
Debs on IWW:

A Letter to William English Walling from Eugene V. Debs in Terre Haute, Indiana, March 5, 1913.

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Terre Haute, Ind., March 5, 1913

Dear Comrade Walling:

It does not matter to me what the capitalist papers think is going on in the Socialist Party as long as we can keep the party as it ought to be.

I regret to see Haywood's recall, but it was inevitable. He brought it on himself. I should not have put section 6 in the constitution, but it is there, and put there by the party, and Haywood deliberately violated it. Is not this a fact?

The question of what sabotage means has nothing to do with the matter. Its advocates have shown that it means anything, everything, or nothing at all. If I had been in Haywood's place and had felt bound to advocate sabotage as he did, I would have withdrawn from the party to do it. If I had deliberately violated the constitution I would have expected to be called to account for it. Else why a constitution at all?

The constitution also prohibits fusion with other parties. Suppose certain members fuse with other parties — would they have fault to find if they were expelled from the party?

I am not now judging Haywood, I am answering your questions. I am free to confess, however, judging from some of the reports I have seen that Haywood has been talking a good deal more like an anarchist than a Socialist.

The IWW for which Haywood stands and speaks is an anarchist organization in all except in name, and this is the cause of all the trouble. Anarchism and Socialism have never mixed and never will. The IWW has treated the Socialist Party most indecently, to put it very mildly. When it gets into trouble it frantically appeals to the Socialist Party for aid, which has always been freely rendered, and after it's all over, the IWW kicks the Socialist Party in the face. That is the case put in plain words, and the Socialist Party has had enough of that sort of business, and I don't blame them a bit. There are IWW anarchists who are in the Socialist Party for no other purpose than to disrupt it, and the Socialist Party is right in taking a decided stand against them.

Answering your questions specifically: (1) The statement on the recall ballot you refer to should, in my opinion, have been omitted; (2) I have not seen Montana's demand, but so far as the right of it is concerned whatever it may be, that is for the party to decide; (3) Certainly I approve of some of the practices that now go under the name of sabotage, for almost everything goes under that name; (4) The same answer as to law-breaking. There are certainly circumstances under which I

advocate it, but I must know what the circumstances are; (5) I think you know there is a very wide difference between the kind of political action Haywood advocates and the kind I advocate, even if we do happen to use identical words.

I received the copy of your book and sent you quite and extended acknowledgment of it from Girard, where it reached me. Sorry this letter did not get to you. Allow me to thank you now for it.

Pardon these hurried words, as I am extremely busy. This letter is not private and you can use it as you wish.

Yours fraternally,

Eugene V. Debs.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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