

The Debs Foundation Newsletter

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



Spring, 1991

Labor Hall of Fame



NOEL BEASLEY (L) AND CHARLES KING (R)
VIEW THE DEBS KIOSK

It was described as the "liveliest and best attended ceremony yet," the December 13 induction of Debs, Reuther, Wagner and Kaiser into the Labor Hall of Fame in Washington, D.C. Noel Beasley, Foundation Executive Vice President, spoke on behalf of Debs during the ceremony, and declared that Debs articulated "a profoundly revolutionary theme, one that remains unrealized at the present time: a vision of human hope." Beasley observed that Debs "would relish the challenges of the 1990's just as he relished the challenges of the 1890's," and added that Debs certainly would be one who would break the "great well of silence" (an apt description of public response one month before Desert Shield escalated into Desert Storm) regarding the Persian Gulf situation and the United States' role in it.

The Debs kiosk will contribute immensely to make the Labor Hall of Fame educational and inspirational for the thousands of school children, labor people and tourists who will visit the Department of Labor annually. A video of approximately ten minutes length describes the contributions of the four inducted this year, and the segment on Debs includes a few seconds of live footage taken on the porch of his home just after his release from Atlanta prison. A striking feature of each display is an oil portrait done by

1990 HONOREE

Eugene V. Debs 1855-1926

"Years ago I recognized my kinship with all living things, and I made up my mind that I was not one bit better than the meanest on earth... While there is a lower class, I am in it, while there is a criminal element, I am of it, and while there is a soul in prison, I am not free."

Labor leader, radical, Socialist, presidential candidate, Eugene Victor Debs was a home grown American original. He formed the American Railway Union, led the Pullman strike of the 1890's in which he was jailed, and merged a dedicated Socialist. An idealistic, impassioned fighter for economic and social justice, he was brilliant, eloquent and eminently human. As a "radical" he fought for women's suffrage, workmen's compensation, pensions and social security — all common place today. Five times the Socialist candidate for president, his last campaign was run from a federal prison where he garnered almost a million votes.

Photo and Text courtesy Friends of the Department of Labor.

SPRING BUSINESS MEETING

April 27 at Debs Home
1:00 P.M.

Plan to be here also at 10:30 a.m.
for a Worker Memorial Day Activity

Continued on Page 7...

A Busy Year In Retrospect

Last year was intended to be a special year in that we wanted to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the building of Kate and Eugene Debs' home. Such an occasion obviously should be marked with an anniversary cake, and we had one. Also appropriate for this National Historic Landmark and shrine to labor and social reform movements was the addition of a number of commemorative plaques in the Memorial Garden honoring pioneer American labor leaders. Unveiling ceremonies were held for plaques honoring six very worthy historic figures, including P.J. McGuire and Patrick J. Quinlan in the Spring, and Mother Jones (the first woman honored), Pat Gorman, Sidney Hillman and Philip Murray in the Fall.

A worthwhile educational endeavor involved the foundation's participation in Earth Day activities, including co-sponsorship of a lecture at Indiana State University and the planting of a tree at the Home. Then a cultural program was scheduled in conjunction with the other events of the annual award banquet weekend. Karen Vuranch gave her dramatic presentation of "Coal Camp Memories" twice, to small but highly appreciative audiences. She then brought down the house at the banquet with her impersonation of Mother Jones.

Two of the highlights of the year came totally unexpectedly. These were national honors coming to Eugene Debs. They show that a lot of people out there are aware and appreciative of what Eugene Debs contributed to American history. One form of recognition was Debs' inclusion in *Life* magazine's "100 Outstanding Americans of the 20th Century." Also unexpected was the high honor bestowed on Debs by being named to the Labor Hall of Fame in Washington, D.C. This newsletter is designated a special issue for its coverage of these singular honors coming to Debs.

