

It Ought Not Be Difficult to Decide:
Campaign Speech at Chicago Auditorium
(October 17, 1904)

Ladies and Fellow Workingmen:—

I thank you heartily for this demonstration and it inspires one to feel the thrill and throb of the sources that underlie society and move the world.¹ This demonstration marks an epoch in the awakening of the working class — in the development of the socialist movement, the greatest movement known to history.

We are in the midst of a worldwide industrial, political, and social revolution. The capitalist system, with its extreme wealth upon the one hand, its abject and widespread poverty on the other; and its political corruption, its industrial slavery, and its social demoralization has about run its course and will soon pass away to make room for one in harmony with the forces, progress, and onward march of civilization. Regardless of all that we hear of liberty, this land is not yet truly civilized and free. Through all the centuries of the past the many have been the slaves of the few. The great masses have borne the burdens of the race and for the most part living in poverty and dying in despair. The world today trembles upon the verge of the greatest organic change in history.

Benjamin Franklin, that great philosopher, once said that man is a tool-using animal and without tools man would lapse into savagery.

In the earlier days, the needs were few and with primitive tools man could easily fill all his wants, but since that time there has been a century of industrial revolution. The tool has become a mammoth machine — a great social instrument. Production has become socialized, but the worker has lost control of the tool. The worker must now sell his labor-power to the capitalist class, which owns and controls the machine. And how is this controlled? By the law of supply and demand. Labor-power is in the market for sale. you don't hear of a capital market because there is no such market. The capitalist buys labor-power. He buys as cheaply as possible, and between these two classes there is an economic and political struggle, and strikes and lockouts, injunctions and bloodshed.

The politician sometimes seeks to obscure this class struggle. The socialist points out that this class rule must be abolished and human freedom shall be established, freedom for all humanity. The politician believes in keeping you in darkness. You are too intelligent to hear. He calls you the “horny handed sons of toil,” but he really means you “horny headed sons of toil.” The socialist tells you not to be interested in nor to follow his leadership, but insists upon opening your eyes that you may see, that you may understand and candidly tells you how ignorant you are.

You produce by your labor all the wealth of the country. You have little or nothing to show for it. you build all the palaces and live in cottages and shanties. You support this government, but you are oppressed and suppressed by it. You support the state and the militia and the regular troops, and when they are called out it is always and everywhere for the one purpose of draining your veins of your blood. You make millions of guns, but you contrive to be at the wrong end of them. You build Pullman palace cars and walk. You produce everything and have practically nothing, while the other class produces nothing and has everything.

This does not prove your intelligence. If you were intelligent you would produce wealth, not for your masters, but for yourselves. If you could get along without King George, you can get along without King John Rockefeller. Political liberty without economic freedom is a myth. Political liberty is rooted in economic freedom. The man who controls and owns the means that sustain my life, owns and controls me. I am his slave and in no sense a free man.

You are divided at the ballot box upon alleged issues, issues in which you have not the slightest interest. The politicians talk to you about the flag — the flag, by the way, that floats over the bullpen in Colorado.

I was speaking a few days ago out West where Senator Dolliver of Iowa was stumping.² He was appealing to the working class to vote the Republican ticket because that party had placed a protective tariff on wool. The working class are just beginning to understand the wool issue. The wool they are interested in is not the kind these politicians have been pulling over their eyes lo! these many years. They are beginning to understand whether the tariff is high, or whether it is low; whether we have the old standard, free silver, or fiat money;³ whether we favor or oppose expansion and imperialism; the fact remains that the working class has no tools, and we want those tools and we want to use them for ourselves. The Republican Party does not propose that the woking class shall have the tools;

neither does the Democratic Party. Both these parties propose that the working class shall be tools — the tools of the capitalist class. The Republican Party is the party of the capitalist class.

Against Mr. Roosevelt I have nothing personal. Not one word to say against either Mr. Roosevelt or Mr. Parker, personally; nor against Mr. Fairbanks or Mr. Davis. But I propose to prove that they are the enemies of the working class. Those men insist that they can serve both the working class and the capitalist class. This is impossible. The men who serve one class serve that class at the expense of the other class.

