

The Debs Foundation Newsletter

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



SPRING 2010

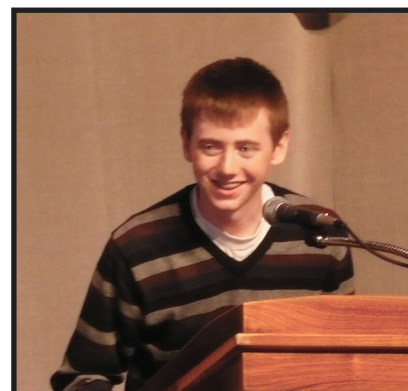
The 2009 Award Banquet



Sullivan Presents Award
to Gettelfinger



Gettelfinger
Speaking



John Ryan
Essay Contest Winner

Last year's award banquet was above average in terms of ticket sales and paid listings in the dinner program greetings section. However, the real measure of a banquet's success deals with unquantifiable dimensions such as enthusiasm and expression of appreciation and support for the honoree. It was readily apparent that close to one half the attendees were UAW members, active or retired. At least three charter bus loads were here and many others drove, no doubt in American-made cars. Ron Gettelfinger showed clearly that he never lost touch with the rank and file. This quality had characterized his leadership style from his first union position as a shop steward to his tenure as president of the UAW. Too bad, in a way, that the banquet was a few months too early for slipping in a few jokes about Toyota safety problems, but it is hard to see how that would have added to the spirit of the occasion.

It was not mentioned that Gettelfinger would be retiring this spring. It was mentioned that another distinguished UAW president and civil rights leader, Walter Reuther, had received the Debs Award in 1968.

A new feature of this banquet was the presentation of the Eugene V. Debs Essay Contest Award winner. The recipient was John Ryan, a South High School student. John was

presented a plaque and a check for \$500. In his acceptance remarks, John expressed appreciation for the honor and observed that the cash award would be a leg up on getting started in college. Congratulations, Ryan.

And congratulations to everyone who participated in this highly successful award banquet.

Howard Zinn on Debs

Howard was honored with the Eugene V. Debs Award in 1998. He died January 27, this year. He had been a contributor to *The Progressive* for many years. The magazine put together a three-page tribute to Howard Zinn in its March issue titled "Distilled Zinn." It included excerpts from Zinn's essays in the magazine from 1998 until 2009. Zinn's comment on Eugene Debs from January 1999 is worth repeating here.

"We are always in need of radicals who are also loveable. Debs was what every socialist or anarchist or radical should be: fierce in his convictions, kind and compassionate in his personal relations."

We think this is an apt portrayal also of the Howard Zinn we saw the day he was honored with the Debs Award.

SPRING BUSINESS MEETING • Saturday, April 24 at 1:00 pm, at the Debs Home

The 2009 Financial Statement

It was not a bad year for the foundation money-wise. We took in \$7796.14 more than we spent and finished the year with \$12,178.03 in our checking account. Looking more closely, however, \$15,969.00 of that income came from the money market portion of our Endowment Fund, which continues the pattern of recent years. This is no cause for great alarm, but it clearly is a trend which will have to be reversed eventually.

Expenditures were a bit lower than usual for one item. The company which has been providing us web service was going through major reorganization and did not bill us in 2009: a plus of about \$1400.00. However, already in this year we have paid a final bill of \$874.00 to that company for website hosting, and \$2345.00 to a new company for a major update of the website and hosting for 2010. By the way, you should check out the redesigned website. It is more appealing and more user-friendly. The address is the same: www.eugenevdebs.com.

There are early ideas for making the foundation's fiftieth anniversary in 2012 memorable. Included in early preparations for this

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Noel Beasley, *Executive Vice President*

Charles King, *Secretary*

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.

event are ideas to launch a major capital campaign to shore up the foundation's financial base. Stay tuned.

Debs 100 Years Ago

The year 1910 was a typical year for Debs, one filled with travel, with lectures, writing for the Appeal to Reason: in short, "taking on the system" in every way possible short of violence. Often coming to the defense of someone who seemed to be suffering some injustice, this year one such case was Fred Warren. But another recurring event in his life was his need to retreat to his home in Terre Haute for rest and recuperation, including doctor visits.

