

Trade Unions and Politics (April 5, 1900)

Terre Haute, Ind., April 5, 1900.

Greater activity has marked the work of organizing labor during the past year than the world has ever known. It is in the air. It is irresistible. Every brand of the industrial army, skilled and unskilled, is wheeling into line. It overleaps all color lines and wipes out all sex discriminations. The movement is universal and it foreshadows the emancipation of the working class from wage slavery.

Most heartily do I approve the work and commend the mission of organized labor. I would have the workers of all kinds thoroughly organized and then cooperate harmoniously under the supervision of a central body. The agitation incident to organizing is healthful and vitalizing. It is educational. In the breast of despondency the heart of hope begins to throb and the bowed form begins to rise.

Let the good work go forward and let all unite in it! In the trade unions the workers are being fitted to take possession of, and manage, their trades when the time comes for the great change toward which the world is irresistibly tending, when the workers will own and operate the means of production in their own interest.

The trade union, as such, should not go into politics. It is an economic and not a political institution. When it is made to endorse candidates and other political service, disruption follows. The members should keep their eyes on the political heelers and henchmen who join the union to swing it their way in payment of a recognition in the form of a cheap political job to some member of the organization.

While trade unionists should keep their union out of politics, they should put themselves into politics in a solid, united body and stand together at the polls as they do in the strike and lockout. As their interests are identical they should vote together to turn out the class that oppresses and exploits them and put their own class in control of the government.

The trade union, properly directed, becomes a mighty factor in the emancipation of the working class and every man and woman in the lang should support the trade union movement.

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