

**ICES OF REVOLT**



**EUGENE V.  
DEBS**

**INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS**

**VOICES OF REVOLT**

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**SPEECHES OF  
EUGENE V. DEBS**

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*SPEECHES OF*  
EUGENE V.  
DEBS

*WITH A*  
*CRITICAL INTRODUCTION*



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**This book is composed and printed by union labor**

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## INTRODUCTION

EUGENE VICTOR DEBS

*By Alexander Trachtenberg*

BORN of poor Alsatian parents in Terre Haute, Ind., on November 5th, 1855, Debs went to work in a railroad shop at the age of fourteen and at sixteen he was firing a freight engine on the railroad. He joined the Brotherhood of Firemen and Enginemen, becoming within a few years the editor of its official journal and secretary of the organization. During his term as leading official of his union, Debs helped to organize several other railroad unions, among them the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen, the Railway Carmen, the Switchmen, and the Railroad Telegraphers. Having been instrumental, in 1893, in organizing the American Railway Union—a union comprising the different crafts employed on the railways—Debs resigned his post as secretary of the Firemen's organization to become the leader of this industrial union of railway workers. Before a year passed, the new organization became involved in a struggle with the Great Northern Railroad, terminating successfully for the union. The same year the A. R. U. joined in a sympathetic strike in defense of the Pullman Company workers who struck against a wage cut. The struggle was a bitter one with the Federal troops helping the paralyzed railroads to break the strike. The strike was lost and Debs was sent to jail for six months for continuing the struggle in spite of the sweeping injunction which the courts issued against him and other strike leaders.

It was during his imprisonment in the Woodstock jail that he saw a gleam of the political implications of the A. R. U. struggle and defeat. Debs was then not new



to politics. In 1878, the year in which he became editor of the Firemen's Journal, he was offered a congressional nomination by the Democrats of Terre Haute which under the prevailing array of political forces meant an election. Debs declined the nomination, being then greatly concerned with the building of the union. In 1885, he was elected by the Democratic Party to the state legislature of Indiana in which he served one term.

When he came out of Woodstock in 1895, he was shaken from his capitalist party moorings, but not sufficiently, for the next year he followed Bryan, who gathered around him the petty-bourgeois reform elements, including the Populists. The lessons of the A. R. U. strike, however, were being crystallized, and in 1897 he addressed a political letter to the members of the A. R. U. in which he declared that "the issue is Socialism versus Capitalism." That it was the Pullman strike and Woodstock that led Debs to Socialism we read in his own account which he gave to the court when he was tried for his leadership in the strike: "I was baptized in Socialism in the roar of conflict."

With his followers in the A. R. U., which in the meantime greatly declined, and representatives of different socialistic groups in the Middle West, Debs organized in 1897 the Social Democracy of America, which took up as its main task the organization of Socialist colonies—a Utopian scheme which met with failure in America fifty years before. With Victor Berger, Debs organized a split at a convention of the Social Democracy in 1898 and formed the Social Democratic Party of America, which was to be built on the pattern of the European Socialist political parties.

This party later united its forces with a split-off faction of the Socialist Labor Party in 1900 and formed the Socialist Party. Debs was the first presidential nominee of the united party and polled about 100,000 votes. He was also a candidate in the three successive presidential elections, receiving 402,000, 420,000, and 897,000 votes

respectively. He declined to be a candidate in 1916. That year the S. P. vote dropped to 585,000. In 1920, while in prison, he was again a candidate and received 920,000 votes.

Besides participating in the national elections as stand-bearer of the party, Debs traveled extensively throughout the country on agitation tours for the party and subscription drives for the various publications with which he was connected, such as the *Appeal to Reason*, the *Rip Saw*, etc. He also contributed to the *International Socialist Review* which was a left wing organ in the Socialist Party. Debs was always in demand as a speaker at various political demonstrations, strikes, free speech fights, defense cases, and similar struggles.

Debs' writings and reported speeches are mostly fugitive. Besides an early collection of his utterances and the sentimental vaporings of a would-be Boswell, there is a collection of his war speeches issued by the National Committee of the Socialist Party, in which his attitude on war is deleted from his speeches to the jury and to the court during his Cleveland trial. The excuse given by the S. P. for the elimination was that the Supreme Court was reviewing the case. However, an edition has been published containing material dated 1925, and not only are references to his war stand deleted but also his remarks concerning the Bolsheviks and the Russian Revolution.

In the following pages the editor attempted to give a critical estimate of Debs' place in the American revolutionary movement. It is based on personal observation of his activities during a period of twenty years. The attitude of Debs on the trade unions and the Socialist Party, as well as his stand on the War and the Russian Revolution, were the only questions which could be taken up in this already too long introduction. The writer believes, however, that the true character of Debs is mirrored in his utterances reproduced in the volume and his position on the several questions discussed in the

introduction. His brother, Theodore, graciously aided the editor in supplying him with material which he had in his possession.

### *Debs and the Trade Unions*

Debs was a revolutionary trade unionist. His whole experience in the labor movement had taught him that only a trade union based on a class program can cope with the offensive of the employers and serve the workers properly in their everyday struggles. His revolutionary conception of the rôle of the trade unions, as well as his experience in craft unions, led him to adopt the idea of industrial unionism. These two motivating forces caused him to sponsor the formation of the Industrial Workers of the World in 1905.

As a Socialist Debs did not believe in the neutrality policy of the S. P. Unlike the "pure and simple" trade unionist he knew that there could be no absolute separation between the political and economic phases of the labor movement. In 1912, when the Socialist Party was at the height of its strength in membership and influence, he wrote: "The S. P. cannot be neutral on the union question. It is compelled to declare itself by the logic of evolution, and as a revolutionary party it cannot commit itself to the principles of reactionary trade unionism." Debs stood for the permeation of the existing unions by the Socialists, advocating the policy of "boring from within." As a matter of fact, this tactic was enunciated at the very inception of the Socialist Party as against the policy of deserting the existing unions and leaving them to the reactionary leaders. Debs never failed to emphasize the need of the organization of the unorganized,—another policy which is stressed to-day only by the Communists and the Left Wing. Neither did Debs recoil from the idea of organizing the unorganized into *new unions* in view of the failure of the official labor movement to pay attention to the hosts of workers left

outside the labor organizations. He wrote in 1912: "*I would encourage industrial independent organization, especially among the millions who have not been organized at all, and I would also encourage the 'boring from within' for all that can be accomplished by the industrial unionists in the craft unions.*" (Italics ours.—A. T.) Even prior to that, in 1910, in a letter to Tom Mann, he wrote: "We must bore from within and without."

Debs hated class collaboration with all his being and he frequently used his invectives against Gompers, who more than any one else personified this policy. Gompers' connections with the Civic Federation always came in for scathing criticism from Debs. "For the very reason Gompers was glorified by Wall Street, Bill Haywood is despised by Wall Street," he thus compared the two outstanding figures who represented the opposite poles in the labor movement. Although many prominent Socialists were active in the leadership of various unions, the A. F. of L. was always considered by Debs as the bulwark of reaction and its affiliation with the Civic Federation was for Debs a sufficient indication of its hopeless class collaborationist policy. He knew well that when a labor organization collaborates with an employers' organization it is the latter that will exert the influence, secure the benefit of such collaboration, and completely demoralize and annul the very purposes for which the union was organized. Although fully recognizing the reactionary character of the A. F. of L. and never failing to attack its leaders for their class collaborationist policies, Debs, however, failed organizationally to challenge Gompers' leadership and call upon his party to solidify the large numbers of organized workers who followed the party into an organized opposition within the A. F. of L. on the platform of the class struggle vs. class collaboration. He wrote in 1911: "The A. F. of L., as an organization, with its Civic Federation to determine its attitude and control its course, is deadly hostile to the S. P. and to any and every revolutionary movement

of the working class. *To kowtow to this organization and to join hands with its leaders to secure political favor can only result in compromising our principles and bringing disaster to the party.*" (Italics ours.—A. T.) How prophetic these words sound to-day when we observe the support which the S. P. leaders now extend to the Greens, the Wolls, the Lewises and the Sigmans in their fight against the militant rank and file in the labor unions. The S. P. has indeed brought disaster upon itself through its policy of making common cause with the reactionary leadership of the A. F. of L. and through them with all the enemies of labor.

The Gompers' policy of "No politics in the unions" always amused Debs who knew that Gompers himself was a Democratic politician and that his lieutenants were working in elections for either the Republican or the Democratic Party in consideration for favors or jobs. The policy of the A. F. of L. to petition Congress or otherwise depend upon government bodies was repulsive to Debs. "Can they not see that we have a capitalist class Congress and capitalist class legislatures and that it is the very height of folly and depth of humiliation for a committee of the working class to beg the representatives of the capitalist class to legislate in the interest of the working class?"

From the very beginning of his acceptance of Socialism as his guiding philosophy, Debs understood that the only *real* labor union is the *class union*. He never failed to drive home this lesson. The old union—by which he meant the union which Gompers helped to develop through class collaboration and which was founded on the policy of a "fair day's work for a fair day's wage,"—he considered as entirely opposed to the interests of the workers. He maintained that this union is "organized on the basis of identity of interests between the capitalists and the wage workers, and spends its time and devotes its energies to harmonizing these two classes; and it is a vain and hopeless task. When this interest can be even

temporarily harmonized it is always in the interest of the capitalist class and at the expense of the working class."

Debs became a convinced industrial unionist as a result of his experience with the unions on the railroads. This is why he helped to form the American Railway Union as an industrial union of the workers employed on the railroads. He witnessed the resultant jurisdictional disputes which were sapping the vitality of the labor unions from the inside, and he saw how the employers were better able to defeat the workers because of their division along craft lines. The reactionary character of the craft union, according to Debs, lay also in the fact that its persistence was atavistic, as it was not keeping in touch with the development of industry.

Debs understood the nature of the class struggle and he always saw the array of class forces in every fight the workers waged. This can be observed in all his utterances. He also knew the power and the rôle of the state in class conflicts. He experienced it many times on himself during the struggles in which he was engaged. He saw the A. R. U. strike broken by military force and when he later described it he wrote that "in the gleam of every bayonet and the flash of every rifle the class struggle was revealed."

### *Debs and the Socialist Party*

On many occasions Debs was in open conflict with the S. P. leadership. Although considered as such, Debs really was never the political leader of the party. He represented perhaps the greatest peculiarity in the American Socialist movement. Considered by the rank and file as the personification of the fighting spirit of Socialism and looked upon by the outside world as the outstanding personality in the American Socialist movement, Debs never wrote a platform for the party, never sat on its executive committee, except for the last two or

three years of his life, when he was brought in more for window dressing, never was sent as a delegate to a national or international convention, never was permitted to participate in the councils of the party to formulate policies and work out tactics. The leadership of the S. P. studiously avoided bringing Debs into the organization. He was kept on the platform where his eloquence was capitalized, or he was allowed to write in fugitive and privately owned Socialist journals rather than in the official organs of the party.

The S. P. leadership feared Debs' revolutionary attitude on the burning questions which agitated the membership of the party. They knew his uncompromising stand on many questions and they preferred not to have any quarrels with him. He spoke his mind from time to time, but being organizationally removed from the membership he could not exercise the influence over them which otherwise would have been his. Debs should have never permitted himself to be placed in such a position by the S. P. leaders. His place was among the proletarian members, guarding the party against the reformist leaders and guiding the membership in his own spirit of militancy. He should have been the political leader of the party instead of letting that leadership fall into the hands of lawyers and ministers.

During the years 1910-12 the S. P. grew in membership, reaching the highest number in its history (over 120,000). Debs saw the entrance of elements into the party who were joining it not as a revolutionary Socialist party but as a third capitalist party. While in other countries there were liberal parties which petty-bourgeois elements, disillusioned with conservative parties, could join, America had two equally reactionary parties from which these elements sought to escape. The S. P. was the only available political home for all those who favored reforms which the two main parties opposed. Advocates of woman's suffrage, direct election of senators, abolition of child labor, protective labor legislation,

etc., joined the Socialist Party through which they hoped to promote these reforms, not bothering about the ultimate aims which were written into the program of the party. In this manner the proletarian and revolutionary sections in the party were permeated by altogether alien elements.

