
New York Fusion Movement a Mistake (circa October 13, 1899)

St. Paul, Minn., [circa Oct 13, 1899].¹

The incident of our branches of Greater New York “fusing” with the Independent Labor Party of that city was a mistake, to put it mildly, and I am glad our comrades awakened to the fact and corrected the error by withdrawing from the alliance before experiencing the harmful effects which must have followed.² How our comrades in the East, who have among them some of the brightest lights in the party, could have been led into a situation in which they had everything to lose and nothing to gain, is not easy for me to understand, and I confess to having been greatly surprised when I heard it.

The Independent Labor Party, whatever its tendencies, is not a socialist party. The majority of its members are doubtless honest in their intentions, but they are misguided and they should be set right, not by giving their “independent party” the sanction of approval by uniting with it, but by pointing out the futility of their undertaking and showing them that their party is simply a middle class movement, and as such is doomed to failure, and that the only true course for the members to pursue is to join the Social Democratic Party and cast their votes for straight socialism, the only possible means of emancipation for the working class. As long as they are not ready for such action they are not ripe for socialist affiliation, and only harm could come from joint action with them.

Subsequent developments have proved that the capitalist politician is to run the “independent party,” and it is to be hoped that our comrades in New York and elsewhere will profit by the experience and hereafter stick uncompromisingly to party principles and party tactics and declarations.

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It is extremely gratifying to contemplate the outlook of the Social Democratic Party. The policy of the party in carrying forward its propaganda on a high plane and refraining from vituperation, however great the

provocation, is bearing fruit, and opposition to the party in every form is melting away before its rapid march.

Another source of congratulation is the absolute harmony that prevails in the party. It is in the best sense a socialist party. There is no element of “bossism,” no individual domination to menace its councils. Each comrade feels, and justly feels, that he is the equal of every other comrade, and this accounts for the fact that our members are united by hooks of steel and that they are inspired by unshakable confidence in the future.

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That our party will make a creditable showing in the campaign this fall is a foregone conclusion. Wherever we have candidates in the field they will receive the united and enthusiastic support of our comrades. The campaign in Massachusetts will be the central point of interest, and thousands will look eagerly for the returns from that state. The state election is to be followed by city elections, and the indications are that our comrades will score victories that will still further stampede the capitalist parties of the “old Bay state.”

The clean, capable, and unimpeachable records of those previously elected have immeasurably strengthened the party, and with the earnest, unremitting, and united energy which our comrades are putting into the campaign, it is safe to predict that Massachusetts will roll up a socialist vote that will flash around the world.

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¹ Date estimated through location of authorship.

² Inspired, no doubt, by the establishment of the Independent Labour Party in Great Britain in January 1893 and its subsequent growth, on August 25, 1899 an American Independent Labor Party was launched at a meeting held at Clarendon Hall in New York City, attended by SDP founding member Joseph Barondess. Invitations were issued to Debs and Haverhill, Massachusetts mayor John C. Chase, among others, to address a mass meeting to be held at the Cooper Union on Sept. 1. Chase subsequently attended and delivered a speech which received the accolades of the crowd. Movement towards close cooperation of the SDP in Greater New York with the new Labor Party in the elections of 1899 seems to have followed in the aftermath.