

The Debs Foundation Newsletter

P.O. BOX 9454, TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA 47808



SPRING 2009

The 2008 Award Banquet



Richard Trumka
Speaking



Roberts Receiving Plaque
from Trumka



Cecil Roberts
Speaking

One record was set at last fall's banquet: that is the number of top union officials present. There was the award recipient, Cecil Roberts, President of the United Mine Workers, Richard Trumka, former president of the UMW and currently Secretary-Treasurer of the AFL-CIO, and Michael Sullivan, President of the Sheet Metal Workers as well as President of the Debs Foundation. These are persons who are well informed on the issues, and also highly effective communicators.

As of the banquet date, October 4, the all important fall elections were just over four weeks away. The outcome was by no means clear, but the consequences were easily cast in stark terms: would it be change for America, or a continuation of Bush-Cheney policies. Currently, many progressives are not happy with some of President Obama's policies or about some of the people he has chosen into his inner circle, but I for one, sleep better at night knowing that it is not John McCain making the presidential decisions.

But no outcomes were certain as of banquet night. It was feared that many who openly expressed support for Obama would, in the secrecy of the voting booth, vote against him because of his race. And might not some who had supported Clinton or Edwards in the primary

just stay away from the polls on election day. Roberts and Trumka were not timid in their opposition to the Republican ticket, and their support for the Democrats. One of them recounted his recent experience when he met an old high school teacher. She said she had always voted Democratic, but she just couldn't bring herself to vote for a Negro. His response to her, and challenge to us, was "why not an intelligent black man for President," when the country could elect a stupid white man for eight years?

The speakers were by and large preaching to the choir, but it was obviously refreshing and invigorating to be in a crowd of like-minded progressives. That night we could not know that just a week later the financial crisis would break open and apparent to all would become the depth of the global crisis that unregulated greed could create.

But we all left the banquet in high spirits, feeling that a worthy person had been honored with the Debs award. Not only was he worthy of the honor, he showed that he highly appreciated the honor bestowed on him by the Debs Foundation. It was a great occasion. Now on to this fall's event.

SPRING BUSINESS MEETING • Saturday, May 2 at 1:00 pm, at the Debs Home

No Such Number

Not exactly the correct way to present the facts. Our P.O. Box number has changed, but for another twelve months mail addressed to 843 will find its way to our new box number, which is 9454. Nothing else in the address is changed. The postal service has given clients sufficient time to notify all their members, and hopefully to use up supplies of envelopes and stationery bearing the old box number.

A Look at Finances

We had a number of unexpected expenses this year, which resulted in \$52,451.20 in expenses compared to \$43,440.07 last year. The largest was \$2555 for repair to the roof and soffits of the Debs Home. Two other large costs were an 80 percent increase in property insurance—to \$1945, and \$971.55 for a new computer. Utility costs also were higher. We spent close to \$1000 near year's end for memorabilia reproductions at Gallo-way and High Ground Digital. Of the costs mentioned above, only that for property insurance is expected to be recurring. This increase was due to a re-evaluation of the current replacement cost of the Debs Home.

On the income side, the award banquet brought in \$16,609.50: \$7970 in program listings and \$8699.50 in ticket sales. This total was offset by banquet-related expenses of \$5514 for dinners, \$1355 for Hulman Center rental, \$300 for the singer, \$95 for flowers, and \$2014 for printing—total \$9,278. Thus, we cleared \$7397 on the banquet.

In 2007, we had to withdraw \$14,970 from savings. In 2008 we took out \$19,955. Clearly, we need to find ways to bring expenditures and income more into balance. At the current rate of deficit spending, the money market account of the Endowment Fund would in five years be depleted.