With his revolutionary instinct Debs felt the danger lurking for the Socialist Party in the admission of such elements. These were the years of "trust busting" campaigns, of muck-raking and the offering of all sorts of panaceas against the encroachments of corporate wealth. The petty bourgeoisie was beginning to feel the solidification of American capital and it was looking to reforms to help it out of the difficulty. These elements were finding their way into the Socialist Party, and the well known among them, particularly the writers and journalists, were immediately acclaimed as leaders. Charles Edward Russell, Allen Benson, and their like became overnight spokesmen of the party. They were elected to executive committees and designated as standard bearers of the party in elections.

Writing in 1911 under the title "Danger Ahead," Debs warned the party against the degeneration which was sure to set in as a result of the admixture of elements entirely foreign to its program and its aims. He wrote: "It (the S. P.) may become permeated and corrupted with the spirit of bourgeois reform to an extent that will practically destroy its virility and efficiency as a revolutionary organization. . . . The working class character and the revolutionary character of the S. P. are of first importance. *All the votes of the people would do us no good if we cease to be a revolutionary party.*" (Italics ours.—A. T.)

Debs crossed swords with the S. P. leaders when they advocated the A. F. of L. policy of excluding immigrants. In a letter to a delegate to the 1910 convention, which adopted a resolution dealing with immigration, he wrote: "I have just read the majority report of the committee



on immigration. It is utterly un-socialistic, reactionary and in truth outrageous, and I hope you will oppose it with all your power. The idea that certain races are to be excluded because of tactical expediency would be entirely consistent in a bourgeois convention of self-seekers, but should have no place in a proletarian gathering under the auspices of an international movement that is calling on the oppressed and exploited workers of all the world to unite for their emancipation."

To Debs such a stand meant forsaking the principle of international solidarity and he called upon the members "to stand squarely on our revolutionary working class principles and make our fight openly and uncompromisingly against all our enemies, adopting no cowardly tactics and holding out no false hopes."

When the Left Wing split from the S. P., Debs was in prison. Only partial information could reach him regarding the controversy in the party which preceded this split. While Debs was bound by many ties to the Socialist Party, he did not fully agree with its leadership. During the 1919 convention the remaining Left Wing elements succeeded under pressure of the split to force a resolution nominating Debs for president for the 1920 elections. The leaders did not wish to have Debs, who was then in prison, nominated as a candidate. They feared that the size of the vote might be affected and did not want to flaunt before the country a presidential candidate who was in prison. When he was finally nominated in 1920 and a committee consisting of Steadman, ONeal and others was sent to visit him in prison to notify him officially of the nomination, he surprised the committee with a devastating criticism of the party.

Regarding the platform adopted at the convention which nominated him, he said: "I wish I might say that it had my unqualified approval," modifying it by saying that platforms are not so important, as "we can breathe the breath of revolution into any platform." He emphasized, however, that "Socialist platforms are not made

to catch votes" and that "*we are in politics not to get votes but to develop power to emancipate the working class.*" (Italics ours.—A. T.) It was also significant that on that occasion he expressed regret "that the convention did not see its way clear to affiliate with the Third International without qualification." Debs, therefore, allied himself with the third of the delegates of the 1920 Convention which favored the acceptance of the twenty-one points of admission and was opposed to Hillquit's proposal for affiliation with reservations. To the S. P. leaders who were present he addressed himself point blank with the following rebuke: "*There is a tendency in the party to become a party of politicians, instead of a party of the workers.*" (Italics ours.—A. T.)

Removed by his incarceration from the outside world, Debs, perhaps, could not see sufficiently that this was no longer a tendency, but a fact. The process of degeneration, beginning with the struggle against the Left Wing, was fast being completed and Debs, having recognized that the S. P. was becoming "a party of politicians instead of a party of workers," should have definitely broken with the politicians and joined with the revolutionary workers who left or were leaving the S. P. in large numbers. Although in prison, Debs should have put himself at the head of the militant elements who were deserting the reformist party and were being organized under the leadership of the Third International, instead of allowing the importunities of his friends to reserve final judgment until he was released. Debs knew enough about the party to realize that it no longer was the party as he visioned it in 1908, a "class conscious, revolutionary, Socialist party which is pledged to abolish the capitalist system, class rule and wage slavery, a party which does not compromise or fuse, but, preserving inviolate the principles which quickened it into life and now give it vitality and force, moves forward with dauntless determination to the goal of economic freedom."

Unlike Lenin on an international scale, Karl Lieb-

knecht and Rosa Luxemburg in Germany, and Ruthenberg in this country, who not only criticized the reformist leaders but fought them and organized against them, Debs remained only the critic. When he was released from prison he allowed the same leaders whom he held responsible for ruining the party, to use him as a shield to cover their alliances with the trade-union bureaucracy and capitalist politicians. Beginning under his "chairmanship," the leaders have completed the transformation of the Socialist Party into a party of liberal reform, even going as far as deleting the clause dealing with the class struggle from their membership application blank.

Debs wrote in 1905 on the place of the class struggle in the program of the labor movement, not to speak of a Socialist party: "*We* insist that there *is* a class struggle; that the working class must recognize it; that they must organize economically and politically upon the basis of that struggle; and that when they do so organize they will then have the power to free themselves and put an end to that struggle forever."

The S. P. has forsaken the class struggle and its leaders advocate class peace. Debs saw this degeneration coming and it was therefore his historic mistake of not breaking with the moribund organization and joining the party of the class struggle—the Communist Party.

### *Debs on War*

Debs was an uncompromising opponent of capitalist wars and as such he was imprisoned during the war. Although he knew the economic causes of wars, he did not fully comprehend the nature of modern imperialism. Unlike C. E. Ruthenberg, who understood the rôle of American Imperialism and was among the first to be imprisoned during the war, Debs was guided in his anti-war stand mainly by his loyalty to the principle of international solidarity of Socialism. He denounced the European Socialists who turned social patriots, and with the

Socialists who voted war credits in mind he wrote: "If I were in Congress I would be shot before I would vote a dollar for such a war." Although probably not acquainted with Lenin's writings, he expressed in a crude way the tactics of fighting the imperialist war and the capitalists of various countries with working-class action. "When capitalists declare war, it is then for us to declare war on them, paralyze industry by the strike and fight every battle for the overthrow of the ruling class."

Some of Debs' utterances betray pacifist notions and repugnance of violence. "When I think of a cold, glittering, steel bayonet being plunged into the white, quivering flesh of a human being, I recoil with horror," he declared in his Canton speech. We find sufficient proof, however, that Debs was not opposed to war *in general*, but to *capitalist* wars.

In 1915, when America began to prepare for war, Debs wrote an article for an anti-Preparedness issue of the *Appeal to Reason* in which he derided those who would enlist in the army. There were many expressions in that article which did not harmonize with his known convictions. He was, however, accused of harboring pacifist illusions. In a reply in another issue of the paper Debs came back with a declaration of his position which should cause his self-appointed successor, Norman Thomas, to renounce his memory forever after. "*No, I am not opposed to all war, nor am I opposed to fighting under all circumstances, and any declaration to the contrary would disqualify me as a revolutionist,*" (Italics ours.—A. T.) was his statement dictated by his revolutionary instinct.

Debs reiterated that he was "only opposed to ruling class war," and that he refused "to obey any command to fight for the ruling class, but will not wait to be commanded to fight for the working class."

Debs felt that, since the question was raised, he must answer it categorically and completely. He wrote further: "*I am opposed to every war but one; I am for that*

*war with heart and soul and that is the world-wide war of the social revolution. In that war I am prepared to fight in any way the ruling class may make it necessary, even to barricades.*" He concluded: "There is where I stand and where I believe the Socialist Party stands, or ought to stand on the question of war." With the support of the League of Nations, which the S. P. once declared was the Capitalist Black International, the World Court and other imperialist instruments among their articles of faith, is it any wonder that the S. P. leaders are forsaking Debs' memory as they ignored his opinions when he was alive.

Debs took the St. Louis anti-War resolution of 1917 seriously. At the Ohio state convention of the party held at Canton he gave expression to what he had said before America's entrance into the imperialist war. Ruthenberg, the leader of the party in Ohio, was already in prison and Debs took the cause of his imprisonment as the text for his address to the convention. The Government convicted Debs and tried to make an example of his conviction and imprisonment, just as the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti was to serve as a warning to the militant workers in the present period. Due to nationwide agitation, Debs was later offered his freedom, but he would not leave prison except on his own terms. On December 25, 1921, after almost three years of incarceration in one of America's bastiles, the 68-years-old revolutionist walked out of the prison doors in broken health, which he never regained till his death five years later.

### *Debs and the Russian Revolution*

The Russian Revolution found in Debs an immediate and sympathetic response. It must be noted, however, that although he considered it "the greatest in point of historic significance and far-reaching influence in the annals of the race," he did not grasp the full meaning of the November Revolution to the world revolutionary

movement of the workers. Debs sensed the difference between the compromising Mensheviks who supported Kerensky and the indomitable Bolsheviks who forged ahead toward the proletarian revolution. In addressing himself to the Russian Bolsheviks in 1918 on the First Anniversary of the November Revolution he wrote: "The achieved glory of your revolutionary triumph is that you have preserved inviolate the fundamental principles of international Socialism and refused to compromise. It will be to your everlasting honor that you would rather have seen the Revolution perish and the Soviet with it than to prostitute either one by betraying the workers to alleged progressive reforms, which would mean to them an extension of their servitude under a fresh aggregation of exploiters and parasites." When the name Bolshevik was spoken of with derision among his party friends, Debs declared publicly: "I am a Bolshevik from the crown of my head to the tips of my toes." To the jury he defiantly declared: "I have been accused of expressing sympathy with the Bolsheviks of Russia. I plead guilty to the charge."

Debs was not clear on proletarian dictatorship as he was not clear on several fundamental problems, especially on the state as taught by Marx and Lenin. He spoke about the "unfortunate phrase" and stated that "dictatorship is autocracy," but he immediately explained that "there is no autocracy in the rule of the masses." The experienced revolutionist in him, even if only by instinct, led him also to the conclusion that "during the transition period the revolution must protect itself." To those of the Socialist leaders who were "for" the Russian Revolution, but "did not like certain features of it," Debs openly declared in speaking to the S. P. committee which came to Atlanta Penitentiary to notify him of his nomination for the presidency in 1920: "I heartily support the Russian Revolution without reservations."

*Debs the Orator*

The fact that Debs was the most eloquent speaker the American labor movement has produced contributed a great deal to his being kept on the platform. American history abounds with names of great orators who flourished in the legislative halls and the pulpits. Daniel Webster and Wendell Phillips are probably the most illustrious representatives of these types of American oratory. Debs was much impressed with the published orations which he read, and in his youth trained himself in the art of public speaking.

There was not that intellectual force that was behind Lassalle's oratory, nor did he become the public tribune as Jaures. Debs on the platform was more the evangelist. He appealed to his audience rather than reasoned with it. He always tried to convert and his speaking pose always betrayed his deep earnestness. His figures of speech were apt and poetic. He often grew lyrical and his rhythmic body responded to the rhythm of his utterances. He kept his audience in raptures and he often appeared to those near him as though he was in a religious ecstasy.

His writings were of the same pattern as his speeches. He probably dictated most of his published articles. They read like impassioned orations. They particularly suited a paper like the *Appeal to Reason*, which was perhaps the best agitational medium the American labor movement ever produced.

With his eloquent voice and trenchant pen, Debs stirred the imagination of large sections of the American working class. His appearance in a struggle was sure to result in the revival of militancy, for he knew how to describe to the workers their life under capitalism and to inspire them with hope for ultimate victory.

*Debs—A Fearless Revolutionist*

In the two outstanding events in Debs' life in which his class integrity was tested,—the A. R. U. strike and the World War,—he revealed himself a fearless revolutionist. "I would rather be a thousand times a free soul in jail than a sycophant or coward on the streets," Debs prefaced his famous anti-war speech at Canton. Knowing that there were Government agents who were gathering "evidence" against him, many in his audience felt that Debs was walking right into the jaws of the Department of Justice. He probably read on their faces their concern over his freedom. "Do not worry over the charge of treason to your masters, but be concerned about the treason that involves yourself," he importuned his hearers.

