
Speech at Eagle's Opera House:

Potter, Wisconsin — Sept. 5, 1917

by Emil Seidel

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Sometimes we think we are hitting the other fellow when we are really hitting ourselves. A few years ago you people voted amendments to the constitution, and you voted down the referendum, the initiative, and the recall. Now you have no right to make use of the referendum in the conscriptive act. As a result we are in the position that we are today. A few years ago three Socialists were appointed to attend a world's meeting to be held at Vienna, but just before receiving our passports we learned that Vienna declared war. We were to meet at Paris, but that city too was in a state of war, as was also Copenhagen. We found that many different nationalities were drawn into the world's struggle. This war has raged for the past 3 years; the War God demands that we continue and we did. We, in the US, looked on at the war, but not disinterested. We followed events, expressed sympathies and antipathies. We were proud that the US was far away from the war. We learned that the emperors, kaiser, tsars, and other rulers were making war upon each other without the consent of the people in the different countries. We did not have to have militarism. The US will not stand for secret diplomacy. We did not see that we were heading straight for war.

The Socialists have told you many times that we were heading into the war. Here is an article, written in 1896, by Doyce: "In as much as militarism manifests

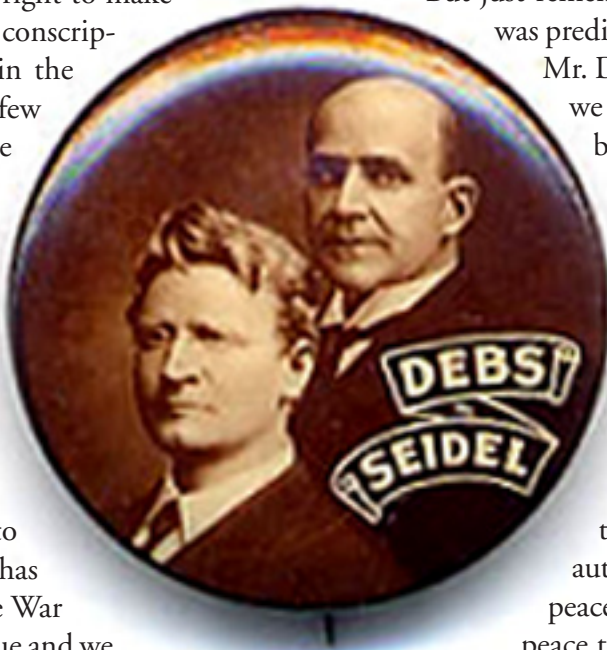
itself in this peculiar appearance, and its brutality and in as much as its progress has produced results detrimental to civilization..." etc. I will not read the whole article to you because that much is self-explanatory.

But just remember that as early as 1896 war was predicted, as shown in this article by Mr. Doyce. We told the people what we saw was coming. This is the beginning of something. It behooves us as a people to think, to be clear on what are the real causes that drive us into the war, and into what we do not want, and to find out how we can avoid the results. The US is in the world war.

When I went to [Antigo?] a short time ago to lecture, a committee told me the authorities did not want me to talk peace. When a man begins to talk peace today, he is likely to be arrested

for disturbing the peace. Today when I went to visit at the courthouse in this city a man drew back when I extended my hand to shake with him.

There is no chance for peace until you get rid of the whole outfit of such officials as you have at the present time. But what is responsible? If you did clean out the city, the state, and the nation of such men you would not yet succeed. There are some people, not officials, still left — not for the protection of life but for the protection of *property*. The national government takes your *sons* by the conscriptive act, but it does *not* conscript your property. The Europeans called on the



US to help them and now the people who made money on the war are calling for war. While these people were making money, we were being driven towards the war. We grew in two years from a debtor nation to a creditor nation. We supplied things for the war, but still, we, the common people, did not get anything from the wealth that was accumulated. When the US got gold, the English became jealous and said our people, that is the American people, must accept notes and the businessman did. After we had found that two years had gone by and the English had not "licked" Germany as she had promised to do, the notes became due and the English could not pay for them. The US had to back up the credit of the Allies. (An article in the December number of the *Contemporary Review* of 1895).

We made big money and the businessman had to find a place for investing it, in order to increase the capital. The wealthy people of the US had much money and no place for investing it and the only way they could get into the market was to get into the war. That was the only chance. Mr. [Elihu] Root went to Russia to give aid in the building of railroads for them. The people did not do this because they liked Russia, but to "skin" the Russians. In April 1917, the US had inadequate railroads herself, yet she sends our people over to build railroads for Russia. We got into the war to find out a place for the investment of *their* money.

The working people of this country are getting dissatisfied. Germany began to make improvements for the working people. The English working people became restless, and the English government found some protection against wrong legislation. The working people of the US also became restless, and the [capitalists] found it necessary to do something. The negroes were in the south, and worked for little or nothing. The working people wanted more and more. In East St. Louis there was a clash between high- and low-priced labor. The Steel Trust broke down the unions, broke down organized labor, and found cheap labor abroad. In the city of Milwaukee there is one of the tanners who has imported negroes from the south. The tanners of Milwaukee broke down the unions so that the average man today cannot make a decent living for himself and family.

