

---

# Socialist Presidential Referendum Now On, Arouses Intense Interest

Unsigned article in *Appeal to Reason* [Girard, KS], no. 1,051 (Jan. 22, 1916), pg. 2.  
Editor of the *Appeal* was Louis Kopelin.

The Socialist Presidential referendum is attracting nationwide attention. Nothing the Socialist Party has done in recent years has aroused more comment than the adoption of this new and democratic method of choosing Presidential candidates. It may well be said that the eyes of America are now on us. The following extracts from the *Chicago Herald*, one of the country's greatest newspapers, is an illustration:

The first referendum for the nomination of a Presidential candidate has been conducted by the Socialist Party. While the Democrats and Republicans are wondering how to make a Presidential primary work, the Socialists are nominating their candidate.

The Socialist experiment is interesting. It may develop the machinery through which the old parties can do away with nominating conventions. That will be a step toward self-government.

This "Socialist experiment" must be a success. Let the old partyites learn from us. Let us show that in our movement the rank and file, not the political bosses, rule. With a successful referendum the party can enter the next campaign with a distinct advantage over the other parties, whose candidates were selected in packed conventions.

But the Socialists must be sure that the Presidential referendum will be an unqualified success. It would be disgraceful as well as undemocratic if the referendum were not truly representative of the entire rank and file, but only of congested centers of certain sections of the country. To have a real referendum every member of the Socialist Party the country over should take part in the voting. All states should get out the fullest vote promptly and energetically. We must not only have a big vote indicative of the will of the rank and file, but also we must have a big vote to make a good showing before the general public.

Undoubtedly the capitalist papers will print the

final results of the Presidential referendum and the figures they will publish must be the largest possible. To the readers of the capitalist press a few thousand votes for aspirants for the nomination will not make much of an impression.

Let every member of the Socialist Party, therefore, take an intense interest in the Presidential referendum now being voted on. If your local secretary has not notified you of the referendum, find out what is the cause. A big vote from all sections of the country, small towns as well as big cities, will make the referendum not only democratic but very effective for campaign purposes.

There are three comrades in the race for the Socialist nomination for Presidency. They are Allan L. Benson, New York; James H. Maurer, Pennsylvania; and Arthur LeSeur, Kansas. Of these Benson leads in the number of local nominations, having received 147 endorsements against 15 for LeSeur and 14 for Maurer.

Readers of the *Appeal* need no introduction to Benson. His weekly article is a feature of each issue. Benson came out for socialism 14 years ago when he was editor of the *Detroit Times*. Shortly afterwards he wrote one of the most effective pamphlets of that time, called *Socialism Made Plain*. His recent Socialist writings are conceded to be the most effective propaganda literature produced in this country. Benson's *The Truth About Socialism* has been justly called the American *Merrie England* and has had a remarkably large circulation. He is also author of *Our Dishonest Constitution* and *The Way to Prevent War*. In the latter book he has formulated his now famous war referendum plan.

Benson's writings in the *Appeal* and *Pearson's Magazine* have been often put in pamphlet form and distributed by the millions. Of these pamphlets, *The*

*Growing Grocery Bill* and *The Bombshell Henry Ford Fired* are the most famous. As a result he has become known to hundreds of thousands of people who are investigating Socialism and who may support us at the next election. In addition to being a writer, he is a forceful speaker and debater. Recently he debated with Henry A. Wise Wood, the jingo leader at Cooper Union, New York, with such disastrous results for his opponent that the latter has since been seeking revenge by abusing Benson in the capitalist press. Because Benson had aroused the audience to a pitch of enthusiasm against jingo doctrines Wood wrote to the *New York Times* suggesting that hanging of people like Benson for treason would be an act of patriotism.

James H. Maurer is well known in the Eastern states as a leader of organized labor. Maurer is president of the Pennsylvania Federation of Labor and also a member of the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party. For several years he has been the lone Socialist member of the Pennsylvania legislature.

Arthur LeSeur, for many years active in the North Dakota Socialist movement, but of late has been identified with the People's College at Fort Scott, Kans. He is now a member of the National Executive Committee of the party.

One of these three will be the standard bearer of the Socialist Party. No matter who is your choice be sure that you express that choice. A big vote on the Presidential referendum will be an inspiring beginning for the next big national contest between the forces of capitalism and Socialism.

***Edited by Tim Davenport.***

***Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing Corvallis, OR, 2008. • Non-commercial reproduction permitted.***