

A UNITED FRONT OF MEN AND WOMEN IN ÍSAFJÖRÐUR – BALDUR RENAMED.

This last November 1924, men and women workers presented a united front for the very first time in Ísafjörður – that is to say, as working classes under the one and same union flag. This surely is cause for celebration for all involved and the town general, as it is no small thing to have the sexes join hands to pave the way for labourers with this novel effort.

Whether we should thank Postmaster Finnur Jónsson for this union I will leave unsaid, but his chairmanship in old Baldur over the past three years does culminate with this. The Working Men's Union Baldur is no more and instead we now have the Labour Union Baldur. Finnur will continue as chairman in the new union, but it is no longer reserved for men only. Though a woman has yet to be elected as a board member of new Baldur, there is no knowing what the future may bring. Here in Ísafjörður, many women are outstanding workers and so it goes to reason that this effort may be a great benefit to the struggle. The working classes generally have a tough enough job of standing their ground against their employers, there is no need to divide us by our sex too.

We, at The Times, of course support our union people, women and men alike, and congratulate the Union Baldur on the new name and increased diversity of union members.

*Sólfinna Hinfinnsdóttir, Reporter of
The Social Times in Gjörningafjöll under Digrajkull,
November 1924*

WAGE DISPUTES AND STRIKES IN.

To this day, only the Communist wing has taken pains to call for increasing the lot of women in the Union's administration. The Social Times did note that Karítas Skarphéðinsdóttir and Jakóbína Guðmundsdóttir were named as candidates for the board, but like their comrades, they were not elected onto the board at the last meeting.

At this recent meeting, Finnur Jónsson was re-elected as chairman for the eleventh time.

Communists, however, have decided to make their opposition to the powers that be finally electable, and now stand officially in the election against the Social Democrat candidates.

Around one hundred and sixty of their rank are present at the meeting, which is almost every tenth adult in town. They may not have the vote of all and one, but they do have a strong current following.

Down on the sandbanks, two people walk in time towards the docks, though they might not be in such agreement in ten years or so.

The discussion is about wage rates and proposals from the Wage Rate Committee, and the work of women and youths on ships.

Life here on the banks is coal and salt work. Unloading of ships and orders from above, whether they come from the mountain or from the dimples of the commanders standing on

...I was never a child...

In an interview that Margrét Sveinbjörnsdóttir took with the historian Sigurður Péturson for the radio programme, My Name is Karítas Skarphéðinsdóttir, she asked him whether people in the West Fjords of Iceland knew about Karítas and her contribution. His answer was a simple "No", common women from the first quarter of the twentieth century are not a part of the large dial of history ticking away in coherent time, from a second to a minute to an hour. Or from Jón Baldvinsson to Jón Baldvin Hannibalsson.

Karítas is an icon of a place and an ideological time, she is a body of a woman who was not meant to govern herself. Thus, she was traded for a building at the tender age of sixteen. Rosi Braiotti has written about the consequences of belonging to an undefined minority in her book *Metamorphoses*. In it she claims that the body is at the centre of political power, both with regards to the larger macroeconomic context and the smaller personal, or micro, context. This is the force that drives the global economic system to the cost of the citizen's bodies. The masses are under the control of these forces and thus takes on the role of the episode.

In his novel, *Immortality*, the writer Milan Kundera discusses the episode in reference to Aristotle: "In Aristotle's *Poetics*, the episode is an important concept. Aristotle did not like episodes. According to him, an episode, from the point of view of poetry, is the worst possible type of event. It is neither an unavoidable consequence of preceding action nor the cause of what is to follow: it is outside the causal chain of events that is the story." (*Immortality*, translated from the Czech by Peter Kussi, Harper Perennial, 1992, New York, p. 304)

Karítas took a conscious stance towards her own life and situation, she decided to present herself as a vehicle for change, both in her private life and by taking on external forces, such as authorities and institutions. Halldór Ólafsson commemorated her in the left-wing newspaper *Pjóðviljinn* using these words: "Karítas would have been a woman of medium build, slight, and light in movement. She dressed well and was chided by ungainly fellows and others who felt that commoners had no right to dress decently. She was one of those people that did not let poverty diminish her. She was articulate and presented her case with determination and resolution."

The character Karítas Skarphéðinsdóttir evidently had no interest in the role of the episode. Her dialogue and activity in the surroundings should have rendered lasting *Immortality*, immediately and before the flesh got weary. A permanent place on the dial of Icelandic history.

Kundera builds on Aristotle but adds this: "...no episode is a priori condemned to remain an episode forever, for every event, no matter how trivial, conceals within itself the possibility of sooner or later becoming the cause of other events and thus changing into a story or an adventure." (same, p.305)

I do not assume that Karítas meant to become an adventure, but she did leave behind a story that we, at the Westfjords Heritage Museum, strive to tell with a brand new permanent exhibition. Her dialogue with the powers that be resulted in reforms for shorter and longer periods of time delivering an improved standard of living for the working classes. The hand of history is pointed towards a woman, who was supposed to be an episode but took initiative and the effort to take control of her own life, a coherent chain of events, from Karítas Skarphéðinsdóttir to Björk Guðmundsdóttir.

