

**A Million Votes or More:  
Statement to the Press in Missoula, Montana  
[excerpt]  
(September 17, 1908)**

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What do I think of the chances for the Socialist Party's success this year? Listen! The Socialist ticket will get over 1 million votes at the November election. I am even inclined to believe that half a million more may be added to the estimate. This is the working man's year. The man who works is beginning to wake up.

This is the first time in almost three weeks of unceasing travel that we have been more than a minute behind our schedule at any stop.<sup>1</sup> It is a great disappointment to me that the "Red Special" could not get into Missoula this afternoon on its regular time. We have been subject to most disgusting delays since leaving Wallace, where I spoke 35 minutes to a tremendous crowd.<sup>2</sup> Gravel trains, freight trains, cattle trains, and construction trains seemed to have right-of-way over us today and we have spent half the time on sidetracks this afternoon.<sup>3</sup>

I am also very sorry that this passenger train had to cut me off from my audience.<sup>4</sup> The trip has been very successful. Everywhere the crowds have been much larger than four years ago. It is on this that I base my high estimate of the vote to be polled by the Socialist ticket.

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<sup>1</sup> Debs had been slated to arrive in Missoula at 3:20 in the afternoon, but his train had rolled in more than five hours late, at 8:30 pm. He gave an impromptu long speech to a vast crowd that assembled at the Northern Pacific rail yard. His regularly scheduled evening hall meeting in the mining town of Butte was necessarily cancelled. Three hundred people waited all night to hear Debs speak for 20 minutes in Butte the next morning.

<sup>2</sup> Debs had been slated to arrive in Wallace, Idaho at 8:30 am and to remain at the station there for half an hour.

<sup>3</sup> The Lewiston socialist weekly *Montana News* later charged that Debs's Montana tour had been deliberately sabotaged by Northern Pacific railway officials with a goal of shutting down the Butte meeting. (See: "Red Special Ditched in Montana," *Montana News*, Sept. 24, 1908, p. 1.)

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<sup>4</sup> Immediately after beginning his speech to the great crowd in the Missoula rail yard, an arriving train had arrived on parallel tracks, effectively splitting the audience in half. A twenty-minute delay ensued, during which Debs gave this brief statement to a reporter from the local press.