



KARL EMIL NYGARD

Minnesota's Communist Mayor

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AT A PREGNANT MOMENT IN TIME, a young Swede-Finn from a small town in the heart of Minnesota's Cuyuna Iron Range made history. When Karl Emil Nygard was elected mayor of Crosby on December 6, 1932, he became the first Communist mayor in the United States.¹ His triumph was no accident. It was the culmination of years of radical activity on the iron range.

Nygard was born on August 25, 1906, in Iron Belt, Wisconsin, to John and Lena Johanna "Jenny" Nygard, both Swedes who had emigrated from Finland. John Nygard entered the United States in 1886 and became an iron miner in Michigan. Lena arrived in 1891 and married John in May 1892 in Ironwood, Michigan. In 1894 their daughter Jennie Amelia was born in Wisconsin. Daughter Anna was born in California in 1899. A year

Young Karl Emil Nygard, 1930, before becoming mayor of Crosby, and a gathering of Communists at the state capitol, St. Paul, 1931



later the family was in Iron Belt, where sons Iver John, Emil Carl (later known as Karl Emil), Leonard Otto, and Sigfred Arthur were born. Three other children were born and died before 1910.²

In 1911 the Nygard family moved to Crosby in Minnesota's Crow Wing County, where John began work in one of the mines on the new Cuyuna Iron Range. On April 11, 1911, the first 42 cars of ore left for Superior, Wisconsin, and by the end of the year the range had shipped more than 147,400 tons.³

As the mines opened, small "location" town sites developed near the shafts. Crosby, the largest of these, was different than the others because it was platted and developed as a planned community. When the Nygard family arrived, the town was well on its way to being a settled, prosperous community of ethnic neighborhoods; people from diverse backgrounds were learning to get along with each other.⁴

In 1912 John Nygard purchased a home for \$700 on two lots in the Lakeview section of town. On the three-block-long street lived 12 Finnish, 6 Swede-Finn, 2 Swedish, and 10 native-born or mixed families, as well as some Serbian, French-Canadian, Italian, British, and Dutch households. Nygard was one of 30 adult males on his street; 21 of them were miners.⁵

When Nygard went to work on the Cuyuna Range, the mines were underground operations where miners worked in contract gangs on ten-hour shifts. Each contractor had to supply his own equipment and was expected to do all necessary timbering and track laying on his own time without pay.⁶

The contract system was a primary reason for labor unrest. The first strike on the Cuyuna range occurred in April 1913, when workers in the Inland Steel, Rogers-Brown Ore, and Iroquois Iron mines demanded, among other things, the end of the contract system. The strike was soon settled amicably. Three years later, the mines were struck again, this time in sympathy with workers on the Mesabi range who were engaged in a bloody struggle with United States Steel. This strike ended in defeat on September 15, 1916, with no guarantee that strikers would get their jobs back if they did not renounce their membership in Crosby Mine Metal Workers Indus-

trial Union Local 490 of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).⁷

The 1916 strike made a strong impression on Karl Nygard who had his tenth birthday while it was underway. He later wrote in the Communist newspaper for children, *New Pioneer*: "STRIKE IN THE MINES! . . . Streets were filled with men, women and children. Deputies! Gun Thugs! Special Police!" He recalled, "Banners were displayed. Striking miners and miners' wives marched in protest. . . . Through lines of deputies and gun thugs we marched and cheered the solidarity of labor. What a grand day that was for me."⁸

Nygard's memories probably were colored by the Communist ideology of the 1930s. He did not become a radical for many years, but there is little doubt that, over time, he and other local activists developed a deep-seated suspicion of the Crosby police. Their attitude toward strikers surely influenced Nygard's ideas about law enforcement.

In the aftermath of the strike, an uneasy peace descended on the range. Local Finns transformed their Workers' Hall from a Socialist refuge to an IWW haven that would become the focal point for Communist activity in the area.⁹

The mining companies raised wages at the end of 1916, but continued anger over economic injustice led to strikes in 1917 that usually involved one or two mines and local grievances. The primary focus of the workers' outrage, however, was America's participation in World War I, and some strikes protested conscription. Officials' responses seem to have fed a growing radicalism on the range. On June 7, 1917, for instance, 18 workers walked off the job at the Croft mine to protest the arrest of Otto Johnson, secretary of IWW Local 490, who refused to register for the draft. The protestors were promptly arrested and questioned, and six Finns were held for failing to register. The next day about 200 miners joined the

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Ten-year-old Nygard confronting a deputy during the 1916 strike in William Siegel's New Pioneer illustration; (below) Inland Steel's Pennington open-pit mine, adjacent to the underground Armour No. 1, Crosby, 1917.

brief protest. The jailed Finns sent an impassioned letter to their comrades, saying that they had not been “obedient enough nor cowardly to submit to registration and from there to be killed or to kill for the good of the world’s largest and most evil capitalist class and its filthy greed.”¹⁰

Two months later, 350 miners, mostly Finns, voted to strike for higher wages and overtime pay, better working conditions and facilities, and the end of the contract system and of discrimination against union members who went out on strike. A similar strike had begun a week earlier on the Gogebic Range in Wisconsin and Michigan and briefly spread to a few mines on the Mesabi Iron Range. The strike surprised the “lords and masters” in Crosby and also initially attracted the support of many ethnic groups. It soon failed on the other ranges, and the



Cuyuna miners were left to fight on alone. As a result, the strike ended quietly on August 18.¹¹

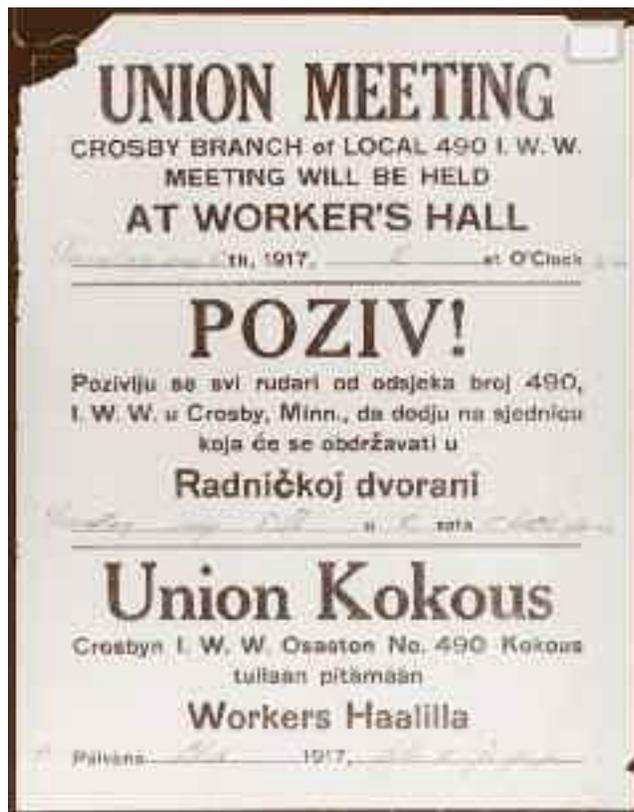
By this time, the militancy of the Cuyuna miners was apparent. As the editor of Duluth's Finnish-language *Industrialisti* wrote, "The Cuyuna range is known now as the most rebellious of Minnesota's iron ranges"; it was there that "workers had dare[d] to demand improvements in worsening work conditions." Men like Matt Tomljanovich, held for trial in the 1917 strike, and Peter Smiljanich, whose wife, Angeline, was arrested in the 1916 strike, would later ally themselves with the Communist Party.¹²

IN HIGH SCHOOL, Karl Nygard became interested in the Farmer-Labor Party "like many thousands of working class youths," he later wrote. He graduated in 1923, part of the largest class in the town's short history.¹³ Between his graduation and the stock market crash six years later, Nygard slowly became more radical as he scrambled to get an education and earn a living and as he witnessed the ongoing struggle for social and economic justice between laborers, their employers, and the government.

