

Labor in Politics: Address Delivered at the
Socialist Picnic at Gross's Park, St. Louis
[excerpt]
(September 13, 1903)

Comrades!

Workingmen and women of St. Louis:—

I have come here this evening to deliver a political address, to talk politics to workingmen and women. Not the politics of your old party politicians, but the class-conscious politics of the working class, the revolutionary, the socialist politics of the proletariat. I am not here to harmonize conflicting class interests, I am not here to appease, but to touch and quiver the revolutionary chord of every man and woman within the hearing of my voice, and right here let me tell you that we are living in the midst of the most tremendous and far-reaching economic and social revolution in the history of mankind. [*Great applause and shouts of approval.*] You shout, but will you vote?

Who are you? I can read from your faces that you are hardworking men and women. I ask you: Who are you? Can you answer? Will you answer?

You are the foundation of society. Your labor makes social life possible. Without your labor there would not be any enjoyment of social life. You are the producers of all values. All the wealth you see around you in this great city and throughout this great country is the result of labor.

Do you own the wealth which you produce? No, you do not. You have built up an aristocracy of wealth consisting of parasites of society, and you, the wealth-producers, represent the great mass of people that live in wage slavery in poverty and misery. You are the fundamental power of society, and you don't see to know it. You imagine that you are free, while in fact you are enslaved. The man who owns the tools of labor, the means of production, controls your means of life. You are dependent on your employer for a job, and for you the job means a chance at life. Consequently, the class of men who own the means of production own your very life.

You have been asleep while the Rockefellers, the Carnegies, the Hills, Pierpont Morgans, Baers, and others have accumulated thousands of millions of dollars of wealth, which represents the stolen products of the American working class.

You have been shouting for the Democratic and Republican parties. You have been voting the capitalist party tickets. You elected the same political parties into power whose mission it is today to protect and advance the class interests of capitalism.

You see the work of your old political parties. The politicians flatter you and pretend to love you before the day of the election; after the election they will kick you and despise you, and when your unions go out on strike or declare a boycott the political rulers will show their love for the working class by ordering the powers of the police, militia, and federal troops to break your strikes and by issuing injunctions against you.

I challenge any politician to show me any difference between the Democratic and Republican parties. Both are the tools of capitalism. the only difference I can find is that the Republican Party is controlled by the big capitalists and the other by the little capitalists who are very anxious to become big ones. Whenever and wherever organized labor is engaged in a serious struggle against the powers of capitalism you will find both the old parties on the capitalist side fighting against the working class.

And yet we witness the disgraceful spectacle of the great army of union men voting for these capitalist parties, under the pretext of voting for good men. We know from experience that the cause of the Democratic and Republican parties is a bad cause, a rotten cause, based on the principle of deceiving the working class for the purpose of enabling the ruling classes to continue their system of exploiting and robbing the toiling masses. How can intelligent, good men fight for a bad cause?

In view of these facts are you not ashamed of ever having voted the Republican or Democratic ticket? It is bad enough to see a poor desperate wage slave scab on his own class by taking the place of his striking fellow workers. In my opinion, however, it is a hundred times worse to see a so-called intelligent union man doing scab work on election day by voting for either of the capitalist parties, thereby injuring the best interests of the working class as represented by the Socialist Party.

The Republican politicians will parade as Lincoln Republicans. Now, Lincoln was a good man, but Lincoln is dead, and in the Republi-

can Party of today the spirit of Lincoln is dead and buried. The party is controlled by the spirit of Mark Hanna, Rockefeller, Morgan & Co.

The Democratic Party poses as the Jefferson democracy, but Jefferson is dead. The Jefferson principles in the Democratic Party are dead, and the principles of boodle and political highway robbery flourish instead.

There are in your unions many fakirs and heelers who are members of organized labor not to help the cause of the working class, but to gain prestige and influence in order to secure some political job from the capitalist parties. You have them right here in St. Louis, you find them in other cities. As a rule they are attempting to play their miserable role in the central bodes, but their life is a short one, and the quicker these parasites on the body of the labor movement are found out and kicked out the better for the movement.

Every true union man must admit the justice and truth and necessity of socialism, and consequently also the necessity of the Socialist Party movement. There is absolutely no excuse for any union man to vote the Democratic or Republican tickets. His proper place is in the Socialist Part, because this is his party, the party of the working class.

