
The Socialist Party in Oklahoma

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Socialism: *The collective ownership and democratic management of things collectively used and the private ownership and private management of things privately used.*

The Socialist Party of Oklahoma is an integral part of the Socialist Party of the United States. Its principles and program are in harmony with the principles and program of international socialism. It declares itself to be the political organization and political expression of the working class of this state. The party's declared purpose is the securing of the powers of government in Oklahoma as a means to bringing about the collective ownership and democratic management of mines, mills, factories, gins, and means of communication and transportation within the state.

The Socialist Party of Oklahoma, in common with all political parties of the state, is a class party. It frankly admits that a political organization is but an expression of class interest. The party therefore exists for the sole purpose of representing the producers of Oklahoma, that is to say, the working class. Seeing clearly the age-long struggle between the producers of the world's necessities and the parasites upon their backs, the Marxian philosophy of the historic "class struggle" is the foundation of its propaganda and organization work.

The Socialist Party did not create class lines or class distinctions in this new commonwealth. The fact that 180,000 mortgaged and tenant farmers are producing wealth, the bulk of which is finally gotten hold of by a small group of non-producers, cannot be charged to socialist activity. The conditions under which the cotton farmers exist constitute a condition and not a theory. Whoever or whatever is to blame for

the situation, there is no controverting the fact that the population of Oklahoma is divided into two well defined groups: first, a very large number of farmers and workers in mines and manufactories; second, a comparatively small group who own and control mines, mills, manufactories, banks, gins, oil mills, and either through title or mortgage, a very considerable [part] of the land of the state.

As a matter of fact, this condition was not brought about through the plans or cunningly devised schemes of any group in particular. The system of private ownership of things which the collectivity must use has brought about the same results in Oklahoma as it has in the remainder of the world. The banker, landlord, and transportation monopolist are just as truly products of this system as the impoverished day laborer and tenant farmer.

As is universally the case, the owning...group in this state have been well taken care of at court. They have been faithfully represented by the Democrat and Republican Parties. The exploiting group has paid the bills of these parties and has in the main molded and directed their policies. Legislation has been both consciously and unconsciously shaped to the end that these propertied interests might be protected and secured. As corporate and large landed interests have increased in power and influence in the state, the political influence of the farmers and labor unionists, so marked in the constitutional convention and the first legislature, has steadily declined.

The Socialist Party, with its clear cut and understandable discussion of the class struggle and its application of the same to conditions in Oklahoma, is rapidly becoming the political expression of the dispossessed class. To this great majority of the inhabitants

of the state, it alone holds out any hope of liberation from the rent, interest, and profit serfdom that has already made conditions in Oklahoma, especially in the cotton-raising sections, wretched beyond belief. The right to a place beneath the sun, the right to work, and the right to the product of such toil, are the tremendous offers its program holds out to the producing class of this commonwealth. Just as the intelligent self-interest of the banker and landlord class drives them to the Democrat and Republican Parties, so does the same force augment the ranks of Socialism from the increasingly class-conscious farmers and trade unionists.

In the very nature of things this clash of class interests in this state must eventually result in two political parties. The Republican and Democratic Parties cannot much longer represent one and the same group,. Many close observers of economic and political conditions in the state believe that the campaign of 1918 will see the disappearance of one of the old political parties.

Representing, as it does, the working and dispossessed class of the state, and having for its program the abolition of the exploitation of the workers through rent, interest, and profit, there can be no compromise between the Socialist Party and the political expression of the owning class of the state. No Bismarckian policy of partial restitution will satisfy those who have done and are now doing the hard and necessary work of the state. Workmen's compensation acts, minimum wage laws, stringent usury statutes, actually enforced, loaning of state money for long periods at low rates of interest, statutes regulating the construction of dwellings on rented farms, state or county gins and elevators, plus all the kinds of legislation that has marked the attempts of the German ruling class to placate the workers of that country, will merely postpone the final result. In the end, an enlightened and class-conscious proletariat will be satisfied with nothing less than the collective ownership and democratic management of the means and instruments of production and distri-

bution collectively used in Oklahoma.

As an indication of the growth of the Socialist movement in the state, the following tabulation of the party vote since the year 1900 is of interest:

1900	815
1902	1,963
1904	4,443
1906	4,042
1908	21,779
1910	24,707
1912	41,424
1914	52,963

27.8% gain over 1912; 114% gain over 1910.

The red card membership of the party now numbers nearly 12,000. Through the dues thus collected, a continuous propaganda work is carried on. 984 "locals," the units of the party organization, form the centers from which the speakers of the party carry on their work. Through a weekly publication which devotes a full page to the Oklahoma movement (*The Appeal to Reason*) and through 2400 precinct committeemen, whose activities are directed by a State Secretary at the permanent headquarters of the party in Oklahoma City, the party activities reach every corner of the state.

At the present time the leading socialist publication (with a state circulation of nearly 60,000) has 2 staff correspondents in Oklahoma, H.G. Creel and John Kenneth Turner. Creel is reporting the activities of the state legislature and of the 6 Socialist members of the House and Senate; Turner is writing a vivid series of articles on the conditions of the tenant farmers of the state.

Whatever be the attitude of the citizens of Oklahoma toward the great world movement for the abolition of war, poverty, and exploitation, known as Socialism, one thing is quite certain: from this time on he will be woefully ignorant of Oklahoma politics if he does not become familiar, to some degree at least, with the principles and program of the Socialist Party of Oklahoma.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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