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## Closing Speech at the Founding Convention of the Social Democracy of America

[excerpt]

(June 21, 1897)

The times are ripe for a change. There are 5 million men in the country without employment. In Alabama little girls work in factories 14 hours a day for 35 cents a week. In Sheboygan men work ten hours for 50 cents. Manhood is reduced to merchandise, and even so it is not worth quoting on [the exchange]. Negro slaves were worth \$1500 apiece, but the white slaves of this country are not worth 15 cents a cord.

I hate riches, but not the rich. I pity the poor man who has \$20 million and cannot let go. I believe in helping him to let go. I cannot understand how a man can cling to \$5 million when men around him are going insane through starvation.

Last winter the mayor of Chicago<sup>1</sup> had to address a proclamation to the people informing them that thousands of men and women were in danger of freezing to death. Yet there was plenty of coal in Chicago. what kept those freezing thousands from helping themselves? I cannot tell. Man is the only animal I know of that has not sense enough to feed himself. Take, for instance, the Kansas jackrabbits. If you kill one of them and you find him fat you may be sure all the other jackrabbits are fat, too. There are no plutocrats among them who corner the crops and get fat while the others starve. No jackrabbit is stupid enough to allow a thing like that.

Coming through Nebraska not long ago I traveled for miles and miles between rows of corncribs bursting with the corn crop of last year. Most of them had on them the mark of the Chicago Produce Company. There was no demand for this corn. The jackrabbits helped themselves, and why did not starving men and women do the same?

In Chicago there are 50,000 starving people, starving in full view of food. Nature has provided an abundance for every creature, and it is stored mountain high in Chicago, before the very eyes of these sufferers. Why do they not help themselves? I cannot tell.

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<sup>i</sup> The mayor of Chicago in 1896 was George Bell Swift (1845-1912), a Republican.