting was held with Amy Klobuchar aides to present the Peace Agenda and to exchange perspectives on the Israel/Palestine conflict.¹⁷

In the early morning of Sept. 24, 2010, FBI agents raided homes in Chicago and Minneapolis, issued subpoenas to 14 activists, and tried to question others around the country, including prominent antiwar organizers in North Carolina and California. Almost all those arrested were Freedom Road/FightBack! members or supporters.

Investigators were looking for possible evidence of "material support" for Colombian and Palestinian groups designated by the U.S. government as terrorist organizations.

As Freedom Road/FightBack! members often wrote of their contacts with officially designated terrorist organizations, the PFLP, and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the FBI had ample grounds for suspicion.

The arrestees fought back.

The apparent targets, all vocal and visible critics of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and South America, deny any ties to terrorism. They argued that the government, using its post-9/11 focus on terrorism as a pretext, is targeting them for their political views.

They are “public non-violent activists with long, distinguished careers in public service, including teachers, union organizers and antiwar and community leaders,” said Michael Deutsch, a Chicago lawyer and part of a legal team defending those who believe they are being targeted by the investigation.¹⁸

Freedom Road/FightBack! quickly formed the Committee to Stop FBI Repression. The Committee “organized phone banks to flood then-Attorney General Eric Holder’s office and the White House with protest calls, solicited letters from labor unions and faith-based groups, and sent delegations to Capitol Hill to gin up support from lawmakers.”

On November 5, 2010, Minnesota Congressman Keith Ellison held a meeting with five of the activists who were raided by the FBI.

Tracy Molm, a Freedom Road/FightBack! member, and arrestee, who “observed” the PFLP on a 2004 visit to Palestine described the meeting with Ellison:

[We asked Ellison to write] a ‘dear colleague’ letter to Obama directly... He said that he's going to look into a ‘dear colleague’ letter and try to get other progressive people in Congress to sign onto it also.¹⁹

In mid-November 2010 Freedom Road/FightBack! supporters spent two days meeting with U.S. Representatives on the case. The delegation asked each Congressperson to sponsor a “Dear Colleague” letter condemning the raids and grand jury subpoenas. In the two days, the delegation met with either the Congressional Representative’s staff or the Representative themselves

Rep. Ellison and his Congressional staff met directly with the delegation. They sent a letter to U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, expressing concern over the situation and is continuing to work on options to support his constituents affected.

“The fact that we were able to interact with 16 legislative aides or Congress people themselves, during an extremely busy time of restructuring leadership in the Congress, exemplifies the attention this matter is receiving”, stated Freedom Road/FightBack! leader Joe Iosbaker.²⁰

Just like phase two of the Holy Land Foundation trial, the investigation was eventually shelved, and no one was ever prosecuted.

Democratic Socialists of America

Parallel to - and often overlapping with - Minnesota's communist movement, is America's largest Marxist organization, the Democratic Socialists of America. DSA was formed in 1982 out of the remnants of the Socialist Party, Students for a Democratic Society, and the Communist Party USA.

Right from the start, DSAers worked inside the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party in Minnesota.

Twin Cities DSA leader Corbin Kidder was a life-long and active member of the D-F-L, where he served as a Precinct Chair, Senate District Officer, and member of the Central Committee of the Saint Paul D-F-L and Minnesota State D-F-L. He was an active member of the D-F-L's Feminist Caucus.²¹

Another DSA comrade, Michael Paymar, was a D-F-L State Representative from the St. Paul area for many years. Many other state legislators were at least DSA "fellow travelers".²²

The Twin Cities DSA local also started a Social Democratic Action Caucus inside the D-F-L. The SDA canvassed for Governor Mark Dayton and Al Gore in the 2000 elections.

Later in the 2000s many Minnesota DSAers were active inside the D-F-L Progressive Caucus.²³

DSA exploded during the 2016 Bernie Sanders presidential campaign and went nuclear after President Trump was elected. From a few dozen members statewide, today DSA has approximately 460 members in the Twin Cities local chapter, 50 in Duluth, 10 in Rochester, and around 75 in the Fargo North Dakota/Minnesota border area. These are not huge numbers, but given that these people are active in the labor movement, student activism, social movements, non-profits and churches, it is more than enough to make a coordinated impact inside the D-F-L.

DSA comrades have been active in many local electoral races and are directly trying to influence D-F-L policy.

Nevertheless, in Minneapolis, one cannot affect policy without engaging with the DFL. So, to kick off Twin Cities DSA 3.0, we will be introducing, through our Minneapolis resident members, three resolutions in the DFL precinct caucuses to be held in Minneapolis on April 4, 2017.

One resolution will ask the DFL to support the Minneapolis City Council in exploring the option of creating a municipal bank, as a profound way to break its relationship with Wells Fargo, an institution that conflicts with its values on many levels.

Another resolution will be directed toward asking the city to consider an expanded definition of its “sanctuary city” status. This is something a number of other progressive cities have recently been moved to do, due to the increasing severity of immigration laws and their enforcement to be expected from the new administration.

Still another resolution will ask the DFL to direct the city to put opposing the pre-emption legislation currently in the Minnesota Legislature very high on its legislative lobbying agenda. Pre-emption is a catch-all term for state efforts to prevent cities from passing their own wage, hour and working condition laws that are more labor-friendly than those of the state.²⁴

Minnesota’s “mainstream” left, is now policy-wise, almost identical to the hard left.

Conclusion

The left has been infiltrating mainstream Minnesota politics for decades. Today Minnesota’s D-F-L is one of the most far left Democratic Party organizations in the nation.

Minnesota’s educational institutions, media, churches, cultural institutions, and businesses have all suffered from the same influences. Every element of the Minnesota left, from the Communist Party USA and Freedom Road/FightBack! through DSA and the D-F-L, has built bridges to Minnesota’s Islamic community.

The Minnesota left can be relied upon to promote and defend Islamic activists at every opportunity. Minnesota’s Marxists and socialists have prepared the way for Islamization. That process is now at a tipping point. Minnesotans are in the middle of a last-ditch battle to save their state.

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