

Research Note

The purpose of this Research Note is to clarify certain misconceptions contained in the paper by Peter V. Krats entitled "Limited Loyalties: The Sudbury, Canada Finns and Their Institutions 1887-1935", published in *Finns in North America* ¹). I read Peter Krats' paper with interest since I also have done extensive research on Finnish Canadians in the Sudbury area. Mr. Krats has commented negatively and, I believe, unfairly on two earlier studies I have written on Sudbury Finns; a 1973 master's thesis in political history on the political and social history of Sudbury Finns ²) and a 1976 licentiate dissertation in political science on the political behaviour of Canadian Finns in the Sudbury area ³).

Mr. Krats states (p. 200; footnote 32) that the conclusions on the political behaviour of Canadian Finns contained in my licentiate thesis are based on "dubious statistical methods and assumptions". Mr. Krats advises that he himself relied on "impressionistic sources" such as newspaper accounts of the time to "reinforce an image of a more balanced voting breakdown".

I believe that my licentiate thesis of 1976 was clear regarding both my methodology and results. My study examined census tracts and voters' lists for Canadian general elections and identified certain rural polling divisions in the Sudbury area that had a substantial Finnish population. (The rural polling divisions that I identified seem to correspond with the Finnish areas identified by Mr. Krats in his later study for the time periods in which our studies overlap.) I then examined the political party breakdown of these polling divisions over twelve consecutive general elections covering the period 1935 to 1972 using official published election data. I did not apply any unique statistical method but simply cited what is a part of the public record.

My study also used a survey of Finnish Canadian voters selected from voters' lists for the constituencies of Sudbury and Nickel Belt that I conducted after the 1972 Canadian General Election and an analysis of a 1965 survey of Sudbury voters conducted by a political science professor at Laurentian University of Sudbury.

So what results did I derive using this "dubious" methodology? Based on a time series analysis of the twelve Canadian elections and the two surveys cited, my overall conclusion was that, while originally some Finns, notably in rural areas, demonstrated signs of deviancy to the re-

gional political norm by support for the Communist Party of Canada, they gradually moved into the political mainstream the longer they lived in Canada. There have been countless studies which report on this kind of evolution in voting behaviour among immigrant groups in both the United States and Canada.

Many political scientists in the United States, Canada and Europe have used — and continue to use — this methodology. For example, both members of my licentiate examination board, Pertti Pesonen, then Chairman of the Political Science Department of the University of Helsinki, and Tuomo Martikainen, the present Chairman, are experts on this methodology and both continue to publish studies based on this kind of political analysis.

I do not know of any political scientist who relies exclusively on newspaper accounts of the time to obtain a "balanced" coverage of voting behaviour as Mr. Krats has done. In fact, when one looks at the media coverage of recent Canadian general elections, every major newspaper relies on polling as its main source of objective information. While the newspaper reporters of today are better educated than those of the 1920's and 1930's, no major newspaper would rely primarily on the "impressions" of its reporters and columnists over hard data acquired by means of a scientifically objective survey.

On page 193, Mr. Krats seems to take me to task. First he states that I have gone "so far" in my political history thesis as to suggest that Sudbury was the centre for much of the political activity which caused the Finnish Canadian population to divide into two opposing factions. He then goes on to say that an analysis of the **actual** activities of the organizations, and the popular reactions to the same, suggests that the role of ideology has been overstated and the Finnish support was closely tied to the degree to which institutions could provide **real** services (Krats' emphasis).

The juxtaposition of his two statements seems to indicate that my research does not fully appreciate the very real services provided by local Finnish institutions (while that of Mr. Krats, presumably, does). This has never been the case.

While it was not the central theme of either of my studies, both dealt extensively with the activities of the Finnish community in the Sudbury area pointing out: (1) a need for creating a social life in the Finnish language for immigrants with little

or no formal education and already of working age; (2) the reliance of pre-1930 Finnish immigrants on the services provided by relatives and other organizations within one's group since those of government were inadequate; and (3) that, while the Finnish Organization of Canada was harassed by the authorities for its political activities, the services it provided to its members were concrete ones and earned the deep-felt loyalties of its supporters. These studies particularly note the close contact between the leaders and membership at large among Finnish social organizations in the Sudbury area.

These observations have also been reiterated in publications of mine such as my paper on the political behaviour of Sudbury Finns published in *Finnish Diaspora I*⁴⁾ and the entry on Finns that I wrote for *The Canadian Encyclopedia*⁵⁾. The point is that I fully agree with the statement that the support by Finns for their institutions was tied to the real services they provided. This should not be surprising since I have been writing on this same theme for quite some time.

In the introduction to my 1973 master's thesis, I stated that my study was not intended to be definitive and expressed the hope that someone in the future would write a more comprehensive history of the Finnish experience in the Sudbury area. Despite certain disagreements, I do feel that Peter Krats has presented a good paper overall

which, especially for the the period up to 1935, represents a significant step toward such a history.

Notes

- 1 Michael G. Karni, Olavi Koivukangas and Edward W. Laine (eds.): *Finns in North America. Proceedings of Finn Forum III, 5-8 September 1984, Turku, Finland. Migration Studies C9.* Institute of Migration, Turku, 1988.
- 2 L. Sillanpää: *A Political and Social History of Canadians of Finnish Descent in the District of Sudbury.* Master's thesis on Political History, University of Helsinki, 1973.
- 3 L. Sillanpää: *The Political Behaviour of Canadian of Finnish Descent in the District of Sudbury.* Licentiate Thesis in Political Science, University of Helsinki, 1976.
- 4 L. Sillanpää: *The Voting Behaviour of Finns in the Sudbury Area.* In: *Finnish Diaspora I*, Toronto: MHSO, 1981.
- 5 L. Sillanpää: *Finns.* In: *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 1985, 1988.

Lennard Sillanpää
Department of Political Science
University of Helsinki