

Nothing Between You and Complete Emancipation: Campaign Speech at Everett, Washington (September 1, 1912)

Friends and Comrades, Fellow-Workers:—

This is something more than a political meeting, and there is something more than political sentiment in this great demonstration. Standing in this presence I can hear and see and feel the throb of the social revolution that will sweep capitalism and the wage system out of existence and usher in the working class commonwealth and social republic. There is one fact in which we may all find comfort, however dark our skies may sometimes seem, and that is that the great heart of humanity is sound and beats true, and whatever we may do in our blindness and our folly to prevent it, the human race rises steadily to a higher plane and the world moves resistlessly toward the light.

This is to be a historic year in the United States; never before have so many men severed the party affiliations of a lifetime. Never before have old established parties been so shaken with internal dissension and rent asunder with such conflicting tendencies, and never since the Civil War has there been such a realignment of political forces.

Political parties are controlled by those who finance them. The Republican, Democratic, and Progressive parties are all financed from the same source, they are controlled in the interest of the same class; and whether the one or the other shall succeed to power there will be no material change in the condition of the workers and producers in this nation. The day has come for you workers to realize that what is done for you must be done by yourselves. Through all the years that have gone the great majority of you have followed blindly the so-called political leaders. You have suffered yourselves to be divided into hostile camps, to be pitted against each other at the ballot box and to cast your vote to support the system in which you are but wage-slave.

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There were four national political conventions held this year which are entitled to our consideration on this occasion. The Republican convention met in Chicago in June last — the regulars, I mean; they call themselves the “straight Republicans” and if they are regular and straight

I wonder who are and what can be irregular and crooked. When that convention met in Chicago I happened to be there. I visited the several first-class hotels where they were lodged and I examined the delegates at short range. I found that they consisted of professional politicians, corporation lawyers, capitalist bankers, society gentlemen, office holders, office seekers, and that the working class was conspicuous, as usual, by their absence.

It took but a glance to see that the delegates who comprised that convention were the representatives of the ruling class. They were there to frame a platform, there to nominate a ticket. But the working class who furnish all the votes and who elect all the candidates were not there; not considered fit to be there because from the Republican point of view it requires brains to write the platform and nominate a ticket and the working class has none. All they are fit for is to furnish the votes on election day — that is, to ratify the action of the political agents of their economic exploiter.

The second convention was held at Baltimore. It consisted essentially of the same class of representatives, the only difference was that they represented different groups of capitalists, different elements of the ruling class, and there were no workingmen in the Baltimore convention. Why should there be in the capitalist conventions? Why should you workingmen who are not fit to write their platforms or nominate their tickets, why should you stultify yourselves by giving them your votes on election day?

The third convention was held in the city of Chicago in August by the so-called progressives. We find upon examination that this convention consisted entirely of the same class of representatives and that there was the same absence of the workers. These three conventions were in all essential respects capitalist class conventions and their only purpose was to frame platforms and nominate tickets in the interest of the ruling class. This is so self-evident that the fact reveals itself.

There was a fourth national convention held this year in the city of Indianapolis in the month of May. And this convention was as distinctly a working class convention as the other three were capitalist conventions. The delegates at Indianapolis did not lodge in the high priced hotels, they didn't go there in Pullman palace cars or private cars as in the case of the capitalists. They were a very modest appearing body of men and women, the kind you meet and greet on the streets of Everett every day of your life. They were a serious looking body of people. They were not there to be applauded by the leisure classes. They were there for a very serious

and important work. Their first and last thought was to devise ways and means of preparing the workers for this great campaign and all other campaigns that are to be fought out until at last capitalism is overthrown, wage-slavery abolished, and the working class stands forth the ruling sovereigns of this nation and of every other nation on the face of the globe. There was not a delegate in that convention, man or woman, who could not drive any Republican, Democratic, or Progressive politician from the platform in thirty minutes in the discussion of the only vital issue involved in this campaign.

These delegates worked hard, day and night, they did their work in a way to command the approval of the membership. But before their platform is accepted and becomes the authorized expression of the principles and policies and program of the party it must be submitted and ratified by the rank and file who are the Socialist Party. And here let me say that the Socialist Party is the only democratic party, the only progressive party on earth. It is financed by a dues-paying membership. Every member is, or ought to be, an active worker in the ranks. Every member has equal rights with every other member and if he doesn't assert himself in the councils of the party, if he doesn't do his duty, it is not because he lacks the opportunity — it is because he is remiss in his obligations to himself and to the party.

