
The Approaching Elections (October 16, 1897)

New York City, Oct. 16, 1897.

Since coming East¹ I have been asked by many members of the Social Democracy what ticket, if any, I consider it advisable to support this fall in New York, Pennsylvania, and other states, in view of the fact that the Social Democracy has no ticket in the field. I answer, unhesitatingly, the ticket of the Socialist Labor Party, the only anti-capitalistic party in the field. At this juncture in the evolution of socialism the supreme demand is to support principles. The personality of the candidates, especially as there is little or no prospect of electing a single one of them, is of little moment. In any event, personal prejudice should not influence any member to either vote against a socialist candidate or, which amounts to the same thing, not vote at all and thereby give support directly or indirectly to the capitalistic power that keeps him in fetters.

There are those who are embittered against the Socialist Labor Party on account of alleged persecution. Show that you are a true socialist by returning good for evil.

Above all parties, we are socialists, and in due course of time we shall find common ground and unite in one great party. What party that shall be, time will determine.

In the meanwhile we must continue to bear in mind that there is no logic in abuse, and that ridicule and slander are not accepted as argument among intelligent and reputable men.

We are entirely pleased with the outlook for the Social Democracy. In June next our National Council will hold its first annual session. We are already organized in 26 states and the rest will be in line in the next 90 days, so that our first national convention will see every state and territory represented. A national political platform will then be formulated, and the Social Democracy will be formally launched on the waters of American politics. Then we can support our own candidates as well as the principles of socialism.

To those who declare we are not “scientific” enough, we have only to say that we stand for the complete overthrow of capitalism, the abolition of the wage system, and the collective ownership of all the means of production and distribution; and the Social Democracy of America, as a national and international political and economic organization, will fight along that line without a shadow of fusion or compromise, either as to principles or candidates (except in case of an honorable alliance with another socialist organization), until victory is achieved and the Cooperative Commonwealth is established.

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¹ Debs began an East coast speaking tour on October 7 with the first of six appearances in New York City on behalf of the SDA. His tour, which lasted more than five weeks, took him to various points in New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, and New Jersey before returning home by way of Cleveland.