
Anthem Quiets Socialists

[event of Nov. 2, 1917]

Excerpt from the news story “Hylan Says Mayor Cut Queensboro Corporation Tax” in *The New York Tribune*, vol. 77, whole no. 25920 (Nov. 3, 1917), pg. 18.

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Socialists threatened for a time to break up the [John Purroy] Mitchel meeting at the New Star Casino, in Harlem, which is in the heart of a strong Hillquit section.¹ George H. Bell, License Commissioner, was reading the Mayor’s speech. When he reached the point where the Mayor mentioned the name of Morris Hillquit as “the candidate of retreat and surrender,” a lusty cheer came from a large section of the audience. Four or five times Mr. Bell started to repeat the sentence, but each time he mentioned the name of Hillquit the cheering was renewed.

Someone suggested “three cheers for Mayor Mitchel,” and the Mitchel and Hillquit supporters were vying with each other to see who could cheer the loudest, when Louis Marshal, who presided, jumped up and shouted:

“Down with the traitors! They are not voters. They don’t know what American free speech means. Go on with your speech.”

Commissioner Bell started again and so did the Socialists. There were cries from the Mitchel supporters that “Hillquit was shouting for free speech” and to “shut up and give him a chance.”

At this point the band struck up “The Star-Spangled Banner.” The entire audience rose. Some of them sang the anthem. Mr. Bell was able to continue and finish the speech without further interruption after the band had played.

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport

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¹ John Purroy Mitchel (1879-1918) was the pro-war incumbent mayor of New York City, seeking reelection in November 1917 as a Fusion candidate in a four-sided race. Also running were Tammany Democrat John Hylan (who won), Socialist Morris Hillquit, and Straight Republican William M. Bennett. After his defeat, Mitchel joined the Army Air Corps, intending to become a fighter pilot. He died in a training flight near Lake Charles, Louisiana when he fell from his plane.