We are fighting for democracy and not fighting for territory; we are not fighting for trade; we are not fighting for expansion, for imperialism. From the

looks of things we are fighting for nothing. (The above taken from a speech by President Wilson). They say we are not fighting the German people, but that we are fighting the Kaiser. It seems strange that it takes so many American boys to fight the Kaiser. One man like "Teddy" Roosevelt could or at least should be able to fight him. They say we are fighting for democracy. They first declare that a state of war exists. They did not ask the people of the US if a state of war exists. We found fault with the German government because the war was declared without the consent of the German people. We did the same thing.

They may lock me up, but I defy them to shut me up. After war is declared the conscriptive act is passed. The Socialists demand that the act be put to a vote of the people through the referendum. When we planted the Goddess of Liberty we started out on a new road, but now instead the people who are running our government at the present time have turned back, and are following the course taken by the German people. We, the people of the US, did not have a word to say. We are being driven to imperialism. We do not have a chance to vote on anything. We have been finding fault with the European people and the European diplomacy. Did the President of the US ask our nation regarding its opinion concerning the reply to the Pope's message? In Germany, at least a committee wrote the reply, while in the US no one but the President himself had a word to say about it; therefore, there seems to be more democracy in Germany than in the US.

There is no democracy when we come to secret diplomacy. We have a censor; news is being censored. If a man wants to speak on peace, he is arrested. In fact a man was arrested for reading the Declaration of Independence. It might be treason to repeat something Mr. Wilson said a year ago. We should have freedom of speech, and the right to assemble. The pacifists were put out of Fargo, Hudson, etc. Why are *we* not put out tonight? Because the people who are here, and not Socialists, are not in a majority and are therefore afraid to say anything. "Woe to the man or the group of men that stand in our way."

We are at war. It is going to cost us some money. Patriots tell us it might cost us \$40 billion before we are through. It is estimated that at least the loss of men will run to 400,000 wounded, killed, and missing. We are supposed to "Hurrah!" at this loss, or we

are considered traitors. They tell us that the hospitals should be prepared for the boys who when they come back will be syphilitic — and then woe to the pure and innocent American daughters.

America is the richest nation in the world. You people could have all kinds of comforts, pleasures, etc. if you only wanted it. When I see the beautiful green verdure, the fields, the forests, the water which could be turned into power for electricity, etc., and when I see that we are wasting our young men, I cannot help but believe that the US has fallen into the hands of robbers. But why? This is the explanation that Socialists give: We say that production for profit is the fault of it all. When I wish to make a profit I must give the other fellow less than he gives me. The whole system on which our production is carried is “skinning.”

I was a Republican once, but they pulled the wool down over my eyes; the Democrats pulled the wool the other way; the Progressives pulled both ways; the Prohibitionists, while the wool was being pulled over the eyes of the people, would not give them even as much as a drink. We are producing for profit and the man makes his profit on his fellow men. The Socialists say there is a wrong in a person getting out 2 pails of produce when he has only put 1 in. The Harvesting Trusts, the Packing Trusts, etc. own the goods, and dish out as they please. Instead of these few people owning and controlling the markets the people of the city, of the state, of the nations should own them. The people should own the mills, the elevators, etc. The industries should be owned by the people collectively, and operated for their use. We all need food, clothing, shelter.

The Socialists propose, instead of producing a surplus, that just enough be produced to build up a strong nation here. Give the boys and girls a chance for better facilities, better opportunities, as they go through the world, and they will be better able to share their burden of life. They know nothing of the world in which they are living. Why not build up the biggest and best nation the world has ever seen? If you would have the German people see that they can get what they want here in this country, and show the soldiers

that this government is better than the old Kaiser, every soldier would desert and come to this country to live. When the question is asked how they are going to get out of the war, they say: “Let them get out of it in the best way they can.”

The laws have been passed. You have no right of referendum, no initiative, and no recall. You cannot recall the President, the Congressmen, etc. But you must get these rights. You have rights — that is, the freedom of speech and of the press, if it is not libelous. You have a right to meet, and have a right to prepare for elections, to pick the best men, to get rid of any law that you do not like. No law becomes effective until the people vote that it is right when the initiative is in force.

One man says: “Make all you can.” That is what the trust tells us, and that is why we are at war. “Make good,” says the other fellow. You must see that the officials make good. They are your servants. They are your little petty “kaisers,” “tsars,” and you must see that you get men that will serve you. We, the Socialists, are in a position to give you a new platform. We have a pledge that we want all interested to sign, and to subscribe to. When you become a Socialist you must renounce all allegiance to and give up all other parties. You believe that all the people work together for a common good. The Milwaukee Leader is a paper for the working people. The Socialistic movement is a worldwide movement, not only in the US but extends through other countries. This movement is the call of the working people. It is an organization that stands for the family, stands for right instead of the dollar; for humanity. We should not be the slaves of profit and property but should be their masters. We have a party of our own. We have our declaration of independence, we are the masters of wealth; we are putting up our own candidates; we have sent our men to Congress; we are introducing our bills; and we *will* pass laws that will be of benefit to the working people, and not for the benefit of the wealthy class.

I thank you for your kind attention.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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