This level of activity had unfortunately its downside, namely, its expense. An examination of the financial statement for 1990 reveals the specifics. While our participation in Earth Day activities received an excellent and extensive coverage (radio, television, newspaper and University campus), there were costs for Larry Gordon's honorarium and travel. Karen Vuranch's dramatic presentations were superb and her banquet performance alone would have been worth the costs, but it was expensive--real talent always is--and ticket sales for Coal Camp Memories hardly paid for printing the tickets. Part of the expense of the anniversary celebration at the Home was avoided when Indiana State University graciously provided us free use of a tent, but there were other costs. Other special expenses were for the installation of a new security system for the Home, the repair of the Memorial wall, and travel and lodging for the secretary to be in Washington for the Hall of Fame induction ceremony.

So, just as we reflect with satisfaction on the completion of a successful year, it is appropriate to face

DEBS FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

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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.

another reality: it is one thing to ambitiously plan (or was it that ambitious?) constructive ways to carry on the foundation's mission, but another thing entirely to bring in the money to pay the bills. There is much work to be done, the central themes of Debs' struggle--social justice, peace, industrial unionism--need to be articulated in new and vibrant ways in the post Desert Storm era. Yet, financially, we face a number of lean summer months. You can help us now by recommending membership in the Foundation to others, after you have made your own dues payment, of course! You also help by ordering one or more of the impressive posters shown on the back page of this newsletter.

Union Leaders Oppose War

On January 10, nine international union presidents published an open letter to George Bush in the *Washington Post* urging the president to "let sanctions work to the fullest before any more blood is shed." Signatories to the letter were Morton Bahr, Communications Workers of America; Owen Bieber, United Auto Workers; Wm. H. Bywater, Int'l Union of Electronic Workers; Keith Geiger, Nat'l Education Association; James Herman, Int'l Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union; George Kourpias, Int'l Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers; Joseph Misbrener, Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers; Jack Sheinkman, Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union; and John J. Sweeney, Service Employees Int'l Union.

Members of the Eugene V. Debs Foundation should not be surprised to note that most on this list are heads of unions that in various ways support our organization, including Foundation president, Jack Sheinkman.

VOICES OF HISTORY

For a time it was thought that we had a valuable "find." Richard Conn, who is Executive Director of the Friends of the Department of Labor, recently gave the foundation a reproduction from an old RCA record owned by his older brother. Back in the 1960's the Socialist Party had given the foundation a tape recording alleged to be of Debs speaking, but it had been proven that the Socialist Party tape was not Debs' voice. At first we thought that the recently received reproduction was a different speaker, thus possibly being Debs' voice. More careful comparison proved both to be the same, the apparent differences due mainly to recording quality. Too bad! It is such a pity that apparently no recording exists of the voice of this persuasive speaker from the days of oratorical giants.

The history of the recording attributed to Debs begins in *Wilshire's Magazine*, November, 1905, with an article entitled "Winning a World." It was associated with the 1904 Presidential Campaign, but there is apparently no proof it was ever delivered by Debs. A month later, Wilshire announced the availability of Debs' speech, as well as one of his own, proclaiming them as "Socialist Speeches for Propaganda," and advertising the disc-record for 75 cents, and the cylinder-record for \$1.00. The recordings had been produced by Columbia Phonograph Company. In June, 1906, the advertisement indicated that while the text of "Winning a World" was Debs', the voice was that of Mr. Len Spencer, "a man specially trained for phonograph reproductions and by far the best record maker in the world." An interesting twist in the origins of this recording is that Mr. Wilshire may have been just as interested in making a buck as in promoting reformist causes. His magazine promoted various get rich schemes, cancer cures, and other medical frauds. Gaylord Wilshire was reputed to have made his fortune in land and stock speculation.

