

Letter to Clarence Smith Explaining His Forthcoming  
Absence from the Meeting to Plan the Founding of the  
Industrial Workers of the World  
(December 23, 1904)

Terre Haute, Ind., Dec. 23, 1904.

Mr. Clarence Smith,<sup>1</sup>  
Chicago, Ill.

My Dear Comrade:—

Your several favors have been received and noted. I have been unable to answer sooner on account of illness which has kept me confined to my room during the last several weeks and from which I am but slowly recovering. The doctor has just informed me that I shall probably have to go South before there shall be any appreciable recuperation of my strength.

I shall not be able to attend the meeting on the second [Jan. 2, 1905].<sup>2</sup> I keenly regret this for I had counted on being with you and in giving such assistance as I could to the work of organizing that is to be undertaken along new and progressive lines. In spite of my best will this is now impossible.

For a good many years I have been working without regard to myself and in all my life I have never known what it is to have a rest. The last year's work was in many respects the hardest of my life. I spent myself too freely and have now reached the point when I must give up for a time as the doctor warned me that my nerves are worn down and that I am threatened with collapse.

There is nothing the matter with me except that I am compelled to let go for a time and so I have had to cancel all my engagements for the immediate future. How soon I may be able to resume I do not know, but I think I shall have to quite the public platform entirely, or almost so, for a year or such matter. There are too many demands constantly upon me and I shall have to turn them aside until I can get myself in physical condition to resume my activities. Under any other circumstances I should have considered it a privilege as well as a pleasure to attend your meeting.

Please find draft enclosed covering the amount you were kind enough to advance to me. Please accept my warm thanks for the favor.

Profoundly regretting my inability to be with you and hoping the meeting may be fruitful of all the good results anticipated, I remain

Yours faithfully,

E. V. Debs.

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<sup>1</sup> Clarence Smith was the general secretary and treasurer of the American Labor Union and one of the primary organizers of the Industrial Workers of the World.

<sup>2</sup> The January 5, 1905 meeting in Chicago, to which some three dozen prominent labor leaders and radical journalists were invited, adopted a document retrospectively known as the Industrial Union Manifesto — a resolution calling the founding convention of the Industrial Workers of the World.