

Initiation Stamps Sold by Federation for the Workers Party of America. January to December 1923.

Based on a document in the Comintern Archive, f. 515, op. 1, d. 206, l. 10.

Date	Armenian	Czechoslovak	Estonian	Finnish	German	Greek	Hungarian	Italian	Jewish	Latvian	Lithuanian	Polish	Romanian	Russian	Scandinav.	So. Slavic	Ukrainian	English	TOTAL
Date	Arm	CzS	Est	Finn	Ger	Grk	Hun	Ital	Jew	Lat	Lith	Pol	Rom	Rus	Scan	SSI	Ukr	Eng	TOTAL
01/1923	†	0	0	135	0	0	0	47	0	0	7	12	0	2	0	52	5	246	506
02/1923	†	0	0	109	0	8	0	24	0	0	9	0	0	20	0	35	0	422	627
03/1923	†	0	0	62	2	0	5	26	1	0	37	2	0	7	0	59	0	189	390
Q-I Tot.	†	0	0	306	2	8	5	97	1	0	53	14	0	29	0	146	5	857	1,523
<i>pct.</i>		<i>0.0%</i>	<i>0.0%</i>	<i>20.1%</i>	<i>1.3%</i>	<i>0.5%</i>	<i>0.3%</i>	<i>6.4%</i>	<i>0.1%</i>	<i>0.0%</i>	<i>3.5%</i>	<i>0.9%</i>	<i>0.0%</i>	<i>1.9%</i>	<i>0.0%</i>	<i>9.6%</i>	<i>0.3%</i>	<i>56.3%</i>	
04/1923	†	0	0	105	5	0	30	20	0	0	13	1	1	3	0	24	0	126	328
05/1923	†	0	0	42	0	3	69	25	0	0	4	17	0	10	1	44	0	226	441
06/1923	†	0	0	82	0	1	100	10	0	0	4	6	4	14	0	18	0	273	512
Q-II Tot.	†	0	0	229	5	4	199	55	0	0	21	24	5	27	1	86	0	625	1,281
<i>pct.</i>		<i>0.0%</i>	<i>0.0%</i>	<i>17.9%</i>	<i>0.4%</i>	<i>0.3%</i>	<i>15.5%</i>	<i>4.3%</i>	<i>0.0%</i>	<i>0.0%</i>	<i>1.6%</i>	<i>1.9%</i>	<i>0.4%</i>	<i>2.1%</i>	<i>0.1%</i>	<i>6.7%</i>	<i>0.0%</i>	<i>48.9%</i>	$\Delta = -15.9\%$
07/1923	†	0	0	88	0	5	13	18	0	0	14	18	0	8	0	7	0	250	421
08/1923	†	0	0	41	0	3	4	55	0	0	10	39	0	11	0	53	0	178	394
09/1923	†	0	0	113	0	0	6	9	4	0	8	29	5	11	0	71	0	351	607
Q-III Tot.	†	0	0	242	0	8	23	82	4	0	32	86	5	30	0	131	0	779	1,422
<i>pct.</i>		<i>0.0%</i>	<i>0.0%</i>	<i>17.0%</i>	<i>0.0%</i>	<i>0.6%</i>	<i>1.6%</i>	<i>5.8%</i>	<i>0.3%</i>	<i>0.0%</i>	<i>2.3%</i>	<i>6.0%</i>	<i>0.4%</i>	<i>2.1%</i>	<i>0.0%</i>	<i>9.2%</i>	<i>0.0%</i>	<i>54.8%</i>	$\Delta = +11.0\%$

Date	Armenian Arm	Czechoslovak CzS	Estonian Est	Finnish Finn	German Ger	Greek Grk	Hungarian Hun	Italian Ital	Jewish Jew	Latvian Lat	Lithuanian Lith	Polish Pol	Romanian Rom	Russian Rus	Scandinavian Scan	So. Slavic SSI	Ukrainian Ukr	English Eng	TOTAL
10/1923	†	1	0	218	0	0	28	41	3	0	16	13	0	3	6	45	14	354	742
11/1923	†	0	0	128	0	1	26	47	3	0	37	5	0	7	2	103	66	409	834
12/1923	†	4	0	107	15	0	6	36	1	0	23	18	0	12	5	52	0	451	730
Q-IV Tot.	†	5	0	453	15	1	60	124	7	0	76	36	0	22	13	200	80	1214	2,306
<i>pct.</i>		<i>0.2%</i>	<i>0.0%</i>	<i>19.6%</i>	<i>0.7%</i>	<i>0.0%</i>	<i>2.6%</i>	<i>5.4%</i>	<i>0.3%</i>	<i>0.0%</i>	<i>3.3%</i>	<i>1.6%</i>	<i>0.0%</i>	<i>1.0%</i>	<i>0.6%</i>	<i>8.7%</i>	<i>3.5%</i>	<i>52.6%</i>	$\Delta = +62.3%$
Σ YEAR	†	5	0	1230	22	21	287	358	12	0	182	160	10	108	14	563	85	3475	6,532
<i>pct.</i>		<i>0.1%</i>	<i>0.0%</i>	<i>18.8%</i>	<i>0.3%</i>	<i>0.3%</i>	<i>4.4%</i>	<i>5.5%</i>	<i>0.2%</i>	<i>0.0%</i>	<i>2.8%</i>	<i>2.4%</i>	<i>0.2%</i>	<i>1.7%</i>	<i>0.2%</i>	<i>8.6%</i>	<i>1.3%</i>	<i>53.2%</i>	

†- Federation only firmly established in July 1924.

Notes:

1. The above series is that of “initiation stamps actually sold” — according to the constitution of the WPA, each new member of the organization was to pay an initiation fee of \$1, receipted by a special stamp for their membership card, the proceeds of which were to go to support the work of the national office. In practice, however, it seems that the collection of these initiation fees were handled differently by the branches of the various federations. Some federations, such as the Italian and South Slavic groups, clearly collected the prescribed fee in a more or less regular manner in 1923, while others, like the Jewish, German, and Latvian Federations, seem to have avoided the use of the initiation stamps altogether. The quantities of initiation stamps sold listed here definitely represent a substantial undercount of the actual number of new non-English members coming into the WPA in 1923. The significance of the English sales number remains to be determined through further archival study. It should be noted that dodging the initiation fee was in the federations’ interest, as the proceeds from sale of “initiation stamps” were to accrue solely to the national office of the party. Removal of this fee made one less financial barrier holding back new members from participation in the organization. Empty dues cards seem to have been a free resource to District Organizers and if the culture of the particular federation was not to collect the initiation fee, there was no practical means of checking compliance.
2. An explosion of initiation stamp sales took place in the 4th Quarter of 1923 and the 1st Quarter of 1924, with the rate rocketed upward by 60% and staying there before falling back to a more normal pace. This burst of sales seems to be linked to the launch of the *Daily Worker* in January 1924. While English-language members probably did “churn” out of the party at a relatively higher rate than members of other language branches during the first half of the 1920s, the vast English-language initiation stamp sale relative to the actual percentage of the organization paying dues through English branches is clearly anomalous.

Compiled by Tim Davenport.

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