
Duty of Social Democrats in the SDF and ALP: Resolution Passed at the New York City Convention, Jan. 29, 1938

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I.

The Social Democratic Federation in New York City has a two-fold duty to perform. On the one hand, in accordance with the decision made by our State Convention in 1936, which in our judgment has proved to be a right and wise one, it has to cooperate with the American Labor Party in its campaigns and related activities and by all appropriate means to promote its growth and development. On the other hand, as an integral part of the Social Democratic Federation of the United States, it has to carry on propaganda for the principles and policies set forth in the Pittsburgh Declaration [May 30, 1937] and educate the masses in the necessity of socializing our industrial system.

There is no conflict between these two functions. They are not alternatives between which we are to choose. Each supplements the other. Both must be performed.

II.

Our acceptance of the American Labor Party as the political organization to which we own support in this city and state is not a matter of mere expediency. It is a definite policy, warranted by Socialist theory and experience. In the presence of a party launched by a large enough section of Organized Labor to give fair hope of permanence and growth, Socialists have no right to stand aloof, still less to keep a party of their own in the political field. WE are convinced that

such a situation exists now and here — that the American Labor Party will live and grow, and that it will so develop as to give ever fuller and more accurate political expression to the interests and aspirations of the working classes.

It is in the nature of the case that in its formative stage such a party should be somewhat lacking in cohesion, in self-reliance, and in clearness of view as to its own future road and goal and should at first tend to pay too high a price for immediate success on the electoral field. These defects it can and will overcome. Through its own experience it will eventually learn to solve its problems and to chart its course. This does not mean, however, that we Social Democrats should idly wait for the learning process to take place without our participation. We have as much responsibility as any other elements in the American Labor Party — indeed, by reason of our longer political experience we have a graver responsibility than others — for hastening its development in quality as well as in numerical strength.

III.

With these considerations in mind, the Social Democratic Federation in New York City again urges all its members to be members also of the respective district clubs of the American Labor Party and faithfully to perform the duties of active membership therein.

The lasting success of the American Labor party would be endangered were it to become an aggregate of distinct and rival groups, striving for control or bargaining among themselves for influence in its councils. It must foster a vital and organic unity, which can be promoted only by appeal to the common sense and the idealism of the rank and file. The Social Democrats, accordingly, do not and should not constitute a faction within the Party and they should combat any attempt that may be made by any elements to dominate it by factional tactics.

The Social Democratic Federation does not lay down any code of rules to govern its members in their capacity as members in the American Labor Party. It does openly and emphatically call upon them to be guided by their Socialist knowledge and Socialist conscience in that capacity as in every other.

Exercising the same right which they concede to others, Social Democrats within the American Labor Party will on all proper occasions frankly express their judgment upon questions of party pro-

gram, policy, and organizational activity and seek to convince their fellow-members of the correctness of their opinions, and they will abide by the Party's decisions, whether favorable or adverse, trusting to the rightness of their views ultimately to prevail. Especially will they, in harmony with the declarations repeatedly made by authorized spokesmen of the American Labor Party, strive to make it independent in practice as well as in ideal.

IV.

Important as is the American Labor Party's task of mobilizing the voting power of the masses to win representation in city and state government, no less important is the task of continuous educational propaganda, which falls primarily upon the Social Democratic Federation. In proportion as this duty is well done, the effectiveness of the American Labor Party's campaigns will be increased and popular support will be assured to its elected representatives.

It is gratifying to learn that for months past the membership of the Social Democratic Federation has been steadily growing through the adherence of new members and the return of old ones who had been misled or discouraged during the period of disruption which culminated at Cleveland in 1936 [May 23-26, 1936]. The growth of our numerical strength must be continued and accelerated.

The officers, committees, and subdivisions of Local New York are urged to launch a vigorous and systematic drive, through circularization, personal visits, and other means to enlist the thousands who are known to be in sympathy with our ideas and to reach others whom we do not yet know.

The success of such a membership drive will depend largely upon the public activity of our organization. The more fully our sympathizers realize that the Social Democratic Federation is a live and functioning body, the more ready they will be to join it.

It is not only among the members of the American Labor Party that our propaganda of ideas must be carried on. We must directly reach the great masses of the people who are not yet ready to break their old political affiliation and join the American Labor Party. Our task is to prepare their minds for that step.

Branch lectures and discussion meetings, as well as study classes in the Rand School, should be encouraged and built up. They have a definite value, especially for the further education of those who are

already interested in our ideas and our aims. The number whom they can directly serve, however, are necessarily limited. We must at the same time use other methods to reach the masses.

V.

The officers and committees of Local New York are accordingly urged—

1. To hold meetings in halls capable of seating hundreds if not thousands of persons, for the discussion on questions of timely interest from the Social Democratic point of view. Such meetings should be held at intervals of not more than a month and as much oftener as practicable, and care should be taken to get them reported in the daily press.

2. As soon as weather permits to hold several outdoor meetings each month at carefully selected points in different boroughs.

3. To see to it that at all such indoor and outdoor meetings suitable leaflets are distributed and that the sale of books and pamphlets and of *The New Leader* is vigorously pushed.

4. To organize a corps of working committees of comrades in all parts of the city whose special work shall be to get new subscriptions and renewals for *The New Leader*.

5. To make arrangements for regular broadcasts from the Debs Memorial Radio Station [WEVD-AM] in the name and under the direction of the Social Democratic Federation.

6. To provide for frequent releases to the daily press, setting forth the Social Democratic opinion of events that loom large in the news.

In this many-sided propaganda it is always to be made clear that the Social Democratic Federation in New York is not a political party and that it wholeheartedly supports the American Labor Party. Social Democrats will also work for the organization of a Labor Party on a nationwide basis.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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