

## **We Are Ready for the Battle** **(July 14, 1912)**

We stand today at the opening of the greatest political battle ever fought in the United States. The enemy is divided, distracted, and demoralized. We alone, who stand for a vital issue, have a definite program, and representing the workers and producers are united, enthusiastic, and confident of victory.<sup>1</sup>

The Socialist Party sounds the one clear note in this chaotic campaign. It alone frankly states its position and its purpose in the din and confusion which envelope the situation.

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Let us take a brief survey of the field of battle.

President Taft is at the head of the “conservative” wing of the Republican Party. Ex-President Roosevelt, whose nomination is scheduled to take place early this month, is at the head of what is called the “progressive” wing of the same party, or what used to be the same party.

The Republican convention, before which Taft and Roosevelt were candidates, was presided over by Elihu Root, the prince of loot. Root unerringly indexed the character of that convention. There were no workmen in that body.

Wendell Phillips once said of the elder Choate that thieves first inquired about his health before they started out to steal. The brigands of Wall Street are in the habit of having Root’s pulse examined before they make a raid.

It was quite in keeping with the fitness of things that John Wesley Hill should open the Republican jackpot with a prayer. Only he should have addressed himself to Satan and invoked his forked-tailed majesty to preside over the disgraceful proceedings.

Taft was finally nominated by fraud. Roosevelt, the incarnation of political chastity, promptly charged his former pal with having stolen the nomination. Taft retorted by saying that the only reason Roosevelt was up in arms was because he had been beaten at his own game. He did not get a chance to steal. Taft beat him to it.

Four years ago Roosevelt strained all the corrupting powers of public patronage and debauched the presidential office to force Taft’s nomina-

tion and afterward boasted of the achievement. Now he is howling like a dervish because Taft helped himself to the nomination in the way Roosevelt taught him four years ago. Nothing is more natural that Roosevelt should now be the vociferous champion of political reform.

The finances for the booming of both Taft and Roosevelt come from "the interests," one gang of Wall Street pirates backing Taft and another Roosevelt. Both Taft and Roosevelt are the political chattels of these interests, legal ownership having been established by cash purchase. Taft wears the collar of the Standard Oil trust and Roosevelt the joint collar of the steel trust and the harvester trust.

If any honest American citizen can cast his vote for either of these corrupt, conniving politicians it is only because he is so blindly given to party worship that he would sink his country to save his party.

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And now as to the Democratic Party! What of its convention, its candidates, and its attitude toward the people?

Elihu Root did not preside there. No, it was Alton Parker, another Wall Street attorney, twin brother to Root, who did honors there. Four years ago when Parker was the candidate for the Democratic nomination for president Bryan said, "He is a tool of predatory wealth and no self-respecting Democrat can vote for him." Precisely because we was a tool of wealth he was made temporary chairman of the convention and all of Bryan's eloquence could not prevail against him.

There were no workingmen in this convention any more than there were at the Republican convention. They are fit only to vote the ticket; they have not brains enough to sit in convention or write a platform. The Republican and Democratic leaders do not say this, they prove it. This is their doctrine, and the torchbearers in their political processions will soon ratify and glorify it.

The moving spirits at Baltimore were Thomas Fortune Ryan, of Virginia, head of the tobacco trust and multimillionaire; Charles F. Murphy, Tammany chieftain and ex-dive-keeper.; Roger Sullivan of Illinois, monopolist and millionaire, denounced by Bryan four years ago as "a train robber in politics"; August Belmont, United States representative of the Rothschilds and a patron of Farley, the strikebreaker; and Thomas Taggart, of Indiana, proprietor of the French Lick resort.

Bryan introduced a resolution declaring that the convention must not be dominated by these eminent gentlemen. All these gentlemen heartily

voted with Mr. Bryan on that proposition. This was and is the greatest political joke of the century. Mr. Bryan's resolution also provided for the expulsion of these celebrities from the convention, but the "great commoner" withdrew this clause, and when Thomas Fortune Ryan sailed for Europe a few days ago in his farewell word to the reporters he said, "Mr. Bryan is one of the finest men in the world."