The story of "the voice" continues, for it came to life again in 1940 or 1941, this time on an RCA 76 rpm. The production was arranged by Mr. Travers Clement, Socialist Party National Secretary, and it was sold as a party fundraiser for \$10 a record. Clement was convinced that it was Debs' voice, having found it on an old wax cylinder. Later still, "the voice" was brought out on a record labeled: "If I'm Elected, Voices of Presidents and Opponents (1892-1952), issued by Heritage Productions. In the accompanying narration Debs' speech is associated with the 1908 campaign rather than 1904. But the speech is excerpted from the old recording of Len Spencer's voice. The record was listed in the *Schwann* catalogue for 1958, but not for 1960. Obviously, many people over the years have wished to hear the voice of such a forceful and persuasive speaker as Eugene Debs, and were willing to accept the claims of Wilshire and others to the authenticity of the recording. A curious aspect of the story is that apparently Debs never made public comment about this possible misuse of his popularity. One would assume that Debs would have

been quick to challenge the authenticity of the written version, had the text not been his doing.

Incidentally, among those denouncing the RCA record as fake were Eugene's brother, Theodore, his niece, Marguerite Debs Cooper, and Martin H. Miller who listened to the foundation's copy. Our thanks go to Dr. Frederic Cornell who researched this topic while working on his doctorate on the history of the Rand School. Dr. Cornell published his findings in the *Bulletin* of Tamiment Institute Library in 1961. Our copy of Cornell's article came to us from Dick Conn, who himself had received it from foundation member Gail Malmgren. Dr. Cornell wrote us that he heard Debs speak in Madison Square Garden during the La Follette campaign in 1924. He mentioned that during the visit he attended a reception where Debs "met and shook hands with several of us children of active party members. I remember him as a kindly old man and a powerful speaker."

Another interesting chapter in the saga of the spurious recording comes from Cornell's research. During the 1913 New York mayoral campaign, the *New York Call* of October 30 reported

how a shopkeeper in the Bronx named L. Greenberg had broken up a street-corner political rally the previous evening. Under the heading "Canned Socialist Talk Outdraws Spellbinders," the article described how Greenberg put in his door a good-sized phonograph machine, to which he attached a large horn, and put a record of a speech by Eugene Debs on. It was reported that when the machine announced the speech by Debs, the greater portion of the audience which had been listening to the old party speakers rushed over to listen to the Socialist speech. A day later the *New York Call* reported that phonograph shop owner Greenberg had found his campaigning for Socialism via the phonograph to be such a hit that he intended to keep it up until election day. He apparently played several of Wilshire's records. The news article concluded that "Speeches by Debs and Wilshire, even if only possible in "canned form," are preferred by his street audiences to the loud mouthings of bromides and vilifications by the capitalist politicians..." Having followed the story this far, perhaps you would like to imagine yourself a member of the turn-of-the-century audience, listening attentively to the opening lines of Debs' Winning a World speech:

The Socialist movement is as wide as the world, and its mission is to win the world -- the whole world -- from animalism, and consecrate it to humanity. What a tremendous task! And what a royal privilege to share in it! To win a world is worthy of a race of gods. And in the winning, men develop god-like attributes, since all men are potential gods.





Earth Day 1990 Tree Planting

**In 1890,
Kate and Eugene
built a new
home.**



Cutting the Cake: Charter Members (L to R),
Quentin Bone, Curtis Culver, Howard
Hamilton, Bob Constantine, Ed Spann



