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## The Social Democratic Party (August 23, 1900)

In the Presidential election of 1892 the socialist candidate received 21,512 votes; in the election of 1896 the vote was increased to 36,275 votes.<sup>1</sup> The following two years witnessed an unprecedented spread of Socialist sentiment and in the Congressional and state elections of 1898 the Socialist candidates received 91,749 votes, an increase of almost 200 per cent, in two years. But it must not be assumed that this vote represented the entire political strength of Socialists in the United States. In a number of states the election laws were such that the Socialist ticket could not be placed upon the official ballot, while in many districts the number of socialists was so small and they were so widely scattered that no nominations were made and the socialist vote was not polled.

The figures given are sufficient to indicate that in the United States, as in other countries. International socialism is making tremendous strides and that its seven million supporters, spread over all the belts and zones of the globe, and the most active propagandists ever known, will in the next few years be multiplied into controlling majorities in all lands which have modern industry as the basis of their civilization. Socialism being wholly a question of economic development. This will mean the end of the present capitalist competitive system and the introduction of its economic successor, the cooperative commonwealth.

The movement is international because it is born of and follows the development of the capitalist system, which in its operation is confined to no country, but by the stimulus of modern agencies of production, exchange, communication, and transportation, has overleaped all boundary lines and made the world the theater of its activities. By this process all the nations of the earth must finally be drawn into relations of industrial and commercial cooperation, as the economic basis of human brotherhood.

This is the goal of modern socialism and it is this that inspires its disciples with the zeal and ardor of crusaders.

So much has been said and written of socialism by persons who have no proper conception of its origin, its philosophy, and its mission, or who, for reasons of their own, have resorted to willful misrepresentation, that it

is not strange that a great many people instinctively shrink from the merest mention of it, and look upon those who advocate this perfectly sane and scientific doctrine as the enemies of society, maliciously plotting to overthrow its cherished institutions.

What is socialism? To answer in a single sentence, it means the collective ownership by all the people of all the means of wealth production and distribution. It is purely an economic question; the evolution of industry has developed socialism. Man can only work, produce wealth, with tools. The mere hand tools of former times have become ponderous and very costly machines. These machines, socialists contend, represent progressive social conceptions. These and the factories, mills, and shops in which they are housed, as well as the lands and mines from which the raw materials are drawn, are used in common by the workers, and in their very nature are marked for common ownership and control. Socialism does not propose the collective ownership of property, but of capital; that is to say, the instruments of wealth production, which, in the form of private property, enable a few capitalists to exploit vast numbers of workers, thus creating millionaires and mendicants and inaugurating class rule and all its odious and undemocratic distinctions.

At this point I deem it proper to introduce the platform of the Social Democratic Party, adopted at its recent national convention, held at Indianapolis:

The Social Democratic Party of America declares that life, liberty, and happiness depend upon equal political and economic rights.

In our economic development an industrial revolution has taken place, the individual tool of former years having become the social tool of the present. The individual tool was owned by the worker who employed himself and was master of his product. The social tool, the machine, is owned by the capitalist and the worker is dependent upon him for employment. The capitalist thus becomes the master of the worker and is able to appropriate to himself a large share of the product of his labor.

Capitalism, the private ownership of the means of production, is responsible for the insecurity of subsistence, the poverty, misery and degradation of the ever-growing majority of our people; but the same economic forces which have produced and now intensify the capitalist system will necessitate the adoption of socialism, the collective ownership of the means of production for the common good and welfare.

The present system of social production and private ownership is rapidly converting society into two antagonistic classes — i.e., the capitalist class and the propertyless class. The middle class, once the most powerful of this great nation, is disappearing in the mill of competition. The issue is now between the two classes first named. Our political liberty is now of little value to the masses unless used to acquire economic liberty.

Independent political action and the trade union movement are the chief emancipating factors of the working class, the one representing its political, the other its economic wing, and both must co-operate to abolish the capitalist system.

Therefore the Social Democratic Party of America declares its object to be:

1. The organization of the working class into a political party to conquer the public powers now controlled by capitalists.

2. The abolition of wage-slavery by the establishment of a national system of co-operative industry, based upon the social or common ownership of the means of production and distribution, to be administered by society in the common interest of all its members, and the complete emancipation of the socially useful classes from the domination of capitalism.

The working class and all those in sympathy with their historic mission to realize a higher civilization should sever connection with all capitalist and reform parties and unite with the Social Democratic Party of America.

The control of political power by the Social Democratic Party will be tantamount to the abolition of all class rule.

The solidarity of labor connecting the millions of class-conscious fellow-workers throughout the civilized world will lead to international socialism, the brotherhood of man.

As steps in that direction, we make the following demands:

1. Revision of our federal constitution in order to remove the obstacles to complete control of government by the people irrespective of sex.

2. The public ownership of all industries controlled by monopolies, trusts and combines.

3. The public ownership of all railroads, telegraphs and telephones; all means of transportation, and communication: all waterworks, gas and electric plants, and other public utilities.

