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# **Socialist Vote Will Have Worldwide Effect: Speech at the Lexington Theater, New York City, Sept. 25, 1921**

by Morris Hillquit

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Viewed as a mere contest for office between the leading old party candidates the coming city election will be a matter of total indifference to the vast majority of the 6 million New Yorkers.

The hundreds of thousands of workers now crying in vain for jobs and bread will remain jobless and breadless after election day. Whether John F. Hylan, the self-confessed “friend of the people,” will be reelected to office or whether Henry H. Curran, the avowed candidate of the vested interests, will grace the mayoralty chair in the next 4 years, the unemployed workers may prepare to take their sorrowful places in the shivering bread lines during the chilly nights of the coming winter.

To the multitude of working class women who are daily watching with helpless despair the rising cost of food and the falling wages of their husbands, neither Hylan nor Curran will bring solace or relief.

Whether one is elected or the other the greedy landlord class will continue taxing the scanty earnings of the workers beyond the point of endurance. The pitiful daily flight of the workers of New York against poverty, misery, and oppression will continue alike under the regime of free-booting Tammany or the labor-hating “fusion.”

## **Vote is Mirror of Moral Caliber.**

If the election offered us nothing more than a Hobson's choice between Hylan and Curran there would be no reason or excuse for the thoughtful worker to take part in the sorry performance.

But there is a vastly more important and vital side to the contest. The election separates and groups the voters of the whole city into distinct camps or parties, which voice their political views, aims, and aspirations. The vote cast on election day is a faithful mirror of the mental and moral caliber of the electorate. Every voter, in marking his ballot, classifies himself in the political catalog of our time. The worker who votes for the reelection of Hylan after 4 years of Hylan writes himself down as an incorrigible Henry Dubb.† He deserves nothing better than Hylan and another mouthful of empty promises. The worker who votes for Henry H. Curran, the colorless, recordless, and supine tool of the respectable labor exploiters, issues to himself a certificate of political incompetence.

The only manifestation of an awakening working class intelligence, the only ray of hope that the election may offer, will be in the votes cast for the Socialist Party. As a barometer of the

†- Henry Dubb was the subject of a cartoon drawn for the Sunday Call Magazine by Ryan Walker, called “This Henry Dubb World.” Dubb was a gullible and simple member of the working class who again and again unthinkingly accepts the lying and hypocritical rhetoric of his capitalist betters, the “Grab-It-Alls.”

Socialist sentiment in New York that vote will not only affect the local issues, but will have a bearing on the great national and international problems of our day and generation.

The whole world is in ruins. It has been wrecked by the war., Now that peace has been at least theoretically established, now that official terror and private hysteria have been somewhat allayed, now the truth can be told. The truth imposes upon us with daily growing force the compelling conviction that the war in all its phases has been the darkest crime ever caused by a band of maniacs, and [that] these criminal maniacs were the world governments of imperialistic capitalists is not excluded.

The human family may never fully recover from the stunning blow of the fatal 1st day of August, 1914. It will not recover for many years to come. The war has not only maimed and killed outright tens of millions of producers; it has hopelessly dislocated the economic system and work processes of the world. The greater part of Europe is poverty-stricken and hungry. In the United States, 5 million workers or more are thrown out of employment.

### **Reaction Rife Everywhere.**

The delicate industrial machine of capitalism is cracking, and the shortsighted capitalist master machinists are making frantic efforts to repair it with sledgehammers. All over the world they are crying for a return to normalcy, and "normalcy" to them means the former golden age of international capitalist rivalry and unlimited exploitation and oppression of labor. The rivers of blood on the European battlefields have not yet dried up, when new imperialist intrigues are preparing new imperialist wars. Reaction is rife all over the globe and nowhere more shameless and rampant than in the United States.

