
The Convention:

A Notable Gathering of the People

Representing Socialism:

Stirring Events in Which Those Who Stood For Political

Action Exclusively Were Defeated — They Bolt.

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Never has there been a convention of the people more pregnant of future good than that of the Social Democracy of America.

It was held in Chicago in Uhlich's Hall, where the American Railway Union was born in 1893 and where the great Pullman strike was declared in 1894. Greater yet will be the results of this convention of '98.

The convention began Tuesday morning, June 7 [1898], at 9 o'clock, and lasted until Saturday evening, June 11, at 6 o'clock, when William E. Burns, the Vice Chairman, after a ringing speech pointing out that all the old ARU strikers and blacklisted men remained loyal to the SD of A, let his gavel fall and declared the first annual convention adjourned.

It was the greatest Socialist convention ever held in this country. The average of ability was very high.

Representatives came all the way from San Francisco and San Diego on the west and from New Hampshire on the east, while all sections, including the south, sent delegates. Ninety-four branches were represented by about 70 delegates.

There was a large element that favored political action and colonization, while a smaller number favored political action only.

The contest between these two ideas began as soon as Chairman Debs dropped his gavel to call the convention to order. Delegate Cook of Chicago moved in the interest of true democracy that a committee of 3 on credentials be elected by the body, and this was carried.

J. Finn of Illinois, J.C. DeArmond of Colorado,

and W.L.A. Johnson of Kansas were elected.

The Committee on Credentials went to the headquarters of the organization and reported on those credentials who had paid their dues and were entitled to seats.

National Secretary [Sylvester] Keliher threw a firebrand into the convention by declaring there were 8 branches organized recently in Chicago, and that he had refused to sign and issue charters for them, as he believed they were organized for the purpose of packing the convention. National Vice Chairman Burns, National Treasurer James Hogan, and National Organizer R.M. Goodwin and J.S. Ingalls protested against the accusation.

The debate on the report of the Committee on Credentials waxed warm and began to be a debate on the merits of political action and colonization. The debate lasted all day, and when adjournment came the question was still undecided.

That evening the National Executive Board met and ordered the Secretary to issue these charters, and it was done. The next morning the Committee on Credentials reported the fact and the delegates were seated without further protest. Then came the election of the Committee on Rules and order of business. C.F. Willard of Colorado, I. Frank of New York, and F.F. Heath of Wisconsin were elected and presented the rules which governed the convention, with some additional changes.

The forces in favor of the dual idea of political action and colonization were led by James Hogan of Utah, while Victor Berger of Wisconsin led the men

who believed in political action only.

The committees were elected on roll call, each representative announcing his vote as he voted.

The Committee on Resolutions was composed of F.F. Heath of Wisconsin, A.S. Edwards of Tennessee, and J.S. Ingalls of Illinois; Committee on Constitution — Isaiah Frank of New York, L.L. Hopkins of New Jersey, and W.P. Borland of Michigan; Committee on Ways and Means — F.G.R. Gordon of New Hampshire, George Koop of Illinois, and Jacob Hunger of Wisconsin; Committee on Organized Labor — G.A. Hoehn of Missouri, Hugo Miller of Indiana, and Joseph Barondess of New York.

The great fight occurred over the Committee on Platform, and on account of magnanimity and generosity, the minority elected the majority of the committee in the persons of Victor Berger of Wisconsin and Margaret Haile of Massachusetts, while the other member of the committee was John F. Lloyd of Illinois, who represented the majority of the convention.

The great fight of the convention came on the report of the Committee on Platform. Margaret Haile read her report, and J.S. Ingalls read the report of J.F. Lloyd. The minority report was the main issue discussed. That day the convention began its session at 9 o'clock Friday morning [June 10, 1898] and lasted until 3 o'clock the next morning.

On Thursday afternoon [June 9], Chairman Debs made his report as Chairman of the National Executive Board in a speech lasting over an hour, in which he declared in favor of political action and colonization. Friday forenoon [June 10] James Hogan made his report as Vice Chairman and Treasurer, and in the course of his report he attacked Secretary Keliher, alleging incompetency or dishonesty, and saying that the convention could take choice of either horn of the dilemma.

After Hogan's statement, which lasted over 2 hours, the result of the convention was never in doubt.

The Colonization Commission reported through its Secretary [Richard J. Hinton] in a typewritten report of some length, in which the Colorado mining operation was favorably reported. The full report will be published in *The Social Democrat* and need not be given here.