Lies and Double Talk: No Plan, But A Strategy

The press is not doing enough to provide objective, thorough coverage of the news. Consequently, it is far too easy for many to rely on just one source of news, which is selected partly by ready availability -- same time, same place, every day on your radio or T.V.-- but largely by the extent to which you hear what you want to hear. Approximately 30 percent of the population is far right, and well known are the places to turn to hear a particular take on the events making the news for the

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Mick Love, *Treasurer*

The *Debs Foundation Newsletter* is published twice yearly for distribution to members and friends of the Foundation. The Eugene V. Debs Foundation is a non-profit, private organization which maintains the home of Eugene and Kate Debs as a museum and shrine to labor, and carries on educational and informational programs which aim to honor and promote the goals for which Debs struggled: industrial unionism, social justice, and peace. For those wishing to become members, an application form is provided elsewhere in this issue.

day. The presentation will be supported by a strong supporting cast. The announcers have been provided their talking points, and the available cast of “experts” are skillful at providing commentary and analysis which supports their one-sided perspective.

One disturbing example of this is how the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) is being described as threatening the end of democracy, the death of free market capitalism, and part of an evil conspiracy designed to turn the U.S. into European-style Socialism. It purportedly would destroy the secret ballot in union certification elections, and expose workers to threats and intimidation by union goon squads.

The argument is a big lie. In the first place, if workers want a certification election and petition the NLRB to conduct one, the workers at that time can also petition that it be by secret ballot. The provision in EFCA as currently proposed for “Card Check” is to allow workers to make their choice in a timely manner without undue pressure, even firings, from employers, beginning with supervisors who pressure workers in one-on-one meetings not to vote for a union. As currently operating, when the NLRB sets up the requested secret ballot election for a couple of months hence, this is when the employer starts the intimidation, requiring workers to attend meetings during working hours to hear anti-union speeches, see anti-union movies, and receive anti-union literature. Unions have no equivalent access to employees. So, what is so anti-democratic and anti-freedom about card check? And the proposed EFCA legislation is not about the secret ballot.

Another example of how right-wing talk radio and T.V. are currently distorting issues and flooding the airways with one-sided “facts” is their ongoing treatment

Debs 100 Years Ago

Debs, with rare exercise of common sense, actually avoided the lecture platform for nearly a year. This at the urging of wife, Kate, who recognized that Eugene was exhausted after the 1908 Red Special campaign and could no longer shrug off his physical ailments. He did, however, make numerous short trips and wrote three or four articles a week for the *Appeal to Reason*. He declined staff requests to move to Girard, Kansas, where the weekly was located, but did maintain a room in a local hotel.

Ray Ginger (p.289) wrote that during the spring and summer of 1909, Debs must have felt like a man on vacation. He did his share of work for the *Appeal*, but it was a novelty for him to eat regularly and to sleep in a bed rather than a coach seat. Consequently, his health mended rapidly in the leisurely atmosphere of Girard and Terre Haute. Debs' period of R&R was interrupted by a court decision which was handed down by Federal Court in the spring of 1909. The editor of the *Appeal*, Fred Warren, was sentenced to six months in jail and a fine of \$5,000. His offense was his forceful defense in *Appeal* articles of Haywood, Moyer, and Pettibone. It was apparent that if this verdict were permitted to stand, separate indictments on the same charges could be brought against the other editors: Wayland and Debs. The weekly would be put out of business, both bankrupted and robbed of its edito-

rial staff. So the decision was immediately appealed.

Plans were made also to enlist public sympathy in the issue. Key to this effort would be a lecture tour by Debs, under the national auspices of the *Appeal*. The local sponsor in each city agreed to sell a thousand tickets at 25 cents each, of which fifteen cents went to the *Appeal*, and each lecture ticket carried a forty-week subscription to the weekly. Thus, every speech by Debs would gain a thousand readers for the *Appeal*, plus a sum of money for the *Appeal*.

The tour began in November at Fred Warren's hometown of Rich Hill, Missouri. Debs was typically forceful in his criticism of the courts. Oft repeated was his earlier epigram: "Under the capitalist misrule the judicial nets are so adjusted as to catch the minnows and let the whales slip through." The circulation of the *Appeal* had been 368,791 when the tour began, and grew to more than 500,000 by year's end. This campaign lasted on into 1910, and if this one cause was not enough for Debs, he also found it necessary to pay some attention to the factional fight in the Socialist Party.

So much for the period of rest and restoration, too many causes needing a fighter with Debs' abilities. And a hundred years later, Debs' ringing indictment of the judicial system and the political and economic establishment still resonates.

