

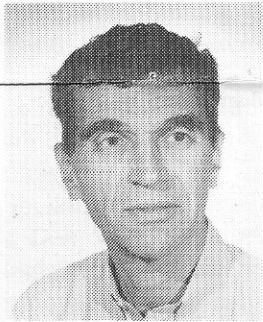
The Debs Foundation Newsletter

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



SPRING, 1986

Robert Coles Set For Sebree Lecture



The fourth Shubert Sebree Lecture is set for April 25, 1986, featuring Robert Coles, Harvard educator, author, and renowned child psychiatrist. A prolific writer, Coles' early books included *Children of Crisis*, which won him a Pulitzer Prize in 1973, and *Still Hungry in America*, published in 1969. Coles' scholarly but sensitive work has contributed substantially to the cause of social justice and the civil rights movement. A recent Christian Science Monitor article--Jan. 10, 1986--described Coles' personal thoughts on his intimate contacts with children of many countries and different life circumstances during the

course of his research. He is described as struck by the searching kinds of inquiries children can and do make--such questions as why some people are hungry and others not, and why people kill each other.

Coles' is fourth in the Sebree Lecture Series. Previous speakers were Michael Harrington, Robert White, and Tony Benn. His visit is jointly sponsored with the Indiana State University Speakers' Series. A Friday 2:00 p.m. lecture will be in Tilson Music Hall, with the 7:00 p.m. lecture in Heritage Ballroom, both on the ISU campus. The Foundation's spring business meeting will be the next day, so plan now to attend both events.

Donation Dollars At Work Dining Room Suite Refinished

The original dining room furniture of Kate and Eugene Debs was recently donated to the Foundation by Mrs. Rhoden Calder, whose husband had inherited the suite from Kate Debs' side of the family. The furniture was brought from Corpus Christi in January, 1985. The impressive, mahogany finished suite was in good overall condition, but its finish showed the effects of more than 80 years cleaning and wax build-up. Now the pieces have all been refinished, and the dull maroon-to-brown appearance has been replaced by the luscious, rich sheen which typifies fine mahogany. The expert refinishing, done by a group of local artisans, is important not only for appearance but it seals the wood for protection against humidity and temperature changes. Now the dining room is furnished just as it was when Kate and Eugene Debs

entertained there. The total cost to the Foundation was \$600 for moving, and \$1500 for refinishing. One of the ways your dues payments and contributions work!

Introducing Our New Curator

Moving in as Curator January 1 was Vernon Pedersen and his wife, Kate. For those of you who do not know, The Debs Home has an apartment in the basement for a live-in curator. Vern is a graduate student in History at ISU, and Kate is in the Nursing program. Vern received one of the Lillian Hanna scholarships awarded by the Foundation for 1985-86. His undergraduate study was completed at the University of Montana, and the Pedersens have relatives in the midwest. One personal item not likely to get much use on the spread at 451 N. 8th Street is Vern's prized stock saddle.

A Museum's Worth. Visit Ours!

"Museums differ fundamentally from educational institutions in that attendance is entirely voluntary, in a visitation pattern that is largely based on families rather than on groups graded by age, and in the absence of a concern for measuring the knowledge that is imparted . . . But does the absence of a convenient scale of measurement imply, as some have argued, that museums have very little role in most of our lives . . . They draw us over the present horizons of our thoughts. They undergird our respect for human capabilities--and our awareness of their limitations. They instill a sense of proportion, even humility, with which to view our own ideas and achievements in relation to those of others." (excerpted from an address by Robert McCormick Adams, Secretary, Smithsonian Institution, at the dedication of the DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Gallery, June 8, 1985.)

Museum Hours

The Debs Home and Memorial Gardens are open to the public from 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., Wednesday thru Sunday. It is closed on holidays, and the week between Christmas and New Year's Day. To arrange special hours or for organized groups, call 812-232-2163, or 812-237-3443. Admission is free.

Having already "sat" the museum numerous times as a fill-in when Daryl Hopple had to be away, Vern was already prepared with a rich repertoire of lore and fact for making a tour of the Home informative and inspirational.

