

The July Convention (June 15, 1901)

The convention for unifying socialists and converting jarring factions into a united party is now a certainty. The Socialist Labor Party alone declines to participate. This is to be regretted — and yet, perhaps, it may be better so. Time will tell. Whatever may be said about the policy of the Socialist Labor Party in hoeing its own row, it must be admitted that more or less danger attends the converging of factions which have long been divided and are still (being human) influenced by their prejudices and their antipathies.

But the very fact that the convention was agreed to by practical unanimity would seem to indicate that the separate columns are ready to unite into a grand army, and that henceforth factional strife is to be silenced and the combined resources of the party are to be brought into concerted action upon the enemy.

As one who earnestly hopes that the convention may accomplish the object for which it has been called, I wish to address a few words to the members of our own party, urging that as many of them as possible be in attendance. The wholesome effect of the commingling and intercourse of the rank and file of the various factions will serve not only to check any tendency on the part of the leaders to yield to their former antipathies, but also to hold the convention true to its course until its mission shall have been accomplished.

It is also important that our delegates should enter the convention hall representing a party free from encumbrance, and as our debt is but small, each branch should cheerfully contribute the trifle necessary to discharge the indebtedness to the last farthing, so that we shall be able to close an honorable record, if that is necessary, and transfer to our successors a clear and clean set of books.

I shall not venture to discuss prospects and probable results, farther than to say that I confidently believe a united party is inevitable. The bitter experiences of the past were perhaps necessary to a more thorough compact and disciplined party, and if we shall profit by it a new era in the socialist movement of the United States will date from the Indianapolis convention.

The one thing necessary is that we shall have a sound socialist party, with a platform that will bear the test of critical analysis. By this I do not mean that we shall quibble and split hairs, but that so far as the fundamental principles of socialism are concerned, they shall be stated with such clearness as to silence all reasonable question as to our party being free from the taint of compromise and in harmonious alliance with the socialist movement of the world.

The convention need not last long. The sooner it settles the question and adjourns, the better. A day would suffice, though I have no expectation that we shall have such luck. Still, I hope some of the long-winded vocal efforts which seem necessary to all conventions — socialist like the rest — will be postponed or abbreviated.

What we want to do is to get together and down to business. A provisional committee could handle affairs until a permanent one is chosen by the several states, and I am in favor of having every state absolutely control its own affairs, thus leaving little for the national party to do except in years of Presidential campaigns. In this particular we can safely follow the methods of the old parties, whose leaders are adepts at organization.

There will be no trouble to organize after the convention. Rapid growth is what we shall have to guard against, and that is a danger which will threaten the socialist movement more and more as it advances to political prominence.

If I am permitted to attend the convention I shall have but one object there. I shall have no friends to favor and no enemies to punish. The scalps I am after do not grow in socialist timber.