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Let us see what Mr. Roosevelt's record is. There was a strike on at Croton Dam, in New York, with the workingmen trying to have the eight-hour law enforced, but Mr. Roosevelt sent the militia there to shoot them down if it had been necessary in order to protect the capitalist class who were violating the law.

Now, all of you workingmen remember well the stand Mr. Roosevelt took in the open shop policy in the government printing office at Washington not long ago. Grover Cleveland sent the federal troops into the state of Illinois in violation of the constitution of the United States — snuffed it out, so to speak, and, effectively speaking, handcuffed John P. Altgeld, in order to break the strike in progress at that time. When Mr. Cleveland committed this crime he had no more ardent admirer than Theodore Roosevelt, and if Mr. Roosevelt had been in Cleveland's position he would have done the same thing. Read the way Mr. Roosevelt eulogizes in his book the acts of Mr. Cleveland.

Secretary of War William Howard Taft is the anointed son of the capitalist class. He issued the first injunction in this country, on the Toledo and Ann Arbor Railway. The employees had that strike won, but Judge Taft's decision lost it for them, and ever since then Judge Taft has been the most glorified being in the eyes of the capitalist class.

Not long ago President Roosevelt found it necessary to appoint a new secretary of the navy, and whom did he choose? One Paul Morton, who is well known here in Chicago, especially by the engineers and firemen who were employed in the Burlington system in 1888, when they went out on strike and when Mr. Morton filled the columns of the daily press with calumnies calculated to destroy their standing as a labor organization. He was

the strikebreaker of the Burlington system, and won promotion by his service in that capacity.

It is such men as Judge Taft, Paul Morton, and Sherman Bell — the military bully and blackguard of the state of Colorado — who have become the chums and official associates of President Roosevelt. Each and all of them have proved every time they have had an opportunity that they are the subservient tools of the capitalist class and the implacable enemies of the working class. *[Applause.]*

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The Democrats had a convention in the city of St. Louis. This convention was surrounded by the same private cars and the same railway magnates, with a different set of politicians. That party is simply the political expression of the economic interests of a class. The Republican Party is the party of the dominant capitalist class, but the Democratic St. Louis convention was the representative of the middle class, the small capitalist class. The large capitalists concluded that the middle class was crumbling, that its economic power was vanishing, that it no longer amounted to anything as a party, and so this class reached out under the domination of Wall Street and seized the Democratic Party and took possession in broad daylight. And now we have two Republican Parties and no Democratic Party — except the Socialist Party, the most democratic party, the only really democratic party the world has ever known. *[Applause.]*

You common people of the Democratic Party are not under the necessity of leaving that party. It has saved you the trouble. It has left you — out in the cold. You better come in out of the elements.

The very first thing the convention did, representing the Democratic Party, the alleged party of the common people, the champion of the working class, the foe of monopoly and enemy of the trusts — the first thing this convention did was to place 2,000 reserved chairs at the disposal of the Business Man's League, the citizens' alliance of St. Louis, an organization deadly hostile to organized labor; but not a single chair was placed at the disposal of labor, organized or unorganized. When Captain Hobson, the hero of the Merrimac — and of the merry smack *[laughter]* — arose and declared that Grover Cleveland had been the only president who had ever used the powers of his great office to crush labor in the interest of capital, that convention rang with applause. this incident clearly

demonstrated the fact that this convention was in sympathy with Grover Cleveland and the capitalist class, since Grover Cleveland was such a faithful servant of that class.

There is not the slightest difference between the two parties so far as the working class is concerned. They both stand for the capitalist system, for the private ownership of the means of wealth production and the operation of industry in the interest of the capitalist class. They are both committed to the perpetuation of wage-slavery, and whether one or the other wins, you lose. [*Applause.*]

This convention nominated Judge Parker, who within 12 months was wholly unknown to the American people. As if by magic the Democratic politicians east and west, north and south, arose and exclaimed, "Eureka, we have discovered the Moses who is to lead the people out of the wilderness into a land flowing with milk and honey." How did this come about? Mr. Thomas W. Lawson, who is writing a series of articles in Everybody's Magazine, who is not a socialist, but because he has been up against the Standard Oil Company and he is under the necessity of explaining in the interest of those who have been fleeced — Thomas W. Lawson, on the eve of the Democratic convention, declared that Patrick McCarren, the political manager of Judge Parker, was on the payroll of the Standard Oil Company at \$25,000 a year, and he furthermore declared his willingness to send Mr. McCarren a certified check for \$100,000 if he disproved the statement. He has not attempted to disprove it, and by his silence pleads guilty to this very grave charge. The Democratic machine is lubricated with Standard oil. [*Applause.*]