In this campaign, therefore, there are just two parties, there is just one issue. The Republican, Democratic, and Progressive parties are three wings of one and the same capitalist party; they all stand for the private ownership of the sources of wealth, of the productive machinery of the nation. They all stand committed to the capitalist system, they all stand for wage-slavery, they all stand for the exploitation of the working class.

The Socialist Party is the only party that stands for the overthrow of capitalism, for the emancipation of the workers, and for the establishment of an industrial and social democracy in which the workers who do all of the useful work, who produce all of the wealth, who make all the sacrifices of health and limb and life to feed and shelter and clothe society, shall be the sovereign rulers, shall stand forth emancipated from all of the degrading thralldoms of the ages and begin for the first time the march toward real civilization.

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I have a peculiar attachment for the comrades and the people generally of Everett.¹ The first time I ever had the privilege of speaking her I

was kidnapped, seized by a committee of workingmen when I had not the slightest intention of stopping over here, and I was taken to a hall crowded with people and for the first time addressed the people of Everett.² At a later day and on an occasion of which many of you remember, at half past twelve, after the midnight hour, was not too late for a packed an overflowing Socialist meeting.³ I wonder how many Republicans and Democrats would attend a meeting under the auspices of their party at that hour of the night. On the several occasions that I have visited here there has always been a very large and enthusiastic and sympathetic hearing; and in the fifteen or more years that have passed since I first came to Everett, I have noted with great satisfaction the spirit of socialist sentiment, the substantial progress of the Socialist Party, until now when you who have worked so hard and so faithfully during all these years are on the eve of a victory that is going to be heard all around the world.

There has been a change of atmosphere since my last visit [1908] and I would be conscious of it had I not been advised of it. The women now have votes, they didn't have when I was here before, and this to me is a particularly gratifying change. I feel freer than I did before. For the last forty years I have been doing what little I could to speed the day when women should have every right, every privilege, every opportunity that man enjoys. I have often said and say again that until that day comes we are not civilized.

It is gratifying to be able to report to you here that all along the line that we have traveled from St. Paul to the coast the meetings, without exception, have been crowded to overflowing. Only a little while ago socialists were harmless dreamers or insane fanatics or bloodthirsty anarchists. They have become more respectable. Respectability is largely a matter of arithmetic. A little while ago the smallest hall was too large for a socialist meeting but now the largest auditorium is too small to hold the socialists.

Night before last we were at Butte, Montana. The largest opera house in the city was engaged. It was crowded, every inch of standing room, within fifteen minutes after the doors opened and the capitalist papers reported that there were as many people who couldn't get in and that was true.⁴ Leaving that meeting a pretty thoroughly disgusted Republican gentleman said to me: "If any of the old parties were to engage that same house and offer to pay the people to attend their meeting the same rates that the Socialists charge to get in they would hardly have a corporal's

guard.”⁵ The reason is that the people know what they want and they quite as well know what they do not want.

They have had quite enough of capitalist misrule and of the kind of speeches that consist wholly of polished platitudes and of rhetorical nonsense. They have had enough of that and they know enough to know that they have had enough and they are turning eagerly toward the meetings where the real issues are being discussed and where the gospel of emancipation is being preached.

They offer all of the inducements that money can command to people to attend their meetings. We, on the other hand, hold out no inducements whatever except those that should appeal to every man, to every woman, who realizes that there is something radically wrong in a land of bountiful abundance, a land in which there is the most marvelously productive machinery on earth and yet where millions of men and women and children are suffering for the bare necessities of life. This is the actual condition. No one dare attempt to deny it. Only those who are the beneficiaries of the crimes perpetrated upon the people, only do they or their retainers offer apologies; and their sycophants are contending, or at least would have us believe they are, and are therefore opposed to socialist agitation and to any change of the system.

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Under the administration of the two dominant political parties in this nation there have been six prolonged industrial crises during the last century. The first came in 1819, the second in 1837, one in 1857, in 1863, in 1893, and the last in 1907. We have had the panic, so-called, under the Republican administration, under the Democratic administration. We have had it under a high protective tariff, we have had it under free silver, and we have had it under the gold standard. It doesn't matter which of these two capitalist parties are in power or what their policy may be. With all of the wonderful productive machinery in full operation and the workers and their dependents, who constitute the great bulk of the population, able to consume but a fraction of their product, it is but a question of time until we have the inevitable results; and when the markets are glutted with the products of your labor that your meager wage will not allow you to buy, you stand idle and helpless and see your wives and children suffer in the midst of the abundance produced by your own labor.

