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# The Old Lyceum:

## Letter to the Editor of *The American Socialist*, April 8, 1916.

by John M. Work

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Comrade Germer has evidently forgotten the facts regarding the Lyceum debt.

It was not the Lyceum debt which kept the National Office swamped. About \$10,000 of the Lyceum debt was not a debt at all. It was owed by the Lyceum Department to the National Office. In order to pay this amount, it was only necessary to make an entry on the books. No real money was required.

The campaign debt, which had been incurred against my protest, and the numerous appropriations made by the Executive Committee, also against my protest, were the debts which swamped the office. They were outside and totally unnecessary. I beg pardon for passing the buck, but it is the truth.

The Lyceum Department was a regular department of the National Office and it had exactly the same right to use a portion of the regular party funds that any other department had. It had precisely the same right to spend \$18,000 of the party funds that the Information Department had — and you all know that I am a loyal supporter of the Information Department. You might just as reasonably accuse the Information Department of being the cause of the deficit, since it spent about an equal sum. Comrades should not permit their malice to warp their judgment. Try to be fair. Give the devil his due.

The Executive Committee had ordered the Lyceum put through on a vast scale, and it was up to Comrade [Ludwig] Katterfeld and myself to put it through, and to spend the necessary funds in doing so. It was an immense enterprise, in which a few thousand dollars do not go very far. I often wished the de-

partment was in Hell. I exercised my authority over it to such an extent that Katterfeld was one of the numerous comrades who were after my scalp at that time.

The department was properly abolished. It was too complicated, for the reason that the National Office did not have any propaganda paper of its own to specialize on, as it has now, and therefore a whole swarm of papers had to be utilized. But he would be a churl who would not give it credit for the good it accomplished, just as he should also give the Executive Committee and the Campaign Committee credit for the good they did. Not only did the Lyceum Department put huge quantities of Socialist literature into circulation and bring thousands of new members into the party, but it also brought *The American Socialist* into existence, by establishing its forerunner, *The Party Builder*. It thus gave us our splendid paper, and paved the way for the present Lyceum. The present Lyceum also has the benefit of the experience and the mistakes of the old one. Is it not clear that to charge it with being an unmixed evil is a gross injustice?

Of course the rest of us are angels.

Katterfeld is only a mortal, but he is a young man of splendid energy and enthusiasm. I would not favor giving him a high position in the party until he has developed more balance. But most of the criticisms which have been leveled against him are unjust. Both he and his critics need to learn how to treat one another with the genuine Socialist spirit.

*John M. Work.*

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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