
No Organic Union Has Been Effectuated (July 21, 1900)

Silence seems to give acquiescence to misrepresentation regarding the “unity” question. It is important enough that we should have a clear understanding about it. There has been no organic union of the SDP and SLP. The issue was placed squarely before our party by the Manifesto of the NEB and defeated by a decided majority. Nor is this all. The second vote taken upon the committee report by those who took exception to the manifesto simply verified the first vote and emphasized the decision of the party. But a small minority of members in good standing voted on the report at all. Repeated extensions of time and the most vigilant drumming of votes could not alter the result.

The two parties are therefore separate and distinct organizations as they were before the question of union was raised. This is the fact and no amount of misrepresentation can change it. Yet there are those who insist that the two parties are now one. Defeated by the general vote of the party at large, they have appealed to the states to secede from the party, and we have heard that one state after another has effected organizations in defiance of, if not renouncing allegiance to the national party.¹ These reports are in nearly every case false and misleading.

Take New York, for example. Four bonafide SDP delegates attended the “joint” convention. Sixteen branches refused to participate on the ground that they were opposed to organic union. yet these four delegates, representing but about 10 percent of our membership in New York, acting with the delegates of the SLP, declared the two parties a “united” party. Such actions are not calculated to promote union sentiment. They simply inaugurate strife. And yet those who object to such methods are denounced for opposing union.

The national party decided against organic union and I maintain that no state convention has any authority to commit the party to such an alliance and that those who take such a step in defiance of the party’s mandate secede from and sever their relations with the party. I have no fault to find with comrades for joining the Kangaroo SLP but I object to the assumption that their action is that of the party of which they are but a very small

minority. The National Executive Board has been and is unanimous upon this question.² When they issued their manifesto it was charged that they, and they alone, were opposed to union, and it was freely predicted that the board and its action would be repudiated by an overwhelming majority. Instead of this the board has been twice sustained by the party, once by the vote on the manifesto and again by the negative action of the report of the “unity” committee.

We have been told over and over again that the rank and file demand “union” and that only the “leaders” stand in the way. Then why do not the “rank and file” remove the “leaders” and unite? Nothing is easier or simpler. Our constitution provides the power of recall and 5 percent of the members can initiate the demand. The fact is that a large majority of our comrades are opposed to joining the SLP. They are satisfied with their party as it is; and in spite of all that has been said about their NEB they know that no one of its members sought or desired official position, that not one of them has ever received a cent of salary, that every one of them has served the party to his personal loss and inconvenience, and that every cent of their official expenses from first to last has been paid from their own private income. Can the same be said of their accusers and traducers?

There has been no opposition to “union” in any proper sense of that term. We have resisted an alliance which under the circumstances was fraught with dissension and strife, not union and harmony. We do not quarrel with those who differ from us. They have all the rights we claim for ourselves. Let them unite with the SLP if they choose to and we will have nothing mean to say about them.³ Time will show which of us is right.

Since there has been some question about my status as a candidate, I wish it understood that I am the candidate of the Social Democratic Party, whose convention nominated me at Indianapolis and whose national headquarters are located at Chicago.

I do not doubt the time will come when we shall have a united party. Until then we yield to the inexorable logic of facts.

We do not claim that we are better than others. WE may not be as good. That is not the question. We differ from them and we are simply standing by our convictions.

But be these differences among socialists what they may, they can and should in every battle unite against capitalism and to such a policy of united action we stand pledged until we have a truly united party.

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¹ At the time of this writing joint state conventions of the SDP and SLP on a more equal basis of representation and delegate authority were held in New York (June 16), Connecticut (July 4), Massachusetts (July 8). A further convention was scheduled for Iowa (Aug. 10). The New York convention was called by dissident elements that would become the Springfield SDP; the other three gatherings were regular annual conventions called by the State Committees of the SDP loyal to Chicago.

² Members of the NEC at this juncture were Frederic Heath (Chairman), Seymour Stedman (Secretary), Eugene V. Debs, Victor L. Berger, and Corinne S. Brown. National Secretary was Theodore Debs and editor of the official organ was A.S. Edwards.

³ This article ran on the same page of *Social Democratic Herald* as did a hatchet job editorial by A.S. Edwards entitled "Harriman's Propaganda in Behalf of 'Socialism': Infamous Tactics Resorted to by the Managers of the So-called United Party" in which Debs's running mate was intimated to have spread "smooth and well-chosen palaver" at the March 1900 convention in Indianapolis and characterized as a leader of "party-wreckers, masquerading as the guardians of the cause of human freedom" who was "stabbing the party, vilifying the organization, and getting pay for doing it."