Then began the debate on the platform. The best speeches in favor of the platform were those of John F.

Lloyd; James Taylor Rodgers of San Francisco, former Populist candidate for Congress; and Thomas Grundy of Pittsburgh, Pa. The best speeches of the opposition were those of J.F. Carey of Haverhill, Mass., and Seymour Stedman. Speeches against the platform were made by Isaac Hourwich, V. Winchevsky, Isaac Phillips, Victor Berger, J. Barnondess, Louis Miller, and G.A. Hoehn.

John F. Lloyd made the closing speech. It was after 1 o'clock in the morning. The hall was crowded with strangers, all sessions being open and public. They remained until the close of the great debate.

Stedman had spoken for the opposition, and in his speech he predicted failure for all colonies and attacked the judgment and integrity of the commissioners. Lloyd arose to answer him and close. Emphasis had been laid on the necessity of a platform and methods which would conform to American conditions and lines of thought. This was really the point at issue: Should the old German Socialist methods, with its "class-consciousness" club tactics, continue, or should American Socialist methods prevail?

American Socialist methods won.

Lloyd made a magnificent speech, showing the fallacy of their position, and pointing out that his side stood for both political action and colonization, while the other side stood for political action. In slow, measured tones he analyzed the arguments of the preceding speakers, and when he finally warmed up he swept away their arguments and contentions like cobwebs.

It was nearly 3 o'clock, and the big audience, which comprised many of the noted people of Chicago, were listening spellbound. Suddenly a delegate from Cleveland arose and said, "Mr. Chairman — I want to go home. I want to be allowed to have my vote recorded."

Vice Chairman Burns was in the chair and said, "How do you vote?"

"Aye," was the response.

Then there was a storm of protests, points of order, etc. amid which rose cries of "Roll call." Representative Frank of New York move the previous question. The roll was called and showed 52 in favor of Lloyd's platform and 37 against.

When the vote was announced, Hourwich of New York jumped on a chair and shouted, "All those who are opposed to this will meet in Parlor A, Revere

House, at 8 o'clock." J.B. Osborne of Atlanta shouted something about those who favored the resolution. The writer got the attention of the chair and demanded that the music which had been started should stop. The music stopped and the chairman declared the meeting adjourned, so there was no walkout of those who afterward bolted the convention.

Saturday morning [June 11, 1898] the convention was called to order, and a number of the delegates were absent. Business proceeded as usual, however. The Committee on Constitution reported, and the constitution was adopted. It provides for a National Executive Council of 9 members, 3 of whom shall be a Political Committee, 3 an Economic Committee, and 3 an Educational Committee. The dues were reduced to \$1 per year. The officers elected are: James Hogan of Utah, Chairman; W.P. Borland of Michigan, Secretary-Treasurer; and 7 others. They are as follows: *Economic Committee* — Col. Richard J. Hinton of District of Columbia; C.F. Willard of Colorado; W.P. Borland of Michigan. *Political Committee* — James Hogan, Utah; G.C. Clemens, Kansas; R.M. Goodwin, Illinois. *Educational Committee* — John F. Lloyd, Illinois; L.L. Hopkins, New Jersey; and Dr. Isaiah Frank of New York.

On Sunday [June 12] the National Executive Council met and organized as above related, and on Monday [June 13] issued a proclamation to the Ameri-

can people. On Monday a number of those who were on their way to the People's Party National Committee visited the headquarters, including such old veteran Socialists as Joseph R. Buchanan of New York and George P. Keeney of California. They expressed their desire to assist the Social Democracy of America.

The bolters who refused to abide by the will of the majority met and organized, calling themselves the Social Democratic Party of America. As it occupies practically the same position as to methods and principles as the Socialist Labor Party, it is doubtful if both will continue as separate parties.

The Social Democracy has practically the same officers as last year, with the exception of Debs and Burns, who both refused to stand for reelection. The organizers will now push it with all their energy. It will grow. It has hope, energy, and vitality. It has democratic government. The referendum and initiative has been adopted in the organization, and an officer can be removed if the membership so desire.

With economic conditions making Socialists with tremendous rapidity, all that is needed in this country is an organization built on American lines, following American Socialist methods, and having an American Socialist platform, to grow to great magnitude and power.

All these the Social Democracy now has, and it will grow to command attention and respect.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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