
A Socialist Mayor and an Almost Mayor

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If anyone fancies the Minneapolis vote was a mere freak, he should have seen the crowd gathered Dec. 4 [1910] in the auditorium of that city. This building will hold 2,700 and was filled that night at 50 cents and 25 cents a seat.

[Thomas] Van Lear, the Socialist candidate, came, according to the last count, within less than 800 votes of carrying the city of more than 300,000 people. Neither he nor the party regret the failure, however, as the vote was much less for other officials and until a reasonably straight vote can land the working majority, backed by a well-organized party, it is better to miss the goal.

Van Lear is a well-known machinist union man, and the vote is proof that the unions are waking up in that neck of the woods.

However, Van Lear does not propose to let another vote be a personal popularity union vote if he can help it. At this meeting, which was "to open the campaign of 1912," he drilled the crowd on the fundamentals of Marxian Socialism with an earnest patience and conscientious zeal which augured well for a genuine educational campaign and a straight vote next time. The Socialist candidate had known how to deal with local and immediate issues during the campaign. The city administration is still fluttering noisily to make the voters forget the way the chicken roosts were disturbed by Socialist hunting dogs. Nor were the nearby issues forgotten at the meeting. Carl D. Thompson was there to tell how they do things in that Wisconsin pride of our hearts.¹ Who could have hoped that in 6 months

¹ Reference is to the recently-elected Socialist administration in the city of Milwaukee, as a part of which Carl D. Thompson (1870-1949) served as city clerk.

there could have been so many tangible gains to record in spite of circumscribed opportunities?

If the Milwaukee city clerk ever tried to be "as funny as he could," where would the side-splitting casualties end?

The mayor who-just-escaped said "Amen" to all the immediate policies of the victorious city, but proceeded then to educate on the long line principles of working class social philosophy. A combination, this, which will get results.

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If anyone fancies North Dakota is not on the Socialist map, he must readjust his notions. At both Fargo and Grand Forks there are active locals very much alive and at Minot there is a full-fledged Socialist mayor.

In Fargo there is a Sunday night lectureship conducted by those who had formerly kept up a Unitarian church.

The speakers are often brought from some distance and are chosen for their educational positions, speaking ability, a prominence of one kind or another. The management has been embarrassed by having about three out of four invited to speak choose Socialist topics. They did not object to having an occasional Socialist, but to have so many hankering to discuss the one subject was somewhat trying. Meanwhile the party folk are well content to have so much propaganda going on without responsibility on their part.

At Grand Forks a Catholic priest's denunciation had given a fine opportunity for propaganda and many evidences of increasing interest were apparent.

Perhaps you do not know where Minot is on the map. Let me advise you to find out. It is third city in the state, and will send the second Socialist Congressman to Washington in 1912 if signs auger true.

When Debs was there recently, 1,000 voters marched the streets with red badges on. The local numbers 125 dues-paying members.

Arthur LeSueur, the mayor, has been an active member of the local for more than 10 years, so that the election of a Socialist mayor is not a freak.

To be sure, he was elected under commission government plan with non-partisan ballot for everybody. But the Socialists had nomi-

nated him by party referendum and had no quarrel with the non-Socialist vote which largely elected him.

We may not think personal standing and popularity ought to count, but they always will unless we “change human nature.”

All we can do is to keep the party well educated in principles and well drilled in party discipline, then rejoice in whatever personal propaganda proceeds from the honesty, big-heartedness, and the brain of individual comrades.

“Thou knowest not what argument
Thy life to thy neighbor’s creed has lent.”

Emerson’s statement is as applicable to politics of the genuine kind as to theologies.

Prejudice is not a logical entity, but it is the biggest stonewall in our path. If faith in and admiration for individuals help people to walk through this obstacle “as if it were not there,” we are the gainers whether we approve the mental makeup of our fellow mortals or not.

Our Minot mayor has no other member of the commission with him for any radical measure but for measures of decency and good government he keeps a working majority with him. The community has taught them it is not safe to oppose the mayor when he has plain common sense on his side.

Mayor LeSueur succeeded in establishing a precedent that may go far.

He convinced the governor and his board that the school funds, lying idle, could be loaned on city bonds, thus solving a serious local problem and opening the way for similar relief from big loan sharks for other North Dakota cities.

There is no recall in the charter of Minot. Enforcement of the laws has brought much antagonism. “The mayor ought to be made to resign,” one of the victims of law enforcement said to a Socialist.

He answered: “There is a bunch of folks who can make him resign all right if they want to. You convince them he is not doing his duty and he will come out of office quick enough. but you will have hard work to make the Socialists pull him out of office because he is doing his duty.”

We are entering the state of Washington now, and equally promising advance is in the air. A gain of 400 percent is officially reported. The vote for head of the ticket — [N.A.] Richardson — candidate

for Supreme Court Judge, received 15,994 votes against 3,024 votes for [Edwin J.] Brown in 1908.

Women here are rejoicing in full citizens' rights. There are no restrictions whatever and women vote on exactly the same terms as men.

There are now five fully enfranchised states in the union.

The referendum was carried by a heavy majority of all votes cast.

Why have not the hats been thrown higher and the hurrahs been heard more noisily?

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport

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