
1891 Annual Report of the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Labor Party of America, December 18, 1891

Published in *The People* [New York], vol. 1, no. 43 (Jan. 24, 1892), pg. 3.

To the Members of the Socialist Labor Party:
Comrades:—

We hereby submit to you our second annual report, a duty that we fulfill with all the greater pleasure seeing the report shows our party to have made marked progress during the last year, and that it now has reached a place that it never occupied before. It is especially gratifying to point out that we have made large acquisitions among the English-speaking element. The circumstance that our ideas are breaking through the ranks of American workingmen is an earnest of greater progress in the future.

Party Fair.

The Party Fair instituted by Section New York during the Christmas days of 1890 was a great success, thanks to the cooperation of the comrades in the county and of the labor organizations in sympathy with us. The net proceeds amounted to \$1,365. This enabled the NEC to pay Oehler, the printer of the party's papers, \$1,170 of the \$1,700 that was owing to him, and in that way to lighten a burden that had weighed heavily upon us.

Alabama Coal Miners' Strike.

The opportunity was offered to, and was

improved by the Party, early in 1890, to show its solidarity with the economic organizations of the workingmen, the coal miners of Alabama, whose delegates had stood by the Socialists at the Convention of the AF of L in 1890. Left in the lurch by the great AF of L, the miners turned in distress to our party. Our call for help was not left unanswered. Within a short time we were able to forward to them the sum of \$500.

DeLeon's Agitation Tour.

The plan of the NEC to institute agitation tours by Comrades August Bebel of Germany and John Burns of England, as mentioned in last year's report, fell through; in its stead the NEC arranged the agitation tour of Comrade DeLeon. This tour stretched through the length of the country; it consumed nearly three months and had an excellent effect. Its cost amounted to \$711.75. Of this amount, \$444.75 was contributed by the Sections, the remaining \$367 was supplied by the NEC. At the commencement of the tour, the NEC was enabled to yield to the request of the Chicago comrades, and placed Comrades DeLeon and Jonas for a week in that city to aid in the Spring campaign.

May Day Agitation.

During the May Day celebrations, Comrades

Pattberg, Forker, and Jonas were sent to Hartford, Philadelphia, Troy, New Bedford, New Britain, Paterson, and Newark. Several other smaller agitation tours were arranged, for instance, that of DeLeon to Binghamton, Pattberg to Wilmington, and Jonas to New Haven.

Agitation in the Coke Region.

Of greater importance than these was the tour of Jonas and Delabar in the coke regions of Pennsylvania. The striking coke miners, feeling themselves, namely, forsaken by the large national organizations of labor, of which they were members, applied to us for speakers, through our comrades in Scottdale, in order to inspire the minors with fresh vigor so that they may be induced to hold out at least until May 1, when the general move for the 8-hour day was expected to be made.

To these striking workmen in distress the NEC sent both financial aid and two speakers to agitate among them, although the conditions of the coke region at that time made the work of the agitators a dangerous one. Nevertheless, Jonas and Delabar were commissioned to address the strikers, and their Socialist speeches stirred their hearers. Hereby the coke regions of West Pennsylvania were brought into contact with our Party. Furthermore, the latter end of DeLeon's agitational tour fell through that same district and was effective in the highest degree.

The Pittsburgher Volkszeitung.

To preserve what had been gained and make still greater progress, a basis for action in that neighborhood became necessary. The fittest place was Pittsburgh. The situation in Pittsburgh and Allegheny City was, however, not an encouraging one. Owing to the suspension of the *Pittsburgher Arbeiter Zeitung*, and the accompanying sacrifices of money and time, great despondency prevailed

among our comrades. The movement threatened to collapse there, and its then condition could not serve as a starting point.

The first thing to be done was to restore confidence to the comrades themselves. This, however, could not be done without a paper and without placing in those cities an agitator who could undertake the work with vigor and zeal. Owing to their previous failure, the comrades in Pittsburgh could not be induced to undertake another paper. In view of all this, there was nothing left but for the NEC to undertake the work themselves. With the assistance of the *New Yorker Volkszeitung* and the self-sacrificing disposition of Com. K. Ibsen, our work became possible, and the *Pittsburgher Volkszeitung* was established as the property of the Party.

In Comrade Ibsen we found the party needed for the post — the able editor and energetic agitator. The funds with which this great task was undertaken barely amounted to \$300; this sum the Party sacrificed to the cause. Today the venture may be considered a success. The paper is firmly established. New life has been infused into our Sections Pittsburgh and Allegheny City; the movement there again moves; the *Pittsburgher Volkszeitung* penetrates every day deeper into the coke regions. The assistance of Comrade Mast in that region has been a valuable acquisition to the NEC; through him the spreading of the paper and of literature is conducted with vigor and systematically.

Growth of the Party.

