

Current Affairs

The New York Mayoralty Campaign

Apparently the New York Municipal campaign of the Socialist Party was a great success. An increase in votes from 33,000 cast for Charles Edward Russell in 1913 to 142,000 polled for Morris Hillquit in 1917, the election of ten Assemblymen, seven Aldermen and one Municipal Court Judge, have established the prestige of the Socialist Party as a political factor in Greater New York. Not only newspapers like the *N. Y. Evening Post* and *The World*, but political organizations like *Tammany Hall*, with its unparalleled capacity for judging the real significance of election returns, admit that the Socialist Party has become a dangerous competitor.

To the Socialist, this is, however, only one of the criterions by which a campaign may be judged—and by no means the most important one. Does the gain in prestige, before the general public co-incide with a real augmentation of our Socialist strength? Was this campaign worth while, from the point of view of a Socialist? Has it served to bring us a step nearer to the final aim of our movement? Has it made Socialists? Has it done more than to persuade a few thousand people to vote for candidates on a Socialist ticket?

We nominate candidates not for the purpose of electing a few men or women to office—but mainly for the purpose of taking away political power from the capitalist class and placing it into the hands of the working class. And this, again, is done with the understanding that it is not enough to elect workingmen, but people who understand the incessant struggle between capital and labor, and who recognize that the struggle can be ended only by the socialization of the means of production.

If there are to-day, in the city of New York, more working people than there were three months ago who understand the essence of Socialism, then the 1917 municipal campaign of the Socialist Party was a success, was well worth all the sacrifices in time, effort and money that it demanded.

Is the increase in socialist sentiment and understanding in sound proportion to the actual vote cast for our candidates? This, and this alone, is the criterion by which the true worth of this campaign may be judged.

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There is no question that the main issue this year was not Socialism, but Peace. The peace issue overshadowed all other questions. The people at large were indifferent to everything else; the one question of war and peace was everlastingly in their minds. If there had ever been any doubts in our minds as to where the American people, or at least the population of New York, stood on the war, a visit to a few of the innumerable hall and street meetings would have effectually banished them.

At all the many meetings we attended, on the Jewish East Side of Manhattan, or in the heart of the American West Side, among the Italians of Harlem, or in the real cosmopolitan Scandinavian, Irish-English districts along the South Brooklyn water front, even the poorest speaker could not fail to arouse the greatest enthusiasm when he touched upon the demand of immediate peace. On the other hand we could not help noticing how coldly those comrades were received who spoke only of municipal affairs and state problems, and forgot to mention the war situation. We distinctly recollect two such cases, where the speakers were not only of the highest type, but possessed the rare gift of entertaining their audiences while educating them in the fundamentals of Socialism as well.

It was, under these circumstances, inevitable, that the campaign should become one of protest and demonstration rather than one of education. It could not have been otherwise, much as most of us would have liked to have it so. Since it so happened that the Socialist Party was the only political organization that stood in opposition to the war and was not afraid to say so, many who, a year ago, were so prejudiced against Socialism that they refused to listen to a Socialist speaker or attend a Socialist meeting now came to us, read our literature, donated to our campaign-fund, and in many cases were eager to assist in every