

23rd April 1908.

This should have
been posted to you yesterday
[Signature]

Dear Norman,

The next meeting of the Fabian executive will be on Friday, too late for the Manchester Poll; and I am not prepared to cut in on the election in any way without consulting my colleagues. It will make no difference to the result of the election; Irving has not the ghost of a chance unless he insures the defeat of both of his opponents by sending Quelch to support Winston Churchill and Jo Burgess to support Joynson Hicks, in which case, no mortal power could save either of them from destruction.

Wells's action raises a question which will finally have to be settled one way or another in the movement. Is the S.D.P. in any serious sense a Socialist body? In the Fabian Society we have always felt it to be absolutely intolerable that any person, by merely calling himself a Socialist, could compel us to support him against any candidate whatever running under the Progressive, Liberal, or Conservative flag. At Municipal elections we have repeatedly ignored Socialist candidatures in favour of Progressive ones. It has become a strong tradition of the Fabian Society that its members are free to act on their own judgment in elections; and when, at the last General Election, this freedom was carried by

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Dr Clifford to the extreme length of supporting an ordinary Party Liberal against a fully accredited Socialist Labor candidate (Pete Curran) we had to admit that he was within his rights although we deplored his action extremely. I think therefore that there can be no question that Wells is in order in the course he has taken.

His letter, by the way, appeared on the day on which the Poll closed for the new Fabian Executive. Only 300 votes out of a total of 1800 have as yet been counted; but if these 300 may be taken as samples of the rest, Wells will come out high up on the list. No intimation has yet been received of any action being taken on his letter within the Society. As I have already said, I do not see that his case can be differentiated from that of Dr Clifford; and if the Society were forced to the final issue in the matter : that is, if it had to choose between excommunicating the S.D.P. and excommunicating H.G. Wells, it would probably excommunicate the S.D.P. Outside the S.D.P., I imagine, most Socialists, though they would not have written the letter themselves, are not by any means sorry that Wells was less scrupulous.

Yours faithfully,

G. Bernard Shaw

G. H. Norman, Esq.,
4N, Hyde Park Mansions,
N.W.

PS. The Fabian poll has now been ascertained - Wells is fourth on the list of 21: that is, above everybody but Webb, Peace & myself. We always head the poll; so he is practically first among the really open places

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