His journey began in Chisholm's Dunwoody mine in the summer of 1923. His brother-in-law, John Smith, worked in the pit, and Nygard probably lived with his sister Anna and her family. For ten months he worked illegally—he was only 16—and saved \$600.¹⁴

In September 1924 he enrolled in the University of Minnesota to study chemistry. "At last my greatest hopes had been realized! I was to study the mysteries of science . . . to devote my life in the interest of mankind," he later wrote in the *New Pioneer*. "By spring I was living on oatmeal and stale baker's buns. I washed windows, tended furnaces, shoveled ashes, anything and everything to get a few pennies for bread." When the spring term ended, Nygard quit school. "I was dizzy with hunger. Weak from lack of sleep. I took one last look at the stately buildings, threw my books into a garbage container and walked northward."

Even though he left the university forever, he had discovered a new political philosophy. "There were quite a number of communists, especially in the sociology department," Nygard remembered. He traveled toward home on a freight train, was thrown off in Staples, and hitchhiked to Crosby. Unable to find a job there, he



Poster in Serbo-Croatian and Finnish as well as English, 1917, collected by the Minnesota Commission of Public Safety, an agency that monitored suspected radical activity

worked in the harvest fields of North Dakota and, during the winter of 1925, in a northern Michigan copper mine. The next summer he returned home and got a job in an underground mine. Eventually laid off, he found work at a cement company in LaSalle, Illinois. He labored there for a year, lived in a work camp, and earned \$4.65 a day. Nygard later wrote in the *New Pioneer* that working in Illinois helped him understand the "conditions of labor throughout the middle west."¹⁵

When Nygard returned to Crosby in 1929, committed to improving the lives of his neighbors, he became an organizer for "the union of all workers" while working in the Armour No. 1 mine. This was probably the Communist Party's National Miners Union, which secretly operated on Minnesota's iron ranges at the beginning of the depression. Soon after the stock market crash, Nygard began to wonder why working people had to struggle so hard to make a living.



Miners at Ironton, near Crosby, about 1925

I couldn't understand in this rich, wonderful country of ours . . . that we couldn't live a decent life. Those that worked . . . and struggled to produce the wealth in this country were kicked out into the street. . . . The only assistance that you could get was go to the city council and tell them your family was hungry and starving. Most likely they would give you a \$10 grocery order.¹⁶

Nygaard's words explain the town system of poor relief that operated in Crow Wing County in 1929. Crosby could pay for board and care, provide transportation, pay rent, and furnish supplies, clothing, food, medical care, and burial of the poor. Direct relief was not allowed; all bills for assistance had to be approved by the Village

Council or an individual council member. The county reimbursed Crosby for 75 percent of its "poor" expenses.¹⁷

Nygaard's questions led him to study what he called the "Russian system. . . . To most Americans, that was something terrible." He compared the Soviet and American systems, read Marx, Engels, and Lenin, and became convinced that financial interests controlled the American government. He believed those interests had effectively silenced the voices of working people. He finally joined the Communist Party sometime before November 1930. By then, he no doubt agreed with Communist Party USA (CPUSA) directives that Minnesota Farmer-Laborites were dangerous social-fascists who opposed the interests of the workers.¹⁸



NYGARD'S POLITICAL STUDIES led to his first run for public office in 1930. Because candidates for municipal posts ran without party designation, it was unlikely that many people knew that one of the candidates for president of the Village Council (mayor) was a Communist, especially since his father was “a good strong Republican.” His political advertisement in the *Crosby Courier* hinted at things to come when he appealed for support from the “progressive, liberal and laboring elements” and added that he was “unhampered by political alliances, and free from partisan promises.” His opponent, incumbent Mayor F. H. Kraus, pledged to “do my utmost by giving all a square deal.”¹⁹

Unemployment in 1930 was not yet a major concern, and voters were not in any mood to make a change. All

of the incumbents won; Kraus defeated Nygard by 250 votes out of 1,030 cast.²⁰

Nygard filed for office again in December 1931. By then, unemployment was becoming a problem as the tonnage of ore shipped declined and three more mines had shut down, laying off an additional 220 men. Still, the people of Crosby were not ready to make a young radical the mayor. Although Kraus won by only 48 votes, Nygard's base of support was virtually the same as in 1930. A third candidate had caused the tight contest.²¹

In the months after the election, suffering on the range increased, and hopes for a recovery faded quickly. In July 1932 Inland Steel announced that two of its biggest mines, Armour 1 and 2, were closing. (John Nygard, aged 69, retired that year, possibly because of the closures.) That fall, Armour No. 1 took 100 men back and Pickands-Mather temporarily called in 160 workers as a “relief measure” to “protect employees, from need and suffering” during the winter. The people of the Cuyuna hit bottom in 1932—employment had declined by 51 percent since 1929 and ore shipments by 96 percent.²²

Throughout 1932 news about local relief activities competed with the bad news from the mining companies. In February the *Courier* announced that the volunteer Emergency Relief Committee had raised enough funds to meet its budget through May 1. At the end of September, it had only \$101.84. The limitations of a private charity trying to cope with massive unemployment became apparent by the end of 1932 when the committee announced that it could no longer meet the demand and was dissolving. The village of Crosby would now be the only source of assistance for the destitute.²³

KARL NYGARD'S ROAD to the mayor's office was paved by increasing radical political activity on the Cuyuna range. As conditions worsened, Crosby's militants openly proclaimed their political agenda through events such as a November 1931 celebration of the fourteenth anniversary of the “United States of Soviet Russia.” In March 1932, 51 Crosby residents—the majority of them Scandinavian or Finnish, including John Nygard—petitioned for an audit of the village books by the state public examiner. The petition drive led to the takeover in October of the Progressive Taxpayers Club by local Communists, led by Karl Nygard. According to the national Commu-

nist newspaper, the *Daily Worker*, the club had originally been “organized to cover up” problems in village administration, and the workers had “brought to light the graft.” The new club members were “determined to oust the entire clique” in the 1932 municipal election and put a Communist in office. Karl Nygard believed that the club had 500 voters. His leadership would later provide him with a strong base of support.²⁴

May 1932 was a busy month, with a May Day program featuring a local speaker and two Young Communist League members from Superior. The Worker’s International Relief, a Communist Party front organization, sponsored Sergei Eisenstein’s film *Old and New* at the Ironton State Theatre. Finally, the *Courier* announced that Nygard had been nominated by the Communist Party to run in November for state railroad and warehouse commissioner.²⁵

Karl with brothers Leonard and Sigfred (from left) in Crosby, 1931, during Karl’s second unsuccessful run for mayor



Rallying supporters, the CPUSA held numerous programs in Crosby with national speakers as well as state candidates. Local Communists hosted a midsummer picnic in June that attracted 400 people and a “Proletarian” picnic in August. Nygard also appeared at campaign rallies in Aitkin, Palisade, Brainerd, St. Cloud, and elsewhere in northern Minnesota. The *Crosby Courier* announced or reported on these events without editorial comment.²⁶

In September Nygard embarked on a different kind of campaign intended to provide “Elements of Political Education.” He wrote a series of articles in the *Crosby Courier* under the pseudonym “Ada M. Oredigger” explaining the relationship between workers and the capitalist system and how Marxism could provide a “path to a better future.”²⁷

