
Minority Report of the Platform Committee Made to the Socialist Unity Convention, Indianapolis, IN — August 1, 1901.

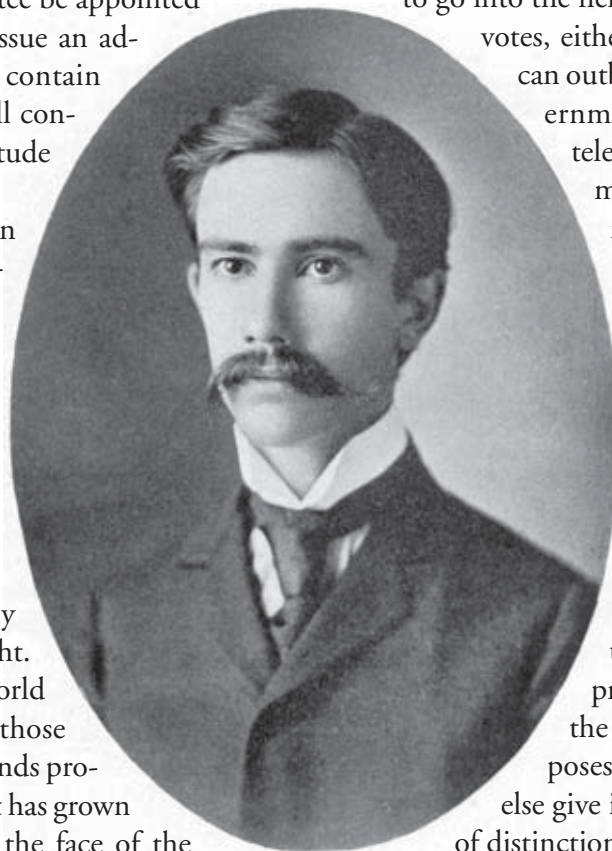
by A.M. Simons

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The following Minority Report was made by Mr. Simons:

Mr. Simons: As a minority report, I move that we strike out all after the words "As such means we advocate" and in place of this that a committee be appointed, preferably not the old committee unless it is necessary, but that a committee be appointed whose business it shall be to issue an address which shall not simply contain these demands, but which shall contain an explanation of our attitude in relation to them.

I realize that this position has all the argument of precedent against it, and that the majority of the committee are perfectly able to point to the fact that there is no Socialist political party today, with the exception of our friends the DeLeonites [the SLP], that has a platform without immediate demands. However, that to my mind carries but very little weight. In no other country in the world has the ground upon which those who advocate immediate demands propose to stand grown so thin as it has grown in America. Nowhere else on the face of the earth have the interests that we propose to serve through the immediate demands grown of so little importance as here. Nowhere else in the world has the struggle between capital and labor narrowed down to as clear a point and as clear an issue as it has in America.



For that reason it seems to me that the argument of precedent falls to the ground.

The other argument which is offered is the argument of vote-getting. It is the argument that today, if we go before the laborers, we must offer them something right away. I answer to you that today, if we are to go into the field of competitive bidding for

votes, either of the old political parties can outbid us. If we demand the government ownership of railways, telephones, and means of communication, if we demand the nationalization of the mines, what are we? A handful whose demand is but a hollow cry. The Republican Party says, "We not only demand that, but we grant it to you." And what do you say? You are reduced to the next alternative and can only say, "No, we have a fine point of distinction between the way the Republican Party proposes to give it to you and the way the Socialist Party proposes to demand that somebody else give it to you," and the fine point of distinction must then be explained in a long argument that leaves the hearer more confused than he was before.

To be sure, I do not accept in the first place the theory that that would make it clear. While I in this speech say it may be fought out on that ground, I claim

the right to strike the ground entirely from under our opponents, and say that the Socialist Party today goes out to the world not for the purpose of bidding for votes, but goes out for the purpose of crystallizing and organizing a non-revolutionary into a revolutionary proletariat of the world, in order that they may achieve their freedom. For that reason I maintain that the very ground upon which they propose to place this discussion crumbles beneath their feet. But, standing upon that ground, I still maintain that even on the question of asking the laborers to rally around them, on the question of organization, that the man who comes forward today representing and reflecting the capitalism of America and the development of the plutocracy in this country, and best representing the spirit of proletarian oppression, and best representing the demands which economic development forces upon the laborers of this country — that the party which stands on that principle has behind it all the momentum of economic development that the proletarian revolution gives it. Therefore, I say that that economic development demands that we should stand clear-cut and square on the fact that between us and capitalism there is no common ground; that between us there is naught but an abyss into which he who seeks to bridge it will only fall into absolute oblivion.

One moment more. You say, “*Are you against ameliorative measures?*” Not at all. But I say to you, I meet you again on that ground, and it devolves upon you to demonstrate that these measures are ameliorative to the working class of America. You will have made a strong point if you can demonstrate that these immediate demands are something of which the benefit to the laborers will be commensurate with the sidetracking of the Socialist movement, with the turning aside of the forces of revolution, and with the energy that must be exerted in order to push them forward. If you can demonstrate that, you will have something at least to set off against the other things. But I deny that you can do so. I deny that the majority of these measures would bring to the laborers more than a slight measure of relief, while they would take their attention from the things for which we stand which would bring real relief.

Now, as to the positive side of my position. I have given you something on the negative side, and I will close with the positive side. We believe that the Socialist Party today can no longer sulk in the tent. It must have an opinion on every question before the people today and must speak that opinion. But we cannot voice that belief by simply re-echoing the catchwords of the capitalist parties. I believe that if we are going to do this at all we ought to prepare something that will set forth at considerable length the position which most of us finally agree upon concerning it, the position that we actually hold in relation to it, something that will really represent us and not misrepresent us as I feel that these demands do.

I ask you that you appoint a committee that shall set forth our principles; that shall explain what we mean when we talk of public ownership; that shall explain, furthermore, at greater length than it does here, the possibilities of the protection of labor; that shall take that last plank applying to farmers and referring to specific demands, and shall show the difference between Socialism and the ameliorative system brought before us today at the behest of the great landowners. Remember that for 20, 30, 40, and 50 years the small farmers were begging for relief and nobody heard their voice. The great irrigation companies came before the American Congress with the same identical demand that you are going to endorse here today, and upon that platform they are pushing toward to success, and the Republican and Democratic Parties can say to the farmers of the West, “*See that little party? They have nothing for you — they are only trying to put you off. We have given you this; we stand ready to help you again.*” But let us show the hollowness of the pretenses they are putting forth. Let us stand as the representatives of the clearest-cut opposition to capitalism the world has ever seen; let us stand in the forefront of the revolutionary movement of the world; let us send out from here a platform that will represent revolutionary socialism, that will not misrepresent us, and that will in itself make a more powerful propaganda argument, and actually a more powerful bid for votes than this thing which is not complete enough, and yet which is too complete.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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