

Darrow, Hearst, and the Democrats (April 1, 1904)

There has been a decided misunderstanding as to Mr. Darrow's political affiliations.¹ It is true that he has at times publicly addressed and temporarily affiliated with Republicans, Democrats, Populists, anarchists, single taxers, and socialists; it is not true, however, that he has ever been a socialist, that he has ever pretended to be, or that he ever had any connection with the Socialist Party. It is therefore quite evident that there is no ground for the assumption that the Socialists are surprised or disappointed because of Mr. Darrow's espousal of the Hearstocratic section of the Democratic Party. The Socialist Party has never claimed Mr. Darrow and Mr. Darrow, beyond his well known socialistic tendencies, has shown no sign of joining or supporting the socialist movement.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Darrow has always plumed himself upon being a free lance, and he has certainly given himself unlimited scope in his political maneuvering; and in this respect at least he is admirably fitted to address the Democratic Party, composed as it is of all the various and incongruous elements necessary to attract Mr. Darrow's versatile genius, and he should be at his best in that capacity.

Mr. Darrow was elected to the last legislature of Illinois as a Democrat. Great things were expected of him, but he seemed to have little influence with the "practical politicians" of the Sucker state. So far as I know, Mr. Darrow has always been a Democrat. While as I have said, he has for the moment been identified with men and movements of all political castes, and of no political caste at all, when it has come down to action instead of mere play, he has always been a Democrat and never in a single instance a Socialist.

He has been Mayor Harrison's chief supporter, twice followed Bryan to defeat, and in every election, national, state, and municipal, has cast his lot with the Democratic Party.

Personally, I have always had the friendliest feelings for Mr. Darrow. Nor have I forgotten that during our trials he served us loyally and to the full extent of his splendid legal ability. But politically, I have not the slightest sympathy with him, and in the light of certain advanced positions he

has taken in the past, I can not understand, nor can I help but regret his present political attitude.

As for the Democratic Party of today, it is writhing in the throes of disintegration; torn asunder by conflicting tendencies which can not be harmonized. Its plutocratic wing and its democratic wing will not flap at the same time.

In such a chaotic state of affairs the only hope lies in the nomination of a candidate for president who has no convictions at all, or who is so obscure that his convictions are totally unknown. A campaign based upon such a nomination will hardly inspire any extraordinary enthusiasm.

What is known as the Hearst movement has sprung from the wide and deep antipathy of the people to the plutocracy and the trusts. Hearst and his element are smart enough to see the drift and are in politics because they believe they can ride into power on the popular wave of anti-trust sentiment. The Hearst movement represents no vital principle whatever. Its pretended democracy is a sham. No such movement would be possible were it not for the dense ignorance of the people. With childlike faith they believe that Mr. Hearst, as president, would, like a modern Goliath, slay the trust octopus and lead his children triumphantly into the promised land.

The papers of Mr. Hearst have shrewdly catered to the socialist sentiment just far enough to appeal to its available support, and having done this they coolly wash their hands of all interest in, or connection with the socialist movement.

The socialist understands Hearst and his office hunt to a nicety. If he is nominated he will serve them the good purpose of purging the socialist movement of all the muddle-brained element who are with it one day and against it the next, and who will find congenial company in the middle and muddle class following of the latest Moses.

The fact that Mr. Hearst has not only a "barrel" but a vat is making his campaign, especially the preliminary stages of it, a carnival of 16 to 1 glory.²

Published in an unspecified Terre Haute daily on April 1, 1904. Reprinted as "A Politician Rightly Labelled" in *Social Democratic Herald*, vol. 6, no. 51, whole no. 300 (April 30, 1904), p. 1.

¹ In conjunction with a March 30, 1904, speech in Terre Haute on behalf of potential presidential aspirant William Randolph Hearst, a local paper had published a statement indicating the Socialist Party was disappointed in the defection from its ranks of Darrow, having previously considered him one of their own.. This contrived report generated socialist objections, which in turn prompted the dispatch of a reporter from a competing newspaper to get a statement of clarification of the matter from Debs.

² Roughly translated: The fact that Hearst has not only a pile of money, but a whole swimming pool full is making his campaign as big a circus as the Bryan campaign of 1896.