Hanna and Glen unveil Gorman's Plaque

DEBS HOM

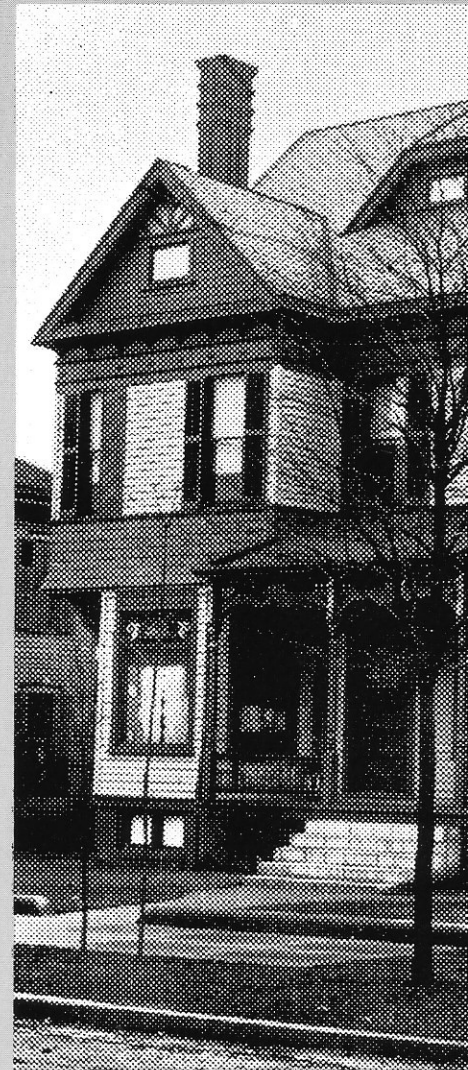


Photo Courtesy of Vi

ANNIVER



CIRCA 1890

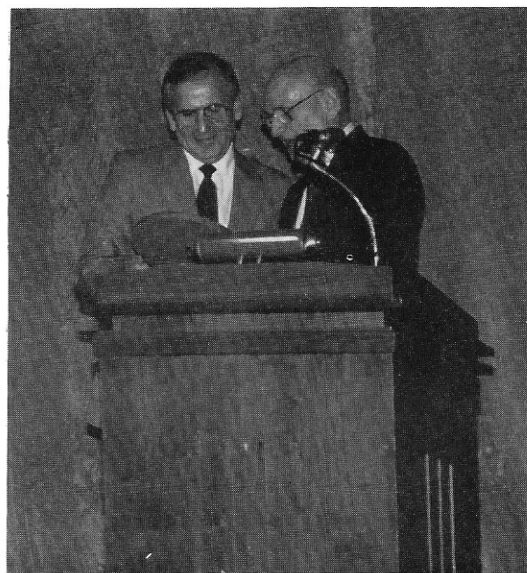


County Historical Society

RY CAKE



**In 1990,
We baked a
cake and
celebrated
in other ways.**



**Lynn Williams (L) receives
Debs Award from Jack Sheinkman (R)**



**Karen Vuranch in One Episode
from "Coal Camp Memories"**



**Spring Plaque Dedication
Beasley Makes Introductory Comments**

OPINION

STATESMANSHIP DESPERATELY NEEDED

As this is written, President Bush is riding an almost unprecedented wave of public support. Silenced is the sniping from his conservative fight over his "sellout" on his "read my lips..." pledge. Gone are the headlines regarding the savings and loan crisis and high gas prices. George Bush is no wimp! He has acted with courage and decisiveness to stim "naked aggression" and save the world from another Hitler. The public, and especially the military, respond enthusiastically to his promise that the Persian Gulf operation will not be another Vietnam, without knowing exactly what that means.

The haunting specter hangs over us of another bloody and costly war won, but for what? In what ways have prospects for lasting peace and stability, with justice, been insured in the Middle East? Just as the United States has led the charge to halt Saddam Hussein's aggression, this world leadership should focus on the fundamental sources of the instability, and formulate policies and programs to attack the problems which lead to crises in the Middle East and elsewhere.

This leadership role will require more statesmanship, more profiles in courage, than is required to act as bold Commander-in-Chief, marshalling the people to enthusiastic and unquestioning support of a war policy. There are problems which have been around for decades, getting worse, because politicians know these are not vote-getters. We voters do not wish to hear that there are limits to growth, that we cannot expect ever-higher material standards of living. We would rather hear that "conservation is not the answer, it just means we'll be colder in winter and hotter in summer." We liked that line so much that we elected the man president in 1980! A decade later, we are over 50 percent dependent on imported oil, thus doing more than any other country to bid up the price of oil and make it a commodity worth going to war over.

If George Bush wants to go down in history as having contributed to world peace and stability, there are in particular three major sources of instability which he must attack. These are the problems of energy, over population, and arms production for profit. These problems are not new, they are not popular, and it will take real statesmanship to direct the energies of this country in the direction of a positive leadership role in the development of worldwide programs.