Just prior to the St. Louis convention Mr. Bryan came to this city, engaged a hall, delivered an address, and tried to stem the current of Wall Street in the Democratic Party. He declared that Judge Parker was the tool of the trusts and that no self-respecting Democrat could vote for him. After Judge Parker was nominated, Mr. Bryan said that his nomination was secured by crooked and indefensible methods. If this be true, and there is no doubt about it, Judge Parker must be a crooked and indefensible candidate, for a straight candidate does not need a crooked nomination. [*Applause.*]

The Republican convention nominated for vice-president Charles W. Fairbanks, a capitalist and millionaire. If you are in his class you can safely vote for him and he is entitled to your most favorable consideration. How many of you are there in this class?

The Democratic convention nominated for vice-president Henry G. Davis, also a capitalist and a multi-millionaire, the owner of a large part of the state of West Virginia, a railroad magnate, a coal baron who does not permit the men in his employ to organize. In his biography you will note that in his youth he was a slave driver; and he is yet; he has simply exchanged a small number of black slaves for a large number of white slaves. *[Applause.]* He has the old notion that a working man ought to be exceedingly grateful that he is tolerated at all, that he is permitted to remain upon earth, that he ought to work faithfully for his master all day long and when evening comes that he ought to pass a resolution of thanks that he has a master who robs him of nearly all that his labor produces; that if he makes any attempt to better his condition he ought to be suppressed by law. *[Applause.]*

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There was another convention, national in scope and character, held in the city of Chicago, but not very widely reported in the press. It was the convention of the Socialist Party, the party of the working class. *[Applause.]* No private cars were in evidence. The delegates had paid their fare going and returning to their homes. They had med not to exalt some individual as a subject for hero worship, but to devise ways and means of emancipating and exalting the working class of the world. *[Applause.]*

This convention consisted of workingmen and workingwomen *[applause]*, wholesome, high-minded men and women who had but one object, and that is the emancipation of the working class. They adopted a platform consisting of but a single plank, a labor plank. It declares against the capitalist system, against wage-slavery, and in favor of the socialist republic.

First of all, it proposes the organization of the working class into a party representing the economic interests of the working class. *[Applause.]* For every capitalist in the United States there are a dozen workingmen. They are overwhelmingly in the majority, and when they are politically organized as a class and become conscious of their power as a class, they will conquer the public powers and sweep into office in this state and every state of the Union and in the nation at large. They will take possession of the industries, put the working class in possession and

control of the machinery of production and distribution, and then will capitalism fall, never to rise again. [*Applause.*]

This convention nominated for vice-president a workingman, a member of a trade union, who, if he had used the ability he has in his own interest, could long since have been rich in the worldly sense; who years ago in his very youth consecrated himself completely to the working class; who has used his time, energy, and ability to elevate and improve the condition and emancipate that class from the degrading thralldom of the ages.

It ought not to be difficult for you workingmen to decide which of these three candidates is your candidate. Do you know of any millionaire who is going to vote for Ben Hanford and myself? I don not — and I do not blame them. They know that we are not their candidates. Unfortunately a great many workingmen do not know that we are their candidates. We are perfectly willing that Roosevelt and Fairbanks and Parker and Davis shall have all of the votes of the capitalists. We will be satisfied with all of the votes of the workers. And if we get the votes of all of the workers, you can visit us at the White House after the 4th day of next March.⁴ [*Applause.*]

We may not be elected this fall. If so it will not be our fault; it will be your fault, and you will have to accept the consequences of your act. You will get what you voted for. So far as we are concerned, defeat means but little, because we are but individuals. But it means a great deal so far as you are concerned, for it will mean for you four more years of wage-slavery. But we are not in the least discouraged; quite the contrary. As we look abroad we not that the working class here and there and everywhere are massing their forces beneath the conquering banner of economic freedom, and to the extent that they are crushed on the industrial field, they rally their forces on the political field. [*Applause.*]

