
The Labor Press

by Eugene V. Debs

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That the press, as an educator, stands first in the list of educating forces in the United States of America, will not, we believe, be seriously controverted. It is doubtless true that the school and the church would set up claims of greater power and influence, and in some regards it might be held that their pretensions were entitled to a consideration, and possibly to a favorable verdict. But, we conclude, if the investigation were to be thorough and exhaustive, it would be found, all things considered, that the press would secure a decision in its favor, as being a factor of far more importance in moulding public sentiment than any other that could be named, and this is all the more probable from the fact that the school, the church, and the stage are all to a greater or less extent under the influence of the press, and are compelled to acknowledge its potent sway.

Accepting such statements as susceptible of proof, the question arises, is the press so educating the American people as best to subserve the public welfare? The question, if it could be put to a mass convention of the American people, would doubtless be decided in the affirmative.

We are not disposed to "call the ayes and nays," nor yet to move a reconsideration of the vote, and yet we do not vote with the majority. It may be said, and we think truthfully, that the religious press, or more properly, the denominational press, helps the churches, the partisan press, its party, the educational press, education, and so on through the list — banking, commerce, transportation, etc. With all of this we have no fault to find, nor are we disposed at this writing to institute invidious comparisons. Fortunately for the country, there is now a labor press. We happen to be one of those who believe that to a far greater extent than will be readily admitted by many, to the labor press of the country is to be committed, by far, the larger share of responsibility in shaping the destiny of this republic.

We would not hesitate, did circumstances require the effort, to offer reasons for our belief in the mission of the labor press of the country, but what we propose now is to suggest to the editors of the labor press of the country the importance of holding a conference for the important purpose of deciding upon a policy best calculated to advance the interests of labor. The labor press of the country has one supreme purpose in view, which is the amelioration of the condition of workingmen and women, in the best and broadest sense of the word. It is doubtless true that the labor press, at present, has in view special interests, as presented by the various organizations which it represents, but it requires no argument to demonstrate that all these various interests have a close relationship, and designate them as we may, they are forever, by the force of attraction, seeking to combine, and do in fact combine and constitute one great and overshadowing interest, which now, more than ever before, commands the attention of thoughtful men.

We feel assured that a meeting of the men who control the columns of the labor press of the country for the discussion of vital questions, for the purpose of knowing each other better, for the exchange of views, of deciding upon attack and what to attack, of defense and what to defend, would lead to results of great benefit. We make the suggestion believing it will be fruitful of good and only good, and shall be glad to know what our esteemed contemporaries think of the matter.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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