Helga Þórsdóttir, sýningarstjóri.

the ship bridge.

Lunch is between 12-13.30, an hour deducted from the work hours, while the half hour is paid.

Most people use this break to sit on the docks having a chat or skip home to see to their children. The kiddies here in town often go around in groups, up the mountain looking for berries or snow, depending on the season, and parents often take turns watching over the little brood when they are not pottering about down by the docks.

Coffee breaks are fifteen minutes twice daily, at 9 and at 15:30, not deducted from the salary.

To have peace and quiet to eat during the coffee breaks is indeed a great victory for the workers here in Ísafjörður. People have long sought a moment's peace from the toil and grind during breaks by resting on a rock by the shore, which is a two-minute walk from the work house.

This has never been a point of negotiation before but now the work hours are properly set down. People can go as they please during breaks. Some find relief in strolling between houses here in town, having a puff of tobacco on the go, or popping in to check on their families.

It is clear, that the workers here in Eyri use their moment's peace where they feel they need to be. Gone are the days

when workers accepted being gathered like farm animals for a quick bite before returning to the drudgery.

But this land never offers unconditional reforms, any more than other lowlands on this our earth. We shall continue to labour for our salt while people still have life in their bones. The important thing is that folk are paid a decent wage and can sit down for their coffee and chow.

After a long and strenuous meeting, the Labour Union Baldur set down a list of reforms to present to the town authorities. On the 14th of September 1931, another meeting is held about work and the crisis. Karítas Skarphéðinsdóttir is elected to sit in a committee of seven to gather information on unemployment in the town. Many come to her. Even those who work a lot want more work and often feel out of a job.

*Bjarkur Hinfinnsson for The Social Times by Djúp,
from Ralokafjörður in Teigskógur, 1932*

Drivers!

**I supply car rubber. Come and
find me before you purchase from
anyone else.**

Sigurður Hannesson.



STRIKING ON 1 MAY.

Salted cod is as palatable in Portugal as it is straight out of the fish troughs here by the docks. Cod, variously cured, has been our principal export in Iceland for centuries. This trade has entailed disputes regarding wages and terms for workers who land and process the product. Working in the salt cod industry does not have to be dreary work – many workers are pleased when the sea is generous and they enjoy the stimmung, as the Germans say, of landing a loaded ship.

It does not hurt that the worker's shallow pockets fill up for a while. There is joy in having a decent life and affording

Death comes to us ALL, though we know not when our time is up. Death is a path we all must take. No one should venture uninsured down any path. Get your insurance with THULE.

salt and spice. Though we can always argue about how salty food needs to be. The fishing companies tend to point out to the workers that less is more, but folks find little joy in a lifetime of tasteless food. The struggle is eternal.

On the morning of 1 May, attempts were made to break the strike of Togarafélag Ísafjarðar with spreading of salt cod, but work was halted. This thirty-second year of the 20th century presents the first time that Labour Day is celebrated in Ísafjörður with an outdoor rally. People want to show unity and strike to protest poor conditions and pay. On this occasion, around four hundred people gathered at several related assemblies in Ísafjörður in the evening of Labour Day.

A small group of workers refused to strike but that issue was swiftly resolved. A small school of cod had a short moment of glory on the docks before work was halted again.

And how did The Social Times experience the evening? All in all, it was a pleasant day of festivities and it was nice to witness the joy of the people who were not just celebrating their special day but also the arrival of spring and return of the Sun after a dark winter.

The Labour Union Baldur and the Communists joined to rally during the day, but in the evening Communists and Socialist held separate assemblies.

The Labour Union is rising in popularity and several people used the occasion to register as members. As May wears on, the ranks of the Union grow steadily.

At the time of this report, on 7 May 1932, there are 210 members present at the Union meeting. Karítas Skarphéðinsdóttir takes to the podium and with a strong voice insists that there will be no backing down from the demands of a wage that covers more than a single pinch of salt. The assembly offers a display of solidarity. The Social Times sends a warm spring greeting to all workers in Ísafjarðardjúp.

Sólynja Maltey Hinfinnsdóttir on Maltusarjörð by Djúp, for The Social Times, from the celebratory assembly of Baldur in Ísafjörður, May 1932

SOCIALISTS RETAIN STRONG LEADERSHIP IN BALDUR – FINNUR JÓNSSON STEPS DOWN.

Times will change and so after serving as chairman of the Labour Union Baldur for a long time, Finnur Jónsson has decided to step down.

In addition to sitting on the executive committee of Ísafjörður Cooperative – the main fishery company in town, Finnur has served as a local representative over the past years, and has been a confidant to many workers in various aspects of town life.

We, here at The Social Times, look out to sea and try to imagine the changes that this might entail. Perhaps nothing will change at all.