Debs tended to use Girard, Kansas as the base from which he launched his travels, returning home to Terre Haute only when it was necessary to recuperate. It is a sad commentary on his life that his wife, Kate, was rarely with him when he felt healthy and fit. From Pittsburgh, in the spring of 1910, he wrote to Kate, saying, "Love and kisses from the sweet honeymoon days of nearly twenty-five years ago," but on the actual anniversary in June of that year, Debs was on the road, far from Kate and Terre Haute.

In 1910, a momentous change took place in Debs' personal life. A ten-year old, Oscar Bauer, Jr., the son of Kate's stepbrother, came

to live with Kate and Eugene. The boy's mother had died two years earlier. For Kate, it was a challenge to suddenly have a ten-year old boy running loose in a house in which she had spent long periods of time alone for 20 years. Gene, on the other hand, was delighted to spend time with the lad. He bought the boy a fox terrier, Buster, and accompanied the two of them on long tramps over the surrounding hills, and, after rain, into the back country to hunt mushrooms.

However, the pleasant opportunity to relive with young Otto the things he had enjoyed with his father as a boy did not tie him long to Terre Haute. In July, 1910, Debs went to Mayo Clinic for a throat operation, but a month later he wrote Julius Wayland: "I'm getting all right and am chomping at the bit for action."

The focus of Debs' speaking tours was the campaign to build up the readership of Appeal to Reason. George Brewer was on the staff of the Appeal to Reason and regularly accompanied Debs on his lecture tours. In a July 7, 1910 letter to Brewer, during an interlude in his strenuous travels, for rest and recuperation, Debs spelled out his preferences for the kind of schedule he would like

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DON'T PITCH YOUR NEWSLETTER! PASS IT ON.

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.

Under the Radar Potential

The activism of the Roberts Supreme Court has set us back 100 years with its ruling that corporations have free speech rights which should encompass spending as much as they want, whenever they want, and in whatever way they choose during elections. This raises the real possibility that CEO's—the brains who control the purse strings of this entity upon which the Roberts court has bestowed rights of free speech, including political expenditures—can spend millions of dollars to buy the legislative and regulatory apparatus which is in their interests.

I heard an informative discussion on Bill Moyers Journal weeks ago which was revealing. The experts on that panel stated that it probably is a mistake to focus on the impact of this judicial ruling on presidential races or even Senate and possibly even House seats. These are too expensive, and also too visible. The potential blow back from public awareness of, for example, Exxon Mobil pouring millions into one candidate's presidential or senate race presents high risk.

But they can get more bang for the buck and, just as

important, do so virtually unnoticed, slipping in under the radar, by focusing on the state level. They can elect governors sympathetic to their interests. But more effective and cost-efficient might be state courts. It is this state judiciary, which is elected in most states, where cases are heard which deal with all sorts of issues in which corporations have interest. There are issues of workplace safety and union-management relations, and environmental regulations pertaining to clean air and water, plant location, and on and on the list goes.

The Moyers Journal segment used Texas as one example where the petro-chemical interests are large and where they have succeeded already in getting a state judiciary which is responsive to their corporate interests. The losers are the poor and near poor, many of whom live near and work in the neighborhoods close to the plants, where their air, water, and soil are contaminated, but the judicial and regulatory systems are stacked against them. It is hard to imagine a system any more stacked against the lower class, but with the additional political clout the Roberts Court has granted corporations, the best legislation money can buy may get a lot better, for the super rich that is.