4. The public ownership of all gold, silver, copper, lead, iron, coal, and other mines, and all oil and gas wells.

5. The reduction of the hours of labor in proportion to the increasing facilities of production.
6. The inauguration of a system of public works and improvements for the employment of the unemployed, the public credit to be utilized for that purpose.
7. Useful inventions to be free, the inventor to be remunerated by the public.
8. Labor legislation to be national, instead of local, and international when possible.
9. National insurance of working people against accidents, lack of employment and want in old age.
10. Equal civil and political rights for men and women, and the abolition of all laws discriminating against women.
11. The adoption of the initiative and referendum, proportional representation, and the right of recall of representatives by the voters.
12. Abolition of war and the introduction of international arbitration.

It will be observed that the Social Democratic Party is pledged to equal rights for all without reference to sex, color, or other conditions. Equality of rights and opportunities for all human beings is the vital fundamental principle of socialism. It aims to establish economic equality by making all equal proprietors of the means upon which all depend for employment, and without which there can be no "life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness." This insures economic freedom for every human being. As no one would have private property in that upon which another depended for employment, industrial mastery and slavery would disappear together and competition for profit would give way to cooperation for use.

The rapidly changing economic conditions are paving the way for the transition from competitive capitalism to cooperative socialism. Socialists are simply indicating the trend of the evolution, and seeking to prepare the way for its orderly reception. The coming of socialism is with them not a debatable question. That is not a matter of doubt or conjecture, but of scientific calculation.

The evolution of the social organism is a fact in nature. In the ceaseless process one state of society follows another in the sequence of succession. Capitalism, the present system, was warmed into life in the womb of feudalism and sprang from that medieval system. Within the span of two centuries this system has practically reached the climax of its development,

and the marvelous material progress of that period exceeds the achievements of all the centuries since the slaves of Pharaoh built the pyramids.

The rapid centralization of capital and the extensive cooperation of labor mark the high state of our economic development. Individual initiative and competitive effort are becoming less and less possible. The day of small production has passed never to return. Notwithstanding the outcry, trusts and department stores, these great modern agencies, increase in number and power. They are the inevitable outgrowth of the competitive system. The efforts of small capitalists to destroy trusts will prove as fruitless as the efforts of workingmen to destroy labor saving machines when first introduced in the last century.

Socialists take the ground that the trust in itself is not an evil, that the evil lies wholly in the private ownership, and its operation for private profit. The remedy is collective ownership and they propose to transfer all such agencies from private hands to the collectivity, to be managed and operated for the good of all.

Ignoring all such alleged issues as "expansion," "imperialism," "free silver," "gold standard," "protection," "free trade," etc., the Social Democratic Party declares that economic freedom is the supreme question that confronts the people. A century and a quarter ago the revolution settled the question of political equality in the United States. But since then an industrial revolution has taken place and political equality exists in name only, while the great mass struggle in economic servitude. The working class are dependent upon the capitalist class, who own the machines and other means of production; and the latter class, by virtue of their economic mastery, are the ruling class of the nation, and it is idle under such conditions to claim that men are equal and that all are sovereign citizens. No man is free in any just sense who has to rely upon the arbitrary will of another for the opportunity to work. Such a man works, and therefore lives, by permission, and this is the economic relation of the working class to the capitalist class in the present system.

In the last century millions of workers were exploited of the fruit of their labor under the institution of chattel slavery. Work being done by hand, ownership of the slave was a condition necessary to his exploitation. But chattel slavery disappeared before the march of industrial evolution, and today would be an economic impossibility. It is no longer necessary to own the body of the workingman in order to appropriate the fruit of his labor; it is only necessary to own the tool with which he works, and

without which he is helpless. This tool in its modern form is a vast machine which the worker cannot afford to buy, and against which he cannot compete with his bare hands, and in the very nature of the situation he is at the mercy of the owner of the machine, his employment is precarious, and his very life is suspended by a slender thread.

Then, again, the factory and mine are operated for profit only and the owner can, and often does, close it down at will, throwing hundreds, perhaps thousands, out of employment who, with their families, are as helpless as if in the desert wastes of Sahara. The recent shutdown of the American Wire and Steel trust in the interest of stock jobbery presented a startling object lesson of economic dependence of the working class.

The few who own the machines do not use them. The many who use them do not own them. The few who own them are enabled to exploit the many who use them; hence a few millionaires and many mendicants, extreme opulence and abject poverty, princely palaces and hideous huts, riotous extravagance and haggard want, constituting social scenes sickening to contemplate, and in the presence of which the master hand of Hugo or Dickens is palsied and has no mission.

The Social Democratic Party is organizing in every village and hamlet, every town and city of every state and territory of the union. It has held its national convention, its candidates are in the field, and it is appealing to the American people. It will neither fuse nor compromise. It proposes to press forward, step by step, until it conquers the political power and secures control of government. This will mark the end of the capitalist system. The factories and mills and mines, the railroads and telegraph and telephone, and all other means of production and distribution will be transferred to the people in their collective capacity, industry will be operated cooperatively, and every human being will have the "inalienable right" to work and to enjoy the fruit of his labor. The hours of labor will be reduced according to the progress of invention. Rent, interest, and profit will be no more. The sordid spirit of commercial conquest will be dead. War and its ravages will pass into history. Economic equality will have triumphed, labor will stand forth emancipated, and the sons and daughters of men will glorify the triumphs of social democracy.

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<sup>1</sup> This refers to votes cast for the Presidential nominees of the Socialist Labor Party of America, Simon Wing (1892) and Charles Matchett (1896).