On the industrial field they are under a thousand disadvantages. The capitalists have resources, are organized, and have control of the opportunities of employment. They are also but few in number. On the other hand the workers are many. They work for wages, but they have no resources. If they cannot be suppressed in one way, the injunction can be issued and the soldiers brought out and all the powers of government can be invoked to crush them. But on the political field they meet the capitalists face to face upon equal ground. It is only necessary that they shall understand that their interests as a class are absolutely identical, that they ought to be bound together as by hoops of steel, that they must unite and act together;

and when they do this, as they will in time, they will sweep into power, they will get possession of government, and when once they have possession of government they will also take possession of industry and operate it in their own interest. *[Applause.]*

Many of you in the middle class are opposed to socialism. You still think there is some chance for you under capitalism and you fear that the socialists will take what little you have and divide it among the shiftless and thriftless. You need not have the slightest fear. The socialist has no use for your small capital; it would do him not the least good. he is after the earth, the trusts, and the machinery of production. *[Applause.]* Besides, soon you will have nothing to divide. When the big capitalists get through with you, you will be ready for us. You may not be ready yet, but you are ripening very rapidly. When you have been stripped of what you have, when you have become proletarians, when you have become expropriated, you will be ready to join us in expropriating the expropriators. *[Applause.]*

Let centralization go forward steadily until it is complete and industry is organized and competition has been practically eliminated. Every system that has appeared has first had birth, has developed to maturity, and declined to decay and death. Every system fulfills its historic mission, outlives its usefulness, and passes away. Every such system develops a class whose economic necessity compels them to put an end to that system. The working class realize that there is no hope for them under the present system; that they have no tools, and can only work by permission; that they therefore live by permission; that the wealth they produce goes to the master who owns the tools with which they work, and that they receive in exchange a wage barely sufficient to keep them in working order. They are beginning to realize that their interests are identical, and to the extent that they become conscious of their interests as a class, so the Socialist Party increases in number, power, and influence; and although it may lose its skirmishes, the ultimate victory is with the Socialist Party without a shadow of a doubt. *[Applause.]*

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The two old parties, the hyphenated party, the capitalist party, draw their campaign funds from the same source. According to the press dispatches more than \$6 million has already been subscribed to the Democratic Party, and more than \$10 million to the Republican Party. These

funds are paid by the American trusts in advance, and if these parties succeed they will serve those trusts. Upon the other hand, the Socialist Party does not receive a penny in the way of contribution from a trust or corporation. It has not as many thousands in its campaign fund as they have millions of dollars, and every penny in its fund is used to open the eyes of and educate the working class. the Socialist Party is the only party that does not want a vote unless the man who casts that vote has the intelligence to know what he is voting for. [Applause.] It has not a penny to spend for whiskey to influence the vote; not a penny to haul you to the polls on election day so that you can walk the other 364 days of the year. [Applause.]

The Socialist Party is the party of the whole working class — men and women. It proposes that women shall have every right that man enjoys. [Applause.] At present woman is not merely economically enslaved, but she is politically mute and dumb. The Socialist Party proposes that woman shall be economically free. In the present society she must be provided for, must be supported. What does this mean? It means that she is a dependent, in economic servitude. In a sane state of society, rationally organized, woman would be able to provide for herself. She would stand erect in the innate purity of her sex, and she would not be compelled, if she happened to be the daughter of poverty, to exchange her womanhood for shelter. [Applause.] In marriage love would be the only consideration, and then we would not have 65,000 divorces in a single year in the United States.⁵ [Applause.]

