

SOVIET VOTES BY SHOW OF HANDS

RUSSIAN OFFICIAL SESSION; IS
MUCH LIKE MASS-MEETING
IN UNITED STATES.

Editor's Note:—Patrick Quinland, an American citizen of Irish descent, recently arrived in the United States from soviet Russia. Quinland had been connected with the labor movement of the United States. At first he was suspected of being a spy and spent a month in jail. Later, he was allowed to see and hear everything he desired during his 11 months' stay in Russia. Owing to conflicting stories regarding Russian conditions carried by couriers and brought by travelers, the United Press asked Quinland to write of soviet Russia as he saw it. The three stories he wrote are released consecutively beginning April 15.

—United Press.

By Patrick Quinland
(United Press Staff Correspondent)
NEW YORK, April 15.—Imagine a New England town meeting, discussing in a straightforward manner its local affairs and voting by a simple show of hands. That briefly, is about now a soviet in the heart of Russia looks to a foreign observer. Between the New England town meeting and the typical Russian soviet in session there are, of course, several fundamental differences. But these grow out of the innate character of the Russian people and the diversity of their political ideals. I visited the soviets of Petrograd, Samara and Saratov, among others, while in session. Thus I was afforded an object lesson of the operation of present system of government in Russia.

At the meeting of the Petrograd soviet, to which I was invited by Zinoviev, president and governor of the Petrograd district, I was startled by

the variety of costume. Being the second largest soviet in Russia, Moscow taking the first place, it gave rather the appearance of a huge mass meeting attended by a nondescript crowd of sailors from the Kronstadt fleet, soldiers on leave dressed in khaki or brilliant Cossack uniforms, workmen in their working clothes and peasants garbed in simple white blouses and shod with picturesque sandals. Many women were present, some fashionably dressed, sitting next to their peasant sisters clad in smocks with vari-colored handkerchiefs on their heads. On the platform sat the president of executive committee, as well as numerous foreign guests and special delegates from outlying districts, some having come from remote places in Siberia. The delegates are elected by their local trade-unions or guilds. As each member entered the building—in Petrograd the sessions take place in the Uritsky palace where formerly the Duma convened—he was required to show his credentials to the military police who stand

with fixed bayonets at the door. The program for this session, as is the custom, was read by Zinoviev, who then proceeded to put each question as it arose to the delegates. One of the propositions argued with not a little vehemence was that of compulsory labor. Speakers asked for the floor and then passed down the aisles addressing the assemblage from the platform. As in the British parliament, the members are frequently interrupted from the floor which fired all

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