
Hillquit Sees Blow to Militarism in Big Socialist Vote: Defeated Candidate Asserts His Party Must Now Be Reckoned With

[statement of Nov. 6, 1917]

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Morris Hillquit, at his home, 214 Riverside Drive, last night said:

“From present indications the Socialists will probably elect several Assemblymen and as many Aldermen in this city.

“Personally I am highly gratified with the results. There has been shown an increase of the Socialist vote of, I should estimate, 500 per cent, and it has established the Socialist Party as an important and prominent factor in the politics of the city.

“The returns from other places in the state and from other states indicate that the socialistic wave is general throughout the country where elections have been held.

“The outstanding feature of our own campaign, as it appears to me, is not the election of Judge [John Francis] Hylan, if he is elected, for there have been Tammany victories before, but the crushing defeat of Mayor [John Purroy] Mitchel and the tremendous Socialist gain. Mayor Mitchel ran on a platform of militarism, both in his conception of democracy and the war policy. He had the great advantage of being the incumbent in office, the prestige of the tremendous vote he polled four years ago, the support of practically every daily paper in the city as well as the support of the strongest man in what, for lack of a better term, I should call America’s war party, and he had unlimited campaign funds.

“With all that he seems to have lost more than half of his vote of four years ago. He has deliberately made the issue upon his own brand of fire-eating patriotism and upon the issue of aggressive continuance of the war to a finish. The citizens of New York have repudiated that policy in no uncertain manner.¹

¹ The youthful mayor John Purroy Mitchel enlisted in the Air Corps following his electoral defeat. On July 6, 1918 the former mayor died on a training flight when he fell from a plane at 500 feet. Mitchel was 38 years old at the time of his death.

“Socialists, on the other hand, have made their campaign, to a large extent, on the issues of democracy and speedy world peace. The unprecedented and striking vote we have recorded, in the face of the embittered opposition on the part of the press, and all agencies of expression of public opinion, and in the face of all other handicaps, including an inadequate organization and insufficient funds, clearly indicates that our program has struck a responsive chord in the hearts of the great masses of the people. The economic promise of socialism has no doubt also played a large part in the rolling up of the Socialist vote.

“We expect to continue the work of public agitation right along with increased intensity. Socialism will hereafter be reckoned as a potent factor in the public life of this country, and it will be a purifying and salutary factor in politics and the social policies of the country. The Socialist men who have been elected will strive for labor and social legislation and the democratization of political forms.

“We Socialists take credit in large measure for the passage of the woman suffrage amendment. From all indications the Socialist vote in the state will exceed 200,000 and all of these were likewise cast for suffrage. Furthermore, our campaign, with its social and progressive background, has visibly affected sentiment in favor of woman suffrage generally. That alone is, of course, a great achievement.”

Edited by Tim Davenport

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