You have produced so much for your master that he is unable to dispose of it and so to protect himself he discharges you. You are out of a job and you wonder what is wrong. I can tell you in just a word. You are getting in enforced idleness what you voted for at the preceding election. When you are in that helpless state the capitalist politician has no message of comfort or cheer for you. Your economic master has nothing for you. You then realize, if you are capable of a single intelligent thought, that you are left to your own unhappy fate, you then realize as you could not possibly do under any other circumstances, that as a workingman you have an interest of your own, that it is not the business of the capitalist or his politicians or his pulpiteurs to do anything for you, but that if anything is done for you it must be done by yourself.

I am quite frank in admitting that it is not within my power to do anything for you and if there are any here who intend to cast their votes for me under the belief that I can do anything for them they had better give their vote to somebody else. I am speaking now of myself in the capacity of a leader. I have very little faith in leaders in general and I know a great many of them very well. A leader is a human being, who, like all other human beings, first takes care of himself. I appeal to you this afternoon to have less faith in leaders and more in yourselves. It is true that the socialist who is elected to office is in position to be of some service to the workers but it is not in the capacity of the leader in the ancient sense of that term, but simply as a representative of the class that elected him.

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For the first time in the history of mankind the workers and producers are organizing for the purpose, the conscious purpose, the deliberate purpose, of overthrowing their masters and installing themselves in power. In this very vital and important respect the present economic and political movement known as the international socialist movement differs from all other movements in the history of the human race. In every preceding attempt of the enslaved worker to overthrow their oppressor, in every revolution of which history gives an account, the workers have been in alliance with the intermediate class to overthrow the ruling class and to install that intermediate class in power, leaving the workers still in subjection.

The ancient world was divided mainly between master and slave, and in the Middle Ages there were lords, barons, and serfs. In modern society

there are capitalists and wage-workers. The ancient masters owned the bodies of their slaves under law. The feudal lords of the Middle Ages owned all of the landed estates; the serf was not allowed to own a square inch of soil under the law. The ancient master could rob his slave by virtue of ownership of that slave. That slave being his property under the law, what the slave produced was, therefore, also his property under the law. In the Middle Ages the feudal serf could only secure access to the soil by surrendering to the feudal aristocracy all that they produced except enough to keep them in producing order.

You workers of today are not the slaves your ancestors were of old nor the serfs your antecedents were in the Middle Ages. You are formally free. The capitalist doesn't own you under the law. But there has been a very great change within the last two centuries in which another form of ownership has been established which is quite as effective in robbing, enslaving, and degrading the workers as if they were the property of the master class under the law. No, the capitalists don't own you but they do own the sources of wealth. They do own the machinery of production. You can't work unless you have access to it. You can only secure access to that machinery by their permission. You can only work on condition that you turn over to them the lion's share of what you produce. And what is there left for you, the workers, the producers, in the aggregate? Just enough to feed, clothe, and shelter yourselves and reproduce yourselves in the form of labor-power, so that under this system and the wage contract you are exploited and you are kept in servitude as if you were the property of the masters under the law.

It is true that you can sever your relationship with one capitalist, with one master, and perhaps find another, but you can't get away from all the masters, and as Marx said, "Your principle aim in capitalism is to find your particular master." Now if you tell me whose tool you use, I will tell you whose slave you are.

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These are harsh terms to some of you. Are they true? Do they describe the actual condition? It is not always [best] to spare the sensibilities of delicate human beings. It sometimes becomes necessary to clothe the truth in a very harsh garb. It is sometimes the only way to reach and arouse the people who need to know of the conditions and the cause of them before they can be expected to see clearly. It takes such measures to

make them know of those conditions and to right the wrongs to which they have been so long suffering and despairing victims.

In this system a relative few, most of whom live in New York and other eastern cities, own all the sources or practically all of the sources of wealth, including the mines and the mills, the factories and the shops, the railways, the telegraph and express — all of these sources of wealth, all of these means of production and distribution. Summed up these are the means of life, the means of life upon which the great masses of people are dependent and without which they are absolutely helpless. These are privately owned and the nation's industries are operated upon the basis that the property of the capitalists is more important than the lives of the workers.

You are given employment on the condition that you can produce a profit. Failing in this you are not permitted to work at all. When you are idle, you are helpless. You see your wife in despair and your children suffering for the necessities of life — your wife and children evicted perhaps, as is often the case in the great cities, turned out into the streets when they are drifting into vice and crime.