The energy problem did not arise yesterday and it has no quick, painless solutions. The Persian Gulf war highlights the critical need to wean the United States from dependence on Arab oil. This will require sacrifices and belt tightening. With the right leadership, the public will support reasonable and effective reform. No doubt individual greed and selfishness is a factor, but the main obstacle to change is the timidity and tunnel vision of our political leadership. Alston Chase, an environmental writer, has observed: "If there are two ways of doing things—one simple and honest but openly painful, the other complicated and expensive in which the pain is deviously hidden—our brave president and Congress will choose the latter. Afraid to impose even the mildest hardships on citizens openly, they compose

laws in which burdens are concealed behind satchels of subordinate clauses that only special-interest lobbyists can understand." (*Tribune Star*, Feb. 17, 1991)

So Bush's energy proposals are more of the same: more nuclear energy and more domestic production of oil, by punching more holes in the ground and the ocean floor. This is no energy policy, just "a mad race to see whether we or the Arabs can pump oil out of the ground the fastest," Chase concluded.

While there is promise in the development of alternative energy sources, many experts agree that the cornerstone of a national energy policy is conservation, and the key to this is to heavily tax petroleum products. There will be no real achievement in energy conservation in the United States as long as we pay less for a gallon of gasoline than West Europeans pay in gasoline tax alone. Don't hold your breath waiting for political leadership in this direction!

Another major source of instability in many parts of the world is the population problem. Saddam Hussein wants the world to believe that he annexed Kuwait in order to help the Palestinians regain their homeland west of the Jordan. Any solution to the Middle East situation has to deal with the plight of the Palestinians. But just how many people are there for whom a homeland is required? Millions now live not only in Israel, but also in Jordan and Lebanon, and large numbers were guest workers in Iraq and Kuwait before hostilities. Put all these Palestinians in their designated homeland and you set the stage for another Ethiopia: too many people, in an inhospitable and semi-arid environment, yet with a birth rate which will cause their population to double in less than thirty years.

Egypt, our coalition partner in the Persian Gulf war, is a prime example of what unchecked population growth can do to frustrate economic development programs. Back in the 1950's, Egypt launched a massive development project the cornerstone of which was the Aswan high dam. Egypt could not afford it, so it turned first to the United States then the Soviet Union. The completion of this water project would increase overall production by 40 percent, by enabling more land to be irrigated and providing electricity for industry. The sad part of the story is that during the fifteen years it took to construct the dam, Egypt's population grew by 40 percent. Egypt squandered its best chance for real economic development, it has no more Nile rivers to dam. It is estimated that prior to hostilities, one million Egyptians were working in Persian Gulf states. These men now have returned penniless to their poverty ridden villages. The United States forgave Egypt its eight billion dollar debt to bind it to the allied coalition. Egypt currently is growing at a rate which will double its population in under 30 years. With no more rivers to dam, debt forgiveness may become an annual event unless Egypt gets its birth rate under control. The situation is much the same for all the middle east countries. The average number of children per woman in the Arab countries is between five and seven, which compares to just under two children per woman in North America

Continued on page 7

STATESMANSHIP

Continued from page 6

and Europe. Don't expect any statesman-like initiatives out of the Bush administration on the world population problem. While at least \$500 million was spent daily to wage a war, the Bush administration has continued the Reagan policy of withholding even our \$25 million annual apportionment from the United Nations Fund for Population Activities.

The third area where statesmanship is needed is to curb the armaments industries willing to sell to every well-healed buyer any weapons or technologies which can be adapted to weapons applications. Saddam Hussein's shopping spree for weapons was encouraged by all the arms manufacturers of the world, including United States companies, yet, the story of how one deadly American weapon, the so-called "cluster bomb," got to Iraq may never be fully revealed, due in part to CIA complicity. On the evening news, virtually on the eve of the initiation of the ground phase of combat in the Persian Gulf, I listened in disbelief to excerpts

from the address of a U.S. Commerce Department official, delivered at an electronics industry trade fair, justifying our free market, nonregulatory approach to the sales of arms related products abroad. He stated that the Commerce Department does not think of the military significance of these products, rather, it thinks of jobs for American workers (and profits for American Companies, he should have added). It is convoluted logic, indeed, to support a policy which helps create jobs for American workers in high tech industries, so other American workers can, as soldiers, face those high tech weapons on some foreign battlefield.

