
The Situation in Ohio.

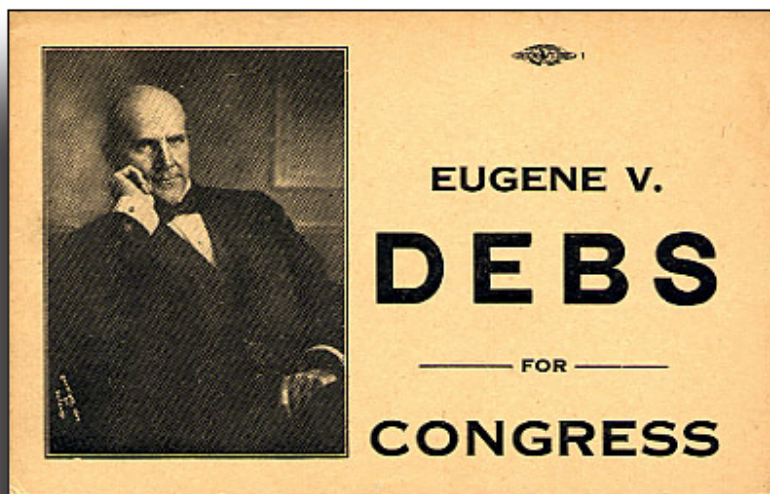
by Eugene V. Debs

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To be under the parole of a Federal Court and to be enjoined from speaking outside of its jurisdiction and inside of it only on condition of saying nothing “unlawful” i.e., nothing that grates the ears of the ruling class, is not entirely an unmixed evil as I have found since my activities as an agitator have been confined to Judge Westenhaver’s district. The order of the court has certainly had a great advertising effect for the meetings in northeastern Ohio have been largely attended by sympathetic and enthusiastic audiences, notwithstanding all the cheap political trickery resorted to by the minions of capitalism to render futile the results of these meetings.

It is quite evident that the industrial captains of capitalism, blind and stupid as they are to all things other than chicane, fraud, and exploitation, gauge accurately the temper of the thousands who attend these meetings and fear the effect thereof on the working class and the general public. For they have attempted in every way their malignity could conceive to thwart the purpose of these meetings. The petty court officials have been especially active along this line, aided or abetted by

the newspapers in hinting at possible trouble and spreading false and malicious reports. At each point the speech has been “taken down” for the local court or to be forwarded to Washington, as if the repeated announcement to the effect could deter any other than a coward from filling his engagements.



At Cleveland for the second time the house was packed to overflowing, the same was true at Toledo, where the whole police force surrounded the building and every entrance and exit were guarded to prevent the possible

catastrophe the evil conscience of the craven bourgeoisie bosses had conjured up out of their fetid imagination. It must have been a great surprise to them that Comrade [Marguerite] Prevey and myself appeared upon the stage unarmed and that no attempt was made to blow up the city.

Oh, what cowards and poltroons the capitalist exploiters are; the faintest whisper of revolt upon the part of their slaves falls like a roar of doom upon their startled ears and strikes terror to their cowardly hearts. It is not only the head that wears the crown that lies uneasy in the still watches

of the night but the head of every robber of honest toil and every drinker of the blood of innocent children.

But whatever the pirates of capitalism may do and whatever their mercenaries and hangers-on may threaten, we shall hold our colors defiantly aloft and go forward with our work without apology and without fear, knowing as we do that capitalism is criminal, corrupt, and festering with every evil, and that Socialism and Socialism alone can avert the upheaval which threatens, and restore peace and sanity to the world.

The situation in Ohio as I view it and as intimate contact and personal observation confirms it, is extremely favorable at the close of the old and the beginning of the new year. The comrades at the various points I have visited are uniformly enthusiastic over the outlook for 1919. They sense the possibilities within the grasp of the workers and have set about to prepare for organized action throughout the state, and this is as it should be. The Buckeye State has a central and commanding position in the class struggle in America. It is highly industrialized and ought to be a very stronghold of the forces of industrial liberation.

The call goes out to every local in the state to get into action. Thousands are now ready to

join the party and each local should strive to secure its full share of the fresh enrollment.

There was never a time when the state was so ripe for Socialist agitation and organization. Let me be a temporary sojourner among you Ohio comrades, bid you take advantage of the present favorable situation and combine all your energies to organize thoroughly the class-conscious forces of labor for the mighty task which now confronts it.

With all my heart I rejoice at seeing the prison doors swing open and Comrades [C.E.] Ruthenberg, [Alfred] Wagenknecht, and [Charles] Baker walk forth once more into the sunlight. These comrades have been consecrated behind prison bars and will now rise to their full stature in the service of the revolutionary movement.

The comrades of Ohio are entitled to my lasting gratitude for their fidelity and devotion during the past few months and I shall gladly avail myself of every opportunity to work hand in hand with them to build up the party, to organize the workers with revolutionary efficiency, fire them with the lofty ideals of their great cause, and speed the glorious day of their industrial emancipation.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

Photo insert: 1916 Congressional Campaign postcard.

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