We see the effects of this system upon every hand. We know that within the last 40 years there has been created in this country an army of tramps that stretches from sea to sea. Every tramp on the highway is a living argument, a pulsing protest against the capitalist system, every one of them. A half century ago the word "tramp" had not been coined. Within that time this army of human beings has been created and whatsoever may be your opinion of them I understand the processes of the system that made them so, and I want to say to you now that they are the victims of conditions that they did not create and were helpless to modify or control and if they had lived in the socialist republic in which every human being has the inalienable right to work and to produce and to enjoy the fruit of his labor, they would be respected, useful men and women. My heart goes out to this army of tramps and I have said and say again that when I see a tramp, through his wretchedness, through his rags, I can see the outline of a human being who is my brother and I take my place side by side with him, no matter how disreputable he may be and I put my arms about him and I say: "Brother, I am with you and against the system that made you what you are."

Then we have hundreds of thousands of thieves and burglars and convicts and pickpockets that infest all of the cities of the nations. We have hundreds of thousands of girls and women who have been driven into lives of shame in this awful struggle for existence. We have two mil-

lion and more little children in their tender years who should be enjoying the fresh air and the sunlight and have abundant nutritious food that they might have their rightful heritage in strong, healthy bodies. We see them under the scourge of the capitalist hunger lash, driven to the mills and factories to become the living cogs in the rushing wheels of industry, feeding the machines. I have seen them again and again standing by these machines in the textile mills of New England, where it requires the combined wage of the husband, the wife, and the children to support the family. I have seen them in the violated atmosphere of these slave pens and have seen them in their young childhood inhaling the lint and I have said to myself: "If these little girls who are ground into profit by the master class, if they should live long enough to approach the marriage state and assume the functions of motherhood, they are unfit for it. Every tissue has been consumed, their vitality exhausted, and their offspring are born tired and weak and have not a fair chance in life."

And then we name them failures and usher them into the jail or the penitentiary and they never have a chance, until at last they have credited to their account all the way from petty larceny to murder. This is why there are over a thousand murders committed in this country every month and why last year there were 13,000 suicides in this land. A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit. Therefore, by their fruit shall ye know them. By the same token the social system can be judged. We have the fruit of this system before our eyes. We can contemplate it at our leisure.

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It is this that constitutes the issue in this campaign. Are you satisfied with conditions as they are? Can you have them changed? Are you willing to do your share to bring about that change?

First of all it is necessary that you shall realize that that change never will come until you prepare yourselves for it. There is a great obligation that rests upon you workingmen and workingwomen. Your duty is to prepare yourselves through education and organization, economic and political, in order to take control of the industries, to operate the industries in the interest of the whole people. This requires a tremendous work that can't be accomplished by any individual or set of individuals, but requires the whole working class. In this system the great majority of you have been satisfied to be known as hands, to be hired as hands, and looked down upon as hands. Let me declare to you this afternoon that you have brains as well as hands. You can think as well as work, and you

can act as well as think, and you can be men and women as well as slaves.

I have already said that I had it not in my power to do anything for you; but while I can do nothing for you there is nothing that you cannot do for yourselves. The power of which I speak is latent within you. When you, the workers here in Everett, Washington, and throughout this land, when you organize and apply your economic power, your political power, there is nothing between this earth and the stars that can stand between you and complete emancipation.

Ever since machinery has been applied to industry, ever since the industrial revolution had its inception, you, the workers have had to work it out. You have had to throw aside your tools, desert your small establishments, and be recruited into groups until now you constitute the grand army that stretches from sea to sea. You work together, you strike together, you are locked out together you are enjoined by Judge Hanford together, you tramp together, you go to jail together, you have had to learn to do all these things together. How much longer are you going to wait until you vote together on election day?

This world only respects as it is compelled to respect and you should respect yourself. Does the capitalist politician talk to you workmen in this way? or does he call you the "horny-handed sons of toil?" It is about this season on the year that he is so proud to stand in your presence and tell you how greatly he is impressed by your intelligence as he looks into your faces. Just think of the sarcasm of calling the great masses of workers intelligent in their present state! He flatters your ignorance so that you may not become wise. The Socialists tell you very frankly that you are ignorant, that you may become intelligent. That is the difference. The capitalist politician very adroitly conceals the only issue in which you are interested and exploits all of those in which you are not interested.

Here in this country they tell you, some of them, that you are poor and have to pay high prices for everything because of the outrageous protective tariff. In England the same class of politicians tell the workers are impoverished and suffer because of the free trade that prevails there. They tell you about this wonderful nation, and it is a wonderful nation, then they talk about Old Glory, then you feel as if you want to take a fit to show that you are a patriotic American citizen, and then they tell you that in this campaign they have a series of issues that are of great interest to the people and that if you will only restore them to power once more they will revise the currency system and they will lower the tariff and reg-

ulate the trusts and do a whole lot of other things that are of no more interest or concern to you than if they lived upon some other planet,

It doesn't make any difference whether the tariff is high or low, it doesn't make any difference how they regulate the trusts — and you well know how that has come to be a joke with every thinking man: the idea of a capitalist class government regulating the trust when we know that it is the trust that regulates the capitalist government.