There is power within people here and many look to the future seeing nothing but possibilities and life on this little spit of land, where fate has brought us together. We tend to forget every now and again that we are in some ways blessed here while we can put food on the table and have the strength and need to be good to one another. So, while the votes continue to fall into the boxes at the political



meetings, there are also steady signs of life within people in practical matters.

We, who walk down the sandbanks looking for news to report, sometimes see this on the outlook. People work diligently, but then they wish to smell something different from the tide when they come home. People of Ísafjörður wish for a decent roof over their heads, and buildings here have been constructed with great success over the past years. This might quite possibly be the grandest market town of these northern latitudes nowadays. We, at The Social Times, have never been to Trondheim or to the new towns on the prairies of Canada, but we do maintain that the life here in town is exceptional and no worse than in Siglufjörður. Some of us here in the West sometimes think that there would be comfort in having more bread and butter and coffee to go around. And of course, this is in part what the struggle is about, how to share and divide.

We shall see what town politics will bring. Hannibal Valdimarsson has been transferred from the Labour Union of Álftafjörður to Baldur, and has now been elected chairman of the Union, with 118 votes to 27 votes for the Communist candidate, Ragnar Guðjónsson. Yet the most notable news might be this – that Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir has now been elected onto the Union board, the first of her sex, as financial secretary.

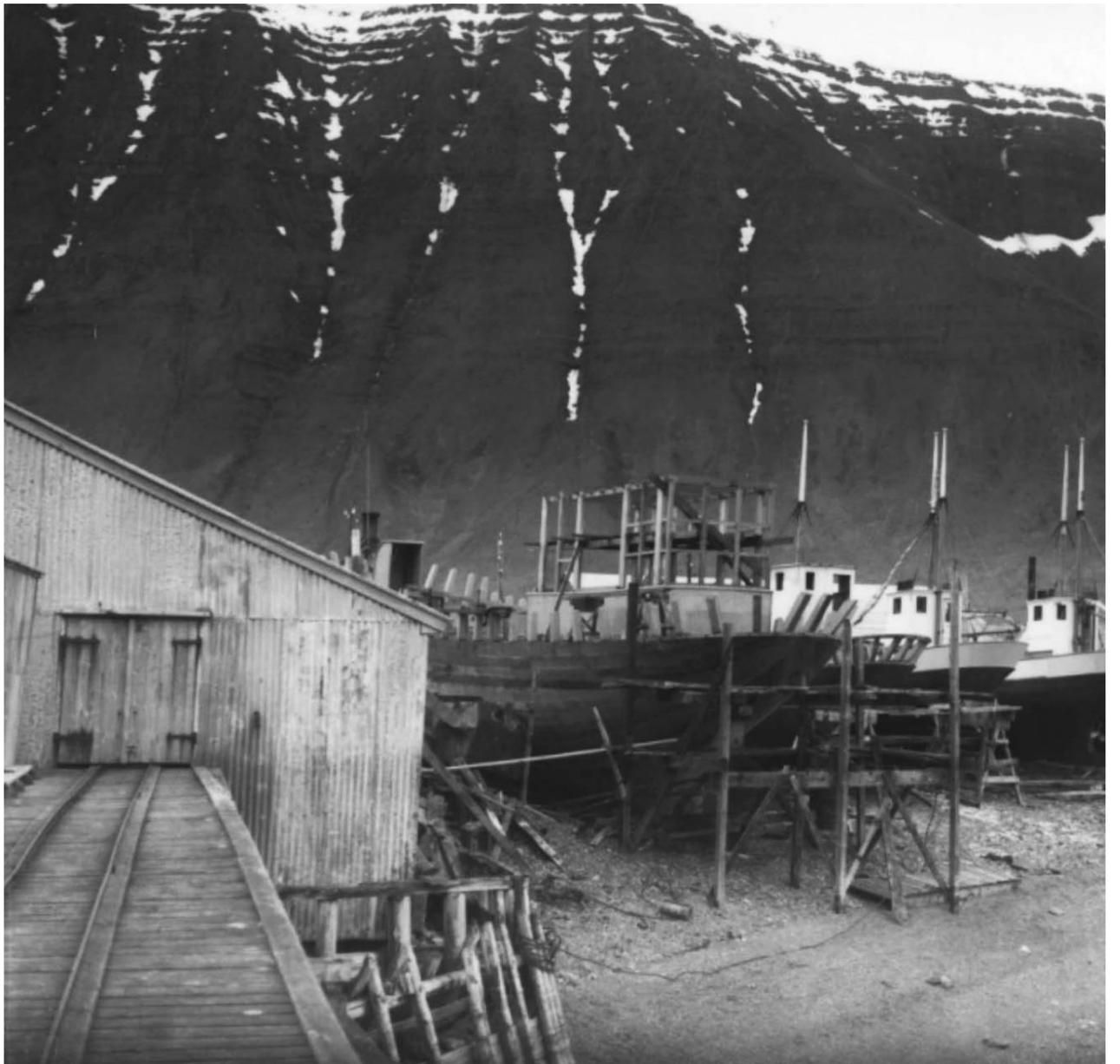
Angus Hinfinn Sólynjason, on Maltusarjörð by Djúp, 1932



WOMEN WIELDING MORE INFLUENCE IN LABOUR UNIONS IN THE WEST FJORDS.

