

Invitation to a Secret Conference to Plan
a New Industrial Labor Union¹
(November 29, 1904)

Chicago, IL, Nov. 29, 1904.

Dear Brother²:—

Developments of the past year have convinced us that craft division and political ignorance are doomed to speedily end.

Asserting our confidence in the ability of the working class, if correctly organized, on both industrial and political lines, to take possession of and operate successfully for their own interests the industries of the country;

Believing that working class political expression, through the Socialist ballot, in order to be sound, must have its economic counterpart in a labor organization builded as the structure of socialist society, embracing within itself the working class in approximately the same groups and departments and industries that the workers would assume in the working class administration of the Cooperative Commonwealth;

Realizing that to wisely inaugurate such a movement will require the putting aside of every selfish consideration by those who undertake the tremendous task;

We invite you to meet with us at Chicago, Monday, January 2, 1905, in secret conference, to discuss ways and means of uniting the working people of America on correct revolutionary principles, regardless of any general labor organization of past or present, and only restricted by such basic principles as will insure its integrity as a real protector of the interests of the workers.

You are to notify the committee, through the secretary, W.L. Hall, No. 3 Haymarket Building, Chicago, of your compliance with this invitation.

Names on enclosed list are of those invited to participate in the conference.

Fraternally yours,

William E. Trautmann (Editor, *Brewers' Journal*),
George Estes,
W.L. Hall,
Eugene V. Debs,
Clarence Smith,
Charles O. Sherman.

Published in W.E. Trautmann (ed.), *Proceedings of the First Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World: Founded at Chicago, June 27-July 8, 1905*. W.E. McDermut, stenographer. New York: New York Labor News Co., 1905, pp. 82-83.

¹ This document was probably written by W.E. Trautmann. It was preserved as a quotation in a short historical paper written by committee member Clarence Smith. This was read into the stenographic minutes of the founding convention of the Industrial Workers of the World and published as part of that document.

² According to Clarence Smith, this document was sent to about 30 prominent radical labor leaders and newspaper editors. Two of these rejected it outright and refused to attend the meeting — Victor L. Berger, publisher of the Milwaukee *Social Democratic Herald* and editor of *Die Wahrheit* (The Truth), and Max S. Hayes, editor of the *Cleveland Citizen*. Both objected to the new organization as a declaration of war against the American Federation of Labor, instead favoring continuation of the “boring from within” tactic, applying pressure for change from inside the organization.