Crosby’s turnout of 1,173 for the November 8, 1932, national election was a record. Strangely enough, the town that would soon elect a Communist mayor voted for Herbert Hoover instead of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Communist presidential candidate William Z. Foster received only 46 votes in Crosby. The village did, however, choose Floyd B. Olson for governor. Losing his contest, Nygard polled 144 votes in Crosby for railroad and warehouse commissioner, a total of 299 votes in Crow Wing County, and 9,458 votes statewide.²⁸

A few weeks later, Nygard filed for mayor on the Workers Ticket. Once again, he was challenging incumbent Mayor Kraus, as was Ernest B. Erickson. The other Workers Ticket candidates were not Communists; Nygard claimed that one was a socialist and another was a “mason man.” Nygard reminded voters that his two previous mayoral campaigns “were splendid demonstrations of the unswerving loyalty of the workers and sympathetic business men of Crosby.” Interestingly enough, he also linked himself with Roosevelt by promising a new deal: “Today, as we enter the fourth year of unparalleled economic stagnation, it is to the interest of every citizen to elect candidates who understand the forces that have throttled the economic life of America, and are therefore better fitted to cope with them. I hereby solemnly pledge myself, if elected, to a new deal in municipal politics and a definite program of retrenchment.”²⁹

On November 25, just as the municipal campaign opened, the First National Bank of Crosby and the banks in Cuyuna and Ironton declared a “moratorium” on oper-



Farmer-Labor Party campaign signs in St. Paul, 1932, urging veterans to support Roosevelt and Olson; voting for Hoover would be “licking the boot that kicked you.”

ations and closed. In Crosby, Ernest W. Hallett immediately began working to reopen the bank, which held \$23,000 in village funds. He and his backers took control on December 19 and asked customers to take a loss on their deposits so the bank could reopen. The depositors, many of whom were unemployed and living on their savings, were naturally reluctant. Hallett persuaded them to accept the terms offered, which included repayment of 45 percent of the savings deposits within five years.³⁰

Shortly after the bank closed, Nygard finally defeated Kraus for mayor, 529 to 359. Erickson, who garnered 301 votes, probably gave Nygard the margin he needed, but Nygard also received 163 more votes than he had the year before. Only 77 eligible voters failed to cast a ballot.

Nygart thanked the village for “the overwhelming vote of confidence given me.”³¹

IT DID NOT TAKE LONG for newspapers to announce that something unusual had happened in Crosby. The *Brainerd Daily Dispatch* commented: “The village of Crosby will be governed under communist influence during the coming year. . . . The newly elected mayor has a record of civic service of many years behind him.” The *Daily Worker* published a banner headline, “First Communist Mayor Elected in America” and stated that Nygard had run openly as a Communist.³²

Shortly after the election, Nygard issued a “declaration of policy” for 1933. He hoped to raise the relief



The story of Emil Nygard, first Communist mayor in America, as written especially for the workers children of America by Emil Nygard.

stipend for the 200 families receiving aid and to “declare a moratorium on the debts owed by the city to the bankers for interest on bonds, and to demand state aid for the relief of the unemployed miners in Crosby.” He also believed that water and lights “should be kept in the miners’ homes even if the city has to pay the Minnesota Power & Light company itself” out of the fund in the First National Bank. Nygard had “served notice that he intends to fight for the protection of worker-depositors in the bankrupt . . . bank and for the funds of the city, needed for . . . relief.”³³

Nygard addressed the issue of the bank again at a victory celebration attended by more than 500 people in late December. The *Daily Worker* correspondent commented that the bankers “tricked the workers into signing papers by which 55 per cent of all savings were wiped off the books.” A local writer for Superior’s Finnish-language Communist newspaper *Työmies* reported that the “Crosby workers were all boiling in rage at this robbery.” The bank reopened with Hallett as president shortly before Nygard took office on January 3, 1933.³⁴

While their anger and frustration were understandable because the bank failure meant an even bleaker future for people already facing hardships, depositors in the First National Bank of Crosby were much more fortunate than customers of the neighboring First National Bank of Ironton, the First State Bank of Ironton, and the



Mayor Nygard, 1933, whose three-part autobiography in New Pioneer was written “especially for the workers children of America”

Trommald State Bank, all of which closed permanently in 1933, their assets liquidated.³⁵

In the long run, Hallett and the other investors did the people of Crosby a great service when they stepped in to keep the town’s only bank open.

In March 1933 the Village Council, in a vote of confidence, designated the bank as its official depository. Nygard did not attend the meeting, but throughout the year he would discuss the bank controversy. He claimed in a speech in New York City in October, which the CPUSA published as a two-penny pamphlet entitled *America’s First Red Mayor in Action*, that his

first political act as Mayor, was to mobilize all the workers, employed and unemployed, to demonstrate to the banking officials that they should, and would be compelled to release this money, so that the workers could be fed. . . . Because the organized workers of Crosby told them they would make it impossible for that bank to function, should they refuse to turn the full amount over to the city, the bankers gladly and willingly turned that \$23,000 over, and the unemployed were fed.³⁶

Many of Nygard’s statements during the year would get him into trouble. He tended to exaggerate when speaking before large groups as he enthusiastically described the political climate in Crosby. Although it is impossible to know why he embellished his role as

mayor, there are several likely explanations. He was 27 years old, and perhaps his youthful passion led him to overstate his influence. He also might have wanted to make his work seem more interesting than it was; in reality, most Village Council meetings were quiet affairs. Finally, he might have tried to amplify the importance of being mayor in a small village to convince fellow Communists that he had really accomplished something and encourage them to run for office.

LOOKING PAST HIS HYPERBOLE, there is little doubt that Nygard worked hard to help the unemployed. Part of his effort, he said, involved organizing a Workers Advisory Committee to “put the political life of the city within the grasp of the working men and women.” At his inauguration on January 3, 1933, he told the crowd of 300 that he was appointing the committee to assist him and that he wanted them to form an Unemployed Council, an idea that came directly from the CPUSA.³⁷

Crosby’s workers organized their Unemployed Council in late March when 21 men signed up at a Workers’ Hall meeting. In April another 58 people joined and paid the three-month membership fee of five cents plus a penny for the member handbook. At that meeting, a

committee was elected to write up the group’s demands to the Village Council.³⁸

On April 11 the group marched to the village hall, where Arne Niemi read their demands—relief stipends, free city water and lights, freedom to buy food from any store, and abolition of “the Relief Administration.” By the end of the meeting, the Village Council had agreed to all but the last item. Both Mike Thomas, president of the Unemployed Council, and Secretary Laurie Anderson believed that they had been successful because of their “militant action.”³⁹

Throughout his tenure, Nygard encouraged the Unemployed Council to protest for or against particular relief programs and policies. He also met frequently with the Workers Advisory Committee. He told the *Ranger* that all “bills to be introduced in the village council are passed upon by the Workers Council and I am bound to vote according to the wishes of the workingmen of the village.” This policy was put to the test early. Before the first council meeting in January, workers “demanded that the [village] jobs be divided up. I agonized over that for a long time because after all these men [village employees] were workers too. . . . And I fought against it. I said no.” The workers then suggested dividing full-time positions into part-time jobs. Nygard accepted the compromise,



Crosby’s police and bosses despair while citizens celebrate Nygard in William Siegel’s 1933 New Pioneer illustration.

and the Village Council implemented the plan, turning the street foreman and truck-driving positions into four part-time jobs. At least two of the men appointed to these new posts appear to have had radical interests.⁴⁰

At this first meeting of 1933, council members had also cut their salaries by 20 percent, and Nygard asked that his pay be reduced from \$50 to \$35 per month. Police salaries were cut as well. Local newspapers reported the council's decisions without comment.

