

by a short-term focus on electoral success. Sylvia would grapple with these problems herself over the coming years, leading to her championing revolutionary direct democracy, on the model of soviets, after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. Writing here, seemingly in early 1913, she articulates her view that 'the very basis of representative government' is the 'interplay of minds and wills, variously reflecting the interests of every section of the community' and therefore its 'more perfect application' would be realised in a time 'when the garbage collectors, the scrub women, and other city employees, will be powerfully represented by those who will be able to speak for them with direct knowledge of their lives and work.' It was to be Sylvia's growing insistence that working people, and particularly working women, must be the authors of their own emancipation that would lead to her expulsion from the WSPU in January 1914 by Christabel, who argued instead that socially privileged women should campaign on behalf of working women. Sylvia's response was contained in the first issue of the East London Federation of Suffragettes' newspaper:

It is necessary for women to fight for the Vote because, by means of the Vote, if we combine in sufficient numbers to use it for definite ends, we can win reforms for ourselves by making it plain to Governments that they must either give us the things we want, or make way for those that will. Working women – sweated women, wage slaves, overworked mother [*sic*] toiling in little homes – these, of all created beings, stand in the greatest need of this, the power to help themselves.⁷

Sylvia's conception of democracy in 1914 recalled her response to the administration of Milwaukee, wherein she proposed a democratic socialism, controlled 'from below', that would necessarily ensure radical change and empower women.



A SOCIALIST ADMINISTRATION THE MILWAUKEE CITY COUNCIL

My first impression of the Milwaukee Socialist administrators was of their eager zest for their work and their great readiness to take the world into their confidence and to explain all that they were doing. To me, a stranger, as to anyone desirous of ameliorating social conditions, to any

seeker after administrative knowledge, they gladly extended a cordial welcome to the City Hall, and an invitation to inspect all its activities.

Mayor Seidel Emil Seidel,* the Mayor, I found to be a gentle, kindly man, small in stature, with grey hair, a pale face, lined a little wearily, but with an expression singularly hopeful and serene, and dark bright eyes – an idealist, but that rare and priceless treasure, an idealist with a head full of practical details.

One realizes in talking to him that he is one of those people who are quick to understand what is going on in the minds of others, and that he meets them with a broad tolerant sympathy. On whatever subject presents itself he takes instinctively the wise human point of view. Speaking of the reorganisation of the police force, he said that he wanted to make it the duty of the policeman to report as to whether the streets upon his beat were kept free from refuse and the garbage cans emptied in due time. 'I want the policeman to have some useful work to do beside marching round with a truncheon,' he said, raising his hand for an instant, as though shouldering the weapon, with a wry little smile and a comical air of pretended pomposity. 'Doing nothing but that is bad for any man, it tends to make him the tyrant of the street.'

He spoke with evident hope and pleasure of the work that was being accomplished by the 'Dependent Children's Home',[†] of the farm that was to take the place of the dismal 'House of Correction',[‡] and other plans; but he added wistfully that most of the work which the administration had wished to initiate was as yet hardly begun. Every Municipal Department had been in such a bad state when they had taken office, so much 'graft'[§] and corruption had had to be uprooted, so many muddles had had to be put straight, that a large part of the eighteen months that had passed had been spent in this way. Moreover the City Charters gave the Council but limited powers of action, and whilst injunctions were several times procured to restrain the Socialist administrators from going beyond

* Emil Seidel (1864–1947), socialist mayor of Milwaukee 1910–1912. Born in Pennsylvania the son of German immigrants, he grew up in Milwaukee and became a socialist whilst studying woodcarving in Germany. In the 1912 presidential election the Socialist Party chose Eugene V. Debs and Seidel as their candidates for the presidency and vice-presidency respectively; they won nearly a million votes.

† {SP} The equivalent of an English 'Local Prison'.

‡ 'Graft': the misuse of funds for political gain.