So now it has come to this question that we, here at The Social Times, were asking on our pages not so long ago – whether it was not foreseeable that some of the women who joined Baldur in the middle of the last decade would be elected onto the board? These women have struggled for more say within the board, and it has not been without adversity, but the result we have now must be give many women cause for celebration as we look back in time at the convention of having solely men on the boards of such enterprises. For the tide seems to have finally turned for the womenfolk. After having served as a representative of working women on the negotiation committee during the hard strike instigated by Baldur in February 1926, Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir has been a great influence on the board over the past few years, for instance by taking a seat on the alternate board in 1927, 1928, and 1931. The sisters Jakobína and Þóra Guðmundsdóttir have also been influential. They were both elected onto the board of the Labour Union of Hnífsdalur in 1927, when the Union called for a strike to fight for its right of existence. Furthermore, Karítas Skarphéðinsdóttir was elected onto the wage rate committee of Baldur in March 1930.

Hinfinnur Fálki Hinfinsson, reporter for The Social Times in Veturhólmar by Ystustrendur, Summer of 1932



PLIGHT OF THE POOR IN THE SPOTLIGHT – 127 TRAITORS SING THEIR SONG BY SUN AND MOON.

Once again the plight of the poor is back on the agenda here in town. People are born and then they are poor. It is an all too common story.

On this January 16th, the formidable labour trailblazer Karítas Skarphéðinsdóttir held another speech in the town council about the matters of the poor, and chided Hannibal Valdimarsson for being soft on the conservatives.

Parents!

Remember: it is vital for your children's health that they get good cod liver oil during the winter months. Halldór M. Halldórss offers the best prices and quality.

Spices, all sorts.

Sweets and more from
M. TH. S. Blöndal

Reykjavik.

Always available at the wholesale of the undersigned.

Gnðm. Pétursson.

We need a stronger opposition to the capitalist powers were not her exact words, we cannot quote her here, but this is the gist of it. Hannibal retaliated by reproaching the communist speakers.

One is born and one becomes poor, and then in the end one accepts that which one has fought so long against.

In the end the Communists relented in their opposition to the Socialist agenda, which the town council approved with a convincing majority.

The steadfast seldom concede to their fate without a fight when they know there is a better way. As the vote was announced, Helgi Hannesson, took to the floor with a few harsh words for the opponents of full justice and told them to go to hell as that seemed to be the only way they had the mettle to pave.

Up until this point, the meeting had been calm, in line with all order and procedures, but this threw the entire assembly into pandemonium, people shouting and calling to

the moon, and for a while there was no order at the meeting of any sort.

The chairman had to make a great effort to manage a few words and announce how the votes fell. When he finished, Jón Jónsson the tailor announced that there were 127 labour traitors in the Union.

Sólynja Maltey Hinfinnsdóttir in Maltusarjörð by Djúp, for The Social Times, anno 1933

Though all
political parties may argue about all things, all housewives agree that the best and most lasting margarine is **Sólar- og Stjórnusmjörliki.**



KARÍTAS SKARPHÉÐINSDÓTTIR AND THREE OTHER COMMUNISTS EXPELLED FROM BALDUR IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY 1934.

Once again, we witnessed the repeated event here in Djúp of people getting hot under the collar. We of course blame the Collar. It should not bask in the sun for people will get much too hot.

We here in Ísafjörður, and in fact on the West Fjords in general, are used to the cold and simply do not know how to behave when the old collar heats up. Shame on you, Collar!

The crux of the matter is that on last 30th of January, this strange year 1934 that seems to be turning the whole mainland topsy-turvy – Collar save us from all that – our union, Baldur, called for a general assembly.

After going over the Board's report and financial statements, and before the ballot, we got a short speech.

Guðmundur Guðjónsson spoke of the recent town council elections and the "participation and behaviour of Communists in various matters," convinced that they had "seriously sabotaged the working classes of this town."

People rarely show up to these assemblies without intending to quarrel or spew some sort of smoke after having chanced upon a sour blood pudding after a long winter in the croft, but that is a different matter.

It was time to elect members for the board, with two lists of candidates – Socialists and Communists. The A-list of Hannibal and company received 177 votes, while the B-list of Communists received 35 votes.

The Communist wing should have expected this result, having elected a letter of the alphabet right behind the Socialists. People don't forget their report cards from school so easily. It takes a steadfast individual to favour B over A when the choice is between such prominent letters.

But now, on this most strange and turbulent year, 1934, we have the following members of Baldur's board: Hannibal Valdimarsson – chairman, Sigrún Guðmundsdóttir – vice chairman, Sverrir Guðmundsson – secretary, Halldór Ólafsson sr. – cashier, and Jón Brynjólfsson – financial secretary.

The ballot for other positions and committees returned 23-27 votes to the Communists. We can safely say that their lot is not proper fodder for the chargers that like to graze on the political grounds here in Djúp in this day and age.

