
Debs Refuses Nomination: Physical Condition and Busy Months Ahead Given as Causes [event of July 9, 1918]

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Eugene V. Debs, Socialist leader of Terre Haute, Wednesday noon declined to accept the nomination as Socialist candidate for Congress in the 5th Congressional District.

In a letter sent to John Edwards, district chairman of the Socialist Party, [Debs] declined to accept the nomination.

J. Harvey Caldwell, a member of the notification committee, stated Wednesday noon [July 10, 1918] that another district convention will be held soon to nominate another candidate, as the party will be represented in the coming campaign.

The letter of Debs in refusing the nomination is as follows:

July 9, 1918.
Terre Haute, Ind.

Dear Comrade Edwards:—

Very fully do I appreciate the nomination for Congress tendered to me by my comrades, especially under the circumstances in which the nomination came to me, and very gladly would I accept the honor if I were able to do so. But there are reasons in my present situation, physical and otherwise, which make this absolutely impossible. The coming months promise to be very busy ones for me, and I have already more in hand than I can well manage, and am, therefore, compelled, much to my regret, to decline the nomination.

Under all ordinary circumstances I realize it to be my duty to serve the cause in any way my comrades may think best and to yield willing obedience to their wishes, but my situation at present for obvious reasons forbids this, and I am reluctantly obliged to inform you and through you the district committee and the comrades of the 5th District in general that greatly as I appreciate the honor they have conferred upon me, and the confidence it implies, that I cannot possibly in justice either to the party or myself accept the nomination.

Allow me to express to your committee and to each comrade in the district my hearty thanks for the kind partiality and generous consideration shown me. I need not assure you that I am with you in all things that may be undertaken to vitalize the Socialist propaganda, wage a successful working class campaign, and spread the light of socialism among the masses.

What is now needed above all things is sound education, the kind that clarifies the minds of the workers and enables them to see the international struggle of the working class against their exploiters and oppressors, and teaches them to organize their industrial and political forces and develop their power as a class that they may abolish the prevailing capitalist system of exploitation, emancipate the toiling masses of all nations, and bring democracy and peace, freedom and self-government, brotherhood and love to a war-torn, blood-drenched and distracted world.

Yours fraternally,

Eugene V. Debs.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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