2009 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Eugene V. Debs Foundation

Mick Love, Treasurer

Expenditures:

Verizon	\$ 1,176.82
Vectren	2,185.67
Duke Energy	1,506.95
Indiana American Water	415.14
U.S. Postal Service	941.11
Indiana Department of Revenue	1,372.80
Internal Revenue Service	3,937.80
Safeco (Unemployment Ins.)	511.00
ISU Human Rights Day	100.00
Terminix	349.20
ADT (Security System)	186.00
Springhill Heating & AC	83.00
Mr. Emblem (Debs Pins)	1,037.60
Meier Johann-Wengler	969.19
University of Illinois Press	815.00
Staples (Fax/Printer)	171.17
Safe Auto (Home Insurance)	1,945.00
Safe Auto (Banquet Insurance Rider)	73.00
John Ryan (Essay Award Winner)	500.00
Anne Feeney (Honorarium & Travel).....	920.00
Trophy Shop (Essay Award Plaque)	35.00
Watler Accounting Service	254.96
Mike Newkirk (Wood Cutting)	100.00
Leilani Newkirk (Clerical)	50.00
Lowes & Complete Outdoor	57.30

Debra Leichty (Graphic Design).....	269.00
Azar Catering	7,546.90
Jewett Printing	6,246.57
Indiana Secretary of State	10.00
ISU Visions & Voices.....	175.00
Inweld Fire Inspection	30.00
Charles King (groundskeeping supplies)	91.17
Harrah Plumbing.....	104.77
Ace Sign	80.25
Charles King (postage & supplies).....	109.61
Association of Indiana Museums	35.00
Museum Director's Salary	15,524.44
Total Expenditures	\$51,207.02

Income:

Dues & Contributions	\$12,955.19
Memorabilia Sales	515.00
Dinner Ticket Sales.....	15,056.00
Dinner Program Greetings	14,507.97
From Endowment Fund	15,969.00
Total Income	\$59,003.16
Income Less Expenses	\$ 7,796.14
Checking Balance 12/31/09	\$ 12,178.03

for the remainder of the year. He stated his case poignantly: "I have been an exile from home on account of the labor movement nearly all of my active life, and especially since I have been married, giving up all the comforts of home to serve the cause. I have now reached a point in life when I can do so no longer and where I would be unjust to myself and cruelly so to my wife if I attempted it.... I should not be away from home more than one third of the time, but I am willing to make it half the time to carry out our plans.... Beginning with September you can book me for two weeks at a time, and for every two weeks I am out speaking I want to be home two weeks, during which time I can rest and at the same time write for the Appeal and keep up my correspondence and meet other demands so that no time will be lost." It is clear that Debs did not view his "down time" in Terre Haute as being entirely restful.

Debs' extensive writing was not only for the Appeal. For example, a November Federal Circuit Court decision upholding the sentence of Fred Warren demanded Debs' response. He sent an impassioned telegram denouncing the decision and then began another lecture tour. By the year's end, the Appeal to Reason had 472,255 paid subscribers. Debs had given more than two hundred speeches for the weekly during 1910; 90 percent of them made a profit for their local sponsor.

Nineteen ten also saw Debs venturing into Socialist Party politics. He was concerned that the socialists were splitting into a conservative "intellectual" wing and a radical liberal "blue collar" faction. Debs felt strongly that socialism should be of and for the working class. Particular issues on which Debs took the side of the laborers were opposition to restrictive immigration politics,

which would exclude all Orientals from the U.S., and in favoring efforts to integrate Negro workers into unions and win them for socialism. Debs' forceful advocacy of the radical point of view on these issues was published in the International Socialist View. Debs' advocacy on these issues did not sway enough members to his point of view, so Debs essentially turned his back on the entire problem of Party policy.

Debs did not blame the Capitalists solely for the plight of the workers. He blamed the workers also for not struggling to gain their rights. His challenge to a Utah audience in 1910 was: "I am not a Labor Leader; I do not want you to follow me or anyone else; if you are looking for a Moses to lead you out of this capitalist wilderness, you will stay right where you are. I would not lead you into the promised land if I could, because if I could lead you in, someone else would lead you out. You must use your head as well as your hands, and get yourself out of your present condition."

These ideas resonate a hundred years later. Treated as "hired hands," working men and women are economically and socially a distinct class in contemporary society. Yet they resist a conscious identification of themselves as a working class. Individually, if they themselves do not quite succeed in attaining some imaginary middle class self-sufficiency, then their children will.

Yet, we take stock of things with a discerning eye and see that only for a small fraction of the people are their life circumstances improving appreciably. We must inform ourselves as best we can, then join other informed, socially conscious persons to work through the democratic process to change things. Get mad! Get active! Then we will see change we can believe in.

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