Taking advantage of the heavy industrial depression created by their own mismanagement,

the American capitalist have entered upon an open and relentless campaign to destroy the organizations and break the fighting spirit of the workers, to cut their wages, to lengthen their work hours, to throw them back into the conditions of unprotesting, non-resisting slavery of former generations. The whole power of government is enlisted in this campaign. Our "non-partisan and untrammled" judiciary enthusiastically supports the orgy of reaction. The attack has met decided temporary success. The capitalist reactionaries are triumphant.

The fools! They believe they can permanently turn back the hands of time upon the dial of human progress, that they can bring back medieval slavery to the workers of the 20th Century. They do not perceive that they are creating new antagonism and bitterness, storing up new social explosives, and preparing the ground for renewed and intensified working class revolts against their despotic misrule.

There will be no return to capitalist normalcy. There is nothing but war and strife ahead of mankind unless the entire discord-breeding machine of capitalism is scrapped, and the workers of the world take hold of the governments and industries and run them rationally and peacefully for the equal benefit and happiness of all people and all peoples.

This is the program of international Socialism, and that is why Socialism alone can save the world.

And here we come to another problem of vital importance in all contemporaneous politics. The social and economic life of the nations cannot be efficiently rebuilt without the participation of Russia. The world cannot afford to ignore the great struggles which 150 million human beings have been waging for 4 years. It must take a definite stand toward them.

No political party has a right to exist without defining its attitude toward Russia.

We Socialists of America do not accept all

the new social doctrines that emanate from Moscow. We do not seek to establish a Soviet government in the United States. We strive to bring about the working class control of the government and industries based upon the principles of democracy and majority rule.

We are bitterly opposed to terrorism and oppression exercised by the capitalist class; we do not propose to supplant them by working class terrorism and oppression. We hope to bring to all mankind a steadily increasing measure of freedom and happiness; we do not believe that our whole social ideal can or will be realized in one blow, and we do not propose to martyrize and sacrifice the present generation for the assumed benefit of the generations to come.

We do not reject the policy of social reform in the present regime. On the contrary, we welcome every measure which will lighten the heavy burden of the worker here and now, enhance his physical comforts and mental equipment, and give him an even greater share in the joys of the world and the determination of his own life. We are Socialists, not anarchists nor Communists.

But while we expressly and explicitly reject the specific doctrines of Communism as a general political creed, we hold that the people of Russia have the right to choose their own form of government and mode of life and to solve their own national problem untrammelled by any foreign interference. As against the hostile aggressions of international capitalism and imperialism we proclaim it the duty of international labor to help and support the government of the Russian workers and peasants.

And such help and support is particularly urgent and imperative now that the much tried country has been visited by the scourge of famine.

### **Must Help Russia.**

For the workers of America there is at this moment no task of greater and more imperative importance than the relief of the unfortunate millions of men, women, and children in Russia struggling for their very lives in the face of the endless miserly inflicted by the calculated malice of man and blind cruelty of nature. They have a right to look to us primarily. Our slogan must be "Give till it hurts."

The task transcends all politics and partisan issues. It goes deep down to the human substance of all of us, but as workers and Socialists particularly we must help the hungry Russian workers and peasants to the very limit of our ability. The Russian famine should not be allowed to furnish the forces of reaction with a new weapon of attack against Soviet Russia.

My fellow citizens, the world is in a sad plight. It needs new revitalizing forces, broad visions and true leadership. Such leadership can be developed only in the unceasing struggles of enlightened working masses inspired by the Socialist ideal. Every opportunity to advance must be taken advantage of, and the coming public election in this great proletarian metropolis offers a splendid opportunity to demonstrate the growth of the Socialist forces in the United States.

We ask you to work for the victory of Socialism, to pile up a crushing vote for Jacob Panken, James Oneal, and Harriot Stanton Blatch and all their fellow candidates on the Socialist ticket not so much because they are vastly superior, mentally and morally, to their opponents, as because they represent the only living force, the only great cause in the coming electoral contest, the cause of the workers and the people, the cause of freedom and true civilization, the imperishable cause of international Socialism.

***Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport.***

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