
In Memoriam: Comrade Anna Ferry Smith Died in San Diego, Cal. by G.A. Hoehn

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Unsigned article was presumably written by *St. Louis Labor* editor
G.A. Hoehn, who was the first editor of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* in August 1898.

Sad news comes from San Diego, Cal. Comrade Anna Ferry Smith, well known to the older St. Louis Socialists by her party work here during the days of 1898-1899, is no more. She died several days ago, but somehow the comrades out West failed to inform the Socialist press of the death of one of the bravest women of the American movement.

Anna Ferry Smith was one of the dozen delegates who, in June, 1898, withdrew from the Uhlich's Hall Social Democracy convention and organized the Social Democratic Party (later Socialist Party) at a conference at the Revere House. From that time on she spent some time in the St. Louis movement, working both for the party and for the labor unions. She was a delegate to the Central Trades and Labor Union until she was called back to California.

Those days were most critical in the St. Louis movement, and we recollect many a sad, and yet humorous, occurrence. When, in 1898, the local movement reorganized as a branch of the Social Democratic Party there were only a handful of people who had not lost courage and hope. And Anna Ferry Smith was one of them. In August 1898 our German paper, *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, made its appearance, and this meant additional work and worry. We remember the days during the fall and winter months of 1898. Our party treasury was empty; our German paper, born in financial bankruptcy, became more bankrupt toward the Christmas days. Anna Ferry Smith, the Socialist organizer; Albert E. Sanderson, the city secretary; G.A. Hoehn, the editor, and two or three comrades out of work, held forth in Room 9, on the

third floor of the International Bank Building, Fourth and Chestnut Streets. Three or four times a day we would get a big can of coffee and stale rolls from Comrade Voegel's little business place on Second Street (gratis, of course!) and then the "leadership" of the St. Louis movement would take their joint meals at "Headquarters." As a rule, there were not enough cups or glasses to serve the hungry ones simultaneously, but this never caused any friction or controversy.

During all these days of trials and tribulations, Mrs. Smith would play the role of the good mother, the true comrade, the heroic and self-sacrificing sister.

These "Kaffeeklatsch" meals at Headquarters ended very abruptly and imperatively, as follows:

The liberal supply of sugar rolls from Comrade Voegel's place became a source of enlightenment to several half-starved cockroaches that emigrated from an old bachelor's "residence," who roomed next door to our office. In less than no time these cockroaches awoke to new life, and after three months their children and children's children became as numerous as the Children of Israel in ancient Egypt.

A council of war was called by Anna Ferry Smith, and then and there our good Mother Anna's "declaration of war" on the cockroaches was unanimously endorsed. "Boys, I hate cockroaches!" she said, "they must go; we can not permit them at Socialist Headquarters. Cockroaches are a nuisance, no matter where they are. How to get rid of them? Well, there are two ways to accomplish our purpose: In the first place," she continued, "the sugar roll and coffee meals around here must be discontinued; next, we get a nickel's worth of Electric Paste. Those we can not kill with the paste, we kill by starvation."

All the boys laughed and said, "Aye!" Within two weeks the cockroaches were gone, every one of them. Later on Mrs. Smith would sometimes remind us of this experience by saying: "All you need to do is to keep your party headquarters clean, and cockroaches, bugs, and rats will not bother you, for these species of God's creation never prosper or multiply in the midst of cleanliness, light, and fresh air."

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When Comrade Eugene V. Debs spoke in San Diego on his Red Special tour last fall Comrade Mrs. Smith was confined to bed. She insisted on attending the Debs meeting. Our comrades transported

the sick old lady to the meeting, which was attended by 7,000 people, and carried her on the speaker's platform, where she occupied an invalid chair.

In last week's *Appeal to Reason* we find the following write-up by Francis M. Elliott:

Anna Ferry Smith.

I have searched the Socialist press in vain for some appreciation of the work of Comrade Anna Ferry Smith. It seems to me something worse than sacrilege that this lofty soul should pass to the great beyond with no word of commendation from those who alone of all the world could appreciate her worth. Her work for humanity began before most of us were out of our swaddling clothes, and her entrance upon the stage of Socialist activity antedates by many years our earliest conception of economic liberty.

The interior of capitalist jails knew her presence intimately long ere her noble personality had dawned upon our mental horizon. She was one of the grand apostles of human liberty, whose presence may be divinely discerned far out upon the frontier of human progress in every age of man. Her impulsive, combative, Celtic nature led her were the combat raged the fiercest and the battle-cry of freedom was ever upon the lips of this noble woman. Her life was a credit and an inspiration to her sex and to all mankind, and when I view in perspective her magnificent struggle I am ashamed of my own paltry sacrifices for and contributions to the cause which she so nobly served.

No words that we can utter, no sentiment that poet's pen can portray, will serve to adequately express the actual worth of her lofty soul to human progress. She lived to see fulfilled her last long wish and that was to know the outcome of the political struggle of 1908. More than to years ago she told me that if she could only live to see Gene Debs nominated and the campaign of last year concluded she would lay down the burden of life uncomplainingly. Poor, dear soul, her wish was gratified. With what commingled feelings of pit and regret she heard the disappointing results of that contest, we may never know. Suffice it that she did not long survive the fulfillment of her wish.

Like the calm that follows the tempest at sea, her great soul sank peacefully into eternity. May she rest in peace and may we have forever with us the inspiration of her spiritual presence!

Edited by Tim Davenport

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