

# The Debs Foundation Newsletter

P.O. BOX 843, TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA 47808

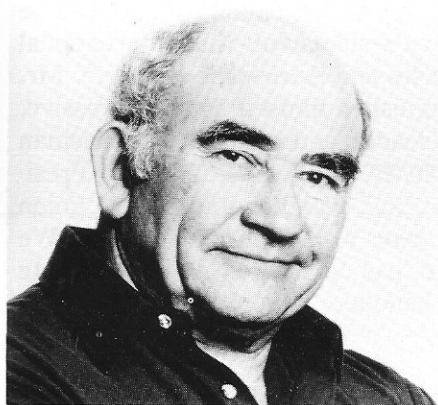
VOL. 2, NO. 2



FALL, 1987

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

## ACTOR, ACTIVIST TO RECEIVE DEBS AWARD



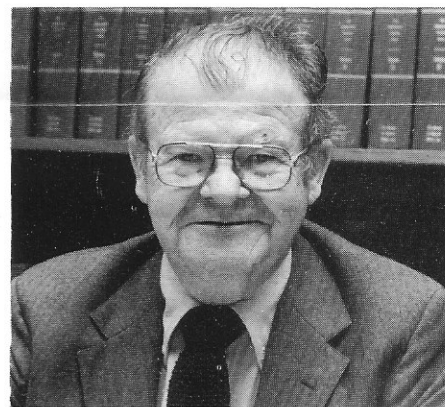
**Ed Asner**

Millions loved him as the gruff, tough but kind Lou Grant on the Mary Tyler Moore and Lou Grant shows, and will like him as Joe Danzig, principal of an inner city high school on NBC's new hour long series, The Bronx Zoo. The real Ed Asner, an outspoken critic of U.S. foreign policy and of labor leaders who at times lack social and political vision, can be a source of extreme irritation to the objects of his criticism, or can stimulate and encourage those who tend to share his concerns. Asner served as

National President of the Screen Actors Guild for two terms (1981-1985) and is founder of many humanitarian and political organizations working toward peace in Central America, long-term nutritional self-sufficiency in Africa, and other human rights causes. Described as a tireless phoneaholic and notewriter, he divides his time between dramatic projects, political and charitable causes, and developing projects for his production company, Quince/Blake Productions, a partnership with actress Timothy Blake. The Eugene V. Debs Foundation is pleased to honor Ed Asner with this year's Eugene V. Debs Award.

Born in Kansas City, Ed alternated interest in sports--all-city tackle in high school--with his interest in drama, both on stage and as deejay on local radio. Acting and his studies at the University of Chicago led to his first stage role there as Thomas a Becker in *Murder In the Cathedral*. A two-year army hitch interrupted any theatrical career but, upon discharge, Asner returned to Chicago and to his acting. Fulfilling every actor's dream, he made it to Broadway. A seasoned veteran by 1961, Asner came to Hollywood with his wife Nancy. Equally comfortable in comedy or drama, Asner has made a success of his career both in films and on television.

It is, of course, for his public service work that Asner is being honored by the Debs Foundation. His courage, conviction and commitment to a sane and humane world place him very much in the Debsian tradition. We hope that you can be present October 17 on this occasion of recognition and celebration.



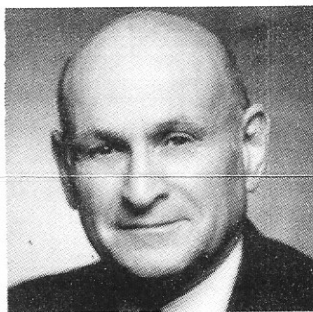
## Jim Wolfe Wolfe To Receive Distinguished Service Award

Long-term Debs Foundation member, James Wolfe, of Cincinnati, is to be recognized October 17 with the Theodore Debs Distinguished Service Award. Jim is best known in labor circles for his work in the International Molders Union and with the Sylvis Society. But his service to the Eugene V. Debs Foundation over the years should be described as extremely helpful and constructive. Officially, he is retired now, but can still usually be reached at his desk in Molders Union offices in Cincinnati. His commitment as Secretary of the Sylvis Society is an effective antidote to idleness.