The Socialist Party proposes absolutely to abolish child labor. Not only is there no excuse for child labor, but it is a rebuke to our alleged and vaunted Christian civilization, a crime that defies the power of language to properly describe. [Applause.] In the present system capitalists must buy labor-power as cheaply as possible. Machinery has become so perfect that it may be operated by children. They can, they do, they must work more cheaply than women and men, and so in their early tender years, when they ought to be upon the playground or at school, scourged by their poverty they are forced into the industrial dungeon. They stand at the machine and feed it; they become cogs in the revolving wheels. Their lives are ground into profit for their masters. They are dwarfed, stunted, deformed. Their lives are broken. They have no fair chance in life. The little girl who is driven into industrial mills at seven, eight, nine, or ten years of age, and feeds the machine until she is old enough to approach the marriage state, if she lives, and assume the functions of motherhood, is wholly

unfit for them. Her offspring are born tired. Their tissues are born tired. Their nerves are exhausted. They have no fair chance in life, no sunshine, no atmosphere, no wholesome foods. Deprived of education, their lives are wrecked, while they perform labor for their economic masters. [*Applause.*]

Our so-called commercial supremacy is built upon broken lives. It is a result of the use of cheap labor so that we can undersell our foreign competitors, also that we may export the greater share of what we produce. And this fact is sometimes glorified by the capitalist politicians. In this system, highly developed, there is a period of industrial activity, followed inevitably by a period of industrial depression. Next winter in Chicago will be a very hard winter, and when multiplied thousands of you workingmen will find yourselves out of employment. It may be some consolation to you to know that we are the greatest exporting nation on the face of the globe. [*Applause.*]

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We live in the most favored land beneath the bending skies. We have raw materials in overwhelming abundance, the most wonderful machinery the world has ever known, and millions of eager and anxious workers stand ready to apply their labor to the machinery to transmit the raw materials into finished products. But, on the other hand, the working class do not consume. Production is limited by consumption, consumption is limited by wages, wages by competition. Machinery has intensified competition among the millions of men, women, and children. The sharper and fiercer that competition, the smaller the wage. The smaller the wage, the less of what their labor produces they can buy. What follows? The working class constitute the great bulk of the population. They cannot buy what their labor produces, the surplus cannot be absorbed by the capitalist class, who are comparatively small; and hence we must export this surplus to foreign countries. The workers cannot consume their products in modern industry. Therefore, the market is glutted, the surplus is forced back upon us. Then comes the reaction, and the country is in a state of panic, industry is paralyzed, the factory, mill, mine, shop, and forge close down. Hundreds of thousands of workingmen are flung out of employment. Their labor-power is no longer required. They have produced more than their masters can consume, and so they must pay the penalty of their overproduction.

All of the signs of the depression are developing. The great plants are beginning to cut down the working force, reducing wages, breaking the strike. They are holding this condition in abeyance as best they can until after the next election. Then when it comes there will be an army of workmen looking for work. Some will leave Chicago, some will come to Chicago; all will be in enforced idleness. Some of them become vagrants, some of them tramps, some of them criminals. It is in this way that crime is made to graduate in the capitalist system, all the way from petty larceny to homicide. *[Applause.]*

There was a time in this country 60 years ago when you might look in the dictionary and you could not find the word "tramp." There is an army of these unfortunates today, not because human nature has undergone a transformation, but because there has been an industrial revolution. According to the annual tabulation of the Chicago Tribune there are about 600,000 thieves and gamblers in the United States; more than half a million fallen women, the most melancholy objects in our so-called civilization; 125,000 convicts; all of our insane asylums crowded and our penitentiaries overflowing. Suicide is increasing at an alarming rate. All these were the fruits of the capitalist system. It has outlived its usefulness. It is an unmitigated curse and ought to be abolished in the interest of all the human race. *[Applause.]*

In this system absolutely no man is secure, and you instinctively know it. You have \$10,000, but you have not the slightest assurance that you will not die in an almshouse and sleep at last in a potter's field. *[Applause.]* You do not know; you cannot tell. It is impossible to draw aside the curtain of the future. You are straining every nerve to educate your son and give him some advantages. Over whom? Over the son of your neighbor. They are told everlastingly that there is room on top. On top of whom? On top of your fellow man. *[Applause.]*

In the capitalist competitive society men are pitted against men in every department of activity, and the struggle has become so sharp, so fierce, so brutal, that it develops and appeals to all that is cold and cruel and dehumanizing in man. The real difficulty is, how shall we get food, clothing, and shelter? In every vision there is the specter of want, the possibility of failure. You do not know what is finally to become of you. Leave your son \$10,000, and you do not know that he will have 10 cents six weeks after you go to your final resting place. He may have to sell the

power of his two hands, his labor-power, and when someone advertises for hands he will be one of those who will respond.

