
Eugene V. Debs, Interviewed for *Appeal*, Sees Bright Chance for His Election to the United States Congress: “Voters Sure to Come to Us,” Says Veteran Champion of the Working Class — Comrades Throughout the Country Support the Campaign with Silver Ballots — Fifth Indiana District Being Flooded with Socialist Literature

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TERRE HAUTE, IND. — This is Eugene V. Debs' home town. “Gene” — that's what he is called here — knows every house, and almost every resident. And every person knows Comrade Debs. The people back home — the Hauteans — know Debs as a neighbor, as a friend, as a lover of humanity, as one of their own. And he is loved.

I have never seen an entire community give its affection to an individual as do these Hauteans. The people I have spoken to come from all classes. I have approached businessmen, editors, workingmen, labor leaders, policemen, waitresses — and all seemed to swallow a lump when they mentioned the name of Debs — the veteran of many class wars, the general of the soldiers of misfortune.

Is a Candidate for Congress.

And it is in this district — the Fifth Indiana Congressional District — that Debs is the candidate for Congress on the Socialist ticket. It is here that I have talked to a group of hard-working comrades who say they are certain to elect Debs — and it is something more than a “say so,” it's a work-so!

They have undertaken a big task (for this is a most difficult district), but they say it can be done,

and while there are quite a number of months to election day, they are already at the job of bringing the message of Socialism to the miners, the farmers, and the city workers of the Fifth District.

Debs — the man who was the Socialist Party's candidate for President during four campaigns — would make a splendid Congressman. Congress needs a Debs. It needs that voice. It needs that mind. It needs that spirit.

Debs Sees Big Vote.

“I have every reason to believe that the campaign if properly constructed (and I am sure it will be) will bring the vote to us. The preparedness issue will do it. I have confidence that the situation is going to become more and more responsive to the appeal of Socialism.”

So said Eugene V. Debs when I interviewed him while in Terre Haute. I saw Debs and his brother, Theodore, in an office in the business section of the city — Debs' own office, where he does his writing. He keeps this office so that he may work undisturbed. He has not even a telephone.

After considerable maneuvering, I succeeded in arranging an interview. At 8 o'clock of a bright June

morning, I entered this simply-furnished workroom and found the candidate waiting for me. We soon settled down to the task facing us, and for 3 hours we were at it.

“Sure to Come to Us.”

Debs told how he cannot walk the streets without being stopped continuously by voters who assure him they will give their support. “I’m going to vote the Socialist ticket for the first time,” is the statement made by many. The Progressive element is “sure to come to us,” Debs said. “They will not return to the Republican Party. Then there are the colored people. Dozens have come to me with assurances that they will give our party their support.”

An article severely criticizing the photoplay, *The Birth of a Nation*, won him the friendship of many negroes. Debs told me that he has received resolutions of commendation from many parts of the country. Almost every paper published for negroes has copied his article. Many of their organizations have requested him to deliver addresses. These negroes (and there are about 1,000 in the Fifth District) are going to vote for Debs.

Discusses National Issues.

In this interview Debs made it clear that he prefers to discuss national issues when he appeals to the voters of the Fifth District. The broader issues of our national life will be placed before the voters — they will learn that the election of a Congressman is a matter of national, not local, significance.

Debs became enthusiastic when he referred to his public meetings. “There is something in them that indicates a breaking away. I see a rising tide of Socialist sentiment. The enthusiasm is marvelous.

“The people don’t want a discussion of the humbug tariff. That has been worked to a frazzle. I see by the early statements that the old parties are going to fight it out on preparedness, Americanism, and the tariff. Americanism — that means anything. It will be trotted in because all other issues are worn to shreds. They are going to attempt to palm that off on the American people.”

Analyzes President Wilson.

Debs did not mince words when he turned his attention to President Wilson, who, according to the Socialist candidate, “has contradicted himself so frequently that there is really no determining where he does stand or what he actually stands for.”

Debs continued as follows:

“In his first message to Congress his attitude was one of uncompromising hostility to the trusts and big interests. He declared that the Democratic Party had come into power for the purpose of destroying the powerful private monopolies and restoring free competition to the business interests of the nation.

“Then things began to happen. It wasn’t long before there was nationwide industrial demoralization, and literally millions of hungry men were tramping the streets of the cities.

“In his next message to Congress and in the speeches made by him at about the same time, he warned Congress that there must be no more interference with ‘legitimate’ business interest, that confidence must be restored, and that business must be given a ‘fair’ chance to expand and to protect its interests, free from legislative interference.”

Wilson Has Surrendered.

Debs added, in emphatic tones, that this meant abject surrender to the trusts and monopolies — and they have had absolute sway ever since.

“The vaunted destruction of the trusts threatened with the Wilson administration in the last national campaign was pure bunkum and it is now clear as daylight to every man who has eyes to see,” said Debs.

“The big interests, the plutocracy, in a word, rule the land and loot the people as despotically and with the same brutal defiance as they did under the Republican administrations of Roosevelt and Taft.

“In the following message to Congress (his third one) and the speeches made in connection therewith, the surrender of the Wilson administration to the plutocracy was made final and complete.

“Mr. Wilson, who had all his life been opposed to militarism, has now become the avowed champion of plutocratic preparedness, and today he stands be-

fore the country pleading in the name of Wall Street and its interests for the largest standing army and the most powerful navy in the world.”

Compares Hughes with Javert.