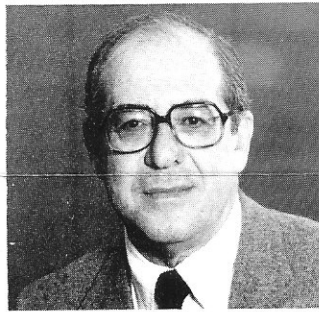
Jim has slowed down a bit in recent years and health has prevented his regular attendance at the Foundation's award banquets and business meetings. We are pleased that he will be here October 17 to be recognized for years of dedicated and useful service.

## Sheinkman Takes Seat As Finley Retires

This has been the year for changing roles for Jack Sheinkman. The Debs Foundation was anticipating upcoming events this spring when it voted to make Sheinkman Foundation President upon Murray Finley's retirement. He was also elected to fill the vacancy on the AFL-CIO Executive Committee formerly held by Finley. Mr. Finley had indicated his interest also in stepping down as Debs Foundation president, and Sheinkman consented to assume this responsibility.



**Jack Sheinkman**



**Murray Finley**

Sheinkman was secretary-treasurer of ACTWU since 1976. Foundation members know him also as honored recipient of the Eugene V. Debs Award in 1985, being recognized for his distinguished career in advocating the cause of workers, organized and unorganized, and for his efforts to bring about a more sane U.S. policy for Central America. Sheinkman is a busy man. Trained as a lawyer, he is a member of the American Bar Association, and he holds office in several national and international organizations. We are fortunate that he is willing to give of his time to the Debs Foundation.

Murray Finley has been receiving praise from many quarters for his distinguished career in organized labor. A union member since 1949, he was elected president in 1972. The AFL-CIO Executive Committee accepted Finley's resignation "with regret and with gratitude" for the counsel and fellowship he provided. The council statement also mentioned his "outstanding performance in the areas of civil rights, fair trade and efforts to achieve full employment," noting also that he was "chief architect" of the merger that created the ACTWU. Murray has served as president of the Debs Foundation since 1981. The opportunity for foundation members to recognize and express appreciation to him will come at the annual award banquet October 17.

## CONTEST WINNER

The winner of the 1987 **BRYANT SPANN MEMORIAL PRIZE IS LINDA A. RABBEN'S** "The Journey North." In this as yet unpublished article, Rabben has used her experience as an anthropologist and traveler to produce a graphic, first-hand account of the poverty and injustice characteristic of northern Brazil, much of which is related to massive rural land development, but which reaches also into the cities of the region.

## DEBS FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER Vol. 2 No. 2

Fall, 1987

Published By  
**The Eugene V. Debs Foundation**  
Box 843  
Terre Haute, IN 47808

### Foundation Officers:

Jack Sheinkman, *President*

Noel Beasley, *Executive Vice President*

Charles King, *Secretary*

Woodrow Creason, *Treasurer*

The *Debs Foundation Newsletter* will be 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.

## Winpisinger To Be Keynote Speaker

The presentation speaker at the annual banquet will be William Winpisinger, President of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers. Mr. Winpisinger has distinguished himself as an aggressive, highly effective labor leader and articulate spokesman for many important causes. He serves as a Vice President of our foundation, and was honored for his union leadership with the Eugene V. Debs Award in 1980. We are delighted that he has consented to be keynote speaker at this year's banquet.

## DECEASED

Two long time members of the Debs Foundation passed away during this summer.

LUCILLE BUSH died in mid August. She was the wife of the late Ned Bush, who served the foundation as executive vice-president and as curator of the Debs Home for many years before his death in 1979. Mrs. Bush never was given a title such as assistant curator, but a person who lived in the basement apartment for many years must have answered the phone and door bell at the Debs Home many times.

