

Declination of Office in the Social Democracy of America at the First National Convention (June 8, 1898)

I have been in this work a long time and I want a rest.¹ The [Social] Democracy can get on just as well, and I shall work as a private in the ranks. But before that I shall have a vacation — perhaps go to Europe. It is not consistent with our ideas to elect a President and other officers. The government will probably be left to an Executive Board. But I shall not even belong to that. I shall accept no office of any kind.

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¹ This statement was made after a morning session marked by what one observer characterized as “considerable violent argument” over the matter of seating of 11 delegates contested by SDA Secretary Sylvester Keliher and the ability of delegates to vote proxies for local branches not in attendance — two propositions which were passed by the convention over Debs’s opposition.