Not only during the war but in times of "peace," Debs urged revolutionary action upon the workers. When the miners in Rockefeller-owned Colorado were being beaten into submission by the hired assassins of the State and the coal companies, when the holocaust at Ludlow was demanding working class action, Debs appealed for a defense fund for the Miners' Union, not to hire lawyers to argue in the courts about the "inalienable rights" of workers to strike, but to "provide each member with the latest high-power rifle, the same as used by the corporation gunmen, and 500 rounds of cartridges. In addition to this, every district should purchase and equip and man enough Gatling and machine guns to match the equipment of Rockefeller's private army of assassins."

Throughout the trial for treason for his Canton speech which began September 9, 1918, Debs conducted himself as a revolutionist. He refused to allow witnesses for the defense and spoke himself to the jury rather than permit his lawyers to use tricks known to the legal profession to mitigate his status before capitalist law. Debs pleaded guilty to the charges made against him by the Government and used the court as a tribune to speak to



the workers of the country. He refused to recant or to take back anything he said. In his speech to the jury he repeated in substance what he said at Canton and, in fact, made it stronger. The anti-War resolution of the St. Louis Convention, which was fast becoming a mere scrap of paper, was revived. Flesh and blood was put on it when Debs spoke for two hours to the jury on that memorable September 12.

The jury having found Debs guilty "as charged," he was brought for sentence on September 14. Availing himself of the customary right to speak before sentence is imposed, Debs prefaced his remarks to the court as follows: "Years ago I recognized my kinship with all living beings, and I made up my mind that I was not one bit better than the meanest of the earth. I said then, I say now, that while there is a lower class, I am in it; while there is a criminal element, I am of it; while there is a soul in prison, I am not free." He took his conviction of ten years' imprisonment as a revolutionist. When the U. S. Supreme Court, including the so-called Liberal Justices, Holmes and Brandeis, unanimously affirmed the conviction, he declared: "The decision is perfectly consistent with the character of the Supreme Court as a ruling class tribunal."

On April 19, 1919, though the war was over, Debs, at the age of 65 and in delicate health, entered Moundsville (W. Va.) prison to serve his sentence. (The Federal prisons were still overcrowded, housing many political prisoners. Later Debs was removed to the Federal penitentiary at Atlanta.) To the workers of America, whose minds and hearts were turned to him, Debs declared: "I enter the prison doors a flaming revolutionist, —my head erect, my spirit untamed and my soul unconquerable."

Debs began his career in the ranks of the labor movement. He reached a high position in his union and led several historic battles. When he came to the Socialist

movement he was a national figure with a prison term and a record of heroic labor struggles behind him.

We already had occasion to refer to the policy which the S. P. leadership employed to exploit Debs to recruit members, to gather subscriptions for various publications, and especially to obtain votes in national elections. In keeping with the party's "neutrality" policy with regard to the trade unions, Debs, though he was opposed to this policy, was nevertheless won away from the field of labor struggles to the narrow parliamentary and agitational fields of activity. The result was that Debs who could organize labor unions and, through his great eloquence and inspiring appeal, move large masses into action, became a platform speaker and a presidential candidate. If it were not for the fact that Debs would frequently rebel against the position in which he was placed by the S. P. and on his own initiative throw himself into struggles which would flare up from time to time, thereby keeping his militant spirit alive, we might have witnessed the transformation of a mountain eagle into a bird of paradise.

The ideological level of the S. P. was rather low. Almost no original Marxist literature was produced and whatever educational work was done among the members was in the main superficial. There was no grounding in revolutionary theory and, in building a party mainly for election purposes, there was little opportunity for revolutionary experience. The milieu in which Debs worked was not conducive to the development of his native abilities and talents as a mass leader and organizer. Nor was there an opportunity for Debs to train for real political leadership. Although usually the reverse is the case, the S. P. received from Debs more than it gave him. He lived and drew sustenance from his earlier attainments.

This condition helps to explain the absence of clarity and theoretical precision on various questions of policy and tactics as expressed in some of his utterances. His main shortcoming was that he was not always able to

pass judgment upon a new situation engendered in a new period of struggle. That he was always attuned to the manifestations of the class struggle, that he was a militant and glorified revolutionary action, the material culled from his speeches and writings will bear witness. Even though in disagreement with persons or organizations in the labor movement, his voice and pen were always placed at the disposal of all who were engaged in struggles. Thus we see him rushing to aid the I. W. W., joining the Friends of Soviet Russia and the International Labor Defense, though those organizations were on the S. P. blacklist because they were led by Communists. Forgotten and unsung by the official labor movement or the S. P., the martyrdom of the Molly Maguires, and the Chicago Anarchists were to him golden pages in the history of the American labor movement, and the Sacco-Vanzetti campaign was always close to his heart.

Jeffersonian Democrats, Anarcho-Liberals and pacifists of all hues, who passed for Socialists and were connected with the Socialist press, used Debs for copy, particularly during the war and during his confinement in prison. They went out of their way to advertise Debs as the "great humanist," the "great libertarian," taking advantage of his good nature and friendliness to everybody. These inane appellations could not be meant for Debs who wrote that "*the most heroic word in all languages is Revolution,*" and who always wanted to be known as an unalloyed revolutionist.

Debs was a revolutionist and, with all his shortcomings, he generally eschewed any other but the revolutionary path. As such he is remembered by the present generation of American revolutionists, who will keep his memory green so that it may be passed on to future generations. Eugene Victor Debs, better known to all those who worked with him as Gene Debs, belongs to the revolutionary traditions of the American working class.

October 1, 1928.

## HOW I BECAME A SOCIALIST

*(From the New York "Comrade," April, 1902.)*

It all seems very strange to me now, taking a backward look, that my vision was so focalized on a single objective point that I utterly failed to see what now appears as clear as the noonday sun, so clear that I marvel that any workingman, however dull, uncomprehending, can resist it.

But perhaps it was better so. I was to be baptized in Socialism in the roar of conflict and I thank the gods for reserving to this fitful occasion the fiat, "Let there be light!"—the light that streams in steady radiance upon the Broadway of the Socialist republic.

The skirmish lines of the American Railway Union were well advanced. A series of small battles were fought and won without the loss of a man. A number of concessions were made by the corporations rather than risk an encounter. Then came the fight on the Great Northern, short, sharp and decisive. The victory was complete—the only railroad strike of magnitude ever won by an organization in America. . . .

Next followed the final shock—the Pullman strike—and the American Railway Union again won, clear and complete. The combined corporations were

paralyzed and helpless. At this juncture there were delivered, from wholly unexpected quarters, a swift succession of blows that blinded me for an instant and then opened wide my eyes—and in the gleam of every bayonet and the flash of every rifle the class struggle was revealed. This was my first practical lesson in Socialism, though wholly unaware that it was called by that name.

An army of detectives, thugs and murderers were equipped with badge and bludgeon and turned loose; old hulks of cars were fired; the alarm bells tolled; the people were terrified; the most startling rumors were set afloat; the press volleyed and thundered, and over all the wires sped the news that Chicago's white throat was in the clutch of a red mob; injunctions flew thick and fast, arrests followed, and our office and headquarters, the heart of the strike, was sacked, torn out and nailed up by the "lawful" authorities of the federal government; and when in company with my loyal comrades I found myself in Cook County jail at Chicago with the whole press screaming conspiracy, treason and murder, and by some fateful coincidence I was given the cell occupied just previous to his execution by the assassin of Mayor Carter Harrison, overlooking the spot, a few feet distant, where the anarchists were hanged a few years before, I had another exceedingly practical and impressive lesson in Socialism.

The Chicago jail sentences were followed by six

months at Woodstock and it was here that Socialism gradually laid hold of me in its own irresistible fashion. Books and pamphlets and letters from Socialists came by every mail and I began to read and think and dissect the anatomy of the system in which workmen, however organized, could be shattered and battered and splintered at a single stroke. The writings of Bellamy and Blatchford early appealed to me. The *Coöperative Commonwealth* of Grönlund also impressed me, but the writings of Kautsky were so clear and conclusive that I readily grasped, not merely his argument, but also caught the spirit of his Socialist utterance—and I thank him and all who helped me out of darkness into light.

It was at this time, when the first glimmerings of Socialism were beginning to penetrate, that Victor L. Berger—and I have loved him ever since—came to Woodstock, as if a providential instrument, and delivered the first impassioned message of Socialism I had ever heard—the very first to set “the wires humming in my system.” As a souvenir of that visit there is in my library a volume of *Capital*, by Karl Marx, inscribed with the compliments of Victor L. Berger, which I cherish as a token of priceless value.

The American Railway Union was defeated but not conquered—overwhelmed but not destroyed. It lives and pulsates in the Socialist movement, and its defeat but blazed the way to economic freedom and hastened the dawn of human brotherhood.

## POLITICS—A REFLEX OF ECONOMICS

*(Delivered at Girard, Kansas, May 23, 1908, on the occasion of nomination as presidential candidate by the Socialist Party.)*

Now it is a fact that politics is simply the reflex of economics. The material foundation of society determines the character of all social institutions—political, educational, ethical and spiritual. In exact proportion as the economic foundation of society changes, the character of all social institutions changes to correspond to that basis. Half of this country was in favor of chattel slavery, and half was opposed to it, geographically speaking. Why was the church of the south in favor of chattel slavery? Why was the church of the north opposed to chattel slavery? The northern capitalist wasn't a bit more opposed to chattel slavery from any moral sense than was the southern plantation owner. The south produced cotton for the market by the hand labor of Negro slaves. On the other hand, the north was not dependent upon cotton, could raise no cotton. In the north it was the small capitalist at the beginning of capitalism, who had begun to manufacture with the machine, and who wanted cheap labor; and the sharper the competition the cheaper he could buy his labor. To the southern plantation owner, chattel slavery was the source of his wealth. He had to have slaves, and what the plantation owner had

to have in economics the preacher had to justify in religion. As long as chattel slavery was necessary to the southern plantation owner, as long as that stage of the economic condition lasted, the preachers stood up in the pulpits of the south and said it was ordained of God, and proved it by the Bible. I don't know of any crime that the oppressors and their hirelings have not proven by the Bible.

### POLITICAL AND INDUSTRIAL ACTION ARE COMPLEMENTARY

*(Delivered at Canton at the Ohio State Convention  
of the Socialist Party, June 16, 1918.)*

POLITICAL action and industrial action must supplement and sustain each other. You will never vote the Socialist republic into existence. You will have to lay its foundations in industrial organization. The industrial union is the forerunner of industrial democracy. In the shop where the workers are associated is where industrial democracy has its beginning. Organize according to your industries! Get together in every department of industrial service! United and acting together for the common good your power is invincible.

When you organize industrially you will soon learn that you can manage as well as operate industry. You will soon realize that you do not need the



idle masters and exploiters. They are simply parasites. They do not employ you as you imagine but you employ them to take from you what you produce, and that is how they function in industry. You can certainly dispense with them in that capacity. You do not need them to depend upon for your jobs. You can never be free while you work and live by their sufferance. You must own your own tools and then you will control your own jobs, enjoy the products of your own labor and be free men instead of industrial slaves.

### POLITICAL ACTION AND THE UNIONS

*(From "Debs: His Life, Writings and Speeches,"  
1908, pp. 91, 136, 142.)*

SOCIALISM is first of all a political movement of the working class, clearly defined and uncompromising, which aims at the overthrow of the prevailing capitalist system by securing control of the national government and by the exercise of the public powers, supplanting the existing capitalist class government with Socialist administration—that is to say, changing a republic in name into a republic in fact.

Socialism also means a coming phase of civilization, next in order to the present one, in which the collective people will own and operate the sources and means of wealth production, in which all will

have equal right to work and all will coöperate together in producing wealth and all will enjoy all the fruit of their collective labor. . . .

The cry, "no politics in the union," "dragging the union into politics," or, "making the union the tail of some political kite," is born of ignorance or dishonesty, or a combination of both. It is echoed by every ward-heeling politician in the country. The plain purpose is to deceive and mislead the workers.

The fully developed labor unionist uses both his economic and political power in the interest of his class. He understands that the struggle between labor and capital is a class struggle; that the working class are in a great majority, but divided, some in trade unions and some out of them, some in one political party and some in another; that because they are divided they are helpless and must submit to being robbed of what their labor produces, and treated with contempt; that they must unite their class in the trade union on the one hand and in the Socialist Party on the other hand; that industrially and politically they must act together as a class, and that any workman who deserts his union on strike and goes to the other side is a scab, and any workman who deserts his party on Election Day and goes over to the enemy is a betrayer of his class and an enemy of his fellow-men. . . .

