
To All Enrolled Socialist Voters: A Statement on the Primaries [Election of April 2, 1936] by Jack Altman, *et al.*

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You have a difficult task, but as Socialists you must be equal to your responsibility. On April 2 you will decide the immediate future of the Socialist Party in New York State.

With two slates listed on the ballot, you must choose. We are sure that your choice will be made on the basis of which slate will be better able to build the Socialist Party.

On the one hand, you have the Old Guard ticket set forth by Louis Waldman, which backs him in the attacks he has been making on the Socialist Party. Because he was defeated in the national convention [Detroit: June 1-3, 1934] he has waged a bitter fight for two years against the Party.

On the other hand, you have the ticket supported by Norman Thomas, who today leads the Party in its most aggressive struggles.

The Old Guard has tried to make it seem that we are Communists. This is not true. We are Socialists who want the Party and its leaders to participate in a militant fight for the principles of Socialism.

We do not deny that some of the Old Guard have served Socialism in the past. But they have since lived through a period of decline, with the party growing weaker, and they have never recovered from it. As a result, some of their most respected members have even accepted political appointments from old-party politicians.

The party membership has resented it. We have been going out on the street corners, distributing leaflets, canvassing voters, watching at the polls, only to find that our candidate, after election day, accepts a job as judge from the very politician against whom we spent our energies in campaign work.

Nor do we like the sight of the Old Guard, in the trade unions, closing their eyes to corruption. As members of the labor movement, it is the job of Socialists, who want to clean up the city halls and the nation's capitol, to set our own house in order.

That is why we had to condemn the Old Guard and their policy in the trade unions. When the American Federation of Labor expelled Hyman Nemser from the Retail Clerks on charges of corruption and dual unionism, the Old Guard permitted him to remain in the Socialist Party. When Heller of the Grocery Clerks was found guilty in his union on the most serious charges, the Old Guard refused to hold hearings before the grievance committee.

In the field of unemployed work, the Old Guard has a black record. While they should have provided leadership to the party in organizing unemployed unions, they hampered the work of the younger members who were eager to do the job. When David Lasser, without the help of the Old Guard, built a national organization of the unemployed, he had to overcome their opposition. When he led a Socialist demonstration of unemployed to City Hall, Louis Waldman criticized him in the capitalist press, saying that we Socialists do not believe in "nagging the administration."

Even in elections, the Old Guard has fallen down. They have done nothing in upstate New York to build up the party so that we might have a strong vote for Governor. Waldman tried desperately to prevent the nomination of Norman Thomas for United States Senator two years ago, in spite of the fact that Thomas is the best Socialist campaigner in the country. Thomas did get the nomination in spite of Waldman and ran far ahead of the ticket.

Now Waldman is moving heaven and earth — and even the *Jewish Daily Forward* — to keep Thomas from running for President, and he wants the aid of the Socialist voters in the primaries to accomplish it. Knowing that he cannot get your help, he has gone to the capitalist courts, asking them to do it.

The Old Guard refrains from attacking Roosevelt vigorously. It is notorious that when Norman Thomas made his famous radio speech criticizing Roosevelt, the Old Guard attacked Thomas in *The New Leader*.

Within the Party, the Old Guard attempted to have their way by dictatorship when they could not have it by democracy. They went so far as to try to expel from the Party those who disagreed with them — comrades like Norman Thomas — but the National Executive Committee of the Party, the highest body between national conventions, prevented it.

For the sake of the strong Socialist Party that can be built in America, for the sake of Socialism itself, you must vote in the primaries for the candidates who are loyal to the principles of the Socialist Party of the United States and a program of militant, aggressive Socialism!

Jack Altman

Executive Secretary, Socialist Party

Murray Baron

Manager, Portfolio, Suitcase and Bag Makers Union

David P. Berenberg

Editor, American Socialist Monthly

Anita C. Block

Lecturer

S. John Block

*Member Charter Commission, Former State Chair,
Socialist Party of New York*

Rev. David Corey

Frank Crosswaith

Chairman, Negro Labor Commission

Winston Dancis

NY State Committee, Socialist Party

Max Delson

Chairman, Board of Directors, Socialist Call

Samuel A. Dewitt

Former Socialist Assemblyman

Sherwood Eddy

Lecturer, Author

Nathan Feinerman

Nat. Exec. Workmen's Circle

Martin Feldman

Manager, Local 132, ILGWU

William Floyd

Editor, Arbitration

Mary Fox

Executive Secretary, League for Industrial Democracy

Charles Garfinkle

Former Socialist Assemblyman

Elsie Gluck

Education Director, Womens Trade Union League

Murray Gross

Manager, Complaint Dept., Joint Board, Dressmakers ILGWU

Arthur Harckham

Secretary, Building Service Employees Union

C.J. Hendley

President, Teachers Union, Local 5

Julius Hochman

Manager, Joint Dress Board, ILGWU

Jessie Wallace Hughan

War Resisters League

Haim Kantorovitch

Author and Noted Marxist

Isador Laderman

Manager, International Pocketbook Workers Union

Harry W. Laidler

Executive Director, League for Industrial Democracy

Edward Levinson

Labor Editor, New York Post

Rev. Leon Rosser Land

Director, Bronx Free Fellowship

David Lasser

Chairman, Workers Alliance of America

Walter Ludwig

Director, Pioneer Youth

Hyman Marcal

President, District Council Painters Union, No. 9

Meyer Matlin

Business Agent, International Pocketbook Workers Union

Darwin Messerole

Socialist Candidate Supreme Court Judge

Jacob Mirsky

President, Bricklayers Union, Local 37

Reinhold Neibuhr

Author

Kirby Page

Author

A. Phillip Randolph

President, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters

Bernard J. Riley

Kings Country Chairman for 25 years

Meyer Rubinsohn

Nat. Exec. Workmen's Circle

Dr. Louis Sadoff

Primary Campaign Manager

Mark Starr

Labor Educator

Hyman Sussman

Secretary, Local 19, Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union

Lewi Tonks

State Chairman, Socialist Party

Bertha Poole Wehl

Rev. Bradford Young

Thomas Young

Vice President, Building Service Employees

Edited by Tim Davenport

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