In one of his perfervid oratorical bursts Mr. Bryan declared that no candidate who received the vote of Murphy, the Tammany boss, and his "ninety wax figures" should have his support or be nominated by the convention. This made his position clear to his admirers and they lustily applauded his peerless patriotism and his fearless defiance of the grafters. But alas! Within a few hours Mr. Bryan swallowed his words, just as he did four years ago when he denounced Parker and Roger Sullivan, and joined hand in hand with Murphy, Ryan, Belmont, Sullivan, and Taggart, in the support of Woodrow Wilson.

Bryan is great at straining at gnats and swallowing camels. His virtuous indignation was aroused when Champ Clark's followers supported Alton Parker for temporary chairman, but when Tammany swung solidly into line for Woodrow Wilson, with the hearty support of Belmont, Murphy, and his "ninety wax figures," Roger Sullivan "the train-robber," Ryan the trust magnate, and Taggart, the prince of Monte Carlo, William Jennings Bryan meekly brought up the rear and said, "Woodrow Wilson is my candidate and great am I as the prophet of progressive politics!"

The cold fact about Woodrow Wilson's nomination is that it was given to him by the Wall Street interest. The convention was deadlocked and only when that deadlock was broke by the delegates under the control of Belmont, Ryan, Sullivan, Murphy, and Taggart, did Wilson get the nomination.

*This makes Wilson Wall Street's candidate.*

This is the naked fact and it is beyond dispute. Wall Street nominates no candidate it does not control. Wilson has already patched a truce with Nugent, the New Jersey boss, and Smith, the senator who represented "the interests" in that state, and they are now on fine and friendly terms again. It was Wilson's war on these bosses that gave him most of his reputation as a political reformer and progressive. But he is making war on them no more.

It will next be in order for Boss Murphy and his "ninety wax figures" to visit Seagirt, along with Belmont and Ryan, Sullivan and Taggart, and the rest of the Democratic reformers and progressives.

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For vice president the Democrats nominated a “dead ringer” for Jim Sherman, Taft’s running mate. Sherman is a skinner of child wage-slaves and basks in the wealth exploited from their puny bodies. This is why he is called “Sunny Jim.”

During Marshall’s term a rich manufacturer was wanted on a requisition from another state. Marshall had him duly notified. The requisition was treated with contempt and the manufacturer not even arrested. Not long afterward a glassblower in the same town was wanted on a requisition. This was promptly granted by the governor in secret and the glassblower hustled over the state line and into jail without even time enough to strip off his overalls.

That is the kind of a friend Marshall, the Democratic candidate for vice president, is to the working class. He certainly is entitled to some consideration at their hands.

Soon after Marshall was elected governor of Indiana he made an address under Catholic auspices in which he said in effect that socialists were traitors and home-destroyers and should be run out of the state. He was vigorously applauded.

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These are the candidates and parties that are now appealing to the suffrage of the American people. The platforms they have issued consist of an array of sparkling generalities. They both claim to be the only simon-pure party of the people. Each charges the other with corruption and in this at least they are both correct. It is a waste of time to analyze these wordy pyrotechnic expositions. It can be clearly demonstrated that they embrace everything, prove anything, and mean nothing.

For instance, when Fairbanks, the former vice president, representing the platform committee, read the committee’s draft of the platform before the convention and reached the paragraph reading, “we affirm our allegiance to government of the people, by the people, and for the people,”<sup>22</sup> he was greeted with “toot-toot,”<sup>23</sup> and shouts of derisive laughter which completely silenced him. The farcical fiasco was well understood by the delegates. Will it be as well understood by the voters this fall?