The Crosby police force was a major issue for Nygard and his followers. The Workers Ticket platform had called for the abolition of the police commission. In late 1932 the Progressive Taxpayers Club had claimed that the police chief and officers should not be on the force because they had not taken civil-service examinations. The club also argued that the police were "not responsive or amenable to the local electorate." The department, they contended, "should be wholly under the control of the Village Council, and so subject to the will . . . of the people—by their votes."⁴¹

Nygard did not trust the Crosby police. His attitude might have been rooted in memories of actions against strikers. It might have been tied closely to the CPUSA's policies and propaganda regarding law enforcement. Or perhaps his distrust resulted from personal experience. He claimed in a New York City speech that he had "been hit over the head a number of times, and I have been hated and cast into jails," although he provided no specifics. He asserted, using almost identical wording at least three different times, that "police forces always have been and always will be used in the interests of the bosses again[st] the workers." While in office Nygard repeatedly (and falsely) claimed that he either tried to "liquidate" the police force, to fire the police chief, to substitute workers patrols for the force, or to eliminate the police commission—but was blocked by the state legislature.⁴²

RHETORIC ASIDE, Nygard carried out his duties as competently as Kraus had. More often than not, he voted with the majority or joined in unanimous decisions. He did the job well, but he had little or no power to improve the lives of the unemployed because state law restricted the powers of municipal governments. A mayor was limited to spending funds for specific pur-

poses, approving applications for relief and licenses, and appointing people to city positions.⁴³

Even though he voted much like his predecessor, Nygard's political activities and speeches about the bank, the police force, and other issues ensured that his term as mayor would be anything but quiet. January proved to be a lull in his stormy tenure.

Shortly before his inauguration, Nygard had participated in a planning meeting for the "Minnesota State Hunger March" scheduled for February in St. Paul. Early that month he described a "very serious" situation: the village was spending approximately \$3,000 a month for relief. On February 20 he led a delegation of Crosby's unemployed in the St. Paul march to remind legislators of the suffering in the state. On the House floor, Nygard and two other chosen speakers—Morris Karson from Minneapolis and Alfred Tiala, a Virginia, Minnesota, member of the Communist United Farmers League—demanded "tangible relief" for farmers and the unemployed and protection from wage cuts and "unfeeling eviction from farms and homes."⁴⁴

In an interview conducted during the march, Nygard boasted:

I cut my salary because I don't want to get more than the unemployed worker is getting. . . . I have succeeded in installing as part of the Crosby government, the workers' advisory council, made up of delegates from workers' clubs and unions. Before any matter is submitted to the city council of Crosby, it first must be passed upon by the advisory council, thereby safeguarding the right of the worker.⁴⁵

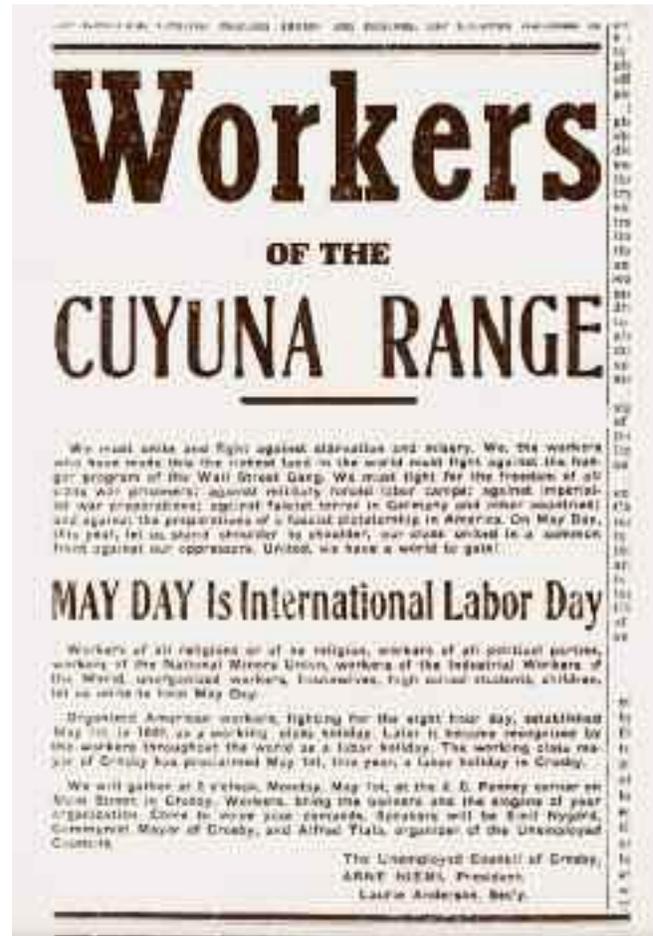
In response, the *Ranger* printed a front-page editorial headlined "Doing Crosby No Good." The worst part of Nygard's wild claims, according to the newspaper, was "the idea that . . . this village is a hotbed of Communism, with a government bordering that of Soviet Russia." A "taxpayer" who wrote to the *Courier* echoed the *Ranger* editor: "It is the general feeling among miners, business men and other citizens of our community that Mr. Nygard's loose talk when not at council meetings or for publication in the outside press is not the best thing for the interests of our Village."⁴⁶

Just a week later, the *Courier* published “Crosby Citizens! How Do You Like This?” on page one. The article reprinted an Associated Press story datelined Chicago that had also appeared in Duluth and “many other newspapers throughout the country.” It quoted Nygard as saying: “We abolished the police force and substituted worker patrols to keep order. . . . The bank shut down just before I was elected, but I forced the bankers to release city funds and instituted measures to increase employment 50 per cent. I am under the strict discipline of the Communist party.”⁴⁷

At the February 28 Village Council meeting, Nygard denied making the statements in Chicago, and, in a letter to the *Ranger* on March 9, he again defended himself.⁴⁸ Controversy, however, did not end there. Nygard would be criticized for his actions and statements for the remainder of his term.

Many Crosby businessmen, for example, refused to close their stores on May Day, which Nygard had declared an official holiday. On May 1 Nygard and Arne Niemi led a parade of about 250 people to Workers’ Hall where more than 400 gathered to hear speeches, including ones by Nygard—who attacked the businessmen for refusing to give workers the day off—and Alfred Tiala, who inveighed against the “forced labor” of New Deal relief programs. In the crowd were members of the Communist Party’s National Miners Union and the IWW who had “answered the call” to show a united front. Partly in reaction to May Day, Crosby later held a large Memorial Day commemoration to demonstrate its “loyalty” and “devotion” to the United States and to counteract the notoriety that Nygard’s activities had brought to the village.⁴⁹

BETWEEN THE RADICALISM of May Day and the patriotism of Memorial Day, another controversy engulfed Crosby. On May 23 the Village Council voted to support Nygard’s motion to send to the State Board of Control an Unemployed Council resolution regarding Reconstruction Finance Corporation-funded relief projects. By a vote of 105 to 1, the Unemployed Council had agreed not to work on relief projects if the Village Council did not change the “forced labor” system. A statement from the Village Council “that the so-called forced labor plan be abolished and work relief paid in



Unemployed Council’s May Day ad calling for solidarity in the fight against oppression, starvation, and misery, Crosby Courier, April 27, 1933

cash instead of grocery orders” was to accompany the resolution. The Village Council’s action closed the relief office on May 24.⁵⁰

Overnight, the councilmen reconsidered. On May 24 they voted to rescind Nygard’s motion and strike the previous day’s action from the official minutes. A new motion gave the relief administration and program the village’s full support. Nygard declined to vote, and councilman John Heglund was not present (he had suffered a heart attack), so the new motion passed unanimously.

