
Open Letter to John D. Rockefeller
(June 19, 1897)

McCoy's Hotel, Chicago, June 19, 1897.

John D. Rockefeller,
New York City.

Dear Sir:—

I take the liberty to inform you that we have this day organized the Social Democracy of America, an organization designed to rescue the oppressed and suffering of our land from the grasp of industrial conditions which they did not create and which they are powerless to control or modify.

The purpose of the organization is, briefly stated, to supplant the present cruel, immoral, and destructive system by the cooperative commonwealth, under which millionaires and mendicants, the abnormal products of an abnormal civilization, will disappear together and the brotherhood of man will be ushered in to bless and beautify the world.

In this city alone, in which the university which bears your name stands monumental of the triumphs of labor and the fabulous wealth of the country, 8,000 families are practically homeless and 40,000 workingmen are verging on starvation.

Offers to Let Him Count Them.

If you think this statement an exaggeration I beg that you may come here and I will arrange to have them assembled on the lake front, and there, under the common sky, their only shelter, their emaciated faces and tattered garments may bear testimony to the haggard truth of man's inhumanity to man.

The picture is well calculated to appeal to men and angels, and, as you are a Christian gentleman and are widely known for benefactions, perhaps you might deem it proper, no less than dutiful, to give your support to an organization whose high purpose it is, not to fool and humiliate these

suffering fellow beings with the paltry crumbs of charity, to perpetuate conditions which make their lives a continuous curse, but to strive for a more exalted humanity, a diviner civilization, such as the Master taught when he said: "On earth peace, good will toward men."

Invites John D. to Come In.

The immediate object will be the relief of the unemployed by colonizing a western state where they may cooperate in the application of their labor to the resources of nature, to provide for themselves and their dependent ones and manfully discharge the duties of an emancipated citizenship.

In this movement there are no class distinctions. Rich and poor are equally welcome to aid in dethroning gold and exalting humanity. Then the strong shall help the weak, the weak shall love the strong, and the brotherhood of man shall transform the earth into a veritable paradise.

To consecrate one's self to such a work is my highest conception to duty to myself and my fellow men, and trusting that you may find it consistent with your own sense of social and patriotic obligation to join hands with us in our emancipating and ennobling mission, I subscribe myself
yours

Very truly,

Eugene V. Debs.

Wire service report, as published in "Will He Accept?" *Logansport [IN] Pharos*, vol. 22, no. 208 (June 21, 1897), pg. 1.