SYLVIA LASKA passed away in July. She was a devoted and highly effective worker for numerous civil rights, humanitarian and peace causes, a crusader very much in the Debs tradition. To the best of our knowledge, she did not ever actually get on the scaffolding or ladder and wield a brush when John was painting the murals on the third floor of the Debs Home, but she did help immeasurably with logistical as well as moral support. She will be missed at the annual award banquets where she and John have helped at a display table for the Wabash Valley Coalition for Peace and Justice.

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## ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

### DEBS IN 1887

#### J. Robert Constantine

In 1887 Eugene Debs continued his work as secretary-treasurer of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and as editor of the monthly BLF Magazine. In his final editorial of the year he expressed pride in the growing membership of the union and in the steady increase in the number of subscribers (25,000) to the magazine. Clearly his organizing talents had played a significant role in the union's growth and his wide-ranging editorials in the Magazine contributed to its reputation as a model of union journalism. In the January, 1887 issue of the Magazine, Debs wrote, "We welcome 1887 and we receive him in Quaker fashion with our hat on."

During the course of the year Debs' editorials revealed lingering traces of his conservative unionism, but they also revealed his growing conviction that craft unions, standing alone, were no match for organized capital and his growing concern for the social costs of industrialization and urbanization. In the January, 1887 issue of the Magazine Debs predicted that "the working men of America will seek assiduously for means of bettering their condition, *apart from strikes and the boycott*. They will discard anarchy and anarchists, violence by whatever name it is known." Strikes, he added in the May issue of the Magazine, "entail almost incalculable losses and no pen has been found sufficiently graphic to depict all the woes which strikes entail." He preferred arbitration, and only if arbitration failed, might strikes be justified. Before the end of the year, however, Debs found that strikes were "the results of under-lying wrongs" and he would soon begin to equate strikes with the colonial response to British "tyranny."

At the same time, Debs began to emphasize new tactics and strategies for organized labor. Labor, he wrote in the January 1887 issue of the Magazine, must organize itself for greater action and effectiveness in the political arena. He did not mean, he said, "the politics of the boss, the mere partisan, and the bummer," but rather "politics, the science of government," which the votes of workers could transform into an agency which would "honestly represent the will and best interests of the governed."

Another idea which had growing appeal to Debs in 1887 was that of a federation of labor unions. (The AFL, founded a year earlier, was still a gleam in the eyes of Sam Gompers and Adolph Strasser). Debs raised the issue in the February, 1887 issue of the Magazine, in which he assured his readers that he was not advocating the elimination of existing unions, but rather the federation of such unions into state and national bodies. "Federation is feasible," he wrote, "and if labor is ever to reach the goal of equality with capital...it will have to federate." No greater service, Debs thought, "could be done for society, for the welfare of all, than for thoughtful men to devise plans whereby labor organizations could be brought into a grand national federation." One result, he predicted, would be that, in Washington, "when the President calls his counselors together there

will be found at the board a man ready and able to speak for men, without whom there would be no government." As noted earlier in a Newsletter, federation of the railroad unions became an obsession for Debs, who was convinced that the separate unions were doomed to failure in their confrontations (strikes!) with management.

Debs' growing interest in the social consequences of industrialization can similarly be traced in the pages of the Magazine. In the January, 1887 issue he attacked the "dictatorial power" exercised by George Pullman in his "model city" outside Chicago, where the workers "submit to kicks, scuffs, and such other degradations as are known and practiced in dominions of czar, sultan, shah, or kedive." For Debs, "the term, Pullman, has become at last the synonym of almost anything odious that heartless, crushing, degrading monopoly suggests to the minds of honorable men." This, 7 years before the Pullman Strike.

In the same issue of the Magazine, Debs set down one of the most effective defenses of freedom of speech and ideas this writer has seen. Dealing with "Haymarket Massacre" anarchists whose ideas he deplored, Debs denounced their trial, conviction, and execution as a dangerous miscarriage of justice. "It must be remembered that Free Speech and Free Press are the twin glories of the American government. Strike them down, throttle them, murder them in court or on the battle field, and no matter by what captivating name the government is known, it is a despotism nevertheless." Judge Gary must learn, Debs wrote, that "nothing was ever gained in the way of suppressing ideas and opinions by hanging or burning men for their ideas and opinions. Ideas and opinions escape the death penalty, the halter, the faggot and the wheel."