At the very time the Republican and Democratic conventions were in session, the United States Congress was also in session, the Republicans in control of the upper house and the Democrats in control of the lower

house. Why did not these two parties perform at Washington instead of promising at Chicago and Baltimore? They had absolute power and have it now; why do they not enact laws redeeming their past pledges instead of making a new lot they never intend to redeem?

I want you to ask this question of every Republican and Democratic politician who asks you for your vote; of every spellbinder who visits your community to tell you why you should vote the Republican and Democratic ticket, and especially of every workingman who has a vote. There is not a pledge or promise the Republican convention made at Chicago, or the Democratic convention made at Baltimore, that the Republican senators and Democratic congressmen at Washington cannot enact into law and put into effect *right now*.

Why don't they do it? Because they are political crooks who have no interest in the people except to deceive them to feather their own nests, and to perpetuate the rotten system in which they are the political agents of the masters.

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This in brief is the political situation which confronts the American people. Many thousands of them are filled with disgust and severing their relations with these corrupt parties, under whose administration the people have been robbed of their patrimony and left at the mercy of a den of thieves.

These parties drip with filth and are rank with putridity. They are foul and unclean as the system they support, and every honest, patriotic citizen will admit that they ought to be destroyed.

Jefferson and Lincoln would scorn, if living, to be caught with the gangs that are masquerading in their grave-clothes and defiling their memory.

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The Socialist Party is the only party of the people in this campaign. Its convention was controlled and its platform was written by the working class; it is financed by the working class, and it stands for the working class against its exploiters and oppressors.

The Socialist Party is the only democratic party today; the only party that stands for "a government of the people, by the people, and for the people."

The Republican and Democratic parties are of the past and draw their inspiration from cemeteries in which the dead statesmen of other days lie buried, unable to speak in their own defense.

The Socialist Party is the party of the living present; it is the party virile with youth and vibrant with new life; the party of high hopes and noble aspirations; the party that is to conquer gloriously in the greatest struggle in the world's history.

The Socialist Party is the only party that proposes that this nation shall belong to those who inhabit it and that its wealth shall be enjoyed by those who produce it. It is the only truly democratic party, the only party that stands for equal opportunity for every man, woman, and child; the only party in this struggle pledged in every fiber of its being to establish industrial and social democracy.

We are ready for the battle. Even now the appeal of socialism is ringing through the nation. It is the only living issue. Everything embraced in "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" is wrapped up in this issue.

We stand on solid ground. The battle cannot go against us. We have only to stand by our guns. Socialism is as unconquerable as fate and as inevitable as the sunrise.

Comrades, this is our year! Everything depends upon our rising equal to this great opportunity. No true comrade will fail on the eve of this historic battle.

Let us fill the air with our shibboleth and rally our forces all over the land! This supreme opportunity may not come again.

Let us rise in all our strength and plunge into the thick of the conflict with all our enthusiasm, and when the smoke of battle clears away, victory will be inscribed on all the Red Banners of the Revolution!

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<sup>1</sup> A July 14, 1912 cover letter to *Appeal* Editor Fred Warren survives, apparently sent with the manuscript of this article. In it Debs writes, "Here is the best article I have written for five years. That is my own opinion of it. For several days I have been filled with this thing and Theo and I came to the office early this morning to get it in shape. If it strikes you as it does me you will covert the *whole first page* with it. I think it states the case as clearly as it can be stated in a brief space while at the same time it is filled with the spirit and rings with the battle-cry of revolution. I believe it would make a rattling campaign document for general distribution it. I have gone over it with great care and eliminated every superfluous word...." See: *Papers of Eugene V. Debs* microfilm edition, reel 1, frame 1022. Not in Constantine (ed.) *Letters of Eugene V. Debs: Volume 1*.

<sup>2</sup> Borrowing of closing words of Republican Party icon Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg Address of November 19, 1863: “It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us ... that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

<sup>3</sup> Sound of the horn of a steamroller.