Between these (Republican and Democratic) parties Socialists have no choice, no preference. They

are one in their opposition to Socialism; that is to say, the emancipation of the working class from wage-slavery, and every workingman who has intelligence enough to understand the interest of his class and the nature of the struggle in which it is involved will once and for all time sever his relations with them both; and recognizing the class struggle which is being waged between producing workers and non-producing capitalists, cast his lot with the class-conscious, revolutionary Socialist Party, which is pledged to abolish the capitalist system, class-rule and wage-slavery—a party which does not compromise or fuse, but, preserving inviolate the principles which quickened it into life and now give it vitality and force, moves forward with dauntless determination to the goal of economic freedom.

### THE FUTILITY OF PETITIONS

*(From speech on "Craft Unionism" delivered at Chicago, November 23, 1905.)*

THE American Federation of Labor is now holding its annual convention in the city of Pittsburgh. What are its delegates doing there? Simply passing the same old resolutions. Once more they are going to petition Congress to enact an eight-hour law. They have done that over and over again and their petition has been as repeatedly pigeon-holed. They

have also resolved to petition Congress to restrict the powers of capitalist courts in dealing with labor. They have done that time and again, and what have they gained by it? Absolutely nothing. No attention has been paid to these servile supplications. They have been disregarded, thrown aside, treated with contempt; but the delegates solemnly meet in convention once more to pass the same hoary resolutions, to introduce the same stale petitions, with the same inevitable results. Now, is not this a perfectly stupid procedure? Are these men incapable of profiting by experience? Do they not by this time understand the nature and essential functions of capitalist-class government?

Can they not see that we have a capitalist-class Congress, and capitalist-class legislatures, elected in every instance by an ignorant working class, kept ignorant, designedly, in the name of unionism, and with the aid of the labor lieutenants of the capitalist class? And that it is the very height of folly and depth of humiliation for a committee of the working class to beg the representatives of the capitalist class to legislate in the interests of the working class?

They were elected to serve the masters. And they are serving them. And we have no right to find fault with them—at least those of us who are responsible for their being where they are.

## A REVOLUTIONARY ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION NEEDED

*(From speech on "Industrial Unionism," delivered  
in New York, December 10, 1905.)*

It is a very important thing to develop the economic power to have a sound economic organization. This has been the inherent weakness in the labor movement of the United States. We need, and sorely need, a revolutionary economic organization. We must develop this kind of strength; it is the kind that we will have occasion to use in due time, and it is the kind that will not fail us when the crisis comes. So we shall organize and continue to organize on the political field; and I am of those who believe that the day is near at hand when we shall have one great revolutionary economic organization, and one great revolutionary political party of the working class. Then will proceed with increased impetus the work of education and organization that will culminate in emancipation.

This great body will sweep into power and seize the reins of government; take possession of industry in the name of the working class, and it can be easily done. All that will be required will be to transfer the title deeds from the parasites to the producers; and then the working class, in control of industry, will operate it for the benefit of all. The work-day will be reduced in proportion to the progress of

invention. Every man will work, or at least have a chance to work, and get the full equivalent of what he produces. He will work, not as a slave, but as a free man, and he will express himself in his work and work with joy. Then the badge of labor will be the only badge of aristocracy. The industrial dungeon will become a temple of science. The working class will be free, and all humanity disenthralled.

The workers are the saviors of society, the redeemers of the race; and when they have fulfilled their great historic mission, men and women can walk the highlands and enjoy the vision of a land without masters and without slaves, a land regenerated and resplendent in the triumph of Freedom and Civilization.

## CLASS UNIONISM

*(Delivered at Chicago, November 23, 1905.)*

THE old trade union is organized on the basis of the identity of interests of capitalists and wage-workers, and spends its time and devotes its energies to harmonizing these two classes; and it is a vain and hopeless task. When these interests can be even temporarily harmonized it is always in the interest of the capitalist class, and at the expense of the working class.

Most capitalists heartily approve the old form of

trade unionism and encourage and liberally support it, for the very reason that this outgrown unionism does not truly represent and cannot actually express the economic interests of the working class.

The simple fact is that industrial conditions have undergone such a complete change that now the trade union, instead of uniting the workers, divides them, incites craft jealousy, breeds dissension and promotes strife—the very things capitalists desire; for so long as the working class is divided, the capitalists will be secure in their dominion of the earth and the seas, and the millions of toilers will remain in subjection. . . .

The capitalist doesn't intend that you shall ever be anything but his wage-slave. He would scout the suggestion that you are his equal. He doesn't associate with you. He belongs to another class; and the class to which he belongs is called the upper class. You, as a workingman, belong to the lower class. The working class has always been the lower class, and is to-day; and you will be the lower class as long as you are content to be that class. It is in your power to make yourselves the upper class, and in fact the only class. You are in an overwhelming majority. There are only a few capitalists as compared to you. And yet, they own practically everything and rule the land and will keep on owning and ruling the land as long as you workingmen allow them to; and you will allow them to as long as you

persist in remaining divided in trade unions and being used against each other, instead of uniting and acting solidly with and for each other and against the capitalists.

The Industrial Workers is organized—and we desire it boldly—to fight the capitalist class. We want it distinctly understood that we claim nothing in common with that class. They have economic interests separate from and opposed to the interests of the working class. And we propose that the working class shall be organized economically and politically to retire the capitalist class from business.

Our business is to put the exploiters of labor out of business.

## INDUSTRIAL VS. CRAFT UNIONISM

*(From article on "Unionism and Socialism," reprinted on "Debs: His Life, Writings and Speeches," 1908, p. 133.)*

THE "pure and simple" trade union of the past does not answer the requirements of to-day, and they who insist that it does are blind to the changes going on about them, and out of harmony with the progressive forces of the age.

The attempt to preserve the "autonomy" of each trade and segregate it within its own independent jurisdiction, while the lines which once separated them are being obliterated, and the trades are being



interwoven and interlocked in the process of industrial evolution, is as futile as to declare and attempt to enforce the independence of the waves of the sea.

A modern industrial plant has a hundred trades and parts of trades represented in its working force. To have these workers parceled out to a hundred unions is to divide and not to organize them, to give them over to factions and petty leadership and leave them an easy prey to the machinations of the enemy. The dominant craft should control the plant or, rather, the union, and it should embrace the entire working force. This is the industrial plan, the modern method applied to modern conditions, and it will in time prevail.

The attempt of each trade to maintain its own independence separately and apart from others results in increasing jurisdiction entanglements, and is fruitful of dissension, strife and ultimate disruption.

## THE CLASS STRUGGLE AND CRAFT UNIONISM

*(From speech on "Craft Unionism," delivered at Chicago, November 23, 1905.)*

THE working class are in an overwhelming majority. They have the numbers. They ought to have the power. And they would have the power

if only they were conscious of their interests *as a class*.

Every effort is put forth by the exploiting capitalist to prevent workingmen from seeing the class struggle. The capitalist insists that there is no such struggle. The editor in the employ of the capitalists echoes "no class struggle." The teacher, professor and the minister, all of them dependent upon the capitalist for the chance to make a living, agree that there are no classes and no class struggle. In unison they declaim against class agitation and seek to obscure class rule that it may be perpetuated indefinitely.

*We* insist that there *is* a class struggle; that the working class must recognize it; that they must organize economically and politically upon the basis of that struggle; and that when they do so organize they will then have the power to free themselves and put an end to that struggle forever.

Now, have not the workers, especially here in Chicago, had sufficient experience during the last few years? Have they not been defeated often enough to demonstrate the inherent weakness of the old trade union movement? Have they not been clubbed by the police and flung into jail often enough? Haven't they had experience of this kind enough to open their eyes to the fact that there is a mighty class struggle in progress, and that there will never be any material change in their condition until

they unite their class in every department of industrial activity?

Speaking for myself, I was made to realize long ago that the old trade union was utterly incompetent to deal successfully with the exploiting corporations in this struggle. I was made to see that in craft unionism the capitalist class have it in their power to keep the workers divided, to use one part of them with which to conquer and crush another part of them. Indeed, I was made to see that the old form of unionism separates the workers and keeps them helpless at the mercy of their masters.

### NO NEUTRALITY ON THE UNION QUESTION

*(From article, "Sound Socialist Tactics," in "International Socialist Review," February, 1912.)*

THE Socialist Party cannot be neutral on the union question. It is compelled to declare itself by the logic of evolution, and as a revolutionary party it cannot commit itself to the principles of reactionary unionism. Not only must the Socialist Party declare itself in favor of economic unionism, but the kind of unionism which alone can complement the revolutionary action of the workers on the political field.

I am opposed under all circumstances to any party

alliances or affiliations with reactionary trade unions and to compromising tactics of every kind and form, excepting alone in event of some extreme emergency. While "the game of politics," as it is understood and as it is played under capitalist rules, is as repugnant to me as it can possibly be to any one, I am a thorough believer in political organization and political action.

Political power is essential to the workers in their struggle, and they can never emancipate themselves without developing and exercising that power in the interests of their class.

I believe in making every effort within our power to promote industrial unionism among the workers and to have them all united in one economic organization. To accomplish this I would encourage industrial independent organization, especially among the millions who have not yet been organized at all, and I would also encourage the "boring from within" for all that can be accomplished by the industrial unionists in the craft unions.

## WE MUST BORE FROM WITHIN AND WITHOUT

*(From letter to Tom Mann, the English militant labor leader, August, 1910.)*

It is true that the old unions are for the most part thoroughly outgrown, reactionary, and utterly

hostile to revolutionary agitation and activity, and that their leaders are of the same character, if they are not corrupt besides. . . .

Industrial evolution has made industrial unionism possible and revolutionary education and agitation must now make it inevitable. To this end we must bore from within and without, the industrial unionists within the old unions working together in perfect harmony with the industrial unionists upon the outside engaged in laying the foundation and erecting the superstructure of the new revolutionary economic organization, the embryonic industrial democracy.

The difficulties we have encountered on this side since organizing the Industrial Workers have largely been overcome and I believe the time is near at hand when all industrial unionists will work together to build up the needed organization and when industrial unionism will receive such impetus as will force it to the front irresistibly in response to the crying need of the enslaved and despoiled workers in their struggle for emancipation.

The economic organization of the working class is as essential to the revolutionary movement as the sun is to light, and the workers are coming more and more to realize it, and the triumph of industrial unionism over craft unionism is but a question of time, and this can be materially shortened if we deal sanely and wisely with the situation.

## A WORD FOR THE I. W. W.

(Delivered at Canton, June 16, 1918.)

FEW men have the courage to say a decent word in favor of the I. W. W. I have.

After long investigation by two men who are not Socialists: John Graham Brooks, Harvard University; Mr. Bruere, Government investigator, a pamphlet has been issued called *The Truth About the I. W. W.*

These men investigated the I. W. W. They have examined its doings, beginning at Bisbee, Arizona, where the officers deported five hundred. It is only necessary to label a man, "I. W. W." to lynch him. Just think of the state of mind for which the capitalist press is responsible.

When Wall Street yells war, you may rest assured every pulpit in the land will yell war. The press and the pulpit have in every age and every nation been on the side of the exploiting class and the ruling class. That's why the I. W. W. is infamous.

The I. W. W. in its career has never committed as much violence against the ruling class as the ruling class has committed against the people. The trial at Chicago is now on and they have not proven violence in a single solitary case, and yet, one hundred and twelve have been on trial for months and months without a shade of evidence. And this is all in its favor. And for this and many other reasons, the

I. W. W. is fighting the fight of the bottom dog. For the very reason that Gompers is glorified by Wall Street, Bill Haywood is despised by Wall Street.

### THE CRISIS IS UPON US

(From the "Rip-Saw," October, 1914.)

IN the present crisis the need of an educated and organized working class is being daily, hourly urged upon us as never before in this struggle. Capitalism may be on its last legs and on the verge of collapse, but that only makes our condition more distressing if we are too weak and impotent as an organized body to deliver to the brutal and outworn old system its *coup de grace* and install the new order of society.

The crisis is upon us but are we prepared for it? Preparation in this case means education and organization and their resultant industrial and political solidarity.

