
Will Meet in a Tent

[event of Oct. 19, 1901]

by E. Val Putnam

Unsigned article in *The Missouri Socialist* [St. Louis], vol. 1, no. 39 (Oct. 12, 1901), pg. 1.
Editor of *The Missouri Socialist* was E. Val Putnam, who presumably wrote the piece.

The state convention of the Socialists of Missouri at Sedalia, October 19 [1901], promises to be an event of great importance. The first steps of active organized opposition to the Socialist movement are now being taken by the capitalist class. Heretofore their policy has been one of silence. The Socialist meetings and Socialist speakers have been carefully ignored. But this method has not prevented the rapid growth of the party, and now the capitalists, thoroughly alarmed at the strength of socialism, are driven to the point of openly attacking the movement, not with argument, but with prejudice and misrepresentation.

The excitement attendant upon the assassination of President McKinley offered the most favorable opportunity for discrediting socialism in the eyes of the people.¹ The Sedalia Citizens' Alliance, relying upon the silly notion in some minds that there is a connection between socialism and anarchy, passed resolutions asking owners of halls, etc., not to rent them for the Socialist state convention. The resolution was widely advertised and had the effect of deterring the proprietors of halls from renting to the Socialists. These proprietors did not refuse because they are opposed to socialism, but because they feared the Citizens' Alliance would make them suffer in a business way if they did not close their doors to Socialists. In a city of 10,000 inhabitants the local comrades, although they number a local membership of nearly 100, have been unable to rent a single hall or even a vacant storeroom for the state convention; therefore, arrangements

¹ President William McKinley was shot twice in the abdomen by Leon Czolgosz, an anarchist, on September 6, 1901. He died of a resulting infection on September 14. An anti-radical hysteria ensued, which embroiled the Socialist Party of Missouri's first convention, already planned for Sedalia on October 19.

are being made to hold the convention in a monster tent which will accommodate 1,000 people.²

It must not be supposed, however, that the sentiment of the people of Sedalia is against the Socialists. The comrades of that city write us that never were the people so thoroughly aroused and that many are now offering sympathy who formerly had no use for our principles. The reaction against the boycott instituted by the Citizens' Alliance has already begun and Socialism will receive a big impetus.

Comrade Eugene V. Debs writes: "The circumstances at Sedalia are most inviting to a Socialist, and I shall be there." Comrade Walter Thomas Mills of Girard, Kan., writes: "I shall be in Sedalia for the state convention. I think all the Socialists within reach should be there. The comrades can count on me to do some talking if that is part of the program." Comrade Fred G. Warren, assistant editor of the *Appeal to Reason*, will also attend. Several speakers will go from St. Louis. There is a prospect of great times and every branch in the state should make herculean efforts to send at least one delegate. We have a chance to be brought prominently before the voters of Sedalia and will be an issue in every election hereafter. It is up and will not down.

On to Sedalia.

Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport

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² The population of Sedalia was actually slightly more than 15,000 in 1900.