After the elections, many sought to find entertainment in poking fun at this thorough licking. Stefán Stefánsson, who we know better as Stebbi the Shoe, took on the role of the Socialist jester with razor-sharp banter but the Communists Guðmundur Guðmundsson and Eyjólfur R. Árnason gave as good as they got. Many took several times to the podium. We, at The Times, could not help but think of old Collar.

This was a tempestuous meeting ending badly for many who have worked hard for this town with all their might. Eyjólfur R. Árnason, Halldór Ólafsson from Gjögur, and Karítas Skarphéðinsdóttir were all expelled from the Labour Union Baldur, in addition to Jón Jónsson the tailor. This will undoubtedly come back to bite them, these obdurate Socialists, but it is what it is, dear friends in Djúp. We battle and brawl, you win some and you lose some.

Sólfinna Hinfinnsdóttir, reporter for The Social Times in Gjöningafjöll under Digrajkull, February 1934



A COMMUNIST ON THE TOWN COUNCIL.

In the autumn of 1933, Eggert Þorbjarnarson returned to Ísafjörður after having journeyed east for a formal education in the USSR. This was not well seen by everyone in town. In fact, some people were very displeased.

In December 1933, Eggert's application for membership in Baldur was rejected by vote at a Union assembly, the reason in part being that Eggert had recently been expelled from the Labour Union Dagsbrún in Reykjavík.

The stance taken in Baldur was that both unions, Baldur and Dagsbrún, were under the umbrella of ASÍ. Therefore, Eggert needed to settle matters in the capital before his slate could be wiped clean here in the West.

Elections for the Town Council were held in Ísafjörður in the beginning of 1934. Three party lists were presented; Social Democrats, Independence Party, and Communists.

Of these three, the Communists caused the most commotion. The Socialists did not worry too much about following of the Independence Party in town but were more concerned with how many votes the Communists could pluck from them.

The aforementioned Eggert Þorbjarnarson, an old hand in Communist undertakings in Ísafjörður, was in fact sent

up here to the West this autumn to correct errors in the operations in his home town. His appointed role was to take the lead in party policies of Communists in town after successful candidacy in town council elections two years ago. Many hoped that Eggert, with his experience of the USSR, would have a lot to bring to the table. Others had different point of view.

Eggert was elected onto the council and now holds a key position in the power struggles in town. He refuses to back the Socialist candidates for positions and committees, rather voting for himself or abstaining from voting. We at The Times cannot help but think of the oystercatcher hopping about the meadows. The oystercatcher stands his ground and defends his nest and has no time for nonsense when pursued.

At the end of all this town council muck it now seems, in this our Lord's year 1934, that the Independence Party has won in a coin toss between their candidates and those of the Social Democrat Party.

The oystercatcher prances about the meadow with his bright red beak. There will be some hullabaloo on the mountainside when the birds of prey get agitated.

Angus Hinfinn Sólynjason, on Maltusarjörð by Djúp, 1934

**There is only one option,
if you, dear labourer, want your interests looked
after in the town council — **vote for the
Communist Party list — the
B-list!****

THE FOUR EXPELLED FROM BALDUR REINSTATED AS MEMBERS – UNANIMOUS VOTE FOR KARÍTAS SKARPHÉÐINSDÓTTIR AT THE ASSEMBLY.

As most people know who follow town politics and the labour struggle here by Djúp, four people were expelled not so long ago from the Labour Union Baldur. Halldór Ólafsson from Gjögur and Eyjólfur R. Árnason were among the four who quarrelled with other members and were in turn expelled from the union, much to their distress.

It now seems that the waters have calmed and the four have now been reinstated as members once again. This took place just over half a year ago, towards the end of 1934, when a secret, recorded election took place with the aforementioned result. The Times finds the most newsworthy information from Baldur is that Karítas Skarphéðinsdóttir, a well-known champion of workers' rights, was accepted into the Union in May with a majority of votes and only two against. The Social Times wishes to use this opportunity to congratulate Karítas on the election.

Sólfinna Hinfinnsdóttir, reporter for The Social Times in Gjörningafjöll under Digrajökull, June 1935

EMPLOYMENT, ALCOHOL, COMMUNISTS, AND SOCIALISTS.

One of the things that seem to go around more than others here in Iceland, despite various efforts on most platforms of society to stand together, is the misuse of alcohol.

As we all know, it has been popular for some time now, at least since the last century, to found temperance societies in the towns and countryside. These societies have more often than not proved vital and in the national interest, full of diligent people who see the benefits of abstaining from alcohol rather than succumbing to a slow death.

We may remember when several good men in Hvítársíða and Hnappadalur, in the middle of the last century, agreed in unison to be tee-total. This was when foreign men, mostly British, with a passion for salmon fishing, started finding their way up here to the west, bringing new employment opportunities for the locals.

As these temperance societies were gaining ground so were developments in Borgarfjörður, spreading new knowledge up here to Djúp. There were various great developments but this may also have given cause for many to take a stance against spirits of the liquid kind.