The Revolution may be at our door but like the revolutions of the past it will be next to fruitless to the working class, unless they are prepared to take advantage of the opportunity it presents to install themselves into power and inaugurate the new order of society based upon their industrial freedom.

The war in Europe and the conditions resulting from it have served to make this an unusually pro-

pitious time to educate and organize the workers along the lines of the social revolution, and to this task every Socialist and industrial revolutionist should now bend all his energies.

Industrial unity should be the watchword of the workers and in every industry the rank and file should get together and make common cause in one and the same industrial union and one and the same political party.

The downfall of capitalism and the triumph of Socialism will follow inevitably when the workers have achieved their economic and political solidarity.

## ORGANIZATION AND EMANCIPATION

*(From the "Southern Worker," April, 1914.)*

THE problem confronting us to-day is preëminently one of organization. To organize the working class is to achieve emancipation.

But there is organization and organization. There is the kind the master class do not object to, in fact, encourage, patronize and support, thus showing themselves to be friends of the working class, but the kind of organization which has the approval of the exploiter is not apt to do anything for his victim except to bind him more securely in bondage. There is another kind of organization that the master class do not approve and commend, but on the contrary



denounce and fight tooth and nail, and that is the kind which has for its purpose the overthrow of wage-slavery, the abolition of the master class, and the emancipation of the wage-slave.

This kind of organization is rightly called revolutionary; it is both economic and political in character, does not trim or trade or compromise, but pursues the straight road to its goal, and this kind of organization is positively the only kind that holds out any hope to the working class.

The absolute necessity for sound, revolutionary organization is becoming more apparent every day. Without such organization the struggle is vain and the future without hope. The industrial democracy and the Socialist republic of which we hear so much and in which we all believe cannot be voted into existence. They have got to be organized and the foundation of such organization must be laid and its superstructure reared within the old system so that when the old system crumbles away the new will be already molded to take its place, and thus prevent lapsing into chaos and disaster from which it would require years and years to recover.

Hand in hand with industrial unity must go the political unity of the workers. They must develop and assert their political power as well as their economic power and make both count for all they are worth in the struggle for industrial freedom. The Socialist Party, organized by the workers, is the

political expression of their hopes and aspirations and this is the party the workers must build up and support staunchly every step of the way and every hour of the struggle until victory is achieved. So long as the government, including the courts, the soldiers, the police and private armies of thugs, gunmen and man-killers, are in the control of the master class all their strikes will be fought under great disadvantages and all the power of master class rule will be used to defeat them and keep them in slavery.

Workers and sympathizers should regard it as their duty to the cause to bend all their energies in this monumental work in spreading the light and speeding the day of industrial freedom.

### THE SOCIALIST PARTY AND IMMIGRATION

*(Letter to George D. Brewer, July, 1910. Brewer was an active Socialist working on the "Appeal to Reason." He was a delegate to the 1910 Congress of the Socialist Party at which the subject of immigration was discussed. Unwilling to come out unequivocally for unrestricted immigration which the rank and file of the members demanded, the S. P. leadership, desirous to placate the A. F. of L., adopted a compromise resolution which favored the restriction of artificially stimulated immigration.)*

I HAVE just read the majority report of the Committee on Immigration. It is utterly unsocialistic,

reactionary and in truth outrageous, and I hope you will oppose it with all your power. The plea that certain races are to be excluded because of tactical expediency would be entirely consistent in a bourgeois convention of self-seekers, but should have no place in a proletarian gathering under the auspices of an international movement that is calling on the oppressed and exploited workers of all the world to unite for their emancipation. . . .

Away with the "tactics" which require the exclusion of the oppressed and suffering slaves who seek these shores with the hope of bettering their wretched condition and are driven back under the cruel lash of expediency by those who call themselves Socialists in the name of a movement whose proud boast it is that it stands uncompromisingly for the oppressed and downtrodden of all the earth. These poor slaves have just as good a right to enter here as even the authors of this report who now seek to exclude them. The only difference is that the latter had the advantage of a little education and had not been so cruelly ground and oppressed, but in point of principle there is no difference, the motive of all being precisely the same, and if the convention which meets in the name of Socialism should discriminate at all it should be in favor of the miserable races who have borne the heaviest burdens and are most nearly crushed to the earth.

Upon this vital proposition I would take my stand

against the world and no specious argument of the subtle and the sophistical of the Civic Federation unionism, who do not hesitate to sacrifice principle for numbers and jeopardize ultimate success for immediate gain, could move me to turn my back upon the oppressed, brutalized and despairing victims of the old world, who are lured to these shores by some faint glimmer of hope that here their crushing burdens may be lightened, and some star of promise rise in their darkened skies.

The alleged advantages that would come to the Socialist movement because of such heartless exclusion would all be swept away a thousand times by the sacrifice of a cardinal principle of the international Socialist movement, for well might the good faith of such a movement be questioned by intelligent workers if it placed itself upon record as barring its doors against the very races most in need of relief, and extinguishing their hope, at the very time their ears were first attuned to the international call and their hearts were beginning to throb responsive to the solidarity of the oppressed of all lands and all climes beneath the skies.

In this attitude there is nothing of maudlin sentimentality, but simply a rigid adherence to the fundamental principles of the international proletarian movement. If Socialism, international revolutionary Socialism, does not stand staunchly, unflinchingly, and uncompromisingly for the working class and for

the exploited and oppressed masses of all lands, then it stands for none and its claim is a false pretense and its profession a delusion and a snare.

Let those desert us who will because we refuse to shut the international door in the faces of their own brethren; we will be none the weaker, but all the stronger for their going, for they evidently have no clear conception of the international solidarity, are wholly lacking in the revolutionary spirit, and have no proper place in the Socialist movement while they entertain such aristocratic notions of their own assumed superiority.

Let us stand squarely on our revolutionary, working class principles and make our fight openly and uncompromisingly against all our enemies, adopting no cowardly tactics and holding out no false hopes, and our movement will then inspire the faith, arouse the spirit, and develop the fiber that will prevail against the world.

## DANGER AHEAD

*(From the "International Socialist Review," January, 1911.)*

THE danger I see ahead is that the Socialist Party at this stage, and under existing conditions, is apt to attract elements which it cannot assimilate, and that it may be either weighted down or torn asunder with internal strife, or that it may become permeated

and corrupted with the spirit of bourgeois reform to an extent that will practically destroy its virility and efficiency as a revolutionary organization.

To my mind the working class character and the revolutionary integrity of the Socialist Party are of first importance. All the votes of the people would do us no good if we ceased to be a revolutionary party, or only incidentally so, while yielding more and more to the pressure to modify the principles and program of the party for the sake of swelling the vote and hastening the day of its expected triumph.

There is also a disposition on the part of some to join hands with reactionary trade unionists in local emergencies and in certain temporary situations to effect some specific purpose, which may or may not be in harmony with our revolutionary program. No possible good can come from any kind of a political alliance, express or implied, with trade unions or the leaders of trade unions who are opposed to Socialism and only turn to it for use in some extremity, the fruit of their own reactionary policy.

Of course we want the support of trade unionists, but only of those who believe in Socialism and are ready to vote and work with us for the overthrow of capitalism.

The American Federation of Labor as an organization, with its Civic Federation to determine its attitude and control its course, is deadly hostile to the

Socialist Party and to any and every revolutionary movement of the working class. To kowtow to this organization and to join hands with its leaders to secure political favors can only result in compromising our principles and bringing disaster to the party.

### DIFFERENCES WITH THE SOCIALIST PARTY

*(From the acceptance speech delivered to the Notification Committee of the Socialist Party at the Federal Penitentiary, Atlanta, May 29, 1920.)*

. . . I HAVE read the platform adopted by the convention and I wish I might say it had my unqualified approval. It is a masterly piece of writing, and it states the essential principles of the Socialist movement.

But I believe it could have been made much more effective if it had stressed the class struggle more prominently and if more emphasis had been laid on industrial organization. I do not believe in captious criticism, but I wanted to be frank with you and state my position. I must do this if I am to prove worthy of the high confidence reposed in me.

However, a platform is not so important after all. We can breathe the breath of revolution into any platform. . . .

I have always been a radical, never more so than now. I have never feared becoming too radical. I

do fear becoming too conservative. We must guard against any policy or attitude of fear to state our position clearly.

Socialist platforms are not made to catch votes. Our purpose should be to state the principles of the party clearly to the people. There is a tendency in the party to become a party of politicians instead of a party of the workers. That policy must be checked, not encouraged.

We are in politics not to get votes but to develop power to emancipate the working class. I would not do or say anything to catch a vote for the sake of that vote. Our duty is to tell exactly what we seek to accomplish, so that those who come to us do so with no misunderstanding.

Some members of the party have been admitted in the past to make us respectable. They were unfortunate incidents. We want what we are rightly entitled to and, if we can get that, we can use it properly for our purposes.

Before serving time I made a series of addresses supporting the Russian Revolution, which I consider the greatest single achievement in all history. I said at that time that I was a Bolshevik. I still am a Bolshevik, but I am not a Russian Bolshevik in America.

I regret that the convention did not see its way clear to affiliate with the Third International without qualifications. There is some difficulty about that



unfortunate phrase about the dictatorship of the proletariat.

A dictatorship does not imply what we mean. It is a misnomer. Dictatorship is autocracy. There is no autocracy in the rule of the masses. During the transition period the revolution must protect itself.

It is an unfortunate term and leads to misrepresentation. I am sorry it is used. I am opposed to dictatorship in every form. We are for freedom and equal rights. When we say dictatorship, we give the capitalist press opportunity to attack us. Phrases do not make a revolution.

I heartily support the Russian Revolution without reservation.

We should withhold criticism of those who have left us. I was sorry to read a speech of Berger's the other day attacking the Communists. I have known many comrades in all these parties. I have high regard for them. They are as honest as we are.

## MILITARISM AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE

*(Delivered before the jury at the Federal Court, Cleveland, September 12, 1918.)*

Now, where there is exploitation there must be some form of militarism to support it. Wherever you find exploitation you find some form of military

force. In a smaller way you find it in this country. It was there long before war was declared. For instance, when the miners out in Colorado entered upon a strike about four years ago, the state militia, that is under the control of the Standard Oil Company, marched upon a camp, where the miners and their wives and children were in tents. And by the way, a report of this strike was issued by the United States Commission on Industrial Relations. When the soldiers approached the camp at Ludlow, where these miners, with their wives and children, were, the miners, to prove that they were patriotic, placed flags above their tents, and when the state militia, that is paid by Rockefeller and controlled by Rockefeller, swooped down upon that camp, the first thing they did was to shoot those United States flags into tatters. Not one of them was indicted or tried because he was a traitor to his country. Pregnant women were killed, and a number of innocent children slain. This in the United States of America,—the fruit of exploitation. The miners wanted a little more of what they had been producing. But the Standard Oil Company wasn't rich enough. It insisted that all they were entitled to was just enough to keep them in working order. There is slavery for you. And when at last they protested, when they were tormented by hunger, when they saw their children in tatters, they were shot down as if they had been so many vagabond dogs.

## WAR: ITS CAUSE AND ITS MAKERS

*(From the speeches delivered at Canton, June 16, 1918, and before the jury at the Federal Court, Cleveland, September, 1918.)*

WAR does not come by chance. War is not the result of accident. There is a definite cause for war, especially a modern war. The war that began in Europe can readily be accounted for. For the last forty years, under this international capitalist system, this exploiting system, these various nations of Europe have been preparing for the inevitable. And why? In all these nations the great industries are owned by a relatively small class. They are operated for the profit of that class. And great abundance is produced by the workers, but their wages will only buy back a small part of their product. What is the result? They have a vast surplus on hand; they have got to export it; they have got to find a foreign market for it. As a result of this, these nations are pitted against each other. They begin to arm themselves to open, to maintain the market and quickly dispose of their surplus. There is but the one market. All these nations are competitors for it, and sooner or later every war of trade becomes a war of blood.

