
In Defense of “Immediate Demands.”

A Reply to A.M. Simons at the Socialist Unity Convention,
Indianapolis, IN — August 1, 1901.

by Gustav A. “Gus” Hoehn

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Mr. Hoehn: We have heard a revolutionary speech, a speech on the clear-cut side of revolutionary Socialism. The comrade [Simons] wants a Socialist Party, revolutionary, with no immediate demands, and if you don't do that, you will get swallowed up by some capitalist party that has stolen our demands. Now, I think it is time that this convention hurry up and get to the scientific aspect of Socialism.

The comrade from Chicago may have an idea, or may be working under a delusion, that his position is the revolutionary position, that his position is the position of the revolutionary movement. I stand here to contradict him. I claim that his position is not only not revolutionary, it is not even conservative. It is reactionary. The position taken by the comrade is the most ridiculous and most reactionary position that was ever taken by any labor representative in the Socialist movement, and I will prove it.

I am here to say that the comrade comes from the same state where they have had practical experience. There was a Socialist movement 20 years ago in St. Louis and Chicago and some other cities, and the Socialists elected men to the city council, and even to the state legislature. Then there came some men that claimed that the time had come to get over this “immediate demand” business, this so-called “reform” business, and proclaim the only true revolutionary Socialism, and they adopted a platform that even went so far as to go

to the extreme of adopting the Communist Manifesto of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels; and to show that they were the revolutionary party, that they were the true Socialist Party, they cut out of the Communist Manifesto the immediate demands. That is to say, they were cutting off their own heads.

I tell you, comrades, if a platform of this kind should be adopted by the Social Democratic Party, the Social Democratic Party would be a thing of the past. Because you cannot feed the people on wind, and all that your so-called revolutionary position amounts to is to go out to the people of the country, to the wage working class, and preach revolutionary wind. That is about all it amounts to.

Now, comrades, I claim that the Social Democratic Party, and with a platform adopted by a majority, stands on the ground of International Revolutionary Socialism, and I do not claim that any charge can be brought against that position. I claim that our revolutionary Socialist Congress stands on the same ground. We claim that the introduction to our platform is revolutionary. The introduction to our platform is a revolutionary document, and shows that the Social Democratic Party is a revolutionary party, and the immediate demands show that the revolutionary party is not trying to feed the people on wind, but trying to ameliorate the condition and educate the wage workers, trying to fight for the wage

workers in order to educate them and ameliorate their condition, and in order to bring them into line with the great international movement of the wage-working class. It is not true that his is a revolutionary position. It is not true that his position is in line with international Socialism, but it is true that his position is in line with the very thing that the capitalist party of America would like to have, because it would lead us right back into the old anarchist movement, and in less than 5 years, instead of having a Socialist movement, you would have another anarchist movement.

Talk about the Cooperative Commonwealth, talk about scientific Socialism, talk about our present state of society, and then you request the American wage-working class to make a big jump, to jump from your revolutionary nonsense right into the Cooperative Commonwealth.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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