It doesn't make any difference what they do as long as you have no tools to work with. They who do own those tools will get what you produce and that is all there is to it and yet that thought ought to be enough. Why should you, a workingman in full possession of your faculties, why should you depend upon any other human being for the right to work and give to him what is produced by your labor? Put that up to any Democrat or Republican and he will dodge it. Insist upon a direct answer and he is helpless. Why should the capitalist own the tool he didn't make and couldn't use to save his life? And why should not the workers, who did make the do and who use it, why should they not own it? That is a workingman's question. They are all working class questions.

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I can't boast as some people do that I have risen to a position of eminence. I have remained in the ranks with the workers, side by side with them, and there is where I belong and I am going to remain. I am not a leader any more than you socialists are followers. We are comrades and working together and we are keeping step to that splendid heartthrob of the impending socialist revolution.

Now the way to test the promises of the capitalist politicians is by what they did when they were in power. At the very time the Republican convention was in session in Chicago and the Democratic convention in session in Baltimore, the capitalist Congress was in session in Washington. These two parties are already in power. Instead of promising the people at Chicago and Baltimore, why did they not perform at Washington?

The Republican Party has been in power year after year during the last 50 years. Since the days of Lincoln, and there are a great many good men in the Republican Party yet on account of Lincoln. Lincoln is dead. There is a great difference in the Republican Party of Abraham Lincoln and the Republican Party of William Howard Taft. I can remember that my father was classified as a black abolitionist because he was a Lincoln

Republican. A half a century ago a Lincoln Republican was as much an undesirable citizen as a socialist today.

During the early years the Republican Party had a mission; it fulfilled its mission and is now corrupt to the core and if you happen to be a workingman in that party I am sure it is because your grandfather was. Do you know that everything has changed since your grandfather lived except his grandson? You don't do a single thing in the same way your grandfather did except to vote as he did. And you think you are honoring his memory — you are a positive disgrace to him. The only way you can honor his memory is to be true to yourself.

Do not take my word for it. I appeal to you to assert your own mental intellect; I appeal to your moral stamina, to your manhood and womanhood, to stand erect and face the issue. You have everything to gain, you have nothing to lose but your chains. Anyone can be in the majority, anyone can drift with the tide.

In every age of the world's history there have been a few men and a few women who have had convictions and courage, who have dared to stand erect alone, to assert themselves, and to accept the consequences of their acts. They have written their names in inimitable letters in the history of mankind. They were the pathfinders in the wilderness, the evangelists of civilization, the heralds of the dawn. They paved the way to better conditions of humankind. They have made this earth a habitable globe. We are under great obligation to them for what they did to make possible what we now enjoy. We can only discharge our obligation to them by doing what lies in our power in the interest of those who are to come after us.

No man loses who is true to himself. If your job goes you go. You lose that to find yourself. You sacrifice the respect of your neighbors to keep your own until you can have both. Karl Marx was afraid to be popular; he couldn't afford to pay the price of his self-respect. here is an example worthy of emulation.

Depend upon yourselves, develop your own capacity for clear thinking, your own self-reliance. Listen for just a moment and you will hear your heart throb the forward march. If your former friends desert you, you will be better off than you were before. You can stand erect and walk forth with your self-respect. You can face the world without a tremor of fear. This is worth making the effort to achieve and when you have achieved it and when you have got the spirit of this great movement it will course in your veins and throb in your heart. It will surge in your very soul, and then you, too, will know why the social revolutionist is

never weak, never discourages, never complains, knowing, as he does, that the movement of which he is a living and pulsating part is in alliance with the eternal forces of evolution. That every defeat develops his latent power, in every defeat he grows strong and though he may be defeated a thousand times, he arises triumphant, presses on step by step with absolute faith in himself, in his comrades until at last the hour shall strike when evolution shall be capped with revolution and this system of wage-slavery goes down as chattel slavery went down, capitalism disappears, and the working class stands forth emancipated at last.

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There are some people who fear to offend what is known as public opinion, to venture an utterance without feeling the public pulse. They want to be certain that they are in the majority. Allow me to observe that if I live long enough to be in the majority and to be satisfied to remain there, I will be quite certain to have over-lived myself. These same people, who are unthinking for the most part, are content with things as they are, as they have been, and as they will be; they haven't studied the economics, the politics, the sociology of this period. They do not know that underlying human society there are great productive forces and in certain stages of their development these overgrow the bounds which contain them and they are gradually rent asunder. The old disappears and the new evolves and we then have a new social system and a new civilization. These are the underlying laws of social development and they never can be suspended.