We will not make any assumptions here at The Times. We simply recall older reports and report the latest news in the town of Ísafjörður.

Because once again people now quarrel about old Bacchus, the enticing drowner of sorrows and memory, making some men slaves to hell itself. We will not blame the old boy for the bickering that now goes on between Communists and Socialists, but they do fight fiercely in public about the drink like men who have had a few to many.



Up until 1932, collaboration between Socialists and Communists in Baldur was reasonable, and Communists were even elected onto Union committees with the Socialists. But after 1932, Communist took a harder line, increasingly accusing the Social Democrats of being "labour traitors" and "henchmen of the Capitalist".

Communists will, with various proposals and presentations, try to expose Social Democrats in office and on the Union board, as servants of the upper classes rather than champions of the working people.

At the same time, the Social Democrats have been taking an increasingly adverse stance towards Communists. They exclude them from all positions of confidence and influence in the Union. They have for instance refused all collaboration for the Labour Day rallies.

The Social Democrats amend every proposal from the Communists touching on town authorities, either to soften criticism or to postpone issues, presenting their own proposals in the next meeting when they've gathered troops to ensure a majority vote. Communists are very organised, preparing for meetings in Baldur with their comrades, presenting proposals on labour amendments and the rights of those who must rely on support from the county.

When the alcohol issue arises it sometimes seems as if the speakers try to outperform each other in their disapproval. The duel of tongues is so ferocious that it sometimes seems like speakers are trying to give each other a literal licking. When quarrels get so fierce there is the danger of not making any point at all. Disputes about issues that people are in fact in agreement about should be beneath union people, whether they consider themselves Communists or Revisionists.

The Labour Union Baldur implemented a ban on alcohol import to Ísafjörður in 1930, and kept it in place for half a year. In the beginning of 1931 the manager of the liquor store negotiated with Baldur, settling on an acceptable quota for the import and selling of alcohol in the town. This was in place for three years or until Icelanders voted for a lift of the

prohibition in the national referendum in October 1933. We, here at The Social Times do not remember celebrations of the calibre as we saw that day. We are no different to other nations in that we like our bread and games too. We should perhaps be able to settle on a way to enjoy them together.

Members of Baldur have for instance not managed to stop their efforts to keep the alcohol problem at bay in Ísafjörður. And the Socialists can hardly sit and drink meanwhile. But this seems to be an easy apple of discord. A fermented apple, perhaps? Oh, dear reader, forgive us Times folk our little jokes.

We do agree with the Union when it encourages all good townfolk to display maturity when the strong spirits may flow freely again. Social Democrats certainly do. Nobody wants our town to become a scene for misery and misfortune, such as happened for a short while when the ban was lifted in 1935. In the referendum, 70% of people in Ísafjörður voted against lifting the ban, while the majority of the nation voted for it.

Now, our formidable Karítas Skarphéðinsdóttir has kept the Union board busy with the matter of alcohol, warning that we may pay dearly for yielding in this battle against old Bacchus. Dear people of Ísafjörður, let us now show moderation and strength, and keep in mind that the shadow on the mountain always lifts no matter how we squabble about it.

Hinfinna Mávus Thorsdóttir, reporter for The Social Times at Sumarsinnajörðir by Djúp, Spring 1936

**Outstanding turnips and potatoes
available! Exceptional smoked lamb,
and much more, both edible and
inedible**

Great products, great prices.

Kr. H. Jónsson.

TWO WEEK STRIKE! WAGE GAP BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN SMALLER IN ÍSÁFJÖRÐUR THAN IN REYKJAVIK.

They are high and mighty, these fellows in the capital who believe that men should receive almost double the pay of the women for their labour. Down south by the blue straits they have many large vessels, sailing the large open seas, manned by valiant men. And the same goes for our boys in Ísafjörður, but at least we appreciate our female workforce better than they do down south.

Over time we, here at the edge of the world, have of course received news of suffragettes and Rosa Luxembourg, and even a Swiss man, who all maintain that we are a strange lot, humans, not to place the same value on everyone's labour. In fact, they say that everyone should have the same shoes to walk in, the same terms, as long as they are running the same errands, it should not matter what sex the feet belong to.

That is not the way things are, however, at least not yet. Who knows what the high flyers staring into the Atlantic from aircrafts will do in the future? That question remains unanswered, but the fact is that here in Ísafjörður women are paid $\frac{3}{4}$ of a man's salary, while women in Reykjavik must do with just of half.

This is not because the men here in the West are lesser men than the fellows in Reykjavik, but rather because people up here are grander in spirit and more just. It is no gift to any person to be born into hard labour. But if we are to develop and improve our communities we need to work hard, and often a lot. This holds true for both women and men.

We here at The Social Times, have witnessed how many women have made up for their slight frames with impressive vigour and diligence. It is evident that here in the West we do not buy as easily into the idea of rating wages in accordance to weight. A rotund man with a fat belly may not be half as efficient as a quick girl.