Debs Theme of Winning Essay

First prize in the Senior Division of the Indiana History Day Historical Essay Contest was awarded to Ryan Minor, 11th grade, Crispus Attucks High School, Indianapolis. His essay was titled: "Dauntless Debs: A Man 'At Stood." The closing paragraph of his essay reads: "In assessing the life of Eugene V. Debs, one is easily tempted to pin the label "tragic" to it. Yet those today who oppose racism, exploitation, and inequality should be inspired by knowing that a man lived who *spent* his life fighting such evils and injustices. That living memory makes Debs' life triumphant." Congratulations, Ryan!

Debs Scholarship at Davis

A Eugene V. Debs Fellowship for the study of History is being offered for an entering student in the doctoral program in History at the University of California-Davis. Inquiries should be directed to Professor Paul Goodman, Department of History, University of California-Davis, Davis, CA 95616.

Wish Lists and Shopping Lists.

Wish lists may be just as fashionable now as ever, but perhaps not as exciting to me personally. You probably can remember the excitement of drawing up a wish list for Santa. The trouble for me was that I knew deep inside that Santa wasn't likely to drop anything off for me on Christmas night which my Dad couldn't afford. But wish lists can be practical. Even if they take some of the thrill and surprise out of gift giving, wish lists help to focus buying on items which will be appreciated and used.

A shopping list is more specific. It lists the items I will buy. Women are supposed to be better grocery shoppers than men because they stick to their lists; they less frequently succumb to impulse buying. A man goes to the store with a \$10 grocery list and comes home with \$17 worth. Never mind that the three jars of peach preserves, bought "on sale, 10 cents off", regularly sell in larger size for less per ounce.

The Debs' Foundation has a list. Wish list or shopping list, here is a partial list of our needs:

Item 1: new hedge around front and sides of home, to replace one which has died back in many spots. Approximate cost--\$3,000.

Item 2: preservation and security, for photographs, many rare, by having negatives made. Approximate cost--\$1,000.

Item 3: roof and gutter repair. Approximate cost--\$2,500.

Item 4: Shubert Sebree Lecture. Approximate cost--\$2,000.

Item 5: lawn mower. Approximate cost--\$200.

Item 6: fulltime Museum Director-Curator. Approximate annual cost--\$12,000-\$15,000.

Item 7: operating budget for the Home. Approximate monthly cost--\$500.

DEBS NEWSLETTER

Spring 1986

Published By

The Eugene V. Debs Foundation

Box 843

Terre Haute, IN 47808

Foundation Officers:

Murray Finley, *President*

Noel Beasley, *Executive Vice President*

Charles King, *Secretary*

Woodrow Creason, *Treasurer*

The *Debs 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.

As of now, some of these items are definite commitments, like keeping the house repaired, paying utilities and insurance, and \$1,000 for the Sebree lecture. Other items, practical as they are, must be kept on a wish list, because we do not have the money for them.

Curator Hopple Resigns

After serving capably for over a year as part-time curator, Daryl Hopple came on fulltime after last fall's action changing him to fulltime status. Daryl was enthusiastic about the opportunity to devote full effort to his career goal of professional museum work. However, contacts made before our new arrangement led to an offer "too good to refuse" in terms of pay and possibilities for advancement, so Daryl left in December for a job with State Farm. We wish Daryl well, and express deep regret that voluntary organizations such as ours so rarely have the financial resources to promise careers to those young adults who wish to professionalize in museum work.

We decided to put on temporary hold our goal of employing a fulltime professional as museum curator-director, although we were not happy with this delay. The move to fulltime curator was a sound one to which the Foundation should remain committed. The Foundation has made considerable progress by reaching such a commitment, and by having worked in committee to produce a fairly complete curator-director job description. Needed now are the funds to move ahead with the expanded program!

Debs: A Century Ago

J. Robert Constantine

A century ago - in 1886 - Eugene V. Debs was entering a significant new phase of his career, a transitional phase from orthodox Democratic politics and conservative trade unionism to the more radical stance for which he was known during the last 30 years of his career. During the previous year - 1885 - Debs had married Katherine Metzel, the step-daughter of a prominent Terre Haute druggist, John Jacob Baur, and the newly-married couple had "set up housekeeping" in rented rooms on South 6th St. in Terre Haute. In 1885, also, Debs had served one term in the Indiana General Assembly, a disappointing and frustrating experience of which he later wrote, "There was a time in my life, before I became a Socialist, when I permitted myself as a Democrat to be elected to a state legislature. I have been trying to live it down. I am as ashamed of that as I am proud of having gone to jail."

