

Progress of the Social Revolution (November 26, 1900)

The returns of the national election are still indefinite and incomplete. It seem certain, however, that our vote is over 100,000 and it may reach 150,000.¹ The figures are smaller than most of us expected, but we are satisfied. Under all the circumstances the party did all that could have been reasonably expected and the showing, if not inspiring, has at least nothing discouraging in it.

From private advices received I am convinced that a large percentage of our vote was counted against us, or cast out upon technical grounds. We were not represented upon the election boards and it was an easy matter to discredit our vote.² In some of the Southern states the Social Democratic vote was counted in the Democratic vote and there was none present to object. We must expect all such difficulties until we are strong enough as a party to protect our interests and have our votes fairly counted.

If all the votes cast and meant to be cast for our party had been counted in our favor it is safe to assume that the Social Democratic Party would stand credited with 200,000 votes.

But we accept the logic of facts and prepare for the next battle. We are too busy getting ready for what is to be to waste any time over what might have been. The vote cast for our ticket measures the progress of the social revolution, and taking note of this we press forward with renewed energy, vitalized by the first encounter with the enemy upon the national battlefield.

The old parties, with whom a campaign is simply a contest for spoils, have folded their flags and stored away their torches for four years more.

The Republican Party has triumphed and the trusts will riot in the spoils of conquest. With such an overwhelming endorsement the dominant capitalist class will throw off all restraint and trustify everything in sight. The centralization of large capital and expropriation of small capital will proceed as never before. The development of capitalism will reach it greatest momentum. Consumption will not be able to keep pace with production and before McKinley's "prosperity" administration closes the crash will

come and then the working class will get in full measure what they voted for.

Overproduction, glutted markets, paralyzed factories, silent mills, deserted mines, enforced idleness, reduced wages, strikes, lockouts, injunctions, soldiers, and the funerals of workmen will follow in rapid succession. There will be no work for the hands and the brain will have a chance. Workmen will have ample time for reflection. When their ambition for this sort of thing is fully satisfied, they will cease voting robes to their masters and rags to themselves; they will stand with their class for the abolition of the capitalist system. Meantime the country will dance to the music of capitalist prosperity.

The Democratic Party presents a picture never before exhibited in the political gallery. Its platform looks as if a cyclone had revised it and its demoralization is complete. Its reactionary, cowardly, and dishonest policy has been spurned with merited contempt and repudiation. There is no longer room for a party that seeks to ride into office by straddling the class issue and engaging, or pretending to engage, on both sides of the class struggle. It is one side or the other, and with the double-dealing Democratic Party doomed the political atmosphere will clear up and the working class will be able to see the class contest, and they will then rally with the Social Democratic Party, the party of the working class in the struggle for emancipation.

Disintegration is already preying upon the Democratic Party. Its leaders are unable to "point with pride" to a single thing. They have not yet recovered sufficiently to even "view with alarm" or "deplore," or "condemn as un-American" anything, not even the "paramount issue" of "throwing away" their votes. The Eastern leaders, who are Republicans in fact, are scrutinizing the wreck but they can hardly make up their minds that it is worth raising. And yet the capitalist class can not afford to allow the Democratic Party to retire from business. It must be used to arrest the progress of socialism and so it is entirely probable that the "radical" element will be given full permission to galvanize the corpse with an injection of "public ownership."

A great many of the rank and file, however, know when they have enough. This is shown by the fact that the tide is already setting in the direction of the Social Democratic Party. A week at headquarters enables me to perceive the drift. Never since we have been a party have the inquiries for party literature, for organizers and speakers equaled the present

demand. Never have the branches increased in number and in membership as now. The party has entered upon an era of development hitherto unequalled and unknown, and it is spreading over the entire country, including the Southern states, and I feel not only confident but absolutely certain that within 12 months our party will have an effective organization in every state in the union.

We are not discussing the “cause” of the recent Republican victory and Democratic defeat. We have no time for that. Ours is a part of the future and not of the past; we are looking forward and not backward; let others linger with the slain on yesterday’s field of action, we must gird afresh our armor and move on the enemy again and again, and yet again, until he is overthrown and routed and driven from the field.

The approaching convention of our party will be an event of special interest and importance.³ The representatives who will assemble at Chicago will be familiar with the trials of the past and equal to the demands of the future, and we can confidently look forward to the most progressive and prosperous year in the history of the party.

I can not close without reference to the loyal support of comrades in the recent Presidential contest. Other candidates may boast a larger vote, but not one dare claim more steadfast devotion. It was born of fidelity to principle and was and will be faithful even unto death.

In the name of the Social Democratic Party which honored me, I thank all comrades for their loyal support.

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¹ Several “official totals” circulate for the 1900 Social Democratic ticket, none of which reach the 100,000 mark — fewer than half the more than 208,000 votes cast for the ticket of the Prohibition Party, the third place finisher in the election. The result failed to meet the most cautious predictions of a vote and was deeply disappointing to Debs, a fact he makes clear in his letter to his most trusted political associate, his brother Theodore, in a letter of Nov. 9, 1900. In it Debs lamented “the results show that we got everything — *except votes*, while remaining upbeat by the level of enthusiasm demonstrated by the crowds to which he spoke. (See: Constantine, *Letters of Eugene V. Debs: Vol. 1*, p. 154.)

² The vote total in New York state of barely over 10,000, in the wake of a march and mass meeting on the eve of the election at Madison Square Garden that drew an estimated 5,000 participants, is particularly suspect.

³ The call of the National Executive Board of the Chicago NEB for a January 15, 1901 special convention was published next to this article in the same issue of the *Social Democratic Herald*.