
The Socialist Press

by Eugene V. Debs

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In the present advanced state of the Socialist movement it is hard to understand why the press, which has been such an important factor in the party's progress, should be so indifferently treated and so scantily supported by Socialists themselves. The importance of the press in the class struggle, in political campaigning, and in the educational propaganda is conceded by all, and yet practically every Socialist paper in the United States is having a desperate struggle to maintain its existence.

Whether Socialist papers are privately owned or party owned, whether they are narrow and dogmatic or liberal and opportunist, they encounter the same difficulties and with scarcely an exception they are compelled to waste their means and energies in keeping going from day to day.

A Socialist paper, no matter by whom started or how honestly and ably conducted, is in for trouble from the very beginning. Where one sends in a subscription to build it up, half a dozen use their hammers to batter it down. Almost everyone could improve the way it is run, but only a few can find anything in it to commend. The result is that the paper, instead of growing and improving and developing power, has to spend most of its time dodging the bricks of its friends and the rest keeping out of the clutches of its creditors.

Socialist publishers and editors have uniformly had the same experience, and yet they remain undaunted and struggle along in the hope that relief may come and that the paper whose critical career has so endeared it to them may at last be placed upon a secure foundation.

The average Socialist editor works harder, longer, and more conscientiously than any other person in the movement, and he does it under circumstances that would break the spirit and drive out in de-

spair and disgust anyone not literally harnessed to the movement by chains of steel.

Yet, in spite of all these handicaps and hardships, the Socialist papers have done and are doing a vital work in the upbuilding of the party and the development of the movement, the value and importance of which could by no extravagance of words be overstated.

With all their weakness they are the strength of the party, the bulwark of the movement, and without them disintegration and disaster would speedily follow.

The supreme importance of a working class press was demonstrated in the Moyer and Haywood kidnaping, in the cases of [Jan Janoff] Pouren and [Christian] Rudowitz, and now again in the cases of [Juan] Magnon and his associates.¹ Without a press of our own in such an emergency, or in any crisis, we are practically helpless — at the mercy of the enemy.

The capitalist class recognize the value of their press and feed it fat and plenty to keep it strong and active. Socialists might well profit by their example. It is not to the credit of the 50,000 Socialists who make up the Socialist Party that their two daily papers have to almost fret themselves into nervous exhaustion to keep up a day-to-day existence.² The snarling wolf is ever at the door, and under such circumstances no paper and no set of men can do the best there is in them. They can not fight the battles of Socialism and the battle of existence at the same time.

Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport

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¹ Pouren and Rudowitz were Russian revolutionaries whom the Tsarist regime sought to have extradited to answer for allegations of violent crimes committed in the conduct of their political activities. Juan Magnon and his associates were Mexican revolutionaries driven into exile by military strongman Porfirio Díaz, who similarly sought their return to face trial and punishment in Mexico.

² These two daily Socialist newspapers would be the *Chicago Daily Socialist* and the *New York Call*.