
Social Democrats in Convention: Large, Enthusiastic, and Intelligent Gathering: Eugene Victor Debs of Indiana Nominated for President and Job Harriman of California for Vice-President — Important Union of Socialist Forces — Party Out of Debt and Growing Rapidly — Mid-Road Populists Drifting Toward the SDP Camp

[events of March 6-9, 1900]

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The Social Democratic Party held its first national convention in Reichwein's Hall, Indianapolis, Ind., March 6, 7, 8 and 9. William Maily of Haverhill, Mass., was elected temporary chairman by acclamation. Sixty-seven delegates were present, representing 17 states and covering every section of the country. Reports of officers showed a rapid and gratifying growth, the party out of debt and having a membership of nearly 5,000. The national organ, the *Social Democratic Herald*, has a circulation of 8,000. The daily press of Indianapolis described the delegates as an earnest and intelligent body of men. This was the most important socialist convention yet held in America. Among its chief accomplishments was the union effected with the anti-DeLeonites, which adds to the membership and working force of the Social Democratic Party about 4,000 thoroughly grounded socialists. Since Jan. 1 [1900], 40 new branches and 987 members were added to the SDP.

The nomination of Eugene V. Debs of Indiana of the SDP for President and Job Harriman of California for Vice-President was very satisfactory to all and bespeaks a tremendous vote for the party.

The utmost good feeling prevailed throughout. The Texas delegates boasted that their state would be first to be won for socialism. California, Wisconsin, Washington, and Massachusetts reported a tremendous boom in the movement, and other sections showed a very encouraging state of things. Visiting mid-road populists said that

their national convention might nominate Debs and Harriman. All present were hopeful and full of courage.

The following platform was adopted on motion of Eugene Debs on Wednesday [March 7, 1900]:

1. Revision of our antiquated federal constitution, in order to remove the obstacles to full and complete control of government by all the people, irrespective of sex.

2. The public ownership of all industries controlled by monopolies, trusts, and combines.

3. The public ownership of all railroads, telegraph, telephones, all means of transportation, communication, waterworks, gas, and electric plants and other public utilities.

4. The public ownership of all gold, silver, copper, lead, iron, coal, and all other mines; also, all oil and gas wells.

5. Reduction of the hours of labor in proportion to the increasing facilities of production.

6. The inauguration of a system of public works and improvements for the employment of a large number of unemployed, the public credit to be utilized for that purpose.

7. All useful inventions to be free to all, the inventor to be remunerated by the public.

8. Labor legislation to be made national instead of local, and international where possible.

9. National insurance of working people against accidents, lack of employment, and want in old age.

10. Equal civil and political rights for men and women and the abolition of all laws discriminating against women.

11. The adoption of the initiative and referendum and the right to recall representatives by the voters.

12. Abolition of war, as far as the United States are concerned, and the introduction of international arbitration instead.

Messrs. [Victor] Berger of and [F.G.R.] Gordon of New Hampshire made speeches showing that the small farmers numbered nearly 6,000,000 votes.

The adoption of a plank covering the interests of farmers was left to the state conventions.

The Convention held a stormy session Thursday afternoon and evening, March 8, and did not adjourn until nearly 8 o'clock at night.

At the morning session the committee from the Rochester convention and the SDP subcommittee reported in favor of amalgamation of the two parties. The two committees locked horns on a name for the united party, the former demanding the appointment of a committee of nine to draw up a treaty; that the treaty be submitted to a referendum vote of both parties for ratification, including the name proposed for the united party. Over this question the convention hotly debated all afternoon. The majority report instructed the committee to stand firmly for the name Social Democratic Party, while the minority report merely told the committee to "urge the selection of the name Social Democratic Party." The minority report was adopted tonight after a prolonged discussion.

Then came the question of a ticket. Eugene V. Debs was placed in nomination by Frederick O. MacCartney of Massachusetts. Mr. Debs at once arose and said that under no circumstances would he be a candidate for President. He said he had private reasons for taking this stand and he sincerely hoped the convention would accept his refusal.

Mr. [Seymour] Stedman of Illinois nominated Fred O. MacCartney of Massachusetts for President, and Representative [James] Carey of Massachusetts nominated Job Harriman of California for President and Max Hayes of Cleveland for Vice-President. Mr. Harriman declined, and in the confusion that followed the convention was adjourned.

A meeting was held in the Criminal Court room Thursday night to discuss socialism with people of the city interested in the movement but not members of the party. There was a good number present. The only party leaders to put in an appearance were Max Hayes of Cleveland, O., and John C. Chase, Mayor of Haverhill, Mass., and all of the others were in informal session at the Occidental Hotel endeavoring to persuade Mr. Debs to accept the nomination tendered him and thus avoid the disruption of the party, which had almost been brought about by the unlooked-for occurrences of the afternoon. Messrs. Hays and Chase spoke at length on socialism.

At a late hour Mr. Debs yielded to the importunities of his fellow delegates and reluctantly accepted the nomination.

Mayor Chase of Haverhill, Mass., who presided at Friday morning's session [March 9, 1900], announced the acceptance by Mr. Debs of the nomination of President and the convention proceeded to make the nomination unanimous by a rising vote. Job Harriman of California was named for Vice-President in the same manner.

In the afternoon the question of what name should be adopted for the newly united party was hotly discussed. It was finally decided to leave the name to a referendum vote of the members at large.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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