It can no longer be a simple fight for a 15 cent increase in wages; it has become a question whether or not the working class shall take possession of all the wealth created by labor or whether this wealth shall remain the monopoly of the class of social parasites who never do an honest day's work.

I want you to think for yourselves. Be men and women who do their own thinking. Under the present system of society you are being robbed whether you receive higher or lower wages, because the wage system is based on legalized robbery. The millions of toilers slave and starve for the idle few who accumulate the stolen products of labor and lead a life of debauchery, demoralizing to themselves and destructive and death-breathing to the working class.

I am not addressing you as a Lincoln Republican or a Jefferson Democrat, but as a union man and Socialist, as a social democrat. I want you to fight for the freedom of your own class and join the working class party, which is the Socialist Party.

I appeal to the young ladies in this audience to investigate whether the young men who are anxious to become their future companions in life's great battle are still doing mercenary work for the old parties, and,

if they do, our young women friends will do well to place these young gentlemen on the boycott list until they get sense enough to become Socialists and work for the emancipation of the working class. Every young man should remember that by voting for the parties of capitalism he helps to perpetuate wage slavery, he strengthens the fetters of hard toil and misery on his own father and mother, on his own sweetheart, and on his own future family.

Let us not be union men 364 days in the year and scab on our own class on election day by voting for either of the capitalist parties.

President Gompers Criticized

Some time ago President Sam Gompers of the American Federation of Labor challenged President Parry of the manufacturers' association. Mr. Gompers denounced Mr. Parry in very strong language, and Mr. Parry denounced Mr. Gompers in equally strong terms. Permit me to inform you that Mr. Parry deserves credit for his open stand in favor of his class. He is not a hypocrite. He is fighting the battle of organized capital. He is true to his class, not only on the economic but also on the political field.

Indeed, this is more than I can say of Mr. Gompers for the following reason: President Gompers is denouncing Parry and his class of union smashers and pledges his word of honor to fight them to the bitter end. When election day comes we see Mr. Gompers go to the ballot box and deposit a scab-ballot. On election day President Gompers of the AF of L votes the same capitalist ticket as President Parry of the manufacturers' association.

I assure you that Mr. Parry will not scab on the capitalist class. He will not vote the Socialist Party ticket. You union men are sacrificing your self-respect and your honor by following such political scab and blackleg tactics.

The political powers of capitalism are organized against you. It is for you to organize under the banner of socialism and the Socialist Party and fight the battles of your own emancipation.

We are in the midst of a most serious crisis in the development of modern society. While the ruling powers of America, Europe, and Asia are preparing for war, are building warships and forts, are drilling millions of armed mercenaries, ready at a moment's notice to throw the civilized world into the bloodiest war in the history of mankind, the millions

of wage workers all the world over are organizing their forces under the banner of socialism and economic freedom.

Workingmen of all countries, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains — you have a world to gain.

No Bismarck, no kaiser, no tsar, no Mark Hanna can check the victorious onward march of labor.

The great army of labor and socialism, although many millions strong, has no forts and warships, no Gatling guns and Winchesters, no lead and powder — in short: we have no machinery of murder and destruction, and yet our army is mightier and more powerful than all the armed forces of capitalism throughout the world. We defeat the Bismarcks, the kaisers, and the tsars, and we shall in the near future defeat the Mark Hannas, the Rockefellers, the Morgans, and other uncrowned princes, kaisers, and tsars of America.

Socialism and science are our most powerful weapons. The rank and file of labor constitute our great army that will use these weapons against the common enemy.

Dark clouds of storm are gathering over the social horizon. Darker and darker grows our surrounding. Now and then, here and there, we see the flashes of lightning of the coming storm. We hear the rumbling thunder like the subterranean noise of the volcano. In the midst of the darkness we hear the voices of the suffering men, women, and children. Take courage! Look up! Soon the golden rays of the sun of socialism will be visible. The storm clouds will disappear. Socialism will enlighten the masses and in the daylight of knowledge and science the working class will concentrate their forces, repel the forces of darkness, reaction, and slavery, and victoriously march over the battlefield of emancipation and economic freedom.

Prepare for the great battle of 1904. It will be a severe struggle between the political forces of capitalism as represented by the Democratic and Republican parties, and the forces of labor and socialism as represented by the Socialist Party.

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