Energy, population, and arms production for profit, these are issues requiring courageous, enlightened political leadership. Were Eugene Debs alive, we suspect that this astute social critic would be struggling to place these issues high on the public agenda.

Labor Hall of Fame

Continued from Page 1

Washington artist Donald Gates. Deb's signature, enlarged in the display, was taken from his letter to James Whitcomb Riley, the 1890 letter in which he makes reference to his new home.

Gene Debs was a citizen of his country and the world, and how appropriate it is that now he is given recognition in two prominent Washington locations: a bust in the National Portrait Gallery, and a kiosk in the Labor Hall of Fame.

Letters Receives Excellent Reviews

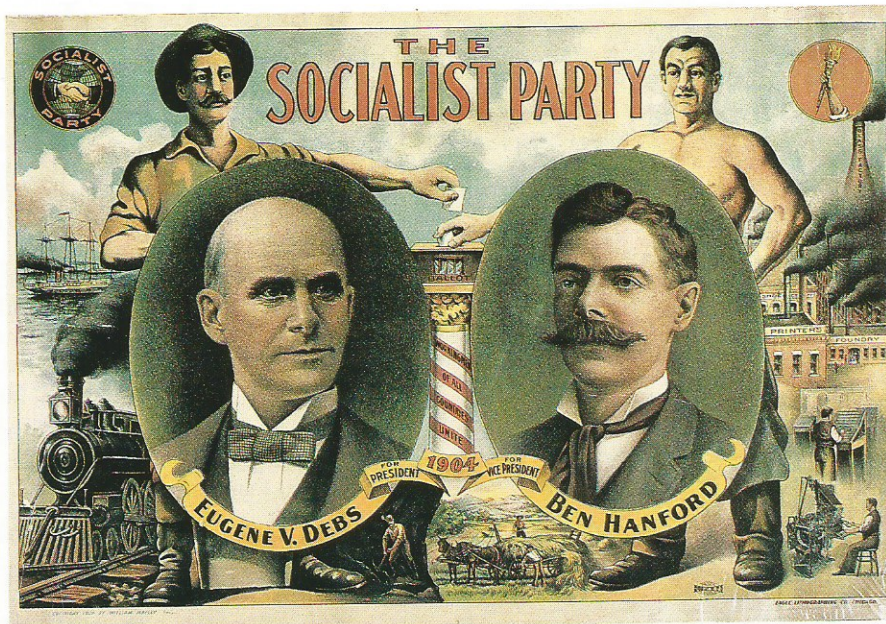
Robert Constantine's edited *Letters of Eugene V. Debs* was released in late 1990, and is certain to become must reading for students of turn of the century labor and radical social reform movements. This is a 3 volume, 1,793 page work. It received excellent reviews already in *The Nation*, February 4, 1991, and *New Republic*, February 4, 1991. Such scholarly works are not meant for the commercial market, so only a university press will undertake publication and the price is high, in this case \$120. It perhaps is a bit specialized for your personal library, but you may want to recommend it for purchase to libraries in your vicinity. *Letters* can be ordered from the University of Illinois Press, P.O. Box 4856, Hampden Post Office, Baltimore, MD 21211.

The University of Illinois Press is to be commended for undertaking this highly valuable publication, and Bob Constantine, foundation charter member, guiding spirit and long time "grunt" for the day-to-day work of the foundation, is to be congratulated for this monumental achievement.