With the impact of machinery on workers' lives and on society Debs dealt in an editorial in the February, 1887 issue of the Magazine. He acknowledged that machinery was a wave of the future, but he questioned the notion that it was "labor saving" or that it would bring an inevitably brighter future for society. "Labor-saving" machinery, he wrote, was threatening to become "idleness creating" machinery, which would create unemployment, lead to crime and poverty and undermine social stability. "Reducing the hours of labor" was Debs' basic solution to the problem and he added that "the state must come to the rescue" of workers threatened by machinery to guarantee that patents for new machinery would not be granted, without an assurance that "society's interests" would be protected.

Some 50 years before Congress passed a child labor law (not thrown out by the Supreme Court) Debs denounced the widespread practice as the product of "capital, capitalists, and the pets of capitalists" who drove children into the nation's mines, mills, and factories by refusing to pay decent wages to their fathers. "Children



should be so situated," he wrote, in the September, 1887 Magazine, "as to have full mental and physical development, and this they would have if simple justice was meted out to working men." The various state laws restricting child labor were, in many instances, Debs said, compelling mothers to enter the work force ("sending them to the graveyard some years sooner than otherwise would be the case") or driving families who relied on children's wages "to the poor-house." A better solution lay in giving workers "their just proportion of the wealth which labor creates."

In 1887 Debs was, of course, not alone in his interest in child labor or the threat posed by machinery or the degradation of workers in company towns, but few were as passionate and eloquent in their attacks on these problems and even fewer would demonstrate a life-long tenacity in seeking their solution. In his last years Debs was still attacking the disgrace of child labor and he died believing that his exercise of the right of free speech had sent him to prison.

### New Curator(s) Introduced

Call them the new occupants of the basement apartment, also official curators, tour guides, handymen, gardeners, you name it. If it is related to the Home and Memorial Gardens our curator is likely to have responsibility for it. Gena Sousa and Tracy Paterson now share the responsibilities. Gena is a graduate student in Agency Counseling, ISU, and Tracy recently earned her Master's Degree in Sociology at ISU and is employed by the Vigo County Welfare Department. We expect of the curator a high degree of dependability, social and political awareness, and the ability to meet and communicate with people, and we feel that Gena and Tracy fit the requirements.

Museum hours are 1:00 to 4:30, Wednesday thru Sunday or by special appointment.

### SAGGING ROOF OR BELL SHAPE

It turned out to be a "bell shape" to the porch roof and not a sag, except where two rafters were rotted, and all the sheeting shingles had to be replaced. We had feared that all the rafters were badly deteriorated, but then learned that the bell shape sway in roofs was popular at the time Debs built the house. It was a relief to have this repaired before winter.

It requires a lot of work and attention to keep the home and grounds in a proper state of repair, clean and presentable. Curators Gena and Tracy are working hard at the job.

### IMPORTANT HOTEL INFORMATION

You should make hotel reservations immediately if you are planning to stay in Terre Haute October 17. Our guests will be competing for rooms with tour groups attending the Covered Bridge Festival in an adjoining county, and every hotel room in the city will be booked. Take my word for it! Below are listed, in order of proximity to Hulman Center, the major hotels. Distance is no problem as the farthest hotel is less than 20 minutes from Hulman Center. Good luck!

Boston Connection (formerly Sheraton): 812-235-3333

Travelodge: 800-255-3050

Best Western: 800-528-1234

Regal 8 Inn: 800-851-8888

Signature Inn: 800-822-5252

Holiday Inn: 800-465-4329

Ramada: 800-272-6232

Super 8: 800-843-1991

Pick: 812-299-1181

### Membership Application The Eugene V. Debs Foundation

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

STREET \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

_____ Student Member	\$ 5.00	_____ Sustaining Member	\$100.00
_____ Regular Member	\$10.00	_____ Life Members	\$250.00
_____ Supporting Member	\$25.00	_____ Other	_____
			Amount

Enclose remittance. Make checks payable to the Debs Foundation.