2008 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Eugene V. Debs Foundation

Mick Love, Treasurer

Expenditures:

Duke Energy	\$ 1,439.66
Vectren	2,382.21
Verizon	1,212.54
Indiana American Water	398.08
High Ground Digital	1,755.00
US Postal Service	1,082.17
Refund for Medicare Overcharge	48.29
Springhill Heating	148.07
ISU Human Rights Day	100.00
Terminix	349.20
ISU Agency Account	700.00
Jewett Printing	4,892.92
Galloway Photo	692.00
Kroger (donuts)	11.98
Lowe's (storm door, etc.)	330.00
Radio Shack & Dell	103.93
Apple House	49.25
Office Max	112.84
Laughrey's (Roof repair)	2,554.74
Harrah Plumbing	305.50
AIM (annual dues)	35.00
Michael Newkirk (labor).....	55.00
Suzanne Maloney (clerical)	30.00
Wabash Valley Visions & Voices	175.00
Democracy's Prisoner.....	19.77
Inweld (fire extinguishers)	25.00
ADT	180.00

Business Advantage	\$ 119.94
State Auto Insurance (home)	1,945.00
Louie Popejoy (banquet singer)	300.00
Azar Catering	5,514.17
Meier Johann-Wengler	956.27
Hulman Center Rental.....	1,355.00
Heinl's Flowers	94.50
Dell Computer.....	971.55
Cunningham Library	500.00
Indiana Department of Revenue	1,313.52
Internal Revenue Service	5,018.19
Museum Director Salary.....	15,168.87
Total Expenditure	\$52,451.20

Income:

Dinner Program	\$ 7,970.00
Dinner Tickets.....	8,699.50
Dues & Donations	9,026.93
Memorabilia Sales	1,116.00
From Endowment Fund	19,955.00
Total Income	\$46,767.43

Fund Balances:

Checking Balance 12/31/07	\$ 9,573.30
Checking Balance 12/31/08	5,875.32

of the AIG executive bonus issue. They feed on the public outrage over what AIG has done to the lives of millions of middle class Americans, but the persons who did this are rewarded rather than punished and given large “retention” bonuses.

The conservative media have by and large handled this issue skillfully, inferring that it is a problem created by the Obama administration. They focus mainly on President Obama and Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner. Geithner should be fired! He allowed it to happen, and lies about when he first knew about the bonuses. Was it March 12, as he claims? Ah, but here is the recorded hearing dated March 3, not March 10, at which the bonuses were mentioned, Geithner present. Gotcha! Ha! Ha!

Not mentioned is that the basic outline of the AIG bailout was hammered out in Congress and with guidance from the Federal Reserve Board and then Treasury

Secretary Paulsen. That is, before January 20.

The truth is that all this fuss is over what amounts to one-tenth of one percent of what was paid to AIG. But it serves conservative Republican interests to keep the noise level high. They have no solutions, but do have a clever strategy. It is to whittle away at the strong public support for Obama, and to delay as long as possible deliberations on the big issues of the reform of health care, education, transportation, renewable energy, and of course, creating or re-creating a regulatory apparatus for the financial industry.

The longer the conservative news media have the focus on such issues as “undemocratic” card check and AIG “retention” bonuses, the easier it will be and less risky, politically, to act as the party of NO on everything Obama and the Democrats try to accomplish. We can’t let the party of NO steal the show!

-CK

For payment of late 2009 or new member dues:

NOTE: Please check here if this is a:

RENEWAL

NEW MEMBERSHIP

ADDRESS CHANGE

Email Address: _____



Membership Dues: The Eugene V. Debs Foundation

NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____


_____ \$ 5.00 Student Member _____ \$100.00 Sustaining Member

_____ \$10.00 Regular Member _____ \$250.00 Life Members

_____ \$25.00 Supporting Member _____ Other

Enclose remittance. Make checks payable to the Debs Foundation.
 The Debs Foundation • P.O. Box 9454 • Terre Haute, IN 47808-0843
 We are a not-for-profit organization, so your dues and contributions are tax deductible. The Foundation owns and maintains the Debs Home and offers several educational and cultural programs.

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