By 1886 Debs was able to devote his full time to his positions as secretary-treasurer of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and as editor of the union's *Magazine*. His editorials in the *Magazine* reflected his changing attitude toward the nature, strategy, and tactics of labor and labor organizations. In earlier editorials he

had told his readers that there was a common interest between capital and labor based upon "an honest day's work for an honest day's pay" and he stressed the mutual advantage to be gained by labor and capital through cooperation. "Strikes are the knives with which laborers cut their throats," he wrote in 1883, and he was proud of the fact that the BLF "had nothing to do with the origin or development" of the great railroad strike of 1877, "nor any other."

By 1886, however, there is a changing note in Debs' editorials on capital and labor and their relationship. In an editorial in the January, 1886 issue of the *BLF Magazine* Debs wrote that "all value is born of labor, and is composed essentially of wages, in other words, no value has its origin in privilege, or acquires any value except through work, and consequently labor alone is the source of revenue among men." The following month (February, 1886) Debs added, "Without laborers capitalists would starve."

To the conservative argument that poverty was an inevitable result of the scarcity imposed by Nature, Debs replied that "the Malthusian theory . . . has not a face to stand on. It was never true." Labor unions would provide a solution to the problem of poverty by creating "a plate at the banquet of Nature for every man and seeing that the plate is well supplied with substantial food" through "a more equitable division of the wealth which labor creates."

By 1886 the "harmony" between capital and labor was seen by Debs in a different light. "Capital and labor,"

he wrote in the *BLF Magazine* in February, 1886, "are usually harmonious when capital dictates the terms of the compact and labor submits." In an editorial in the August, 1886 issue of the *Magazine* Debs made it clear that strikes were no longer merely "knives with which laborers cut their throats." While deploring the "losses" suffered by workers as a result of strikes, he argued that "the wrongs which produce strikes and occasion the losses demand first consideration." The American colonists had "*struck* for freedom and independence, and had they been defeated in the war of '76 they would still have been *striking* for the recognition of their rights." There had "never been a strike in America, when the demands of laboring men were in excess of absolute necessities, and there ought never to have been a strike, because there ought never to have been a refusal of the just demands of laboring men."

In 1886 Debs retained his faith in trade unions as the mechanism through which justice and fairness would be established in the economic order, and he worked day and night to organize new locals for the BLF and for other unions, but it seems clear that his analysis of the capitalist system and his solutions for its problems were being revised. Labor, the "conservative editor" wrote in January, 1886, ". . . means business. It means a revolution in parties. It means the breaking up of old combinations and the organization of a new party, with ideas based upon justice and fair dealing."

50th Anniversaries

Mail received in recent months has mentioned fiftieth anniversary celebrations for several unions. We at first thought it would be appropriate to comment briefly on each such union. After all, industrial unionism was one of the important causes for which Eugene Debs struggled, although he died a decade too early to see the real fruits of his efforts. We gave up the idea of individual recognition when we considered just how long the list of industrial unions would be which were founded fifty years ago last year, this year, or the next. We do hope that when these unions celebrate fifty years of representing the working people of America, they will not overlook the contributions which Gene Debs made to promoting their type of labor organization.

"They Also Serve . . ."

I first met Maxine Creason on a warm Saturday morning last May. Woody Creason and I had planned a little clean-up, fix-up work at the Debs Home and garden. She was dressed for grocery shopping; Woody had said they would just "drop by" the house. But Maxine pitched right in for a couple of hours, she didn't worry about dirt under her nails or smudge on her slacks. Growing and caring for plants was her forte. That morning I

was impressed with her knowledge of flowers and shrubs of the season and the region. I later learned that she had always been ready to lend a hand, for everything from planting flowers to selecting wallpaper for the Debs home. For the first time ever, Maxine and Woody missed last year's Award Dinner due to her illness. Even then, we did not realize that so soon we would have to bid her adieu.