During the original debate on the issue, Village Attorney Frank E. Murphy had told the councilmen they were victims of “bad advice.” The *Ranger* editor echoed that opinion in “Playing With Fire”: “If a hundred and five individuals, led by a small group, prominent among

whom are members of the Communist party . . . can lead the workers of the Range into the false positions of defying the governmental agency that is here to help them through a trying time, then the Range is without a doubt in for a difficult time.”

But the workers on relief were in no mood to listen. Most refused to “clear brush on lots and plots belonging to local businessmen.” Only ten men showed up for work, and Nygard and the strike committee persuaded them to join the two-day protest. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration official who met with the strike committee agreed to a wage raise, approved an increase in the relief stipend, and granted the right of “workers to trade with the [Crosby Worker’s] Cooperative.”⁵¹

The attitude of Crosby’s strikers was surely influenced by Communist Party propaganda against President Roosevelt’s relief program. Tiala had commented on this on May Day, and the *Daily Worker* frequently featured articles attacking work-relief programs. Crosby’s unemployed had easy access to this paper through a file maintained at the public library by the Young Pioneer troop.

Some of the unemployed Finnish men were also reading the Communist newspaper *Työmies*, which had recently published an article in which Nygard encouraged his comrades to attend the CPUSA’s Ninth District School in Minneapolis. He had attended the last session and reported that he had received “more learning in 6 weeks . . . than in a year at capitalist schools.”⁵²

Nygard himself traveled to Minneapolis in June 1933 to appear at CPUSA campaign rallies. There he “received an enthusiastic reception from the workers” as he attacked the “Farmer-Labor traitors” and urged people to join the Communist Party. During the summer he also spoke at the Wisconsin CPUSA’s state picnic in Milwaukee, addressed an antiwar picnic sponsored by Minnesota’s CPUSA in rural Deerwood, spoke at the Finnish Worker’s Club’s “Festival of Struggle” and the Communist Party Plenum in Duluth, and accepted an invitation from New York State Communists to campaign for mayoral candidate Robert Minor in October.⁵³

THE DAILY WORKER and the *New York Times* both covered Nygard’s arrival at New York City’s bus depot, their different perspectives apparent in their descrip-

tions of the scene. The *Times* reported that Nygard “was met by a drizzling rain and a small group of Communist needle trade workers carrying a wet banner.” The *Daily Worker*, however, noted that Nygard was “greeted with a cheer” by several hundred people including a number of candidates in the municipal election. It did not mention the rain.⁵⁴

Later that night, members of the Red Front carried Nygard into the North Star Casino on their shoulders. The Red Front Band led the procession, and the banquet crowd cheered as it entered the room. At an election meeting, mayoral candidate Robert Minor called Nygard a “splendid young champion of Labor of the West.”⁵⁵

During his four-day visit, Nygard addressed enthusiastic crowds throughout New York, appearing at Webster Hall, New Star Casino, Hunt’s Point Palace in the Bronx, Scandinavian Hall in Brooklyn, Bronx Cooperative, Rockland Palace in Harlem, Paterson Carpenters’ Hall, a conference of the Needle Trades Workers’ Industrial Union in Cooper Union Hall, and Coney Island Workers Club in Brooklyn. He marched in an election parade sponsored by the Workers’ Ex-Servicemen’s League. The *Daily Worker* announced that he had spoken to about 30,000 people.⁵⁶

All of the invitations must have been intoxicating, and Nygard succumbed to the attention in New York City, where he recklessly retold many of the stories that had gotten him into trouble in March. At Webster Hall on October 19, he claimed he had state officials jumping when he spoke. He said that he used mass protests to intimidate the Village Council into doing what he and the Unemployed Council wanted. He boasted that he had stood up to the police chief during a protest meeting and described in vivid detail a mass strike of workers at a “forced labor camp.”⁵⁷

Reports of his speeches in the *New York Times* and the *New York World Telegram* would not help him get reelected. The *Courier* headline seemed almost resigned to the news: “Mayor Emil C. Nygard Boasts Success in Running Village as Communist: Out of Pasture Again, Crosby Mayor Tells New York How He Runs Town.”⁵⁸

NYGARD’S RADICAL ACTIVITIES in Crosby and across the country effectively obscured the job he did as mayor. He faced a tough reelection campaign. As he told the *New*

Pioneer in April: "The bosses in Crosby are in a rage. They are wailing piteously at the thought that 'the fair name of Crosby has been polluted by a Communist Mayor.'" Nygard's opponents were determined to defeat him, and they rallied behind the candidacy of Nicolai Wladimiroff, a Finnish immigrant, former mayor, and local jewelry-store owner. They would not make the mistake of running two candidates against Nygard again.⁵⁹

By the time the campaign opened, it was apparent that Nygard was vulnerable and that his support had eroded. His public statements were both defiant and defensive. In a November campaign advertisement he wrote: "For a candidate . . . to say that he will struggle in the interests of all the people is both idiotic and impossible. In a society divided into classes, he will be repeatedly called upon to vote either for the workers . . . or for the exploiters of labor. . . . Workers of the world unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains! You have the world to win!"⁶⁰

With his political career in jeopardy, he tried to create a strong, united front with the non-Communist union members and workers by reminding them of the need for labor solidarity. His opponents, on the other

hand, were using rumors to divide the workers, to disrupt campaign meetings, and to suggest that the mines would reopen if only Nygard were not mayor. He felt forced to pledge in a December 1 notarized statement that he would resign as mayor immediately if the mining companies "will reopen their mines and hire all the miners formerly employed. . . . I brand as ludicrous falsehoods the said rumors in circulation, and challenge any of the mines . . . to give the remotest corroboration."⁶¹

During the campaign, a circular was distributed that claimed E. W. Hallett had been able to "buy \$50,000 worth of [the First National Bank's] frozen assets on which [Hallett could] secure from the Federal Government \$40,000 on long terms." After the election, Hallett charged that Nygard was responsible for the circular.⁶² Although this was never proven, both sides obviously were willing to use inflamed rhetoric to accomplish their goals.

By election day on December 5, it was apparent that Nygard would lose. The 735-to-277 vote was an obvious repudiation of the young mayor. "Crosby Renounces Red Mayor," the *Ranger* declared, and his defeat made news in Brainerd, Duluth, Minneapolis, and New York. The



Nygard's attempt at damage control, Crosby Courier, December 1, 1933

Daily Worker attributed the outcome to the “heavy campaign in the capitalist press.” The *Duluth News Tribune*, on the other hand, proclaimed the election “An Answer to Communism” and commented, “The overwhelming defeat of Emil Nygard . . . proves that the people are not ready to adopt any of the tenets of Communism. . . . with economic conditions steadily improving and discontent changing to renewed courage and hope.”⁶³ In fact, campaign tactics, Roosevelt’s New Deal, and Nygard himself were all major factors in the election outcome.

Nygard was dedicated to helping his fellow miners, but he also seemed determined to spread the Communist gospel. In the small town of Crosby, where some of the mining companies were locally owned, his radical activities had offended a sizable portion of the electorate. Newspaper editors became increasingly hostile, and letters to the editors disparaged both his performance in office and his statements to the press. Community leaders rallied the village to counteract outside images that it was a bastion of communism and to reject his reelection bid.

