

---

# Russell and His War Views:

## Letter to the Editor of *The American Socialist*, January 29, 1916.

by Eugene V. Debs

Published in *The American Socialist* [Chicago], v. 2, no. 29, whole no. 169 (Jan. 29, 1916), pg. 4.

It is not necessary I should say that I have no sympathy with the views recently expressed by Comrade Charles Edward Russell on the question of preparedness for war. All capitalist governments and all ruling and exploiting classes are alike to me. My fight as an international Socialist is against them all and I have no preference among them. I have not a particle of national pride or jingo patriotism and the only preparedness of a fighting nature that I have any interest in is the preparedness of the world's proletariat, through sound education and revolutionary economic and political organization, to smash the world's ruling classes and wipe their robber regime from the face of the earth.

But widely as I differ with Comrade Russell upon this vital question I honor the man for having the courage of his convictions and I want to say that it requires moral courage of the highest order to take the position he has taken and fearlessly and frankly express himself in the face of a hostile and overwhelming opposition. Few men in history have had the moral heroism to do that. Wendell Phillips was one and Charles Edward Russell is another. Grievously mistaken as I believe him to be, I am bound to respect his moral

integrity.

There is no instance in American politics where a man in order to be true to his own conscience deliberately forfeited the nomination for the Presidency of the United States. Russell did this. I think there is not doubt that but for his utterance on the question of preparedness, on the very even of the nomination, he would have been chosen as the standard bearer of the party in the coming campaign. Such men, however mistaken, are all too rare in the world.

I am led to say this much because of recent harsh criticisms of Russell which have appeared in these columns, some going so far as to denounce him as a traitor and to demand his expulsion. I take issue with these comrades. There is not a drop of traitorous blood in Russell's veins. He is simply mistaken and it is our duty as his comrades to seek to convince him of his error. He has done as much as any one comrade to place the party and the movement in this country where it is today. I profoundly regret what I believe to be his mistake but I am sure he will right himself in due time. I too have made mistakes, many of them.

*Eugene V. Debs.*

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

*Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2006. • Non-commercial reproduction permitted.*