

The Debs Foundation Newsletter

P.O. BOX 843, TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA 47808-0843

SPRING, 1995



Pullman Strike Conference Reaps Award

The fall, 1994 conference on the Pullman strike sponsored by the Department of History, Indiana State University is receiving the 1994 Creative Programming Award from the National University Continuing Education Association Division of Conferences and Institutes at the organization's annual conference April 9. Held to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the historic Pullman Strike, the official conference title was "The Pullman Strike Centennial Conference: Labor, Politics and the State in the 1890s." Rich Schneirov, Associate Professor of History at ISU and foundation member, was program organizer.

Over 200 participants showed up for the conference and they didn't come just to make formal presentations; they discussed, debated and intellectually stimulated each other. They came from all over the United States, and there was a sense of excitement and camaraderie not evident at the typical scholarly, professional meeting. One reason the conference is receiving recognition is because it brought together a variety of perspectives on the central topic. Labor historians were joined by union leaders in examining the events of the Pullman Strike in political and historical perspective. Not in a long time if ever has an important aspect of

the Debs legacy been so thoroughly examined. A number of foundation members attended many of the sessions, and a partial list of foundation members on the program includes executive officers Sheinkman and Beasley, and Chuck Deppert, Nick Salvatore and Patrick Simmons. Curators Mike Bailey and Dave Quesenberry made special effort to have the Home open extra hours for the large number of conference participants having their first opportunity to tour the museum.

Financial support for the conference came from sources as diverse as were the backgrounds of the participants, including the Indiana Humanities Council and the Indiana State AFL-CIO. The ISU Division of Conferences and Non-Credit Programs did an excellent job with the mechanics of the conference and its staff and the History Department's Rich Schneirov are to be congratulated for a highly successful and worthwhile conference.

New Display Cases

Word has just been received that a 50-50 matching grant proposal has been approved by the Wabash Valley Community Foundation which will finance the purchase of four new display cases for second-floor rooms of the Debs Home. The new cases will feature wood-grain bases, walnut finish and gold aluminum frames with a cornice/light fixture for better illumination of displays. The two-shelf units will be more space efficient, giving priority to vertical rather than horizontal space usage and placing more items in comfortable viewing range. No longer will viewers have to lean over and peer down at the memorabilia.

This project has for several years been high on the wish list of improvements and upgrades as far as the executive officers are concerned, so naturally when the possibility of outside funding became apparent, we had to try for it. A grant proposal is never a sure-fire thing, however, so approval always comes as a pleasant surprise.

The total cost for the four units will be \$5,260, the foundation responsible for one-half this amount. By the way, do you know an organization or an individual interested in being credited with a contribution for one-half the cost of one or more of these cases? We would not say no to such an offer.

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Spring Business Meeting

Saturday, April 22

Debs Home

Foundation Dollars At Work

An entire sequence of actions were set in motion by the acquisition of Kate and Eugene Debs' parlor furniture. The repairs and renovations will not come without considerable cost, but that unfortunately is the price to be paid for historic preservation. Along with the historic pieces of furniture came a scrapbook which contained the photograph, reproduced in last Spring's *Newsletter*, which has guided decisions on several changes and renovations. The 30 year old drapes need to be replaced, the furniture re-upholstered in fabric to match the drapes, and wallpaper color coordinated with the fabric.

Have you bought new drapes in recent years or had a favorite old chair upholstered? I couldn't believe how much prices for such things have escalated! I knew what has happened to the price of automobiles, food and over the counter or prescription drugs. The fact is that we are embarked on projects with an approximate \$6,000 price tag.

The parlor and library improvements are not all that has to be done which is expensive. We never got around to repair or replacement of the front steps before winter, and their deteriorating condition requires prompt attention now that Spring is here. There also is the foundation's share of the match-grant which is purchasing four new display cases for the John L. Lewis room and the James Whitcomb Riley room. We are fortunate indeed to have the endowment fund as a source of funds when such expenditures are made. It would however be much better to leave that fund to grow untouched and to pay these expenses through dues payments and special contributions. There would be the opportunity for organizations or individuals to contribute the price of an item – as for instance \$500 for the foundation's share of the cost of one of the display cases – and to be recognized appropriately for that donation. Think about it, possibly for yourself or your organization.

Which The Best Bet?

I was walking through the mall last fall when the news of the day included that congress had passed the Uruguay Round multilateral trade agreement (GATT), and that the Power Ball lottery was up to 95 million dollars. I happened to see a nice woman's sweater on a rack, priced at \$90, made in China. I caught myself wondering at which I would become the richer: winning the lottery or being one of the middlemen involved in the mark-up of that sweater and millions more like it from a labor cost of two to four dollars to the \$90 retail price. Only a compulsive gambler would say to play the lottery.

DEBS FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

Spring, 1995

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* 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.

Debs Fellowship at UC Davis Made Secure

Foundation member Paul Goodman made a bit of history last year when he retired from University of California, Davis. He had been American history professor at UC Davis since 1965, specializing in the history of American politics, the labor movement and the Holocaust. Goodman had anonymously supported the Eugene V. Debs Graduate Fellowship in history each year since 1985. Now he has given enough to establish the fellowship in perpetuity for one or more Ph.D. students in history at UC Davis. Goodman also bequeathed a substantial sum to the university for the establishment of the Emmanuel Ringelblum Chair in Jewish History. It was history making for UC Davis in that this Chair will be the first endowed chair in the university's College of Letters and Sciences.

The Eugene V. Debs Graduate Fellowship in history will contribute substantially to promote continued intellectual inquiry into the life of Debs and the progressive movement in America.