Wars have been waged for conquests, for plunder, and since the feudal ages, the feudal lords along the Rhine made war upon each other. They wanted to

enlarge their domains, to increase their power and their wealth and so they declared war upon each other. But they did not go to war any more than the Wall Street Junkers go to war. Their predecessors declared the wars, but their miserable serfs fought the wars. The serfs believed that it was their patriotic duty to fall upon one another, to wage war upon one another. And that is war in a nutshell. The master class has always brought a war and the subject class has fought the battle. The master class has had all to gain and nothing to lose, and the subject class has had all to lose and nothing to gain. They have always taught you that it is your patriotic duty to go to war and slaughter yourselves at their command. You have never had a voice in the war. The working class who make the sacrifices, who shed the blood, have never yet had a voice in declaring war. The ruling class has always made the war and made the peace.

*Yours not to question why,  
Yours but to do and die.*

I have been accused of having obstructed the war. I admit it. Gentlemen, I abhor war. I would oppose the war if I stood alone. When I think of a cold, glittering steel bayonet being plunged in the white, quivering flesh of a human being, I recoil with horror. I have often wondered if I could take the life of my fellow-men, even to save my own.

Yes; I was opposed to the war. I am perfectly willing, on that count, to be branded as a disloyalist, and if it is a crime under the American law punishable by imprisonment for being opposed to human bloodshed, I am perfectly willing to be clothed in the stripes of a convict and to end my days in a prison cell.

The War of the Revolution was opposed. The Tory press denounced its leaders as criminals and outlaws. And that is what they were, under the divine right of a king to rule men.

The War of 1812 was opposed and condemned; the Mexican War was bitterly condemned by Abraham Lincoln, by Charles Sumner, by Daniel Webster and by Henry Clay. That war took place under the Polk administration. These men denounced the President; they condemned his administration; and they said that the war was a crime against humanity. They were not indicted; they were not tried for crime. They are honored to-day by all of their countrymen. The War of the Rebellion was opposed and condemned. In 1864 the Democratic Party met in convention at Chicago and passed a resolution condemning the war as a failure. What would you say if the Socialist Party were to meet in convention to-day and condemn the present war as a failure? You charge us with being disloyalists and traitors. Were the Democrats of 1864 disloyalists

and traitors because they condemned the war as a failure?

### “PREPAREDNESS” AND POVERTY

*(From the “American Socialist,” December 18, 1915.)*

THE industrial condition of the toiling masses in this country is set forth clearly and shockingly in the report of the United States Commission on Industrial Relations. The facts and figures here presented and supported by incontrovertible proof tell the tragic story of labor’s poverty-stricken and wretched condition under the prevailing industrial system. One-third of all the workers in the land are the victims of chronic poverty and one-fifth of the whole number are in a state of continuous unemployment, and to protect this beneficent system and to perpetuate this delectable condition, a program of “preparedness” has been formulated by the ruling class which appeals in clarion tones to the patriotic fervor of every poverty-stricken toiler in the land.

The zeal and ardor and burning “patriotism” of the barons of industry, the pirates and the buccaneers on the high seas of labor, is of course readily understood, but how any workingman or any sympathizer with the working class can fall for this plutocratic conspiracy to establish a military dic-

tatorship, and thereby buttress the industrial system which robs, pauperizes and brutalizes the great mass of honest toilers, is not easy to account for.

Capitalist "preparedness" means the security of this nation's robbers against the same class of robbers of other nations. To the working class it means that the class that robs and impoverishes them is in danger and that it is their "patriotic" duty to fight and die like mad beasts to perpetuate the plutocratic misrule of their thieving, plundering masters and their own poverty, servility and degradation.

Danger to the ruling class is a thing to rejoice over and take advantage of, and not to worry over and prepare against. The ruling class owns the nation, controls the government, and waxes fat on the spoils wrung from the working class. Let the ruling class fight their own wars and defend their booty. The workers they have despoiled owe them no allegiance or protection and the workers themselves have nothing to protect but their poverty and nothing to lose but their chains.

Plutocracy, patriotism, and preparedness, poverty and pauperism, are interlinked in the military program of Wall Street, and if the workers are not totally blind they will steer clear of that devil's snare and launch a scheme of preparedness of their own for the day coming when they will have to fight for their lives, if they are not to be completely

crushed beneath the iron hoof of a military autocracy.

No workingman has any business to enlist in a capitalist class war or fight a capitalist class battle.

It is our duty to enlist in our own war and fight our own battles. But first of all we shall have to organize, equip, train and drill our army, and this army consists of the industrially and politically organized workers of the land, and when capitalists declare war on one another, it is then for us to declare war on them all, paralyze industry by the strike and fight every battle for the overthrow of the ruling class and their ravaging, plundering, war-breeding, man-killing, heart-breaking, soul-destroying system, and for the emancipation of the working class and the brotherhood of peace of all the world.

## IN WHOSE WAR I WILL FIGHT

(From the "*Appeal to Reason*," September 11, 1915.)

SINCE my characterization of the soldier in the Jingo edition <sup>1</sup> I have been asked if I was opposed to all war and if I would refuse to be a soldier and to fight under any circumstances, and to make my answer through the *Appeal to Reason*. No, I am

<sup>1</sup> Reference is here made to an article published by Debs in the *Appeal to Reason*, August 28, 1915, under the title "Never Be a Soldier," in which he characterized the soldier as "the hired assassin of his capitalist master," and called upon every worker "never to become a soldier and never to go to war."



not opposed to all war, nor am I opposed to fighting under all circumstances, and any declaration to the contrary would disqualify me as a revolutionist. When I say I am opposed to war I mean ruling class war, for the ruling class is the only class that makes war. It matters not to me whether this war be offensive or defensive, or what other lying excuse may be invented for it, I am opposed to it, and I would be shot for treason before I would enter such a war.

If I were in Congress I would be shot before I would vote a dollar for such a war.

Capitalist wars for capitalist conquest and capitalist plunder must be fought by the capitalists themselves so far as I am concerned, and upon that question there can be no misunderstanding as to my position.

I have no country to fight for; my country is the earth; and I am a citizen of the world.

I would not violate my principles for God, much less for a crazy kaiser, a savage czar, a degenerate king, or a gang of pot-bellied parasites.

But while I have not a drop of blood to shed for the oppressors of the working class and the robbers of the poor, the thieves and looters, the brigands and murderers whose debauched misrule is the crime of the ages, I have a heart-full to shed for their victims when it shall be needed in the war for their liberation.

I am not a capitalist soldier; I am a proletarian revolutionist. I do not belong to the regular army of the plutocracy, but to the irregular army of the people. I refuse to obey any command to fight from the ruling class, but I will not wait to be commanded to fight for the working class.

I am opposed to every war but one; I am for that war with heart and soul, and that is the worldwide war of the social revolution. In that war I am prepared to fight in any way the ruling class may make it necessary, even to the barricades.

There is where I stand and where I believe the Socialist Party stands, or ought to stand, on the question of war.

## THE BOLSHEVIKS

*(Delivered before the jury at the Federal Court, Cleveland, September 12, 1918.)*

I HAVE been accused of expressing sympathy for the Bolsheviks of Russia. I plead guilty to the charge. I have read a great deal about the Bolsheviks of Russia that is not true. I happen to know of my own knowledge that they have been grossly misrepresented by the press of this country. Who are these much-maligned revolutionists of Russia? For years they had been the victims of a brutal Czar. They and their antecedents were sent to

Siberia, lashed with a knout, if they even dreamed of freedom. At last the hour struck for a great change. The Revolution came. The Czar was overthrown and his infamous régime ended. What followed? The common people of Russia came into power, the peasants, the toilers, the soldiers, and they proceeded as best they could to establish a government of the people.

It may be that the much-despised Bolsheviks may fail at last, but let me say to you that they have written a chapter of glorious history. It will stand to their eternal credit. Their leaders are now denounced as criminals and outlaws. Let me remind you that there was a time when George Washington, who is now revered as the father of his country, was denounced as a disloyalist, when Sam Adams, who is known to us as the father of the American Revolution, was condemned as an incendiary, and Patrick Henry, who delivered that inspired and inspiring oration that aroused the colonists, was condemned as a traitor.

They were misunderstood at the time. They stood true to themselves, and they won an immortality of gratitude and glory.

When great changes occur in history, when great principles are involved, as a rule the majority are wrong. The minority are right. In every age there have been a few heroic souls who have been in advance of their time, who have been misunderstood,

maligned, persecuted, sometimes put to death. Long after their martyrdom monuments were erected to them and garlands were woven for their graves.

## GREETINGS TO OUR RUSSIAN COMRADES!

*(From an article in a symposium, "One Year of Revolution," issued November 7, 1918.)*

THE anniversary of the Russian Soviets is an event that should be celebrated with joy and enthusiasm by the revolutionary proletariat of every nation on earth. It is an event which should evoke the heartiest congratulations of the working-class of the whole world.

When the Revolution in Russia occurred a year ago and the actual toiling and producing masses came into power under the leadership and inspiration of Lenin and Trotsky, all the ruling class powers on earth, the United States not excepted, instinctively arrayed themselves against the new-born working-class republic and predicted freely that the new régime would not last one week. From that time to this these powers of imperialism and capitalism and their corrupt politicians, their slimy priests and their whole vast brood of mercenaries and sycophants, including their filthy and venomous press, have gone to every extreme of falsehood, calumny

and personal vituperation to discredit the leadership of the Russian revolutionaries and ruin and destroy the Bolshevik administration, the first real attempt at actual democratic administration in the history of the world.

But in spite of all these stupendous reactionary and destructive forces the Soviet has survived and the Russian proletariat, thanks to its heroic and uncompromising leadership and its own inflexible determination, is still in power, defiantly challenging its ruling class adversaries and issuing its greeting and message of fraternity and good will to the proletariat of the world.

Comrades of the Russian Soviet and the Bolshevik Republic, we salute and honor you on this first anniversary of your great revolutionary triumph, the greatest in point of historic significance and far-reaching influence in the annals of the race. You have set the star of hope for all the world in the eastern skies. You have suffered untold persecution, exile and misery and you have shed your blood freely all these years in the great struggle for emancipation, not only of your own oppressed people, but the oppressed of all the earth. On this historic anniversary we extend our proletarian hand to you from all directions and across the spaces and assure you of our loyalty and our love.

The chief glory of your revolutionary triumph is that you have preserved inviolate the fundamental

principles of international Socialism and refused to compromise. It will be to your everlasting honor that you would rather have seen the Revolution perish and the Soviet with it than to prostitute either one by betraying the workers to alleged progressive reforms which would mean to them an extension of their servitude under a fresh aggregation of exploiters and parasites.

You, Russian Comrades of the Soviet and of the Bolsheviks you represent, are resolved that for once in history the working-class, which fights the battles, sheds its blood and makes all other sacrifices to achieve a revolution, shall itself receive and enjoy the full fruitage of such a revolution; that it shall not allow itself to be used, as dumb driven cattle, to install some intermediate class into power and perpetuate its own slavery and degradation.

On this anniversary day we pledge you, brave and unflinching comrades of the Soviet Republic, not only to protest against our government meddling with your affairs and interfering with your plans, but to summon to your aid all the progressive forces of our proletariat and render you freely all assistance in our power.

We pledge you, moreover, as we grasp your hands in comradely congratulations, on this eventful day, to strive with all our energy to emulate your inspiring example by abolishing our imperialistic capitalism, driving our plutocratic exploiters and

oppressors from power and establishing the working class republic, the Commonwealth of Comrades.

## GREETINGS ON THE THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

*(Written in the Federal Penitentiary, Atlanta, and published in the New York "Call," November 7, 1920.)*

GREETINGS, comrades, in our glorious celebration of the third anniversary of the Russian Revolution. The proletarian world and lovers of liberty everywhere thrilled with joy at the news of the great victory of the Russian people. The triumph of the workers' cause in Russia is an historic milestone in the progress of the world and its influence for good has circled the earth and will direct the course of the future.

The emancipation of Russia and the establishment of the Workers' Republic is an inspiration to the workers of the world, and this people's government is a bright star in the political heavens and will light the way of the world; it is the great hope of the human race and its example will lead to the emancipation of the workers of the world; all hail to those noble comrades who have carved out a people's government on an impregnable foundation of granite that shall stand for all time.

Comrades, you have weathered the storm; the

faithful coöperation of comrades has been able to defeat the world-wide alliance of capitalism. I am sure that the same spirit that conquered capitalism will develop the geniuses that will conquer the devastating diseases you inherited from capitalism in Russia and combat the present mad methods of alien capitalistic governments who seek to destroy the newly emancipated people of Soviet Russia.