The Debs Foundation

P.O. Box 843

Terre Haute, IN 47808

Your dues and contributions are tax deductible. The Foundation owns and maintains the Debs Home and offers several educational and cultural programs. We are a voluntary organization with no paid staff.

**A REMINDER!**  
**HAVE YOU PAID**  
**YOUR 1987 DUES?**

## EUGENE V. DEBS FOUNDATION ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET

Hulman Center  
ISU Campus

Saturday  
October 17, 1987

The social hour/reception in Hulman Center begins at 5:30 p.m. (cash bar open). The awards dinner begins at 7:00 p.m.

Tentative plans are for a reception/open forum discussion at 3:00 or 4:00 p.m., at which a number of previous Debs Award recipients will be present. Try to be here for this hour. Call 812-237-3443 for further information.

On Saturday the Debs Home will be open to visitors from 10:00 a.m. until 5:30 p.m.

The fall business meeting will be Sunday, October 18, at 10:00 a.m., at the Debs Home.

See important information elsewhere in this newsletter on hotel reservations in Terre Haute.

### Dinner Ticket Order

(\$20 per ticket)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ X \$20 - \$\_\_\_\_\_

number of	amount
tickets	enclosed

Tickets must be paid in advance.

Please check one of the following options:

☐ Mail my tickets to the following address:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

☐ Hold my tickets at the door, in the name of \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to the Debs Foundation. Mail to the Debs Foundation, Box 843, Terre Haute, IN 47808. Inquiries may be directed to Charles King, 812-237-3443.

## FROM THE MAILBOX

### Thoughts on Creating Jobs

As the first and only Black member of the Armed Services Committee, I was often patronized by lobbyists about the number of jobs created by military contracts. A North American Rockwell lobbyist came before the committee to retail the virtues of the B-1 bomber, then a new idea. He estimated that 125,000 people would be hired for a \$20.5 billion program.

I pointed out to the lobbyist that I could employ 1,000,000 American men and women in public service jobs at \$20,000 per year with that money, and still have half a billion dollars to administer the program.

The Rockwell representative said I was right, and promised never to use the argument that a weapons program was a jobs program.

He may have personally stopped, but I still hear this argument every day in the House of Representatives. It is still wrong.

According to studies by Employment Research Associates every \$1 billion spent on education creates 62,000 jobs. On hospitals, 48,000. On guided missiles and ordnance, 14,000 jobs.

(excerpted from a letter sent in late 1986 by Congressman Ronald V. Dellums, D-California.)

## Laska continued from page 2

A resident of Terre Haute, Sylvia's death came in Boston after a brief illness. Dedicated and active as Sylvia was in so many worthy causes, her passing left a lot of big shoes to be filled. Her friends will be interested to know that a memorial fund has been established in her name. The educational scholarship is for work in the area of early childhood development. Donations would need to indicate Sylvia's name, and be sent to the Indiana State University Foundation, Terre Haute, IN 47809.

## Show Support, Send Greetings

In recognition of the foundation's 25th anniversary, you have the opportunity to be listed with other members and friends of the Eugene V. Debs Foundation on a special greetings page of this year's award banquet program. It seemed appropriate to make our printed program a bit more elaborate this year as befitting for an organization which is celebrating 25 years of service. To have your name appear on this page, send a check for \$20, made to the Debs Foundation and designated as for "program greetings," and mail to P.O. Box 843, Terre Haute, IN 47808.

**PLEASE DON'T PITCH YOUR NEWS-LETTER. PASS IT ON TO A FRIEND OR PLACE IT IN A READING ROOM.**

**EUGENE V. DEBS FOUNDATION**

P.O. BOX 843

TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA 47808

**Address Correction Requested**

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