The same forces that brought the capitalist system into existence are now operating to overthrow it. All of the forces of modern society are working for socialism. The capitalists themselves are doing their utmost to hasten the end of their own system. They steadily centralize to enlarge their power, and as they centralize to destroy their competitors they furnish us with recruits. Not only this: in exact proportion as they centralize we, the workers, organize, and when they get through centralizing we will be through organizing. They will have the capital and wealth, we the economic and political power.

We are in an overwhelming majority. We have a score of votes to their one. We have but to learn how to use it. We are learning very rapidly. We are more numerous than we were a few years ago. We will be far more numerous in the coming year. We are going to send a number of representatives to congress — the next congress — and if you workers

do your duty here and elsewhere in this district there is no reason why Joe Gilbert should not be your next representative at Washington. Why, from all indications, unless they are misleading, you are going to sweep this county clean as a blotter. Get in control within limitation and then begin the real work in a small way and in due course of time you are going to sweep Washington — and unless I am mistaken Washington is going to be one among the first that is going to float the socialist flag.

You Socialists have honored yourselves in nominating for your standard bearer for the governorship Anna A. Maley — as true a socialist and as noble a woman as there is to be found anywhere in this or any other country. I know her record, her work, and I know that in all her self-denying life she never yet has failed in a single instant to serve the working class to the full extent of her power. She is a workingwoman who has a clear head and a warm heart and a great soul, and while we are not in the habit of eulogizing individuals, it is perfectly in order to say that Anna A. Maley is the incarnation of the spirit of working class revolt against wage-slavery and she is the typical representative of the working class and a noble expression of its aspirations to be free.

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We wait and we watch and we work. How the skies have brightened since the sun of socialism has arisen. Long before this great white light came into my life there was something lacking. For years and years I tried to organize the workers and I met with defeat. I repeated the efforts with the same results for I appeared to be in the quicksand. There was no solid foundation and finally there came a time when the work of many years was subjected to a very severe test and the fruit of those years of labor was swept away.

I found myself in jail, and strange as it may seem, in the darkness of a prison cell I found the light. It was there that I became a socialist and from that time to this, no matter how trying the ordeal has been, how hopeless to a good many others, I have known that my feet were upon the rock and that my head was amongst the stars.

And so we have the strength for any fate and it matters not what it has in store for us, we are prepared for it all and we shall at last triumph over it all. And this is of some value to us. It is worth all and more than it costs. I would not exchange it for all the material wealth in the world; if I had all of that at the price of what I have, I would have nothing. I would

be poor indeed but with these clear ideas and with those lovely ideals and with these comrades who never fail — what have I to wish for?

They sometimes ask us if it is not true that socialists are also capable of selling out. What for? Do you suppose that John D. Rockefeller has anything that I want, except to relieve him of his burden and give him a chance? If it were a permanent condition does anyone suppose that I would exchange places with him and give him what I have and accept what he has? Money is not wealth, it is not riches. True riches are of the spirit and of the soul. The Man of Galilee, the carpenter of Nazareth, the despised workingman of twenty centuries ago, had not a dollar. He was infinitely richer than Rockefeller.

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We make the claim that this system has no beneficiaries in any real sense of that term; that even those who succeed under the prevailing standards fail and fall at last. There is a moral as well as a physical law that is just as inexorable: the fruit of exploitation turns to ashes upon the leaves at last. No human will ever be free until all are free. Emerson was never nearer the philosopher when he said: “If you seek the other end of the chain that binds the slave you will find it riveted to the wrist of his master.”⁶

Lincoln said: “For the reason I object to being a slave I object to being a master; one is just as degrading and as immoral as the other.”⁷

The successful capitalist who is your economic master and political ruler has great power but he is not a highly developed human being. Place one of them on this platform this afternoon and allow some socialist workingman here to ask him a few simple questions about the history of his own country, about economics, science, and what have you and you will be amazed to see how densely ignorant he is. He has not the time to accumulate true knowledge; his mind is abnormally developed. In this sharp, fierce competitive struggle his conscience is destroyed and he has a clear eye only for an opening to make profits. He is crafty but not intelligent. The dollar mark is on each of his three billion brain cells. He has a palatial residence and a private yacht and automobiles and all that money can buy but there is something that he doesn't understand, that he is lacking, for he hasn't found true happiness and he gives his time to the pursuit and usually dies disappointed.