By the way, in the capitalist system when men are wanted, “hands” are advertised for. When the capitalist sees an advertisement for hands he does not respond. He knows that that does not mean him. He is not for sale. He is head; he is not hands. [*Applause.*] The capitalist uses his head. He allows 50 workingmen to apply their hands to his machinery and convert raw materials into wealth. He becomes rich, and they remain poor. Some of them live in cottages, still others in hovels, and some in lairs that are wholly unfit or human habitation. You see this division in every city in the land; here in Chicago notably, where capitalist is quite fully developed. the fashionable boulevards are lined with palaces. The larger districts embrace the comfortable houses of the middle class. In the still larger territory poverty dwells, and beyond that you see the red light glimmering in the distance.

You have a son. Look into his blue eyes and think of the possibilities before him, and think of the solicitude that you feel as to his possible future, and the uncertainties of our present system will give you no little concern.

You have a little daughter. She may be force to enter a department store and work in her early, tender years, for two and a half or three dollars a week. Do you know what that means? It means that at a time when she ought to be at home under the influence of her mother she is subjected to a thousand temptations. She must be respectably clad and present a neat and tidy appearance. She is compelled to work early and late. She makes a misstep; she starts on the downward road. It is because in the capitalist system the department store is the source of that broadening and ever-deepening stream which leads into the red light district. [*Applause.*]

It is said that these things are inherent in and inseparable from our civilization. I repudiate the charge as a libel upon the human race, as a slander upon civilization.

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In the competitive system we are pitted against each other. Our economic interests are in conflict. We make war upon each other. We do not develop those qualities that dignify and glorify human nature. We do develop tooth and fang and claw; cunning at the expense of conscience. No

one understands this better than the businessman. No one mistrusts the businessman more than the businessman. It is his rule to treat every man as a rogue until he proves himself otherwise, and never to give him a chance to prove otherwise, for that might be his own undoing. [*Applause.*]

It was Emerson who once said that if you will trace to its other end the chain that fetters the slave, you will find that it is riveted to the wrist of his master. Morally speaking, the master cannot rise far above the level of his slave. He may have a callous; he may wear good clothes and fare sumptuously, but he is in no true sense a civilized human being. His brain is thronged with problems how to make larger dividends, how to secure greater profit. The more he gets the hungrier he grows. He fails, and falls at last a victim to the capitalist system. He gets rich in the worldly sense; in every other sense he remains a pauper. Do the capitalists lead complete lives? What do they know outside of the rules of exploitation? How many capitalists are there in the city of Chicago who can give a scientific definition of the term “capital?” How many can intelligently define themselves, or have ever read a standard book on political economy, or know anything about the history of their own country or anything about literature, science, art? How many of them have time to contemplate the stars or the myriad wonder of the universe? How many of them rise above the animal plane, stand erect in the majesty of true manhood, and give expression to their own honest convictions? A very small part of them. They go to their homes, but they do not hear the loving voice of the wife, the prattle of the child, the crooning of the baby — sweeter music than the minstrelsy of the most gifted musician. They are engaged in this beastly, brutalizing struggle for mastery over their fellow men.

We appeal to the moral sense. We know that man is in an economic condition in which he is compelled to fight his fellow man for bread. We are concerned with the environment. We do not propose a mere change of party — we propose a change of system. [*Applause.*] We are not reformers — we are revolutionists. [*Applause.*] We do not fuse with any other party, and we would a thousand times rather die than compromise. [*Applause.*]

We are moving forward on a straight line, day by day becoming conscious of our power, realizing that as Samson was shorn of his locks, the secret of his power, so the working class have been shorn of the tools with which they work, and these tools are the secret of their power. We are marching forward, keeping step to the inspiring music of the new emancipation; keeping step with the forces of evolution, in league with them,

knowing that the same forces that have brought man to his present plane are still in operation and will continue so until at last mankind are civilized and free.

And so we wait, we watch, and we work. We appeal directly to the working class, and through the working class to that class which is rapidly recruiting the working class, to organize a party that represents their economic interest, the revolutionary party of the working class who have done the work through all of the centuries, and who have been in slavery since the beginning of time.