Even if his rhetoric had not driven away supporters, the New Deal moved some of them into Civil Works Administration (CWA) projects in Crow Wing County and to Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps throughout the country. The first 100 men from the county went to work for the CWA just weeks before the election and were paid in cash, not relief vouchers. When the first paychecks were issued on November 25, 1933, the Communists, who had been calling for cash relief since the depression began, lost a campaign issue. Money in the pockets of Crosby’s unemployed miners meant more food on the table, Christmas presents under the tree, and feelings of hope instead of anger.⁶⁴

The CCC was perhaps even more important in diffusing Nygard’s support. On May 4, the first 50 men from the county—44 from the Cuyuna Iron Range—boarded a train for Fort Snelling. Crosby alone sent 22 men off that day; among them was Mike Thomas, former president of the Unemployed Council, who went to Camp Mokelumne in California. Later that summer Bernard Rochon, whose father had been a secretary of the Unemployed Council, and Nolan Bickford, whose family had participated in various Communist rallies in 1932, joined the CCC. It is highly unlikely that these three were the only members of “Nygard’s army” to find work



in the program. When he needed their votes, they were not in town to cast ballots.⁶⁵

NYGARD’S TERM ENDED QUIETLY. He and his supporters remained active in the community, however. In 1934 they celebrated International Women’s Day on March 11 and observed May Day with speeches, a talent show, and a dance. The Unemployed Council once again challenged payment of relief for local work in vouchers instead of wages. There were plays and fund-raisers to support communist causes and organizations.⁶⁶

While “Nygard’s army” was busy in Crosby, he continued to travel and speak. He addressed the National Convention Against Unemployment in Washington, D. C., in February 1934 and spoke in Cleveland



Jubilant Civilian Conservation Corpsmen leaving Fort Snelling for job assignments, 1933

on the trip home. He rallied supporters in Aitkin, Otter Tail County, and Brainerd. He also decided to run for Congress.⁶⁷

In October 1934 Nygard filed a petition in Crow Wing County to put his name on the ballot for Congress in the Sixth District and sent petitions to the district's 14 other counties. Responding to a request for an opinion, the Minnesota attorney general's office ruled that Nygard had missed the filing deadline in Morrison County by one day and denied him a place on the November ballot.⁶⁸

The *Daily Worker* claimed that Nygard had been sabotaged by the Farmer-Labor Party, which was worried that he was "tremendously popular." The paper called on "workers' organizations in Minnesota and

throughout the country [to] immediately bombard Governor Floyd Olson with protest telegrams demanding that Emil Nygard . . . be put on the ballot. . . . To let Olson get away with this would mean a defeat for the workers of the whole country." But Olson received only three protests—from the secretary of the Pittsburgh Pen and Hammer, the Lower Bronx Unemployment Council, and a man in Jersey City, New Jersey.⁶⁹ Nygard's run for Congress had been thwarted.

Two weeks after the 1934 general election, Nygard filed to run for mayor in Crosby. His opponent was Dr. John P. Hawkinson, who beat him 771 to 163. Karl Nygard had run his last campaign, and elections in Crosby became quiet affairs. Hawkinson ran unopposed in 1935, when only 660 residents went to the polls.⁷⁰



Karl and Helen Nygard at home in Becker County, 1969

IN 1936 NYGARD MARRIED HELEN KOSKI, whose parents had been active in the CPUSA's Finnish Federation, in Becker County. They moved to Rochester, where he worked briefly for the *Olmsted Progressive* newspaper. They later bought land in Sugar Bush Township in Becker County and raised their family.⁷¹

Nygaard supported Elmer Benson for governor in 1936 and worked road construction for a few years before he became a Northwest Dairy Herd Improvement Association supervisor. He probably abandoned the CPUSA, in part because of his isolation in Becker County and in part because the party had become increasingly aimless. But he remained committed to his Marxist political philosophy for the rest of his life. He died on April 26, 1984, at the age of 77. Because his children knew nothing about his life in Crosby, his obituary in the *Detroit Lakes Tribune* did not mention his term as mayor in 1933. No notice of his death appeared in the Crosby-Ironton *Courier*.⁷²

Karl Nygard's story is an important part of American history. His election in 1932 represented the apex of radicalism in the United States before the New Deal altered the political landscape forever. With relief programs such as the CCC, CWA, and WPA and enactment of the National Labor Relations Act in 1935, iron miners' seemingly endless struggle for economic and political justice shifted from revolutionary ideology to mainstream politics, as they sought solutions to the problems they faced in the workplace. □

Notes

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1. *Crosby Courier*, Dec. 8, 1932, p. 1.

2. *Detroit Lakes Tribune*, Apr. 26, 1984, p. 7; United States, *Census, 1920, Population*, microfilm roll 829, Crosby, enumeration district 123, sheet 25B, copy in Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) Library, St. Paul; Karl Emil Nygard, tape recorded interview by Timothy Madigan, Sept. 13, 1973, Northwest Minnesota Historical Center, Minnesota State University, Moorhead, transcript, 1 (hereinafter, Nygard transcript); *Courier*, July 14, 1932, p. 1; Petition for Naturalization, Crow Wing

County District Court Naturalization Records, 1871–1954, roll 7, frame 647.

Instead of his given name, Emil Carl, this article uses Karl Emil, the name he later chose. Both his oral history interview and his *Detroit Lakes Tribune* obituary identify him as Karl Emil. The original wording in direct quotations—often Emil C.—has been maintained.

3. Anna Himrod, *The Cuyuna Range: A History of a Minnesota Iron Mining District* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Records Survey Project, 1940), 33, 44–45; Charles E. Van Barneveld, *Iron Mining in Minnesota*, University of Minnesota School of Mines Experiment Station Bulletin 1 (Minneapolis, 1913), 205; David A. Walker,

Iron Frontier: The Discovery and Early Development of Minnesota's Three Iron Ranges (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1979), 252, 255.

4. Crosby was platted in 1909. Arvy Hanson, ed., *CUY-UNA!: A Chronicle of the Cuyuna Range* (Crosby: Crosby-Ironton Courier, 1976), 45; Walker, *Iron Frontier*, 253; Arnold R. Alanen, "Years of Change on the Iron Range," in *Minnesota in a Century of Change*, ed. Clifford E. Clark Jr. (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1989), 179–80.

5. Immigrants and second-generation Americans accounted for 72 percent of Crosby's population in 1920; U.S. *Census, 1920, Population*, vol. 3, p. 519; U.S. *Cen-*

1920, *Population*, roll 829, Crosby, sheets 24B, 25A, 25B; Crow Wing County, Register of Deeds, Torrens "Certificate of Title," No. 907, 4: 7, Crow Wing County Courthouse, Brainerd, MN.

6. Van Barneveld, *Iron Mining*, 58.

7. A. K. Knickerbocker, "The Contract Wage System for Miners," *Mining and Scientific Press* 120 (Apr. 1920): 497–98; Neil Betten, "The Origins of Ethnic Radicalism in Northern Minnesota, 1900–1920," *International Migration Review* 4 (Spring 1970): 50; *Crosby Crucible*, Apr. 12, Apr. 26, 1913, both p. 1; *Deerwood Enterprise*, Aug. 11, 1916, p. 1; *Brainerd Tribune*, Sept. 15, 1916, p. 1.

8. Emil Nygard, "Our First Mayor," *New Pioneer*, Feb. 1933, p. 4. Nygard's story was serialized in three successive issues.