Have faith, comrades, your triumph is complete. Other nations will become liberated and together shall form a brotherhood of the world.

## THE RIGHT OF FREE SPEECH

*(Delivered at Canton, June 16, 1918.)*

I HAVE just returned from a visit from yonder (pointing to workhouse), where three of our most loyal comrades<sup>1</sup> are paying the penalty for their devotion to the cause of the working class. They have come to realize, as many of us have, that it is extremely dangerous to exercise the constitutional right of free speech in a country fighting to make democracy safe for the world. I realize in speaking to you this afternoon that there are certain limitations placed upon the right of free speech. I must

<sup>1</sup> Reference is made to three Cleveland Socialists who were imprisoned for their opposition to war—Charles E. Ruthenberg (died March 2, 1927, while Secretary of the Workers' Communist Party), Alfred Wagenknecht and Charles Baker.



be extremely careful, prudent, as to what I say, and even more careful and prudent as to how I say it. I may not be able to say all I think, but I am not going to say anything I do not think. And I would rather a thousand times be a free soul in jail than a sycophant or coward on the streets. They may put those boys in jail and some of the rest of us in jail, but they cannot put the Socialist movement in jail. Those prison bars separate their bodies from ours, but their souls are here this afternoon. They are simply paying the penalty that all men have paid in all of the ages of history for standing erect and seeking to pave the way for better conditions for mankind.

If it had not been for the men and women who, in the past, have had the moral courage to go to jail, we would still be in the jungles.

Why should a Socialist be discouraged on the eve of the greatest triumph of all the history of the Socialist movement? It is true that these are anxious, trying days for us all, testing those who are upholding the banner of the working class in the greatest struggle the world has ever known against the exploiters of the world; a time in which the weak, the cowardly, will falter and fail and desert. They lack the fiber to endure the revolutionary test. They fall away. They disappear as if they had never been.

On the other hand, they who are animated with

the unconquerable spirit of the Social Revolution, they who have the moral courage to stand erect, to assert their convictions, to stand by them, to go to jail or to hell for them—they are writing their names in this crucial hour, they are writing their names in fadeless letters in the history of mankind. Those boys over yonder, those comrades of ours—and how I love them—aye, they are our younger brothers, their names are seared in our souls.

I am proud of them. They are there for us and we are here for them. Their lips, though temporarily mute, are more eloquent than ever before, and their voices, though silent, are heard around the world.

## INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

*(Delivered at Canton, June 16, 1918.)*

EVERY Socialist on the face of the earth is animated by the same principles. Everywhere they have the same noble idea, everywhere they are calling one another “comrade,” the noblest word that springs from the heart and soul of unity. The word “comrade” is getting us into closer touch all along the battle line. They are waging the war of the working class against the ruling class of the world. They conquer difficulties; they grow stronger through them all.

The heart of the international Socialist never beats a retreat. They are pressing forward here, there, everywhere, in all the zones that girdle this globe. These workers, these class-conscious workers, these children of honest toil are wiping out the boundary lines everywhere. They are proclaiming the glad tidings of the coming emancipation. Everywhere they are having their hearts attuned to the sacred cause; everywhere they are moving toward democracy, moving toward the sunrise, their faces aglow with the light of coming day. These are the men who must guide us in the greatest crisis the world has ever known. They are making history. They are bound upon the emancipation of the human race.

### THE PRESENT INDUSTRIAL SYSTEM

*(Delivered before receiving sentence from the Judge of the Federal Court, Cleveland, September 14, 1918.)*

IN the struggle—the unceasing struggle—between the toilers and producers and their exploiters, I have tried, as best I might, to serve those among whom I was born, with whom I expect to share my lot until the end of my days.

I am thinking this morning of the men in the mills and factories; I am thinking of the women who, for a paltry wage, are compelled to work out their lives; of the little children who, in this system, are

robbed of their childhood, and in their early, tender years, are seized in the remorseless grasp of mammon, and forced into the industrial dungeons, there to feed the machines while they themselves are being starved body and soul. . . .

I think of these little children—the girls that are in the textile mills of all description in the East, in the cotton factories of the South—I think of them at work in a vitiated atmosphere. I think of them at work when they ought to be at play or at school; I think that when they do grow up, if they live long enough to approach the marriage state, they are unfit for it. Their nerves are worn out, their tissue is exhausted, their vitality is spent. They have been fed to industry. Their lives have been coined into gold. Their offspring are born tired. That is why there are so many failures in our modern life.

Your Honor, the five per cent of the people that I have made reference to, constitute that element that absolutely rules our country. They privately own all our public necessities. They wear no crowns; they wield no scepters, they sit upon no thrones; and yet they are our economic masters and our political rulers. They control this Government and all of its institutions. They control the courts.

The five per cent of our people who own and control all of the sources of wealth, all of the nation's industries, all of the means of our common life—it is they who declare war; it is they who make peace; it

is they who control our industry. And so long as this is true, we can make no just claim to being a democratic government—a self-governing people.

### THE FIRST MARTYRS OF THE AMERICAN CLASS STRUGGLE

*(From the "Appeal to Reason," November 23, 1907. In the following lines Debs pays tribute to the members of the militant miners of Pennsylvania, members of the Molly Maguires, ten of whom were executed and fourteen imprisoned for their activities in behalf of the workers in the anthracite region during the great strike of 1874-5, and the bitter struggle which followed the defeat of the strike.)*

THEY all protested their innocence and all died game. Not one of them betrayed the slightest evidence of fear or weakening. All were ignorant, rough and uncouth, born of poverty and buffeted by the merciless tides of fate and chance.

To resist the wrongs of which they and their fellow workers were victims and to protect themselves against the brutality of their bosses, according to their own crude notions, was the prime object of the organization of the "Molly Maguires." Nothing could have been farther from their intention than murder or crime. It is true that their methods were drastic, but it must be remembered that their lot was hard and brutalizing; that they were the neglected children of poverty, the products of a wretched environment. . . .

June 21, 1877, the curtain fell upon the last mournful act in this tragedy of toil. The executioner did his bidding and the gallows-tree claimed its victims. On that day history turned harlot and the fair face of truth was covered with the hideous mask of falsehood. The men who perished upon the scaffold as felons were labor leaders, the first martyrs to the class struggle in the United States.

### THE MARTYRED HEROES OF LABOR

(From article in "New Time," February, 1898, quoted in "Debs: His Life, Writings and Speeches," 1908, p. 265.)

THE men who were judicially murdered in Chicago in 1887, in the name of the great State of Illinois, were the *avant couriers* of a better day. They were called anarchists, but at their trial it was not proven that they had committed any crime or violated any law. They had protested against unjust laws and their brutal administration. They stood between oppressor and oppressed, and they dared, in a free (?) country, to exercise the divine right of free speech; and the records of their trial, as if written with an "iron pen and lead in the rock forever," proclaim the truth of the declaration.

I would rescue their names from slander. The slanderers of the dead are the oppressors of the living. I would, if I could, restore them to their

rightful positions as evangelists; the proclaimers of good news to their fellow-men—crusaders; to rescue the sacred shrines of justice from the profanations of the capitalistic defilers who have made them more repulsive than Augean stables. Aye, I would take them, if I could, from peaceful slumber in their martyr graves—I would place joint to joint in their dislocated necks—I would make the halter the symbol of redemption; I would restore the flesh to their skeleton bones, their eyes should again flash defiance to the enemies of humanity, and their tongues, again, more eloquent than all the heroes of oratory, should speak the truth to a gainsaying world. Alas, this cannot be done, but something can be done. The stigma fixed upon their names by an outrageous trial can be forever obliterated and their fame be made to shine with resplendent glory on the pages of history.

Until the time shall come, as come it will, when the parks of Chicago shall be adorned with their statues, and men, women and children, pointing to these monuments as testimonials of gratitude, shall honor, with holy acclaim, the men who dared to be true to humanity and who paid the penalty of their heroism with their lives, the preliminary work of setting forth their virtues devolves upon those who are capable of gratitude to men who suffered death that they might live.

## SACCO AND VANZETTI MUST NOT DIE!

*(From an "Appeal to American Labor," written for the International Labor Defense, May, 1926.)*

The supreme court of Massachusetts has spoken at last and Bartolomeo Vanzetti and Nicola Sacco, two of the bravest and best scouts that ever served the labor movement, must go to the electric chair.

The decision of this capitalist judicial tribunal is not surprising. It accords perfectly with the tragical farce and the farcical tragedy of the entire trial of these two absolutely innocent and shamefully persecuted working men. . . .

It would have been merciful to the last degree in comparison had they been boiled in oil, burned at the stake, or had every joint been torn from their bodies on the wheel when they were first seized as prey to glut the vengeance of slave drivers, who wax fat and savage on child labor and who never forgive an "agitator" who is too rigidly honest to be bribed, too courageous to be intimidated, and too defiant to be suppressed.

And that is precisely why the mill-owning, labor-sweating malefactors of Massachusetts had Sacco and Vanzetti framed, pounced upon, thrown into a dungeon, and sentenced to be murdered by their judicial and other official underlings.

I appeal to the working men and women of Amer-



ica to think of these two loyal comrades, these two honest, clean-hearted brothers of ours, in this fateful hour in which they stand face to face with their bitter and ignominious doom.

The capitalist courts of Massachusetts have had them on the rack day and night, devouring the flesh of their bodies and torturing their souls for six long years to finally deal the last vicious, heartless blow, aimed to send them to their graves as red-handed felons and murderers. . . .

There is another voice yet to be heard and that is the voice of an outraged working class. It is for labor now to speak and for the labor movement to announce its decision, and that decision is and must be, Sacco and Vanzetti are innocent and shall not die!

To allow these two intrepid proletarian leaders to perish as red-handed criminals would forever disgrace the cause of labor in the United States. The countless children of generations yet to come would blush for their sires and grandsires and never forgive their cowardice and poltroonery.

It cannot be possible, and I shall not think it possible, that the American workers will desert, betray and deliver to their executioner two men who have stood as staunchly true, as unflinchingly loyal in the cause of labor as have Sacco and Vanzetti, whose doom has been pronounced by the implacable enemies of the working class.

Now is the time for all labor to be aroused and to rally as one vast host to vindicate its assailed honor, to assert its self-respect, and to issue its demand that in spite of the capitalist-controlled courts of Massachusetts honest and innocent workingmen whose only crime is their innocence of crime and their loyalty to labor, shall not be murdered by the official hirelings of the corporate powers that rule and tyrannize over the state.

### THE GUNMEN AND THE MINERS

*(From the "International Socialist Review," September, 1914.)*

THE time has come for the United Mine Workers and the Western Federation of Miners to levy a special monthly assessment to create a GUNMEN DEFENSE FUND.

This fund should be sufficient to provide each member with the latest high power rifle, the same as used by the corporation gunmen, and 500 rounds of cartridges.

In addition to this, every district should purchase and equip and man enough Gatling and machine guns to match the equipment of Rockefeller's private army of assassins.

This suggestion is made advisedly, and I hold myself responsible for every word of it.

If the corporations have the right to recruit and maintain private armies of thieves, thugs and ex-convicts to murder striking workingmen, sack their homes, insult their wives, and roast their babies, then labor unions not only have the right but it is their solemn duty to arm themselves to resist these lawless attacks and defend their homes and loved ones.

Under government by gunmen you are literally shorn of the last vestige of liberty and you have absolutely no protection under the law. When you go out on strike, your master has his court issue the injunction that strips you of your power to resist his injustice and then has his private army of gunmen invade your camp, open fire on your habitations and harass you and your family till the strike is broken and you are starved back into the pits on your master's terms. This has happened over and over again in all the mining states of this Union.

Now the private army of gunmen which has been used to break your strikes is an absolutely lawless aggregation.

If you miners were to arm a gang of thugs and assassins with machine guns and rifles and order them to march on the palatial residences of the Rockefellers, riddle them with bullets, and murder the inmates in cold blood, not sparing even the babes if there happened to be any, how long would it be

before your officials would be in jail and your unions throttled and put out of business by the law?

The Rockefellers have not one particle more lawful right to maintain a private army to murder you union men than you union men have to maintain a private army to murder the Rockefellers.

