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# Manifesto to the American People Issued from Woodstock Jail [Jan. 8, 1895]

by Eugene V. Debs

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Woodstock, Ill., Jan. 9 [1895].— Eugene V. Debs, George W. Howard, Sylvester Keliher, Louis W. Rogers, William E. Burns, James Hogan, and Leroy Goodwin are confined in the McHenry County jail.

Tuesday evening [Jan. 8, 1895] Mr. Debs issued a manifesto to the American people, which contains the following:

"In going to jail for participation in the late strike we have no apologies to make nor regrets to express. We go to jail, not like quarry slaves, but sustained by the consciousness that we have done our duty. No ignominy attaches to us on account of this sentence. I would not change places with Judge Woods, and if it is expected that six months or even six years in jail will purge me of contempt the punishment will fail of its purpose.

"Candor compels me to characterize the whole proceeding as infamous. It is not calculated to revive the rapidly-failing confidence of the American people in the federal judiciary. There is not a scrap of testimony to show that one of us violated any law whatsoever. And if we are guilty of conspiracy why are we punished for contempt? This question will continue to be asked with ever-increasing emphasis.

"I would a thousand times rather be accountable for the strike than for the decision.

"The ridicule of the press that we are posing as martyrs will not deceive the people. We all have homes and loved ones, and none of us are here by choice. We simply abide by the arbitrary action of the courts. There is a higher power yet to be heard from. No corporation will influence its decision. Our cause is that of conscientious liberty, and we have an abiding faith in the

American people. We accept our lot with becoming patience and composure. We can afford to wait.

“So far as I am concerned, I feel that when all the circumstances are considered it would only have been disgraceful if we had so acquitted ourselves as to have kept out of jail. Our enemies are entitled to all the comfort they can extract from our imprisonment, and our friends have no concern.

“Questions of great and grave importance are up for decision. Great principles involving the liberty of the citizen are at stake. Out of all this, good will come. There is one fundamental, bedrock principle that the American people will never suffer to be sacrificed. It may be menaced, as it now is, but when the high court, “We, the people,” have passed final judgments, its enthronement will be fixed and secure for all time.

“We are by chance the mere instrumentalities in the evolutionary processes through which industrial slavery is to be abolished and economic freedom established. Then the starry banner will symbolize, as it was designed to symbolize, social, political, religious, and economic emancipation from the thralldom of tyranny, oppression, and degradation.”

*Edited by Tim Davenport*

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