In the ancient civilization men were abject slaves; in the Middle Ages they were serfs; in modern times they are wage-slaves of capital. The next stage will be socialism. We are looking forward to that time, and as we strain our vision just the slightest we behold the dawn, the glorious sunrise, and when the sun of socialism has marked the meridian of its glory it will look down upon a nation in which there is no master and no slave. [*Applause.*]

So we wait until this minority becomes the majority. If you believe in these conquering principles, if you esteem human life of greater value than material profit, we ask you to join this party, to give this movement your support. It is not yet popular. When it becomes so it will not need you. If you want to write your name in letters that will live, join it now. Take the advice that Beecher⁶ gave a young man, when he said, "Young man, in your youth join some righteous and unpopular cause."⁷

The socialist movement is that cause. It is spreading over the world. It proposes to humanize the human race. We are engaged in the last of a long series of class struggles. Socialism will put an end to the animal conflict for existence. It will civilize the world. And, among other things — and let me emphasize it, if I can, in closing — it will put an end to war. [*Applause.*]

Every Christian nation on the face of the globe is armed to the teeth today, with a powerful navy and a large standing army ready at the word of command to blow Christian brains into the froth, to send the souls of millions to the bar of the Almighty because profit is vastly more important than human life in the capitalist system. War is the prostitution of genius, the brutalizing of the human race. You invent an explosive by which you can snuff out a hundred thousand human lives in the twinkling of an eye, and take it down to Washington, and your fortune is made. Under socialism genius will be exalted in order to dignify manhood. The nations of the

earth will be drawn into close, harmonious, sympathetic relations with each other. No more will the workingmen of one country be arrayed in deadly conflict with the workingmen of another. Under socialism war will be forever ended. The interests of the working class of one country will be the same as the interests of the working class of all other countries.

I am one of those who absolutely refuse to shoulder a death-dealing gun at the behest of any capitalist murderer whatever. If he wants to commit murder he must commit it himself, so far as socialism is concerned. With the end of capitalism comes the end of war. Capitalism is war. With the beginning of socialism comes the inauguration of peace, the beginning of the march of advancing civilization.

Then machinery will be the only slave. At the touch of man it will produce in abundance for all. The industrial dungeon will become the temple of science. The badge of labor will be the only badge of aristocracy. Then work will be joy. Every man will gladly do his share of the world's useful work. Every man will have leisure and can cultivate his mind and give his heart and soul an opportunity. Men will rise from the rule of capitalism, from the kingdom of necessity, to the atmosphere of freedom. The army of tramps will be dispersed. The penitentiaries will be vacant. The insane asylums will be depopulated, the shadow of the gallows will no longer fall upon the land.

If you believe in the conquering principle of the socialist movement that will put an end to capitalism and establish the socialist republic, we ask you to join us in marshaling the working class for the grand international march from capitalism into socialism, from slavery to freedom, from merchandise to manhood, from barbarism to socialism.

I thank you each and all. [*Great applause.*]

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¹ Speaking before a packed house at the Chicago Auditorium, a crowd estimated at 4,000, Debs was greeted by a massive ovation which "swept over the vast audience, subsided, grew again, and again, and again."

² Jonathan Prentiss Dolliver (1858-1910) was a Republican member of Congress who joined the United States Senate in August 1900 to fill a vacancy caused by the death of John Henry Gear (1825-1900).

³ Fiat money is currency unbacked by precious metal.

⁴ Until 1937 the inauguration of the new presidential administration took place on March 4 of the year following the general election. Inauguration day was subsequently moved to January 20. In the event that either of these two dates landed on a Sunday, the inauguration ceremony was held the following day.

⁵ By way of comparison, there were an average of more than 1.1 million divorces per year in the United States during the 1990s. Owing to a decline in the marriage rate in the twenty-first century, this number stood at about 825,000 per year during the 2010s.

⁶ Henry Ward Beecher (1813-1887) was a noted Congregationalist minister and abolitionist.

⁷ Numerous variations of this frequently quoted directive exist, usually attributed to abolitionist Wendell Phillips (1811-1884).