
“Socialize Now — Railroads First!”

That is the *Appeal's* Plan of Action

Unsigned article in the *Appeal to Reason* [Girard, KS], no. 1,106 (Feb. 10, 1917), pg. 1.
Editor of the *Appeal* was Louis Kopelin.

There is no more promising field for Socialist activity than organizing and crystallizing the sentiment that already exists against the private ownership and mismanagement of the American railroads. And there is no more direct road to Socialism than to nationalized this highly important and strategic industry. This campaign to socialize the railroads can be conducted now — and it will be conducted unremittingly henceforth. The *Appeal* plans to force the fighting every inch of the way. No quarter will be given or asked. The campaign is now fully under way and before many months pass you will realize its limitless scope and extent.

This campaign will begin with the exposure of the high finance and corruption of the American railroads by one of America's greatest journalists, conceded by all to be an authority on the subject — Charles Edward Russell. Coincident with Russell's articles, political agitation will be carried on through every possible channel open to us. Non-partisan public meetings devoted to the socialization of the railroads will be held. Initiative petitions and heckling of candidates will be the methods used. A new form of congressional “backfire” will be adopted when the time becomes ripe. But more important than all will be the filing of a suit against the railroads — sensational in character — by counsel of national reputation.

The *Appeal's* campaign to socialize the railroads is now being undertaken for several reasons. They are:

FIRST, because we are convinced that the

American people are ready for this approach to the Cooperative Commonwealth. The average American can grasp this much of Socialism when presented in language he understands. By making this beginning we can follow up with the socialization of the steel industry and the mining industry. It will then not be hard to lead our followers to the socialization of all other necessary industries.

SECOND, we are beginning this campaign now because the conditions are ripe. The cost of living is increasing at a terrible rate mainly because of the tribute society is constantly compelled to pay the railroads for the shipment of foodstuffs from the raw state to the manufacturer until the finished articles reach their ultimate consumer. It is estimated by economists that the railroads extract in various form of charges and profit about one-third of the retail cost of each commodity.

THIRD, the time is ripe for a nationwide agitation to socialize the railroads because of the dissatisfaction existing among the nearly 2,000,000 employees of this industry. The Adamson law is now before the United States Supreme Court and whether this law is upheld or not the railroad labor question is going to be a serious issue.

FOURTH, the time is auspicious for a campaign to socialize the railroads as we are now on the eve of a revival of stockjobbing and bond-floating in the railroad industry. According to well-informed persons in the financial world an effort will soon be made to divert the capital now used

in manufacturing war munitions to the extension of the private ownership of railroads in this country. And the people will not stand for a return to the scandalous days of our railroad building period if we, the Socialists, give them the facts and lead them effectively and energetically.

Charles Edward Russell, as you will not in his biography on this page, is admirably fitted to become our chief of operations in this mighty campaign to have the government take over the railroads. Russell has written more on this subject for popular magazines than any other journalist. His writings in *Hampton's Magazine* so angered the railroad magnates that through their control of the banks they put that flourishing magazine of 400,000 circulation out of business. The story of this outrage is printed on this page as a warning to our readers of the serious of the *Appeal's* proposed campaign. So long as the Appeal Army

stands back of us we have no fear of being forced to the wall. We are confident that, as in the past, our efforts to fight this battle of the people will be rewarded by your loyalty and support.

"Socialize Now — Railroads First!" is our battle-cry. With this slogan we shall begin a mighty crusade not only for the purpose of rejuvenating the Socialist movement but also accomplishing something practicable in the near future. With this slogan we shall begin Russell's series of articles in our issue dated February 24 [1917]. First, we shall sow the seeds of education; later, we shall reap the harvest of organization and victory. This, in short, is the *Appeal's* plan of action. What do you — reader and friend of the *Appeal* — think of it? We want to devote our entire next week's issue to the opinion of every one of you. This plan of action is submitted for your acceptance or rejection, as it cannot be carried out successfully unless you stand solidly behind us.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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