9. Paul Lekatz, "Cooperatives in Crosby," 1, in *Finns in Minnesota*, Writers Project files, box 227, Works Progress Administration Papers, MHS Library; Hans R. Wasastjerna, ed., Toivo Rosvall, trans., *History of the Finns in Minnesota* (Duluth: Minnesota Finnish-American Historical Society, 1957), 141; *Courier*, Aug. 23, 1918, p. 1.

10. *Crucible*, Dec. 16, 1916, p. 1, Feb. 24, 1917, p. 1, Mar. 3, 1917, p. 1, 4, June 9, 1917, p. 1, July 14, 1917, p. 8; Carl H. Chrislock, *Watchdog of Loyalty: The Minnesota Commission of Public Safety During World War I* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1991), 122; *Industrialisti*, June 16, 1917, p. 2, translated by Eila Iivonen (hereinafter, all translations by Iivonen unless otherwise noted).

11. *Duluth News Tribune*, July 30, 1917, p. 1; *Crucible*, Aug. 8, 1917, p. 1; *Brainerd Tribune*, Aug. 10, 1917, p. 1. "Lords and masters" from *Industrialisti*, June 22, 1917, p. 1; see also *Industrialisti*, Aug. 10, 11, 18, 1917—all p. 1.

12. *Industrialisti*, Sept. 18, 1917, p. 2, 3. On Smiljanich, see *Crucible*, Aug. 19, 1916, p. 1; *Daily Worker*, Jan. 2, 1933, p. 1. On Tomljanovich, see *Daily Worker*, Jan. 10, 1933, p. 4, Oct. 16, 1934, p. 3.

13. Nygard "Our First Mayor," Mar. 1933, p. 4; *Courier*, May 25, 1923, p. 1.

14. Here and below, Nygard, "Our First Mayor," Mar. 1933, p. 4; Nygard transcript, 2.

15. *Milwaukee Journal*, Aug. 15, 1933, p. 3; Nygard, "Our First Mayor," Mar. 1933, p. 4, Apr. 1933, p. 10; Nygard transcript, 3–4.

16. Nygard transcript, 3–4, 8–9; Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 38, 47.

17. *Minnesota Year Book* (Minneapolis: League of Minnesota Municipalities, 1931), 2: 114.

18. Nygard transcript, 8–9, 10; Klehr, *Heyday of American Communism*, 257.

19. Nygard transcript, 15; *Courier*, Nov. 20, 1930, p. 3.

20. *Courier*, Dec. 4, 1930, p. 1. Some 3,451 people lived in Crosby, and 80 percent of the 1,277 eligible voters cast their ballots. U. S., *Census, 1930, Population*, vol. 1, p. 1218.

21. *Courier*, Dec. 3, 1931, p. 1, Dec. 31, 1931, p. 2, Nov. 24, 1932, p. 1; Himrod, *Cuyuna Range*, 86.

22. *Courier*, July 7, 1932, p. 1, Oct. 27, 1932, p. 1; *Brainerd Daily Dispatch*, Oct. 26, 1932, p. 1; *Duluth Herald*, Dec. 13, 1932, p. 2. Mining figures derived from analysis of shipping records from 1929 through 1935; *Courier*, Nov. 30, 1929, p. 15; *Skilling's Mining Review*, Mar. 1, 1930, p. 4, Feb. 27, 1931, p. 1, Feb. 5, 1932, p. 4, Feb. 18, 1933, p. 8, Mar. 11, 1933, p. 2–3.

23. *Courier*, Feb. 4, 1932, p. 1, Nov. 3, 1932, p. 1; *Ranger* (Ironton), Nov. 3, 1932, p. 1, 2. The relief committee's funds had clearly eased the burden on the village's resources. Crosby spent only \$319 more on relief in 1932 than in 1931, even though the number of people needing help had risen dramatically. Crosby's request for \$14,861 from the county in January 1933—equal to 75 percent of the village's total relief expenses in 1932—was the county's largest, exceeding Brainerd's request by some \$860. *Brainerd Dispatch*, Jan. 4, 1933, p. 1.

24. *Courier*, Oct. 5, 1931, p. 1, Mar. 24, 1932, p. 1; *Daily Worker*, Oct. 29, 1932, p. 2; Ben Field, "The First Red Mayor," *New Masses* 9 (Sept. 1933): 22–23. The audit, completed in 1932, was critical of village administration; *Ranger*, Nov. 17, 1932, p. 2.

25. *Courier*, May 5, 1932, p. 1, May 19, 1932, p. 1; Klehr, *Heyday of American Communism*, 104; Nygard transcript, 20, wherein Nygard recalled incorrectly that he had run in 1936.

26. *Courier*, June 23, 1932, p. 4, June 30, 1932, p. 1, Sept. 1, 1932, p. 1, Oct. 27, 1932, p. 4; *Työmies*, July 21, 1932, p. 1 (trans. by the author); *Daily Worker*, Aug. 29, 1932, p. 2, Oct. 29, 1932, p. 2.

27. *Courier*, Sept. 8, 1932, p. 6; the column also appeared on Sept. 15, 22, and 29. The pseudonym was probably based on Oscar Ameringer's "Adam Coaldigger" byline in the *Illinois Miner*, which he edited in the 1920s. Nygard likely was exposed to Ameringer's socialist philosophy while working there. Oscar Ameringer, *If You Don't Weaken: The Autobiography of Oscar Ameringer* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983).

28. *Courier*, Nov. 10, 1932, p. 1, Nov. 17,

1932, p. 8; Mike Holm, comp., *Legislative Manual of the State of Minnesota* (St. Paul, 1933), 233; Millard L. Gieske, *Minnesota Farmer-Laborism: The Third Party Alternative* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), 171.

29. *Courier*, Dec. 1, 1932, p. 1, 8; Field, "First Red Mayor," 23.

30. *Ranger*, Dec. 1, 1932, p. 1; Ernest W. Hallett, *A Bit About the Life of Ernest Wilbert Hallett* (Crosby: The Author, [1971?]), 158.

31. *Courier*, Dec. 8, 1932, p. 1, 8; U.S., *Census, 1930, Population*, vol. 1, p. 1218.

32. *Brainerd Dispatch*, Dec. 11, 1932, p. 1; *Daily Worker*, Dec. 10, 1932, p. 1.

33. *Daily Worker*, Dec. 14, 1932, p. 3, Jan. 5, 1933, p. 2; *Duluth Herald*, Dec. 13, 1932, p. 2.

34. *Daily Worker*, Jan. 5, 1933, p. 2; *Työmies*, Jan. 7, 1933, p. 1; Hallett, *Life of Hallett*, 158.

35. *Ranger*, Mar. 23, 1933, p. 1, Oct. 5, 1933, p. 1, Nov. 3, 1933, p. 4.

36. *Courier*, Mar. 9, 1933, p. 4; Emil Nygard, *America's First Red Mayor in Action* (New York: Workers Library, 1933), p. 3.

37. Klehr, *Heyday of American Communism*, 50, 52–53, 283–84; Nygard, "Our First Mayor," Apr. 1933, p. 11; *Daily Worker*, Jan. 13, 1933, p. 2.

38. *Courier*, Mar. 30, 1933, p. 6, Apr. 6, 1933, p. 6; *Työmies*, Apr. 1, 1933, p. 7.

39. *Courier*, Apr. 13, 1933, p. 5, Apr. 20, 1933, p. 7; *Työmies*, Apr. 19, 1933, p. 6, Apr. 23, 1933, p. 1.

