
Keynote Speech to the Founding Convention of the Labor Party of the United States: Chicago — November 22, 1919. [excerpts]

by Max S. Hayes

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All candidates declined in favor of Max Hayes, who was elected by acclamation and delivered the keynote speech of the convention. Mr. Hayes spoke, in part, as follows:

All eyes are turned on Chicago to see what will come out of this gathering. Every place to which we go, every publication we read, every public utterance indicates that there is something radically wrong with our political and economic system.

The time has come for us to burn the bridges of the old political parties behind us, and to rally to the new movement of the working people. (*Cheers.*)

There is no opponent of the workers who will deny that they have responded fully to every demand made upon them by the war, ending in the victory of the Allies.

Yet hardly had the armistice been signed, when we found the interest that had made eloquent promises, returning to their old attempt to undermine our organizations in the industrial field. They declared that the trade unions were controlled by revolutionists, bolshevists, anarchists, and “reds” — the very names to strike terror into the hearts of the unsophisticated — in

order to prejudice the minds of the people against organized labor.

Railway men, miners, iron and steel workers, all were charged with attempting to bring about revolutionary chaos, a thing that is furthest from their minds.

We know as Americans what our rights are and we intend to enforce them.

Our slogan is “America for the Americans.” Just as we believe in America for the Americans, so will we stand for Russia for the Russians. (*Cheers. Delegates arose and threw their hats in the air in enthusiasm.*) We demand Mexico for the Mexicans, and freedom for all peoples.

We do not distinguish between the imperialism of a Hohenzollern and a Gary.

There are no differences on fundamental issues between the old parties.

Old-timers remember the ancient issues of tariff and free trade, the principal achievement of which was to build a stone wall around the United States and enable a US Steel Corporation to develop from a pygmy into a giant.

Then in 1896 we had another sham battle on whether there was 50 or 100 cents in a dollar, and although we had no free coinage of silver, today we have the 50-cent dollar.

Imperialism was the next issue — we were urged to think of the Filipinos, Puerto Ricans, and

Cubans and forget our troubles at home.

Now it is proposed to make the League of Nations the issue of the Presidential campaign.

Again we are to cast our eyes abroad and neglect the problems of the shop, factory, and mine.

But the people will no longer be fooled by these fake issues.

The time is coming when the workers of the world will establish a workable league of nations of all the people. *(Cheers.)*

We demand the restoration of the rights of free speech, free press, and assembly. *(Cheers.)*

We demand that opportunities to be thrown open to the people — the complete abolition of speculation in land that it may be made available to the returned soldiers.

We want all national monopolies owned and operated by the people. We endorse the Plumb Plan for operation of the railroads. *(Cheers.)* We want ownership and operation of the mines by the miners who do the work.

A start has been made to nationalize the banking system and when we get control we'll finish the job.

The time is rapidly approaching when we will follow the glorious examples of Australia, Great Britain, and Canada.

Let us dedicate our lives to the upbuilding of a movement that will bring satisfaction and glory to the working people of this nation and emancipate the toilers for all time to come. *(Cheers and Applause.)*

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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