And so we are now getting used to the idea that women may almost earn a man's salary. I suppose the recent two-week strike played a part. The womenfolk simply walked out and stood their ground. Never a quiet moment in the labour struggles here by Djúp.

*Hinfinnur Fálki Hinfinnsson,
Reporter for The Social Times in Veturhólmar by Ystustrendur,
1936*



EGGERT PORBJARNARSON MOVES BACK TO MOSCOW TO SERVE THE COMINTERN – HALLDÓR ÓLAFSSON FROM GJÖGUR TAKES OVER AS THE COMMUNIST REPRESENTATIVE ON THE TOWN COUNCIL.

It is evident to most that Communists oppose Fascism and will do whatever it takes to unite the working classes against the oppression and tyranny that has taken hold in some countries, like a force of nature at this dark and ominous time in the world. Eggert Þorbjarnarson has relocated to Moscow to work for the Comintern, which means that the Communist wing has lost a great champion from their ranks here in Ísafjörður

Some claim that the sun sets later if someone takes the time to watch the sunset. We, the people of Ísafjörður, know this, tending to move from under the mountain to chase the rays of the Sun.

Now Eggert has gone where he will surely find the great sun in a new place. We wish him joy and the best of luck in a new arena in the Socialist struggle.

But we have other people. Even some people who give a dog's turd about which way the mountain faces the Sun each day. For here in Ísafjörður, you see, it is not the Sun that moves. Everything comes down to the mountain. We appreciate Copernicus but the sandbanks do not matter so much in such a small society.

Halldór Ólafsson from Gjögur has taken over from Eggert as the Communist representative in Ísafjörður. We, here at The

Times, choose to look at it thus: Halldór, with his conduct and appropriate confirmation of his passion for the good fight, would gladly lie in the deepest ravine of the mountain in darkest winter if such an act would ease the life of those who must struggle for their daily bread and butter.

Halldór has the character and disposition needed. He is cooperative and seems to think of the Socialists as birds of similar feather, and a similar ally is better than an army of enemies.

There was also a change in policy with the Communists last year with regard to the Socialists, who are now their chief allies in the fight against fascism.

We, here in Iceland, are governed by the working classes as they are called in layman's terms. The Social Times can divine various signs of the government's workings, all over the country. We must appreciate that these days it is not a given thing to be alive, especially not in harmony with the other living.

We hope this will all end well. There are good omens and signs of a better future.

*Hinfinnur Fálki Hinfinnsson,
reporter for The Social Times in Veturhólmar by Ystustrendur,*



LIVE FROM THE STORM IN ÍSÁFJÖRÐUR – COMMUNIST REPRESENTATIVE IN KEY POSITION.

The weather here in the West is unpredictable and now it's not up in the high skies but down below the lowest clouds where we breathe in the scent of the next person on the streets of Ísafjörður.

Communists have refused to back the representative from the Social Democratic Party in elections for positions and committees. Eggert Þorbjarnarson votes for himself or abstains from voting so that the results must be determined by drawing of lots between the Social Democrats and the Independence Party. With quite some hullabaloo, some shouting, intrigue and manipulation of sentiments the Independence Party manages to win most of the time and gain both the positions of council chairman and town mayor.

This is a great shock to the Socialists who criticise Communists harshly for failing the united labour force. We, at The Times, blame the unpredictable weather, for it can be a real beast.

*Finhinnur Ugly Finhinnsson,
reporter for The Social Times in Drúpnastaðir by Eilífðarhlað, 1938*

NO TO NAZIS IN ÍSÁFJÖRÐUR.

Like in other European countries, there seem to be people here in the West who are ready to don a Nazi uniform if it is properly tailored. The tailors are few and far between, and fabric is scarce, so the Nazis are still a very small group here in Ísafjörður.

If truth be told, we don't have much to build on here in the West Fjords of Iceland for those who want to practice these politics that seem so popular in Mid-Europe. We do not know whether this popularity is due to people down there finding it acceptable to assault their fellow citizens, or whether the masses are so terrified of their authorities screaming down their megaphones.

Whatever the reason, it seems highly unlikely that we in the West Fjords would build concentration camps for people from the next valley, even though we sometimes pretend to have a bone to pick with them.

Of course, we here in Djúp, can with a little bit of focus and a lot of determination look to neighbouring nations and start to imagine that they are bad nations, such as the Faeroese and the Greenlanders, for they are small nations that even we might conquer if we diligently gathered the hayforks in the barns and rowed out to see on our rowing boats and trawlers, the whole nation crossing the ocean in a few boats. Then we could really start sewing uniforms and cutting out medals from the beach pebbles to pin on our jackets.

We, here at The Social Times, have even considered the possibility of fashioning these uniforms from seaweed so that

our army would give off a pungent and Aryan sea-scent, announcing the arrival of a hardy race from the deepest north.

Oh, we cannot help but jest here in Ylhvammur by Djúp, just for you, dear Times readers.

