
Workingmen's Party of the United States: Address of the Executive

by Philip Van Patten & Conrad Pfeiffer †

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Comrades and Fellow-workingmen:—

In assuming the duties of the responsible offices to which your suffrages have elevated us, we deem it proper and necessary to give a brief review of the situation from our standpoint, and to suggest those measures which, we believe, would most rapidly build up the Party. The action of the late Union Congress at Philadelphia [July 19-22, 1876], in effecting the consolidation of the different Socialistic parties in the United States, is in our opinion one of the grandest steps ever made in the history of this country, and it should be our sacred duty to maintain faithfully this most important union — putting aside all individual differences and prejudices for the accomplishment of the one grand result for which we all struggle — the securing to every man the full benefit of his labor.

While it is to be regretted that the workingmen of this so-called Republic are obligated, at present, to receive instruction on questions of Liberty and Justice from citizens of foreign birth — men raised and educated under despotism, it must nevertheless be remembered that the same power which creates and supports all monarchism and which has caused the fall of all previous republics in the world's history, has, at present, even more despotic sway in our own false "Republic," rendering men's lives and fortunes vastly more uncertain than when pursuing the regular beaten paths of life to which men are confined under those monarchies.

Until we can exercise our rights and liberties free from the control of the Money Power, we are no more than slaves, and our American workingmen must soon realize this fact. Therefore let not our cause be called a "foreign" movement — its only true name is "the sacred cause of Humanity."

Considering the deadly blight under which the entire civilized world is now prostrated — called variously by the names of Financial Depression, Overproduction, etc., and out of which condition the "Political Economy" of the capitalists can offer us no means of escape, we should now put forth all our energy to work in destroying the false idols raised by them to disunite and enslave us, such as "Greenback Inflation," "Specie resumption," etc. etc. We should convince these suffering millions that their oppression is the result of unjust distribution instead of overproduction — and that when mankind becomes sufficiently enlightened, through their suffering and our devoted efforts, to demand that all production be regulated to meet the wants of the people by placing all the *means* of production in the hands of a true popular government founded on our principles — that then and only then can the evils of society be remedied and the true mission of man be fulfilled.

In accordance with the admirable platform adopted by our representatives at Philadelphia, which advocates not only the broad principles of Socialism, but also urges those measures which to all sensible minds are evidently immediately necessary for the relief of the working classes, and the adoption of which measures will, in our belief, soon secure beneficial results, the

† — The task of writing this address, published without signature, was assigned to English-speaking Corresponding Secretary Philip Van Patten and German-speaking Recording Secretary Conrad Pfeiffer by the Executive Committee of the WPUS at its meeting of August 6, 1876. The draft was submitted to the full Executive Committee for its approval at its next meeting, held on August 8, 1876.

Workingmen's Party of the United States has on the principle of national development inaugurated that most preliminary movement which is our best guarantee of success, namely, the union of the workingmen of East and West, North and South, under our banners. The plan of organization under which our party has constituted itself, we believe to be unexcelled. The centralized method of organization has too often been successful to permit of any reasonable doubts against its practicability in the present instance. The action of the Congress on the subject of the ballot box as a means of redress for our wrongs is the result of bitter experiences in the political campaigns, and although there may be some among our comrades who differ with us on this question, still we believe that similar experiences as those we have had will convince them of our helplessness at the polls when the power of United Capital can corrupt police, sheriffs, and judges, as has been witnessed by many of our members. Undoubtedly, as expressed in our Platform, our policy should be to work faithfully and earnestly in the cause until we can march up to the polls in united bodies in a manner calculated to inspire respect, and by means of proper guards we may be certain that our votes will be received and counted. A majority of votes would then mean a speedy solution of the Labor Question. But until Labor receives its just reward, every vote given to a candidate of either of the existing parties would be an endorsement of the capitalists' oppression of the working classes, since all such candidates are unquestionably controlled by Capitalists — therefore the laboring man who should deposit a vote for any other than a true representative of the workers would be false to his fellow-laborers, his family, and himself.

Regarding the Emancipation of Woman there can hardly be any one in our ranks who does not recognize the fact that only through the emancipation of Labor can this grand result be attained — by establishing the independence of the worker and equalizing women's wages with those of men.

There remains but one more important action of the Congress requiring explanation, namely the resolution dispensing with the exercise of the Referendum. This decision, which has given rise to discussion among some of our Eastern branches, while apparently a violation of principle was nevertheless the only sensible solution of a difficult problem even had the parties not taken previous action thereon. It was, however, resolved at the Pittsburgh convention in April last [April 1876] that the question of Union should, before final action, be submitted to the various branches for approval or rejection — and that on the completion of the union the Congress should constitute itself into a committee of the whole in order to adopt those members which should appear immediately urgent and necessary. We believe an impartial consideration of these facts will find no reasonable grounds for doubt or dissension.

In conclusion, we wish to impress upon all our comrades a full realization of the fact that the personal assistance and cooperation of each member is earnestly desired and most necessary in spreading our principles and administering our affairs.

Regarding ourselves (as all Party officers ought) simply as fellow workers in the good cause, we invite criticism and scrutiny of all our acts and will be always ready to submit promptly to the will of the majority.

To those pioneers and party officers who have preceded us in the movement, we wish to express our respect and gratitude, knowing the difficulties they have contended against, and admiring their perseverance under bitter persecution and oppression. It shall henceforth be our sacred duty to hasten the completion of their good work and assist in preparing the way for the emancipation of the human race under that perfect government of Truth and Justice, the Universal Republic!

Greeting and Fellowship to all comrades in the Cause of Labor,

The Executive Committee, WP of the US.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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