
**Letter to Theodore Debs, National Secretary
of the Social Democratic Party in Chicago
from William Butscher, National Secretary
of the Socialist Democratic Party in Springfield
(December 12, 1900)**

Springfield, Mass., Dec. 12, 1900.

Chicago National Executive Board,
Theodore Debs, Sec.
126 Washington Street,
Chicago, Ill.

Dear Comrades:—

The national campaign just closed has demonstrated the fact that the rank and file of the Social Democrats of this country are possessed of a much sounder instinct and a greater foresight than many of the men who feel called upon to “lead” them.

While these leaders were arguing on the line of rejecting union for the sake of unity and analyzing the spirit of their fellow workers from the field of socialism, the rank and file of the Social Democrats saw nothing but the approaching national campaign, and joined hands in the battle against their common foe — capitalism. The movement was spontaneous and irresistible. State after state and local after local united, and refuted the claim that the “time was not ripe for union” by a practical demonstration of the contrary.

So strong indeed was the movement for union that even the center of the contest, the state in which your committee has its seat, Illinois, could not escape it. The rank and file of socialist voters of Illinois forced complete union for the state and county elections, and one of the members of your own committee, yielding to the general sentiment, introduced the resolution declaring for *organic national union immediately after the campaign*.¹

The joint and harmonious work of the campaign fastened the bonds of solidarity still tighter around all true socialists; the enthusiasm of the members achieved what the diplomacy of their leaders could not

accomplish — a practical union of the Social Democrats of the United States.

The final unification now seemed almost a matter of course, and urgent demands for an early joint convention for the purpose of formally effecting the same commenced, coming from all parts of the country, when we were apprised by your official organ that your committee had called into your headquarters a separate national convention of your members for January 15 [1901].

Comrades, we do not know the exact purpose of your convention, but from the fact that it was called in such haste and without consulting even your own adherents, and from the further fact that according to the report of your official organs, the convention was decided upon at a meeting of one of your locals, characterized by violent abuse of our organization and our members, we assume that it was not called in the interest of socialist unity, and let us be frank, we suspected it to be a move to head off the threatened avalanche in favor of union.

In the face of these facts, we feel it our duty towards the members of our party as well as towards those affiliated with your committee, to define once more our attitude on the issues between us.

Comrades, we are for the union of the socialist forces of this country today, as strongly and unqualifiedly as we were ever since the joint unity committee adjourned.² We are willing to forget the many unpleasant incidents of the past. We are ready to surrender our mandates, offices, and organization to the entire membership of the Social Democratic Party represented at the joint convention, and we demand the same of you. We cannot afford to waste our time in mutual recriminations over imaginary grievances at a moment when energetic and concerted action of all earnest socialists is required more than ever in order to exploit the favorable field now open to our propaganda. To wantonly split our movement just now is a crime against our great ideal, a crime against the working class of this country, and you are about to commit this heinous crime by your efforts to make the discord in the socialist ranks permanent.

If you expect to inaugurate another era of personal abuse and controversies in our movement, we will positively refuse to follow you, and if you endeavor to keep alive the unfortunate petty controversies and divisions within the party, the membership will know how to bring about complete unity of all active and earnest socialists in spite of all.

We request you to postpone the calling of any national convention until the rank and file of the entire membership of the Social Democratic

Party, as constituted during the recent campaign, has had a chance to pass upon the matter, and should you pay no heed to this request, we will address a similar communication to the convention called by you.

Yours for the cause,

The Provisional National Executive Committee.

William Butscher, Secretary.

Published as "Socialist Unity" in *Haverhill Social Democrat*, vol. 2, no. 12 (Dec. 22, 1900), pg. 2.

¹ Reference to Seymour Stedman. Although few letters from this period have survived, on Nov. 9, 1900, a perturbed Eugene Debs wrote to his brother Theodore, "I am surprised at Stedman's intimation that we may have something to do with the other factions. Great heavens, haven't we got enough? If there is any attempt to harmonize or placate, *count me out*. We must go forward on our own lines and those who don't choose to fall in need not to do so. There must be no *wobbling* at this time." (See: EVD to Theodore Debs, Nov. 9, 1900, in J. Robert Constantine (ed.), *Letters of Eugene V. Debs: Volume 1, 1874-1912*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990; pp. 154-155.

² The Joint Unity Committee of 18 met twice: March 25-27 and April 20, 1900, both times in New York City.