
Joseph A. Weil Devised Arm and Torch Emblem for NY Socialist Party

Unsigned article from the *New York Call*, Sunday, Nov. 3, 1918.

Twenty-four years with the socialist movement of this country in the case of Joseph A. Weil, candidate in the 19th Assembly District, Kings, is not just keeping a red card in his pocket, but 24 years of strenuous work in every branch of active service for the emancipation of mankind from capitalism.

No job that was required by the movement has he hesitated to do. To sweep the clubrooms, to carry a platform, to fix up the signs, to speak from the platform, to lecture, to represent the Socialists in central committees and conventions were activities equally important to him. All of these he did with cheer. He has been an inspiration to many a younger man. No work was "dirty work" to him, if the work was for the movement. Although poverty and an orthodox conservative education were his heritage, he broke these fetters and as a free man threw his lot with that of the working class.

In 1895 he joined the Socialist Labor Party, but when the split came in 1899 he helped to form the Social Democratic Party. "I joined the new party," said Weil, "because I felt that by doing so I would best advance the cause of the working class. I felt that the Socialist Labor Party was becoming a dogmatized sect. My heart bled for the workers. Then things were much

worse than they are now. The legal restrictions favoring the masses and physical comforts that exist now were not even dreamed of then. I was also convinced that socialism here, as well as in all other countries, must be a slow process, that the road to human emancipation would have to be made step by step."



Few know that Joseph A. Weil is the "father" of the American Socialist Party emblem. When the new Social Democratic Party was founded and the question of choosing an emblem arose, Weil and Hillquit were elected on that committee. It was Weil who conceived the idea of the "arm and torch." He said: "I saw in socialism the light that shall eventually lead the world out of darkness into cheer and joy and human happiness."

For 24 years Weil was a member of the City and Central Committees, which he served faithfully, always showing his protean working capacity. When Abraham Cahan made his first open-air speech some 20 years ago he did so from a platform built by Weil. Weil never knew anything about carpentry, but "necessity was the mother of invention."

While his occupations never made it possible for him to join any particular labor union, he was heart and soul with the economic movements of the working class. When the workers, especially the tailors, found themselves starving in the great strike of 1912, Weil was instrumental in organizing the largest emer-

agency kitchen in Brooklyn at the Brooklyn Labor Lyceum. The whole of Weil's family worked for weeks in that kitchen. His wife, his son, and his two daughters are all Socialists. His greatest boast is that his family is 100 percent Socialist. Weil's son, Louis, before he was drafted, was an active member in the state organization of the YPSL. His daughter, Gertrude Weil Klein, is the Assembly candidate in the 4th District in Brooklyn.

Weil is at present a member of the Kings County Central Committee of the Socialist Party. He was one of the founders of *The Call* and always was a hard worker in the Workingmen's Cooperative Association, its publishers. He is a member of the Executive Committee of the association.

Weil has run on the Socialist ticket many times before, but never did he come so near to victory as last year, when he lost out by 50 votes to his Democratic opponent. His defeat was entirely due to a misunderstanding about the soldiers' vote. From the canvass of his district, the 19th Assembly, all indications point to victory.

Weil is popular in his district, even among non-Socialist. They admire him for his sincerity and good nature. He is tolerant at ideas, whether or not they are in accord with his. On that point Weil says: "I believe that everyone has a right to his own convictions. Even

in party disputes, I am never antagonized by difference of opinion. A little self-control and tolerance do more to bring about an understanding than anything else I know of." When asked what the character of his work in the Assembly would be if elected, Weil said: "I would continue the work for socialism right in the Assembly. Our legislators are far from understanding

the social conditions and difficulties pressing upon the poor and making their lives miserable. I hope that we have a large Socialist delegation at Albany. The impression made by the Socialist aldermen and assemblymen will go down in the annals of American legislative records. Most people did not know where the laws were being made until the Socialist raised a rumpus about the capitalist legislative atrocities. The greatest usefulness of the Socialist representatives was in blocking legislation adverse to the public welfare."

In his answer as to what legislation he would propose at Albany on behalf of his district, Weil remarked: "It is hard to know where to start. It seems that everything is wrong in our present state. But the first thing I would do would be to get after the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Corporation, and see what could be done to alleviate the atrocious treatment of the public by that company."



Edited by Tim Davenport. Button shown above circa 1905.

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