And yet the law does not interfere with the Rockefellers when they set up government by gunmen, and have their private army of man-killers swoop down on a mining camp, turn loose their machine guns, kill without mercy, and leave death, agony and desolation in their wake, and therefore it becomes your solemn duty to arm yourselves in defense of your homes, drive out these invading assassins, and put an end to government by gunmen in the United States.

In a word, the protection that the government owes you and fails to provide, you are morally bound to provide for yourselves.

Recollect that in arming yourselves, as you are bound to do unless you are willing to be forced into abject slavery, you are safely within the spirit and the letter of the law.

Let these unions and all other organized bodies of workers that are militant and not subservient to the masters declare war to the knife on these lawless and criminal hordes and swear relentless hostility to government by gunmen in the United States.

A "mine guard" in the uniform of a state militia-

man is a copperhead in the skin of a rattlesnake, and possible only because an even deadlier serpent has wriggled his way into the executive chair of the state.

### THE SUPREME COURT—A TRIBUNAL OF THE RULING CLASS

*(Statement issued March 10, 1919, when the U. S. Supreme Court upheld the conviction and sentence of Debs, quoted in David Karsner, "Debs: His Authorized Life and Speeches," p. 56.)*

THE decision is perfectly consistent with the character of the Supreme Court as a ruling class tribunal. It could not have been otherwise. So far as I am personally concerned, the decision is of small consequence. But there is an issue at stake of vital interest to the American people. It involves the fundamental right of free speech. With this our boasted freedom is a delusion and a farce. . . .

Great issues are not decided by the courts, but by the people. I have no concern in what the coterie of begowned corporation lawyers in Washington may decide in my case. The court of final resort is the people, and that court will be heard from in due time.

The decision just rendered places the United States where old Russia under the Czar left off. It

is good for, at least, a million Bolshevist recruits in this country.

I stand by every word of the Canton speech. The Supreme Court to the contrary, notwithstanding, the Espionage Law is perfectly infamous and a disgrace as well to the capitalist despotism at whose behest it was enacted.

Sixty years ago the Supreme Court affirmed the validity of the Fugitive Slave Law to save chattel slavery. Five years later that infamous institution was swept from the land in a torrent of blood. I despise the Espionage Law with every drop of blood in my veins, and I defy the Supreme Court and all the powers of capitalism to do their worst.

All hail to the workers of America and the world!  
The day of emancipation is dawning.

## OUR REVOLUTIONARY TRADITIONS

*(Delivered before the jury at the Federal Court,  
Cleveland, September 12, 1918.)*

A CENTURY and a half ago, when the American colonists were still foreign subjects, and when there were a few men who had faith in the common people and believed that they could rule themselves without a king, in that day to speak against the king was treason. If you read Bancroft or any other standard historian, you will find that a great majority of the

colonists believed in the king and actually believed that he had a divine right to rule over them. They had been taught to believe that to say a word against the king, to question his so-called divine right, was sinful. There were ministers who opened their Bibles to prove that it was the patriotic duty of the people to loyally serve and support the king. But there were a few men in that day who said, "We don't need a king. We can govern ourselves." And they began an agitation that has been immortalized in history.

Washington, Adams, Paine—these were the rebels of their day. At first they were opposed by the people and denounced by the press. You can remember that it was Franklin who said to his compeers, "We have now to hang together or we'll hang separately by and by." And if the Revolution had failed, the revolutionary fathers would have been executed as felons. But it did not fail. Revolutions have a habit of succeeding, when the time comes for them. The revolutionary forefathers were opposed to the form of government in their day. They were denounced, they were condemned. But they had the moral courage to stand erect and defy all the storms of detraction; and that is why they are in history, and that is why the great respectable majority of their day sleep in forgotten graves. The world does not know they ever lived.

At a later time there began another mighty agitation in this country. It was against an institution

that was deemed a very respectable one in its time, the institution of chattel slavery, that became all-powerful, that controlled the president, both branches of congress, the supreme court, the press, to a very large extent the pulpit. All of the organized forces of society, all the powers of government, upheld chattel slavery in that day. And again a few appeared. One of them was Elijah Lovejoy. Elijah Lovejoy was as much despised in his day as are the leaders of the I. W. W. in our day. Elijah Lovejoy was murdered in cold blood in Alton, Illinois, in 1837, simply because he was opposed to chattel slavery—just as I am opposed to wage slavery. When you go down the Mississippi River and look up at Alton, you see a magnificent white shaft erected there in memory of a man who was true to himself and his convictions of right and duty unto death.

It was my good fortune to personally know Wendell Phillips. I heard the story of his persecution, in part at least, from his own eloquent lips just a little while before they were silenced in death.

William Lloyd Garrison, Garret Smith, Thaddeus Stevens—these leaders of the Abolition movement, who were regarded as monsters of depravity, were true to the faith and stood their ground. They are all in history. You are teaching your children to revere their memories, while all of their detractors are in oblivion.



Chattel slavery disappeared. We are not yet free. We are engaged in another mighty agitation to-day. It is as wide as the world. It is the rise of the toiling and producing masses who are gradually becoming conscious of their interest, their power, as a class, who are organizing industrially and politically, who are slowly but surely developing the economic and political power that is to set them free. They are still in the minority, but they have learned how to wait, and to bide their time.

It is because I happen to be in this minority that I stand in your presence to-day, charged with crime. It is because I believe as the revolutionary fathers believed in their day, that a change was due in the interests of the people, that the time had come for a better form of government, an improved system, a higher social order, a nobler humanity and a grander civilization. This minority that is so much misunderstood and so bitterly maligned, is in alliance with the forces of evolution, and as certain as I stand before you this afternoon, it is but a question of time until this minority will become the conquering majority and inaugurate the greatest change in all of the history of the world. You may hasten the change; you may retard it; you can no more prevent it than you can prevent the coming of the sunrise on the morrow.

## THE CRIMSON STANDARD

(From *"Debs: His Life, Writings and Speeches,"*  
1908, p. 245.)

THE red flag, since time immemorial, has symbolized the discontent of the downtrodden, the revolt of the rabble.

That is its sinister significance to the tyrant and the reason of his mingled fear and frenzy when the "red rag," as he characterizes it, insults his vision.

It is not that he is opposed to red as a color, or even as an emblem, for he has it in his own flags and banners, and it never inflames his passion when it is blended with other colors; but red alone, unmixed and unadulterated, the pure red that symbolizes the common blood of the human family, the equality of mankind, the brotherhood of the race, is repulsive and abhorrent to him because it is at once an impeachment of his title, a denial of his superiority and a menace to his power.

Precisely for the reason that the plutocrat raves at the red flag, the proletarian should revere it.

To the plutocrat it is a peril; to the proletarian a promise.

The red flag is an omen of ill, a sign of terror to every tyrant, every robber and every vampire that sucks the life of labor and mocks at its misery.

It is an emblem of hope, a bow of promise to all the oppressed and downtrodden of the earth.

The red flag is the only race flag; it is the flag of revolt against robbery; the flag of the working class, the flag of hope and high resolve—the flag of Universal Freedom.

### MAY DAY—REVOLUTION

*(From the New York "Worker," April 27, 1907.)*

THIS is the first and only International Labor Day. It belongs to the working class and is dedicated to the Revolution.

To-day the slaves of all the world are taking a fresh breath in the long and weary march; pausing a moment to clear their lungs and shout for joy; celebrating in festal fellowship their coming Freedom.

All hail the Labor Day of May!

The day of the proletarian protest;

The day of stern resolve;

The day of noble aspiration.

Raise high this day the blood-red Standard of the Revolution!

The banner of the Workingman;

The flag, the only flag, of Freedom.

As the slavery of the working class is international, so is the movement for its emancipation.

The salutation of slave to slave this day is re-

peated in every human tongue as it goes ringing round the world.

The many millions are at last awakening. For countless ages they have suffered; they have drained to the dregs the bitter cup of misery and woe.

At last, at last the historical limitation has been reached, and soon a new sun will light the world.

Red is the life tide of our common humanity and red our symbol of universal kinship.

Tyrants deny it; fear it; tremble with rage and terror when they behold it.

We reaffirm it and on this day pledge anew our fidelity—come life or death—to the blood-red banner of the Revolution.

Socialist greetings this day to all our fellow-workers! To the god-like souls in Russia marching grimly, sublimely into the jaws of Hell with the Song of the Revolution in their death rattle; to the Orient, to the Occident and all the Isles of the Sea!

*Vive La Revolution!*

The most heroic word in all languages is REVOLUTION.

It thrills and vibrates; cheers and inspires. Tyrants and time-servers fear it, but the oppressed hail it with joy.

The throne trembles when this throbbing word is

lisped, but to the hovel it is food for the famishing and hope for the victims of despair.

Let us glorify to-day the revolutions of the past and hail the Greater Revolution yet to come before Emancipation shall make all the days of the year May Days of peace and plenty for the sons and daughters of toil.

## THE PRESENT ORDER CANNOT ENDURE

*(Delivered before receiving sentence from the Judge at the Federal Court, Cleveland, September 14, 1918.)*

THIS order of things cannot always endure. I have registered my protest against it. I recognize the feebleness of my effort, but fortunately I am not alone. There are multiplied thousands of others who, like myself, have come to realize that before we may truly enjoy the blessings of civilized life, we must reorganize society upon a mutual and coöperative basis; and to this end we have organized a great economic and political movement that is spread over the face of all the earth.

There are to-day upwards of sixty million Socialists, loyal, devoted, adherents to this cause, regardless of nationality, race, creed, color or sex. They are all making common cause. They are all spreading the propaganda of the new social order. They are waiting, watching and working through all the

weary hours of the day and night. They are still in the minority. They have learned how to be patient and abide their time. They feel—they know, indeed—that the time is coming in spite of all opposition, all persecution, when this emancipating gospel will spread among all the peoples, and when this minority will become the triumphant majority and, sweeping into power, inaugurate the greatest change in history.

In that day we will have the universal commonwealth—not the destruction of the nation, but, on the contrary, the harmonious coöperation of every nation with every other nation on earth. In that day war will curse this earth no more.

Your Honor, I ask no mercy. I plead for no immunity. I realize that finally the right must prevail. I never more clearly comprehended than now the great struggle between the powers of greed on the one hand and upon the other the rising hosts of freedom.

I can see the dawn of a better day of humanity. The people are awakening. In due course of time they will come to their own.

When the mariner, sailing over tropic seas, looks for relief from his weary watch, he turns his eyes toward the Southern Cross, burning luridly above the tempest-vexed ocean. As the midnight approaches, the Southern Cross begins to bend, and the whirling

worlds change their places, and with starry finger-points the Almighty marks the passage of time upon the dial of the universe, and though no bell may beat the glad tidings, the look-out knows that the midnight is passing—that relief and rest are close at hand.

Let the people take heart and hope everywhere, for the cross is bending, the midnight is passing, and joy cometh with the morning. . . .

### THE FUTURE IS OURS

*(Delivered at Canton, June 16, 1918.)*

WHEN we unite and act together on the industrial field and when we vote together on Election Day we shall develop the supreme power of the one class that can and will bring permanent peace to the world. We shall then have the intelligence, the courage and the power of our great task. In due time industry will be organized on a coöperative basis. We shall conquer the public power. We shall then transfer the title deeds of the railroads, the telegraph lines, the mines, mills and great industries to the people in their collective capacity; we shall take possession of all these social utilities in the name of the people. We shall then have industrial democracy. We shall be a free nation whose government is of and by and for the people.

And now for all of us to do our duty! The clarion call is ringing in our ears and we cannot falter without being convicted of treason to ourselves and to our great cause.

Do not worry over the charge of treason to your masters, but be concerned about the treason that involves yourselves. Be true to yourself and you cannot be a traitor to any good cause on earth.

Yes, in good time we are going to sweep into power in this nation and throughout the world. We are going to destroy all enslaving and degrading capitalist institutions and recreate them as free and humanizing institutions. The world is daily changing before our eyes. The sun of capitalism is setting; the sun of Socialism is rising. It is our duty to build the new nation and the free republic. We need industrial and social builders. We Socialists are the builders of the beautiful world that is to be. We are all pledged to do our part. We are inviting—aye, challenging you this afternoon in the name of your own manhood and womanhood to join us and do your part.

In due time the hour will strike and this great cause triumphant—the greatest in history—will proclaim the emancipation of the working class and the brotherhood of all mankind.

THE END



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