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PARTY ACTION.

The question whether a great reform can be best promoted by independent political action is not capable of an unvarying answer. It depends upon the circumstances of time and field. When the struggle of existing parties involves no principle and independent political action can attract attention and provoke discussion, it is clearly the best means of bringing a principle into politics; but when existing parties begin to divide upon that principle, even if the difference ^W_A between them is comparatively a small one, then it may be that the most effective means is to utilize their fight and to devote the energy that might be expended in a separate movement to urging them on.

Both as to the field and as to circumstances there is a wide difference between the campaigns in which the new party has already engaged and that in which it will engage if it enters next year the arena of national politics. In the campaign in New York city in 1886 the independent labor movement, concentrating on a single candidate in a narrow but conspicuous field, brought a great principle into what otherwise would have been but the contest for spoils of municipal rings. The field of state politics into which we entered in the campaign just closed was wider and much more difficult, especially as the shadow of the approaching presidential campaign was over it. But the political circumstances were the same. Neither of the great parties stood for any political principle, and the issue between them was merely as to which organization should control the offices and gather in the spoils. And the only possible way to make this state campaign a means of arousing thought upon vital questions was

~~was~~ to run a ticket on a clear cut platform. We did not poll as many votes as we expected, but we did a vast deal of what is in itself more important than polling votes - setting men to think.

Now we come to a still wider and more difficult field. If the political circumstances remain as they were in November I should say that difficult as is the task of entering the national arena with a third party we ought to attempt it. Even if we could not hope to poll much of a vote, we could at least provoke discussion and push organization, and give the earnest men all over the country who are disgusted with politics that mean nothing but spoils, a chance to cast a ballot that would represent the vital principle of American democracy, even if they had to write it.

Signed: Henry George.
December 17, 1887.