
The People's Party

by Eugene V. Debs

Unsigned article published in *Locomotive Firemen's Magazine*,
vol. 15, no. 7 (July 1891), pp. 624-625.

The convention which assembled in the city of Cincinnati during the month of May to organize a "new party," the "People's Party," or a "third party," succeeded in so far as preliminaries were concerned. About 1,500 delegates responded to roll call. Committees were appointed, discussion took a wide range, and enthusiasm marked every step of the proceedings, from start to finish.

The great work of the convention was to formulate a platform. This was accomplished as follows:

Platform of the People's Party.

Your Committee on Resolutions beg leave to submit the following:

That in view of the great social, industrial, and economical revolution now dawning upon our civilized world, and the new and living issues confronting the American people, we believe the time has arrived or the crystallization of the political reform forces of our country, and the formation of what should be known as the People's Party of the United States of America.

1. That we most heartily endorse the demands of the platform adopted at St. Louis in 1890; Ocala, Florida, in 1890, and Omaha, Neb., in 1891, by the industrial organizations there represented; summarized as follows: The right to make and issue money is a sovereign power to be maintained by the people for the common benefit, hence we demand the abolition of National banks as banks of issue, and as a substitute for National bank notes, we demand that legal tender treasury notes be issued in sufficient volume to transact the business of the country on a cash basis without damage or especial advantage to any class, or cause such notes to be legal tender in payment of all debts, public and private, and such notes when demanded by the people shall be loaned to them at not more than 2 percent per an-

num upon non-perishable products, as indicated in the sub-treasury plan, and also upon real estate, with proper limitation upon the quantity of land and amount of money.

2. We demand free and unlimited quantity (coinage) of silver.

3. We demand the passage of a law prohibiting alien ownership of land and that Congress take prompt action to devise some plan to obtain all lands now owned by alien and foreign syndicates, and that all lands held by railroads and other corporations in excess of such as is actually used and needed by them, be reclaimed by the government and held for actual settlers only.

4. Believing the doctrine of equal rights to all and special privileges to non, we demand that taxation, national, state, or municipal, shall not be used to build up one interest or class at the expense of another.

5. We demand that all revenues, national, state, or county, shall be limited to the necessary expenses of the government, economically and honestly administered.

6. We demand a just and equitable system of tax on income.

7. We demand a most rigid, honest, and just national control and supervision of means of public communication and transportation, and if this control and supervision does not remove the abuse now existing, we demand government ownership of such communication and transportation.

8. We demand the election of President, Vice President, and United States Senators by a direct vote of the people.

9. That we urge united action of all progressive organizations in attending the conference called for February 22, 1892, by six of the leading reform organizations.

10. That a national central committee be appointed by this conference to be composed of a chairman to be elected by this body, and of three members, i.e., from each state represented to be named by each state delegation.

11. That this central committee shall represent this body, attend the national conference on February 22, 1892, and if possible unite with that and all other reform organizations there assembled. If no satisfactory arrangements can be affected, this committee shall call a national convention not later than June 1, 1892, for the purpose of nominating a candidate for President and Vice President.

12. That the members of the central committee for each state where there is no independent political organization conduct an active system of political agitation in their representative states.

Those who will critically scan the foregoing document, the platform upon which the "People's Party" proposes to do battle, and at the same time, provide themselves with the latest platform declarations of the Democratic and Republican parties, will be able to discover what new departures are proposed by the "third party."

The issue of "greenbacks" to take the place of national bank notes is not a new idea. It has often been suggested, and it would seem to be an easy matter, but practically, it would require a great deal of legislation to avoid serious financial embarrassments.

The new departure in finance proposed in the platform of the "People's Party" is for the government to put afloat all the paper money required, make it receivable for all debts both public and private, and then loan it out to anybody and everybody at 2 percent per annum upon "imperishable products, and also upon real estate, with proper limitations upon the quantity of land and amount of money." The scheme, should it be put into practice, would at once develop into startling proportions.

The demand for free and unlimited coinage of silver is a question that is now before Congress, and exhaustive arguments have been made for and against the proposition; more are to follow. It is thought by some who have examined the subject that it ought to be sufficient to coin the American product of the mines, others would limit the amount, while others would have our mints coin all that offers from the outside world.

The prohibition of the alien ownership of land in the United States is eminently a correct idea; and it is unquestionably just to require railroad corporations to dispose of their lands, reserving only so much as will enable them to transact their business.

In plank 7 we have the proposition of government control of "public communication and transportation," that is to say, if those in charge do not make rates reasonable, the government shall become the owner of all railroads and telegraph lines.

It is easy enough to formulate such a proposition, but since government ownership would require an expenditure of about \$10 billion, and since labor would have to pay every dollar off the vast sum, we do not apprehend that the government will immediately take the contract.

We think it likely that the new party or People's Party will give the country a "shaking up." The indications are that party lines will undergo some radical changes and that under changed political con-

ditions, laws will be enacted that will modify in numerous instances situations which now are fruitful of complaints and widespread unrest.

We should like to see laws passed that would either squeeze the water out of corporation stocks and bonds, upon which the people pay dividends, or compel those who control the water to pay taxes on every dollar it represents.

We should like to see laws enacted that would permit a poor man to have his case tried in the courts of the country, the same as a rich man, and when it could be shown that a bribed and debauched judge ruled against the rights of the poor man, he should have his filth-bedrabbled robes torn from him and be sent to a felon's cell by the shortest and most expeditious route.

The indications are that such a party is coming which will discard and anathematize class legislation and inaugurate a reign of justice. As we view matters such is the sign of the times.

Edited by Tim Davenport

1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR · September 2015 · Non-commercial reproduction permitted.