No human being ever found real happiness looking for it. Happiness is in doing and not in seeking. If you would know the meaning of real

happiness you must know first of all that you are a social being. You must know the joy of service to your fellow man, and you must be sufficiently enlightened to understand that only in the service of your fellow man can you really and truly serve yourself. That was the philosophy that was preached by the Nazarene twenty centuries ago. It was he who said: "Let him who is greatest among you be the servant of all the rest."⁸

Thirty million men, women, and children have to fight for jobs and force wages down to the point of subsistence. Businessmen have to fight each other and drive each other into ruin; millions of professional men fight each other for practice. It is perfectly vain for your ministers to preach on Sundays for human brotherhood when we live in a system where we have to fight for mere existence. Only when our economic interest becomes mutual, when we socially own what we socially need and use, only then can we work together side by side in the true spirit of humanity, only then can we expand to our noblest proportion, only then can we develop and express the best that is in us, only then will we start the march of the divinest civilization that man has ever known.

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Here is a magnificent tree... This tree is possible only because the soil and the climate are adapted to its growth and its development. That same physical law applies to the human being. The economic soil and social climate must be adapted to the development of man and woman...⁹

In the modern city we find the settlements, the red light district; here we find the multiplied thousands who have failed in this system and here they reek and fester until at last death comes to the rescue and lulls these hapless victims to sleep. This is capitalism and what you vote for when you vote the Democratic and Republican tickets. When you vote the Socialist ticket you vote to put an end to this enslaving and degrading system and there enter the light of a new civilization.

And if you are looking for the light and the knowledge that is necessary to you, subscribe for *The Commonwealth*, this paper here in Everett — a splendid little socialist paper that is filled with illuminating matter that you need to read and to digest and to understand. If you are already a socialist you can secure a score of subscribers, extend the scope of its circulation, and speed the coming of the better day for us all. And it is coming. You can hasten it or you can retard it, but you can no more prevent it than you can prevent the sunrise on the morrow.

In the coming election you will have the opportunity of registering your approval of capitalism, your desire for its continuation. You also have the opportunity of registering your protest and your determination that this system shall be destroyed. I am appealing to you not for your votes. We Socialists do not ask for your votes. You know what socialism is and if you are in the working class you will vote for socialism without being asked. If you do not know what it is and if you are satisfied to take such information regarding it as you can get from capitalist papers and capitalist magazines, then your vote would do us no good and I wouldn't ask you for it.

The Republican and Democratic politicians appeal to you to vote. Have you ever heard one of them appeal to you to think We Socialists do not appeal to you to vote but to think. We are doing what we can to turn on the electric light in your brain and when you see a socialist you know almost at a glance that he is in the party. He may not wear very good clothes, he may not be regarded as a desirable citizen; he may live in a humble cottage, possibly what you would call a shack. Inside you find a man there and a woman there and it is a house of light. You will also see upon the shelves the standard books on economics and history and science. He knows why he is a socialist but you don't know why you are not. You may hate him; he pities you. You think you know him; he knows he knows you. he can give an account of himself. You don't know a socialist who can't read and write, you don't know one who can't give a reasonable account for the faith that is in him.

It is his ignorant and benighted fellow workingman who thinks that the socialist is foolish and is throwing his vote away. The same ignorant workingman doesn't throw his vote away; that is, he doesn't think that he throws it away. Oh, no, he makes use of it. He votes for slavery because he knows that he has a dead cinch on that and can't lose. He doesn't take any chances for freedom because he fears he may lose, so he votes for slavery knowing that he's bound to win.

No man throws his vote away who votes his interests. The Socialist vote expresses the determination of the man who casts it to be free. His first vote doesn't secure his freedom, nor does his second vote, nor perhaps his last vote, but while he is developing his political power he is also developing his economical power. He is building the industrial union that is going to embrace all of the workers and when finally he casts his decisive vote, the winning vote, he will have back of that vote the economic power of his class to enforce it. When, by the triumphant vote, the industries of this nation, or their title deeds rather, are trans-

ferred from the Rockefellers, Vanderbilts, Goulds, and Hills to the people in their collective capacities, the workers will have already been industrially organized. They will be in the mills and factories and mines and the railways and everywhere the workers work together consciously; and then they will by perfectly peaceable means, I hope, lock out the capitalists as they have so often been locked out themselves in the past. They will be in control and then we will have the industrial commonwealth and then every man will have the inalienable right to work under the most improved machinery and under the most favorable conditions that can be devised.

