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# Open Letter to Theodore Debs of the Social Democratic Party in Chicago from William Butscher of the Social Democratic Party in Springfield, December 15, 1900.

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Springfield, Mass.,  
December 15, 1900.

Chicago National Executive Board,  
Theo. Debs, Secretary,  
126 Washington Street,  
Chicago, Ill.

Dear Comrades:—

The national campaign just closed has demonstrated the fact that the rank and file of the Social Democrats of this country are possessed of a much sounder instinct and a greater foresight than many of the men who feel called upon to “lead” them.

While these leaders were busy arguing on the line of rejecting union for the sake of unity and analyzing the spirit of their fellow workers in the field of Socialism, the rank and file of the Social Democrats saw nothing but the approaching national campaign, and joined hands in the battle against the common foe — capitalism. The movement was spontaneous and irresistible. State after state and local after local united, and refuted the claim that the “time was not ripe for union” by a practical demonstration to the contrary.

So strong was the movement for union that even the center of the contest, the state in which your committee has its seat, Illinois, could not escape it. The rank and file of the Socialist voters of Illinois forced a complete union for the state and county elections, and one of the members of your own committee, yielding

to the general sentiment, introduced the resolution declaring for ORGANIC NATIONAL UNION IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE CAMPAIGN.

The joint and harmonious work of the campaign fastened the bonds of solidarity still tighter around all true Socialists: the enthusiasm of the members achieved what the diplomacy of the leaders could not accomplish — a practical union of the Social Democrats of the United States. The final unification now seemed almost a matter of course, and urgent demands for an early joint convention for formally effecting the same commenced coming from all parts of the country, when we were apprised by your official organ that your committee had called into your headquarters a separate national convention of your members, for January 15 [1901].

Comrades, we do not know the exact purpose of your convention, but from the fact that it was called in such haste and without consulting even your own adherents, and from the further fact that according to the report of your official organ, the convention was decided upon at a meeting of one of your locals, characterized by violent abuse of our organization and our members, we assume that it was not called in the interest of Socialist unity and, let us be frank, we suspect it to be a move to head off the threatened avalanche in favor of union.

In the face of these facts, we feel it our duty towards members of our party as well as towards the members affiliated with your committee, to define once more our attitude on the issues between us.

Comrades, we are for union of the Socialist forces of this country today as strongly as we were, ever since the Joint Unity Committee adjourned. We are willing to forget the many unpleasant incidents of the past, we are ready to surrender our mandates, officers, and organization to the entire membership of the Social Democratic Party represented at the joint convention, and we demand the same of you. We cannot afford to waste our time on mutual recriminations over imaginary grievances at a moment when energetic and concerted action of all earnest Socialists is required more than ever, in order to appropriate the favorable field now open to our propaganda.

To wantonly split our movement just now is an act against our great obligation, a crime against this country, and you are apparently willing to doubly commit this iniquity in your manifest efforts to make the discord in the Socialist ranks permanent.

If you expect to inaugurate another era of personal abuse and controversies in our movement we must refuse to follow you, and if you endeavor to keep alive the unfortunate petty controversies and divisions within the party, the membership will bring about complete unity of all active and earnest Socialists, in spite of it all.

We request you to postpone the calling of a national convention until the rank and file of the entire membership of the Social Democratic Party as constituted during the recent campaign has had a chance to pass on the matter, and should you pay no heed to this request, we shall be called upon to address a similar communication to the convention summoned by you.

Yours for the cause,

The Provisional National Executive Committee,  
*William Butscher, National Secretary.*

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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