Financial Report: 1990 Eugene V. Debs Foundation

Expenditures	
Terre Haute City (Sewage)	\$ 233.40
Terre Haute Gas	1,414.40
Public Service Indiana	1,643.70
Indiana American Water Co.	343.78
GTE North	1,242.20
US Sprint	195.25
ISU Division of Printing	406.65
Audio Visual Center	15.50
ISU Television Service	25.00
ISU Library (Special Collections) ..	1,000.00
ISU Bookstore(Ginger's book)	656.00
Hanna Scholarships	1,200.00
Tim King (Clerical, photographs) ..	76.00
Meier Johan-Wengler Inc	4,560.31
Indiana Dept. of Revenue	19.68
Illiana Pest Control Co.	225.00
Pell's Photo	88.20
Heinl's Flowers	128.00
T. Dudley	214.65
T.H. Postmaster (Postage)	295.87
UAW (T-shirts, Earthday)	50.00
Enterprise Press.....	243.00
Larry Gordon	
(Earth Day: honorarium, travel) ...	2,664.88
Herman Koren (L. Gordan meal)	12.08
Ismaeil Sandizod (Projectionist)	10.00
Bunch Nurseries	107.00
Marriott Food Svc.	149.65
W-TWO TV (Seniors Day booth).....	50.00
Hemminghouse Signs	65.00
A D T (security)	3,955.50
Wash-on-Wheels	375.00
Tribune-Star (advertising)	337.11
Charles H. Kerr Publishing	331.62
Jewett Printing: Posters	3,654.70
Letters, Programs, Flyers	4,786.89
Indiana Secretary State	10.00
Inweld Corporation	13.70
Debs Saving Account	5,000.00
Donnelly Colt (buttons)	242.00
Karen Vuranch (honorarium, travel) ...	1,720.00
Middlewest Freightway	142.00
Keith Jones	78.00
Joe E. Halbert (masonry)	589.31
Spann Awards	1,000.00
Certificate of Deposit	4,000.00
Safety Deposit Box	14.00
Service Charge Merchants	6.00
Markle Insurance Agency	1,043.00
Cambridge Documentary	95.95
Indiana AFL-CIO News	300.00
Duke University (Debs Photos)	155.16
Greg Larson (Musician)	290.00
Brick Oven Bakery	126.00
Dewey Lockwood	11.40
Charles King (travel)	574.00
Materials & Supplies (House).....	718.99
Terre Haute Tent & Awning	250.00
Azar's Catering Service	3,820.25
Hope Persinger	24.00
Terre Haute Travelodge	34.24
Society Bank National Assoc.....	125.00
(return to Edelman Estate due to overpayment)	
Labor News (advertising)	97.50
Best Western Motel	43.00
Total	\$51,300.02
Revenue	
Plaques	12,000.00
Membership Dues	5,830.00
AFL-CIO (Donation)	2,500.00
Program Ads	9,750.00
From Savings Account	5,000.00
Debs Dinners	5,820.00
Sales at the House.....	930.00
Contributions	1,420.00
ISU (Gordon Lecture)	1,000.00
Edward Spann	1,000.00
Hanna Family	400.00
Certificate of Deposit Redeem	2,164.98
Total	\$47,814.98
Income-Expense Difference	\$ 3,485.04
Bank Balance as of Jan. 1, 1990.....	5,352.56
Bank Balance as of Jan. 1, 1991.....	1,867.52
Certificate of Deposit (due July 7).....	4,000.00
Savings Account	931.16

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NEWSLETTER
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This 31x22 inch reproduction of a 1904 campaign poster is as attractive a poster as was ever used, depicting the unity of all kinds of workers and their solidarity at the ballot box. Introductory price of \$15.00 includes postage and handling. Direct order and payment to Debs Foundation, P.O. Box 843, Terre Haute, IN 47808.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> \$10.00 - Regular Member | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250.00 - Life Member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25.00 - Supporting Member | <input type="checkbox"/> 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.

***Have You Sent
Your Membership Dues?
Please Do So Today!!***

EUGENE V. DEBS FOUNDATION

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