Then we will work not to enrich an aristocratic class which looks down upon us in contempt but we will work to produce for ourselves. We will produce in abundance for every woman, man, and child and then we will reduce the workday in proportion to the improved machinery and the progress of invention and then we will so reduce the workday that every man and woman will have leisure time to cultivate their mines, to read good literature, to enjoy good art, and to realize something of what life is in its larger and nobler and diviner lights. There will be no master and there will be no slave; instead there will be free men and women and there will be able-bodied workers enough to do all the work and produce all the necessary wealth. All of the children who are now dwarfed and deformed and whose lives are broken, all of these children will be withdrawn from industry. They will then have time to grow up and be properly educated and to serve themselves and to serve society.

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This in brief is the mission of the socialist movement, of which the Socialist Party, which makes the appeal to you this afternoon is the political expression. If you believe in the principles of this movement hesitate no longer, take your place without fear where you properly belong and do you share to speed the coming of that brighter day for all of us.

And here let me say that this movement is not confined to this country alone. For the first time in history a universal movement has been organized. The socialist movement is as wide as the world. The Socialist is already the greatest party on earth. It is the only international party. It has already cast more than 10 million votes. It has upwards of 50 million adherents — men, women, and children who are animated by the same high principles and who are everywhere keeping steps to the inspiring heartbeats of the impending social revolution.

This movement has its representatives in all the congresses of all nations on earth. The greater part of this marvelous work has been accomplished within a single generation. In this great movement we find the expression of the working class of all the world. They are now arising, standing erect, throwing the badge of servitude from their necks, getting in closer and closer touch with the movement, learning to work together in the social spirit for the good of all, developing steadily the power that is to set them free. There is inspiration in the very thought of this great movement that embraces our common humanity, that makes it appeal to all people regardless of their nationality, race, color, creed, or class. They have long since got the inspiring cry of Karl Marx, that great philosopher, that splendid apostle, that true leader of the working class: "Workingmen of all countries unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains. You have a world to gain."

It is this movement that appeals to you, to each of you. It is you who must give the answer and to yourselves; give that answer in a way that in the future you may look yourself in the face without a blush. Do not wait until the Socialists are in the majority. They will not need you then and the world will never know that you have ever lived. If you believe it is right, join it in its minority and do your part and then you, too, will write your name in the deeds that live forever.

Every argument, or so-called argument that is made against socialism, against the industrial democracy today was mad against political democracy in this country a century and a half ago when the American colonists were still the American subjects of the king, when the great majority of the people believed he had a divine right to rule. When great principles have been involved the great majority have been wrong, the minority right. It is in the march of time that the majority are still in advance. Their cause is triumphant and then the world applauds and he who is in advance can well afford to stand alone and patiently bide his time. After a while the world catches up to where he stood and raises a monument where he fought and weaves garlands of flowers with which to cover his grave.

This minority in due time will be converted into a majority. It will sweep into power and fulfill its historic mission, and when that great work has been accomplished and when the workers are free, when our common humanity is disenthralled, then men and women can walk all of the highways side by side, they can enjoy the enrapturing scenes of the land without a master; a land in which the badge of useful service is the only badge of aristocracy, a land in which we shall still compete, not for

jobs, not in the terrible struggle for existence, but we shall compete with each other to excel in good works and he will be regarded as greatest who most completely concentrates his services to the service of humanity. Then we will all be radiant and responsive in the most perfect brotherhood of all mankind.

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¹ Everett, Washington was the epicenter of the Socialist Party's radical wing in the Pacific Northwest in this period. [EXPAND](#)

² Debs was on speaking tours which brought him to Washington state in October 1899, June–July 1902, and briefly in December 1902. He was also in the state in September 1904 as part of his presidential campaign tour, but it is unlikely he was “abducted” at that time as his travel arrangements were tightly booked.

³ This event took place on September 15, 1908, during the “Red Special” presidential tour. Debs spoke in Seattle to a crowd of 3,000 at the Dreamland Rink for 90 minutes and was whisked away at 10:45 pm, arriving in Everett shortly before midnight. That meeting continued until 2:00 am. This was the only double evening speech for Debs during the 1908 national tour, although he spoke briefly at train stations multiple times each day.

⁴ Debs spoke at the Broadway Theater in Butte, Montana to a paying audience of 2,500 on August 30, 1912. Local Socialist Party leader Alex Mackel was in the chair.

⁵ Debs meetings in 1912 typically had a general admission price of 25 cents, in a period when a typical daily wage was roughly three dollars.

⁶ A misquotation of a possibly apocryphal line ascribed to Emerson by Confederate General John B. Gordon, repeated by Wendell Phillips: “One end of the slave’s chain is always riveted to the wrist of the master.”

⁷ The source of this true or pseudo Lincoln quotation has not been located.

⁸ Misquotation of Matthew 23:11: “But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.”

⁹ The published version of this short paragraph is garbled in the original.