Thankfully it has come to light that the people of Ísafjörður do not want Nazis in their midst. Our mountains have no patience for such folly, and neither do the people. A few young men in their uniforms decided to stand as candidates in the recent elections and held a meeting in Ísafjörður under the Nazi flag but the Socialists took a strong stance against them and protested with outdoor rally to thunderous applause. Away with the mob! Was the unified cry. We don't want Nazis in this town.

*Sólfinnur Hinfinnson in Ylhvammur by Djúp, for The Social Times,
The Winter of the Eclipse 1938*



ÍSÁFJÖRÐUR – THE RED TOWN.

It should come as no surprise to those who closely follow national affairs in Iceland that a recent census confirmed that Ísafjörður is the town in the western part of the country that is seeing the highest increase in population and job creation. Now, at the start of the second World War, around 2800 people are registered as living here in town, and that is an increase of over 400 inhabitants over the past ten years.

Ísafjörður is still the only town with municipality rights in the western part of the country and life here is full of dynamics and culture, which is a sign of the growth here in Djúp. But there is also hard talk about the issues here. It can hardly be said that the struggle for our bread and butter is a dull one.

Ever since district magistrate Skúli Thoroddsen was stripped of office by the royal governor in Reykjavik over half a century ago politics in Ísafjörður have been brutal.

The Social Democrats took over from Skúli's followers and the most radical national sovereigntists in the beginning of the 20th century, uniting that struggle with new circumstances. So much has happened since the beginning of the century that the large forests abroad could hardly grow fast enough if we needed them for paper to document all this.

Socialism is a large part of town life in Ísafjörður like in world history the past forty years.

We, who have warmed the cockles of our hearts here in Ísafjörður are among the first to elect to be governed by the working classes here in Iceland. Over the past decade, men and women united in the labour unions and thus set a new course for the labour struggle here in Iceland.

Anything can happen in Ísafjörður, as we all know. If not here, then where else in the world?

We, here down on the banks, up in the slopes, and

down in the valleys spend a part of each year in the shadow of the mountain and do not enjoy the sun like folk in more southern parts of the world. We are marked by our home and almost take our place in the world for granted, even though we are always aware of its advantages and inconveniences.

There is not much lowland, but the mettle of the people who have made their life here is stronger than of many others on sunny beaches, who smile year round in the golden rays that pierce the ocean. We are hardy and hold onto each other. That is how it is supposed to be.

It is true as day that Ísafjörður is the first Red Town in Iceland. This is where the Social Democrats first gained majority in a town council, this was 1921, and it was in most part due to the diligence of the unions, the workers, and the temperance societies. Since then the Red Council has played an active part in developments in town, especially under the leadership of the food doctor Vilmundur Jónasson and postmaster Finnur Jónsson, who served as chairman of the Labour Union Baldur for a long time.

Most of the docks were owned by the merchants of Hæstikaupstaður and Neðstikaupstað until the Social Democrats made efforts in the 20's to buy these docks. In 1925, a new hospital designed by Guðjón Samúelsson was opened. A state of the art dairy farm with 27 cows was built in Seljaland in Skutulsfjörður and run by the town council. When the banks and the fisheries sold off half of the town's fishing fleet this same year, the Socialists found the Ísafjörður Cooperative – Samvinnufélag Ísfirðinga. The co-op had seven new 40-45 motored vessels built, the last one arriving in Ísafjörður towards the end of 1929.

In addition to this, the co-op procured fish processing facilities in the Turnhús in Neðstikaupstaður.

Slowly but surely, the town became a Socialist stronghold, not in the town council but also within most of the large businesses operating here.

The co-op was the principal fishery here in Eyri and maintained that position the first quarter of the twentieth century. Kaupfélag Ísfirðinga and Samvinnufélagið later acquired a majority holding in the fishery company Njörður hf.

Njörður ran five smaller vessels in the 30's, most of which were great fishing ships for their size.

All these operations and projects were managed by the Social Democrats.

In 1936, the Town Council founded the first shrimp factory in Iceland and took over the town's trawling company in collaboration with private enterprises.

We, here in Ystustrandir who write these words on paper that will no doubt be wrinkled once they reach Ísafjörður, sometimes sit on a cloud and wonder what we should say about all this.

The conclusion is probably that Ísafjörður is a Socialist town. A red town. The influence and ideology of Finnur Jónsson have impacted the town and how the unions and the economy have fared here.

Karítas Skarphéðinsdóttir struck like lightning, igniting the flame when it had all but gone out, as it had so many times before after so many rainy days.

We who do not fully understand the twentieth century quite yet, still continue to follow events but call it a day now here in Baldurssalir and Grjótspunahlíð and Ystustrandir.

Events will unfold and things that we could not dream of will happen. Of that, at least, we can be sure. The twenty-first century will come even though we find it unthinkable.

We, the reporters for The Social Times, send all people by Djúp, from down south by Barðaströnd, west to Strandir, up into Jökulfjörður, and north to Hornstrandir, our very best greetings on this seriously snowed-in Christmas Eve of 1940. Summer will be here before we know it.

Hinfinnur Fálki Hinfinnsson,

Reporter for The Social Times in Veturhólar by Ystustrendur



...I was never a child...

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