40. Here and below, *Ranger*, Mar. 9, 1933, letter to the editor, p. 4; Nygard transcript, 22–23. John Fredrickson, who became the assistant street foreman, sent May Day greetings to *Työmies* in 1933; Victor Bjorklund, hired as a laborer, was a member of the Progressive Taxpayers Club and had signed the 1932 audit petition. *Industrialisti*, Dec. 19, 1931, p. 21; *Courier*, Mar. 24, 1932, p. 1, Jan. 5, 1933, p. 1, 5, Jan. 12, 1933, p. 3; *Ranger*, Jan. 5, 1933, p. 1; *Työmies*, Apr. 26, 1933, p. 7.

41. *Courier*, Jan. 5, 1933, p. 1, 6.

42. Nygard, *America's First Red Mayor*, 3; *Työmies*, Jan. 5, 1933, p. 1; Emil Nygard, "There's No Police Brutality in Crosby, Minn.," *Labor Defender* 9 (Dec. 1933): 77; *Daily Worker*, Oct. 19, 1933, p. 3; *Ranger*, Nov. 17, 1933, p. 5.

43. This analysis was derived from the "Official Proceedings" published in the *Courier*, 1931–34.

44. *Daily Worker*, Jan. 2, 1933, p. 1, Jan. 28, 1933, p. 2; *Työmies*, Jan. 21, 1933, p. 6; *Ranger*, Feb. 9, 16, 1933, p. 1; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Feb. 21, 1933, p. 3. On the

United Farmers League, see Klehr, *Heyday of American Communism*, 104, 138, 144.

45. *Brainerd Dispatch*, Feb. 20, 1933, p. 1.

46. *Ranger*, Feb. 23, 1933, p. 1; *Courier*, Feb. 23, 1933, p. 5.

47. *Courier*, Mar. 2, 1933, p. 1. *Työmies*, Mar. 3, 1933, p. 1 documents Nygard's trip to Chicago.

48. *Courier*, Mar. 9, 1933, p. 4; *Ranger*, Mar. 9, 1933, p. 4.

49. *Courier*, Apr. 27, 1933, p. 1, May 11, 1933, p. 1, June 1, 1933, p. 1; *Daily Worker*, May 9, 1933, p. 2; *Ranger*, May 5, 1933, p. 1; *Työmies*, May 10, 1933, p. 4.

50. Here and two paragraphs below, *Courier*, June 1, 1933, p. 4; *Ranger*, May 25, 1933, p. 1, 3; *Työmies*, May 27, 1933, p. 1.

51. *Daily Worker*, May 29, 1933, p. 1; *Työmies*, May 30, 1933, p. 2; Field, "First Red Mayor," 23.

52. *Työmies*, May 19, 1933, p. 6.

53. *Minneapolis Journal*, June 10, 1933, p. 2; *Daily Worker*, Jun. 14, 1933, p. 3, Sept. 13, 1933, p. 2; *Courier*, July 27, 1933, p. 4; *Milwaukee Journal*, Aug. 15, 1933, p. 9; *Duluth Herald*, Aug. 23, 1933, p. 4; *Työmies*, Aug. 25, 1933, p. 3; Field, "First Red Mayor," 22–23.

54. *New York Times*, Oct. 18, 1933, p. 15; *Daily Worker*, Oct. 18, 1933, p. 1.

55. *Daily Worker*, Oct. 20, 1933, p. 1.

56. *Daily Worker*, Oct. 17, p. 5, Oct. 18,

p. 5, Oct. 19, p. 1, Oct. 21, p. 1, 2, 3, Oct. 23, p. 2—all 1933.

57. Nygard, *America's First Red Mayor in Action*, 1–10.

58. *New York World Telegram*, Oct. 18, 1933, p. 3; *New York Times*, Oct. 19, 1933, p. 28L; *Courier*, Nov. 9, 1933, p. 1.

59. Nygard, "Our First Mayor," Apr. 1933, p. 11; *Duluth Herald*, Nov. 15, 1933, p. 20.

60. To the Voters of Crosby," *Ranger*, Nov. 24, 1933, p. 3.

61. *Daily Worker*, Dec. 2, 1933, p. 3; "Political Advertisement," *Ranger*, Dec. 1, 1933, p. 6.

62. *Courier*, Dec. 14, 1933, p. 8.

63. *Ranger*, Dec. 1, 1933, p. 1, Dec. 7, 1933, p. 1; *Brainerd Dispatch*, Dec. 4, 1933, p. 2, Dec. 7, 1933, sec. 2, p. 1; *Duluth Herald*, Dec. 6, 1933, p. 20; *Minneapolis Tribune*, Dec. 6, 1933, p. 2; *Daily Worker*, Dec. 9, 1933, p. 1; *Duluth News Tribune*, Dec. 7, 1933, p. 16.

64. *Brainerd Dispatch*, Nov. 18, 1933, p. 3, Nov. 22, 1933, p. 1; *Ranger*, Nov. 24, 1933, p. 1.

65. *Courier*, May 4, 1933, p. 1, June 15, 1933, p. 1, Dec. 28, 1933, p. 1; *Daily Worker*, Oct. 19, 1933, p. 3. It is impossible to know how large Nygard's "army" was in Crosby, but the town's mass meetings regularly attracted 250–400 people. At least 117 Finnish families or individuals sent regular holiday greetings to *Industri-*

alisti, *Työmies*, or both. Not all members of the "army" were Communists; Crosby's active chapter of the socialist Slovene National Benefit Society had at least 200 members, and there was also a radical Scandinavian group in town.

66. *Courier*, Dec. 28, 1933, p. 4, Dec. 20, 1934, p. 8; *Ranger*, Mar. 2, 1934, p. 1, May 4, 1934, p. 1, May 25, 1934, p. 1, Sept. 14, 1934, p. 1; *Daily Worker*, Oct. 16, 1934, p. 3.

67. *Ranger*, Feb. 2, 1934, p. 8; *Daily Worker*, Feb. 6, 1934, p. 3, Feb. 7, 1934, p. 3, Feb. 16, 1934, p. 5; *Ranger*, June 15, 1934, p. 5; *Courier*, July 12, 1934, p. 6; *Brainerd Dispatch*, July 31, 1934, p. 4.

68. *Brainerd Dispatch*, Oct. 8, 17, 1934, p. 1; *Daily Worker*, Oct. 10, 1934, p. 3; *Ranger*, Oct. 12, 1934, p. 2; Opinion of David J. Erickson, Oct. 11, 1934, in Records of the Attorney General's Office, Opinions, Minnesota State Archives, MHS.

69. *Daily Worker*, Oct. 22, 1934, p. 1. For protests, see Records of Governor Floyd B. Olson, Executive Letters, 1934, Box 17, Minnesota State Archives, MHS.

70. *Courier*, Dec. 6, 1934, p. 1; *Ranger*, Dec. 5, 1935, p. 1.

71. *Courier*, July 9, 1936, p. 4; *Land Atlas & Plat Book: Becker Co., Minn.* (Rockford, IL: Rockford Map Publishers, 1983), 1939.

72. Nygard transcript, 40–44; *Detroit Lakes Tribune*, Apr. 26, 1984, p. 7.

The photos on p. 168 (top), 174, 176 (center), p. 184, and p. 186 are courtesy Travis E. Nygard; the drawings, p. 170 and 176 are from New Pioneer, Feb. 1933, and p. 177 from the Apr. 1933 issue. All other illustrations are from MHS collections, including the poster, p. 171, in Agent's Reports to T. G. Winter file, Minnesota Commission of Public Safety Records, Minnesota State Archives.



Nygart with his food-service coworkers at the University of Minnesota, about 1924



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