In The News

Tribune-Star Coverage

Publicity is one important goal for the Foundation. We are pleased with the coverage which the Home and the Foundation's activities receive. The following have appeared in the Terre Haute Tribune Star recently.

"Orr Recognizes Debs' Work in Promoting Celebration '88." This headline after Indiana Governor Robert Orr's press conference at the Debs Home, November 13. Among his comments: 'The people of the Terre Haute area are justified in taking a lot of pride in the accomplishments of not just this one man (Debs), but of all the people from this area who have done so much for this state and nation.' Orr described Debs as a controversial man who shook society 100 years ago, "and in doing so brought about many of the things which we now recognize as conventional. It is important that we recognize Debs' home as an example of our heritage."

Assuredly, we welcome all favorable publicity, including that from our Republican Governor. Nor were we concerned that the use of so many T.V. lights blew a couple of electrical fuses during the news conference.

"Not for a Card-carrying Socialist!" The news coverage of Governor Orr's visit mentioned as an aside that this visit came just months after the Indiana House of Representatives refused in 1985 to pass a resolution honoring the 100th anniversary of Debs' tenure in the Legislature. A resolution honoring Debs was introduced by Rep. Robert Hellmann, D-Terre Haute. Hellman said that after waiting for the resolution to be handed down, he asked House Speaker Dailey about the delay. Dailey became flushed and said that as long as he was Speaker, the Indiana House would never honor "a card-carrying Socialist."

After failure in the House, the Indiana Senate approved a Debs resolution, which has been framed and now hangs in the Debs home.

"Terre Haute First National Bank Introduces You to Eugene Victor Debs." Debs was included in this series in the Tribune Star honoring Wabash Valley historical figures. The quarter-page article, of approximately 500 words, tastefully laid-out, summarized Debs' life and work, and closed with the observation that his home at 451 N. 8th St. remains as a National Historic Landmark.

"Debs Artifacts Donated." Autographed photographs of Eugene V. Debs were donated by Jefferson Stokes of Lancaster, Ohio, and his brother, Terre Haute resident Eugene Debs Stokes. Their father, Albert F. Stokes, had been a Debs worker, and a pallbearer at Debs' funeral on Oct. 20, 1926. One of the photographs presented is of Debs' casket being borne into the Terre Haute Labor Temple for public viewing.

The picture of the brothers making the presentation to Curator Daryl Hopple, plus interpretive comments, appeared in the November 24, 1985 Tribune Star.

"Let's Talk About It", announces a late winter series of book discussions sponsored by the Vigo County Public Library. The theme of the series is "People of Our Times," and the discussion books are biographies of four persons from the 20th century who left their mark in America. Besides Eugene V. Debs, the series includes C. S. Lewis, Woody Guthrie, and Maxine Hong Kingston. The discussion of Debs is to be led by Charles King, Foundation secretary, and is to be held at the Debs Home.

Indiana Statesman Articles

Three articles have appeared recently in the *Indiana Statesman*, ISU student newspaper. A student newspaper not only is to inform the university community; it is a training ground for prospective journalists. We are delighted to be able to provide substantial subject matter for news copy for this paper.

"Eugene V. Debs Winner Calls for Unity" commented on the 1985 Awards Banquet, Oct. 12, honoring Jack Sheinkman, and also recognizing Tilford Dudley and Hilton Hanna with the newly established Theodore Debs Service Award.

"Debs Museum: Landmark on Campus," and "Debs' Niece Preserves Memory of 'Visionary' in Home." These two articles, plus a photo, were given an entire page in the January 24, 1986 issue. The first commented on the opportunity which the Home offers to the university community for a touch of unique American History. The second discussed the contributions of Marguerite Debs Cooper, Debs' niece, to the preservation of the Home.

Dues Reminder

A good many members have not paid their 1986 dues yet. If this includes you, we encourage you to renew now, and to give serious consideration to supporting the Foundation at a higher membership level. For a renewal it is not necessary to use the form at left. Save that for a prospective new member.

Membership Application The Eugene V. Debs Foundation

NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

_____ Student Member	\$ 5.00
_____ Regular Member	\$10.00
_____ Supporting Member	\$25.00
_____ Life Member	\$100.00
_____ 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.