Debs then said that [Republican candidate Charles] Hughes stands for the same things Wilson advocates — only more so. That is to say, it is a race in which the candidate who shouts “Americanism” louder will be elected, if the voters allow themselves to be misled again. Wilson yells for “undivided Americanism,” while Hughes orates for “undiluted Americanism.” The voters will be given an opportunity to take their choice between Tweedledee and Tweedledum.

Hughes, said Debs, has been a satisfactory Supreme Court justice — to capital. He has not hesitated to make his decisions according to the wishes of the House of Have. He has never, in his entire career, shown the slightest sympathy for the cause of the exploited toilers. And yet, he has always been able to pose as a “Progressive” before the people and, at the same time, convince the monied interests that he is “sound and conservative.” He will make an ideal President — for the exploiters.

“Hughes,” said Debs, “is a javert. Javert, you will remember, is the detective in Victor Hugo’s great novel, *Les Miserables*. Javert, through a sense of ‘duty’ hunted for many years a helpless victim of society who had stolen a few pennies. There was no element of pity, of mercy, Javert had his ‘duty’ to perform — and he did his utmost, regardless of the suffering he caused. Hughes is the political Javert. He would condemn his own mother, if his ‘duty’ ordered him. He would scrutinize the law books and forget all feeling of humanity and affection.

Hughes Satisfies Wall Street.

“Hughes, if elected President, will be considered ‘safe’ by the legalized thieves. The capitalists who rob within the law will feel secure for 4 more years if he is sent to the White House. There is nothing in his past to permit any other conclusion.”

The Socialist Party, said Debs, ought to poll a tremendous vote this November. The radicals of all parties must come to the Socialists, if they would vote consistently. This makes the outlook favorable for a vote of at least 2,000,000.

The Socialists, he added, have a united party. There is teamwork among the comrades everywhere. “I’ve been in all campaigns since our party was organized in 1900,” said Debs, “and never have I been in a campaign like this one, never have I seen such harmony. The political parties of capitalism have never been as near the brink of disruption and destruction.

Sees Socialist Advances.

“We may even send our first Senator to Washington in the person of Grant Miller, of Reno, Nev. Oklahoma will elect from 20 to 50 Representatives to the Legislature. The corrupt registration law, passed by the desperate Democrats, has done the Socialists a great deal of good, because it was so raw, so flagrant, that the voters could not swallow it.”

My final question was: What would you do if you were elected to Congress?

Debs answered:

“I’d make a clean, uncompromising fight along working class lines. I’d oppose every kind of preparedness and armament and equipment. I’d fight for my class, as I’ve always fought. I’d be a true working class representative.”

Help Elect Debs to Congress.

While the campaign to elect Debs to Congress has hardly begun, the comrades throughout the country are already coming forward with the kind of assistance that brings results. According to Noble C. Wilson, campaign manager for the committee in charge, letters are coming in from every section.† Robert Hunter, the noted Socialist writer, sends a contribution with this comment:

I am an old Terre Haute boy and love the dear old place. I would rejoice to see one of the noblest of its sons represent it before the world in Congress, in place of the corporation

† - Noble C. Wilson was incidentally a fraternal delegate from Indiana to the founding convention of the Communist Labor Party, held in Chicago in September 1919.

lackeys, corrupt politicians, and others of like type who have misrepresented Terre haute people and made every old Terre Haute boy blush with shame.

C.N. Shock, former mayor of Lima, Ohio, writes:

I cannot let this opportunity go by to add my little mite to assist in your campaign. You certainly have a great opportunity to send a man to Congress who will not only be an honor to your district, but who will accomplish much in the interest of humanity as well.

To reach about 20,000 farmers and 10,000 coal miners is no easy task. But the campaign plans will bring the principles of Socialism to every one of them, if the members of the Debs campaign committee receive the support they expect from the Socialists throughout the country.

Literature will do the trick. The printed word will make possible the election of Debs to Congress. With the name of every voter in the hands of the campaign manager, the next task facing the workers is to supply this large mailing list with the literature that converts. Fortunately, the miners are all members of the United Mine Workers and they are for Socialism, or, at the least, are sympathetic. They can easily be convinced that Debs is the man who should receive their support next November. Literature will do it.

Send Silver Ballots.

In addition, the Fifth District committee is already making arrangements to employ the best speakers obtainable. Regular organizers will soon be located

in the 6 counties. Men like Walter Thomas Mills, Allan L. Benson, George R. Kirkpatrick, Meyer London, and many others have promised to lend their voices to the campaign to "Send Debs to Congress."

As I have already stated, the comrades throughout the country are coming forward with silver votes. That is to say, they realize they must help even though they cannot cast a vote in the Fifth Indiana District. So they send silver ballots. Of all the letters I have examined (and many have passed through my hands), the most touching was one written by Mrs. Laura Clark of Richards, NM. This comrade is the widow of a Civil War veteran. Her letter, which ought to put new heart into the most discouraged, follows:

Enclosed find money order for \$5 for the "Send Debs to Congress" fund. I am a poor widow without an income, but if it were absolutely necessary, Debs could have my last cent and my life thrown in for good measure.

This is sent not so much for Gene personally, as for myself and all the millions of victimized women who are helpless in the crushing maw of Mammon. If my mite, so gladly contributed, is the means of helping the gospel of Brotherhood, I shall feel that I have not lived in vain.

Realizing that such comrades are behind Debs in his great campaign to carry a district for labor, realizing that the Socialist workers in and around Terre Haute mean business, realizing that the voters are lending Socialism a sympathetic hearing, we may safely expect great things from this movement to "send Debs to Congress."

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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