As a result of the setting in motion of all these forces of agitation and activity in the Party, we can record the establishment of 23 new American, 19 new German, 6 new Jewish [Yiddish], 1 new Scandinavian, and 1 new Hungarian Section. There were 2 American and 5 German Sections dissolved. That the number of new American Sections should exceed that of the German ones is a

most encouraging sign and one that must urge us to renewed efforts.

The People.

Through the publication of *The People* by the New York Volkszeitung Publishing Association, a great burden was taken from the shoulders of the Party. Our English organ, *The Workmen's Advocate*, went up in *The People* by a popular vote of the Party. The arrangement made with the Board of Directors of the *Volkszeitung* is such that the Party reserves full control over all the columns on the page headed "Workmen's Advocate" [page 3], and that the Editor in Chief can only be chosen with the consent of the Party (National Executive Committee). Our financial status was greatly eased by the removal of the deficit of *The Workmen's Advocate*, brought about by this arrangement. On the other hand, the *Volkszeitung* is now making great sacrifices for *The People*. Towards rendering these sacrifices lighter we have been able to contribute only \$150. This is a reason the more why the comrades should do all in their power to increase the circulation of the paper.

The Sozialist.

Seeing that the NEC had to cover the deficits in the party organs, it was found that this came somewhat in conflict with Art. 4 Sec. 5 of the Constitution, which placed the management of the papers in the hands of the New York Section. That Section, accordingly asked the NEC to assume the management; and this was done with the consent of the Party. Our organs have demanded heavy sacrifices from us during the year, the sums devoted to them amount to \$1,400, including three months for *The Workmen's Advocate*. The deficit on the paper increased so that we were forced to appeal to the Party with the alternative either to suspend the paper or to increase its subscriptions and advertisers to enable it to continue.

The Party decided in favor of continuance, yet, notwithstanding all the efforts of the manager, no marked improvement has been noticeable. But for the \$80 received from the Labor Lyceum we could not have continued the paper.

Labor News Company.

Under the weight of these burdens, the Labor New Company has suffered greatly. The troubles within the Party, and now fortunately over, the lack of funds, and the further circumstance that we had during the first years to devote all our energies to the building up of the Party, all these contributed to bring the Labor News Company to the very verge of dissolution. From all possible sources, here as well as abroad, the "Rosenberg Executive" had raised loans, and in that way not only heaped up debts, but impaired our credit. Hence most of the orders could not be filled, or were filled with small profit. Only by slow degrees were we in a condition to pay off these debts, in that way enabling our Manager to establish new connections and to place the Labor News Company on a profitable basis.

Much is yet to be done and should be done in this direction were not our hands too much tied up. With but a few hundred dollars, the Labor News Company could be placed upon a footing where it could render invaluable services in the publication and distribution of pamphlets, leaflets, and other works that could promote the agitation. All that our comrades could do should, therefore, be done to second the efforts of the NEC in this direction.

Brussels Congress.

In the matter of the delegation of Comrade [Lucien] Sanial to the Brussels Congress there is nothing to add except that he carried out the instructions of the NEC. The comrade's work at Brussels is known to you all. With regard to some

matters, touching the labor movement in America, the NEC will take the proper steps to introduce them to the labor organizations. To defray the expenses of the delegate (\$275), an extra per capita tax had to be imposed. Some Sections are still in arrears on this tax.

National Convention.

The Party decided against the holding of a Convention this year — 1891. In view of the fact that in the course of the year, State Organizations, looking to political action, were formed by our comrades in Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Massachusetts, and of the further fact that we are approaching a Presidential election, the Party shall have to decide again, whether or not it shall hold a National Convention in 1892.

Harmony.

In the matter of “Union,” brought up by Section Jersey City Heights, which stands outside the Party, and by some of our own Sections, nothing more could be done by the NEC because the large majority of our own Sections either voted against or wholly ignored the proposals made by the NEC. This only proved that the Party is of the opinion that there is nothing to unite inasmuch as admission into the party is free to the couple of Sections that still adhere to Cincinnati [Rosenberg’s group], there being no fundamental difference dividing

us. In such places where there still exist Sections of both sides, and where our Party has gone into the campaign, all worked harmoniously together.

National Secretary.

Almost at the close of the year it became necessary to choose a new National Secretary by reason of the resignation of Comrade [Benjamin] Gretsche. We feel sure that Comrade [Henry] Kuhn will display the thorough, able, and conscientious qualities of his predecessor.

General Outlook.

In many respects, the year that is about to end has been an important one for our Party and the spread of our ideas. Many an important step has been taken, but many more remain to be taken. At the end of our term we only have to express the hope that our comrades will cooperate harmoniously with the new National Executive Committee towards the fulfillment of our mission: to continue the spreading of Socialism over the land with renewed zeal and vigor.

Socialism is growing in America. Three Cheers for Social Revolution!

*Straden, Griesbeck, Goldschmidt, Pattberg,
Schweppendick, Flechsig, Schwartz.*

Brooklyn, Dec. 18, 1891.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2011. • Non-commercial reproduction permitted.