Distribution of Income and Wealth In The United States

	INCOME (1990)	WEALTH (1980s)
Richest Fifth	44.2	78.7
Second Fifth	24.1	14.5
Third Fifth	16.6	6.2
Fourth Fifth	10.7	1.1
Poorest Fifth	4.5	- 0.4

Source: Schaefer and Lamm, 1995

Debs 100 Years Ago...

One hundred years ago Eugene Debs was beginning what was to become a major transition in his multifaceted career as labor leader, public servant and great humanitarian. A young middle-aged man age 40, Debs had gained a national reputation as a dynamic union leader, tireless organizer, editor of *The Magazine* of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen, and founder of the American Railway Union. Founded in 1893, the ARU had phenomenal success in organizing railroad workers of all crafts and skills in one industrial union, much to the consternation of the conservative leadership of the railroad brotherhoods, and had been completely successful in a strike against the Great Northern Railroad. But 1895 saw Debs viewing the world from prison, seeing the ARU destroyed, its strike funds depleted, its members blacklisted from employment in the industry and its leaders jailed for contempt of court by not ordering an end to the Pullman Boycott.

The fateful experience of the Pullman Boycott was a very educational experience for Debs. It showed forcefully how the power of a unified and committed union was no match for the combined

power of business, government and judicial system. Debs had seen the bias of the press, the unlimited greed of business leaders, the brutality of company-hired security forces, and the impunity with which illegal and brutal means were used to break the strike. Debs and the other ARU leaders were charged with contempt of court for ignoring an injunction which had been based on a dubious application of the Sherman Antitrust Act, were tried without jury in a case heard by the same judge who had issued the injunction, and sentenced to six months in jail. So in January, 1895, he began serving the prison term, but also had to stand trial on an indictment for conspiring to obstruct a mail train on the Rock Island Railroad (a federal offense). Debs and the other defendants were transported each day the approximately 50 miles from Woodstock, Illinois to the courtroom in Chicago.

Not a person was indicted for the act of obstructing a mail train, rather, the union leaders were indicted on the dubious doctrine of conspiracy to commit such an act. Clarence Darrow defended Debs effectively, carrying the

fight to the prosecution. The ARU had held no secret meetings. Throughout the boycott it had warned its members against violence and against disruption of mail shipments. It had offered to move any mail trains which might be tied up. The prosecution clearly was losing the case when a juror became ill and the judge discharged the jury and continued the case until May. The trial was never reopened, but Debs was not pleased simply to not be

convicted. He and Darrow had wanted to argue the case through on its merits.

While Debs continued to serve time in Woodstock his lawyers appealed the contempt of court conviction which had sent him there. The appeal, heard by the Supreme Court in Washington, D.C., involved the fact that it was legal to strike, so the alleged infraction must have been a criminal act to be tried before a jury. Instead, the same judge who had issued the injunction had pronounced sentence for its violation, and the ARU leaders were jailed without benefit of a jury trial. The Supreme Court denied the appeal without even entering into the question of the scope of the Sherman Act on which the injunction had

been based, and avoided any pronouncement on the specific terms of the injunction. An injunction, regardless of the validity of its provisions, must be obeyed. Case closed, serve your sentence!

So Debs spent half of 1895 in Woodstock jail. It was a clean, well maintained jail and Debs was well treated, but he was not a free man. He had time during these months to reflect on the events of the past few years, the evident ineffectiveness of the railroad brotherhoods, the divided nature of the labor movement, and the institutional resistance to any form of industrial democracy in the established economic, political and legal systems. He was beginning to realize that a viable labor movement was not possible until there were institutional changes of such nature as only political action could make possible. Debs was about to shift his career focus from labor activist to political action. But much of 1895 was to be spent reflecting on all these things and searching for a way to move forward while serving time as a convict at Woodstock jail.



Keys From Woodstock Jail

1994 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Eugene V. Debs Foundation

Expenditures:

Utilities:	
Indiana Gas Co., Inc.	\$ 1,597.60
Indiana American Water Co.	346.04
PSI Energy	1,241.20
City of Terre Haute (Sewage)	105.60
GTE North	1,146.68
U. S. Postmaster	470.84
Jewett Printing	4,771.78
I S U (printing & photo work)	1,151.10
Terminex International	342.00
Northwest Missouri State (Ginger's book) ...	3,000.00
State of Indiana (Sales Tax)	23.86
Merchant Bank	15.00
Leilani Newkirk (clerical)	175.00
United Farm Workers of America (airfare) ...	300.00
Association of Indiana Museums	20.00
Secretary of State	10.00
Peter Sargent (shipping)	52.47
Mike Bailey (transportation)	50.00
Furniture Transportation	500.00
Inweld Corp.	15.00
A.D.T. Security System	186.00
Hanna Awards	1,200.00
Markle Insurance	937.00
Spann Award (Gunther Peck)	500.00
Meier - Johan - Wengler, Inc.	1,106.28
Thiemann	7.98
Azars Catering	3,056.20
Tribune Star	257.04
Heinl's Flowers	57.00
Indiana Statesman	114.00
Ed Asner (airfare)	470.00
Total Expenditures	\$ 23,725.67

Income:

The Spann Family	\$ 1,000.00
The Hanna Family	400.00
Membership Dues	5,920.00
Dinner Tickets	5,647.00
Program Ads	11,750.00
House	1,229.69
Contributions	2,153.95
Total	\$ 28,100.64
Balance as of Jan. 1, 1994	\$ 8,456.08
Total	\$ 36,556.72
Less Total Expenses	\$ 23,725.67
Balance as of Jan. 1, 1995	\$ 12,831.05
Savings Account	\$ 5,210.66

**Recycle your
Newsletter
by
passing it
on...**

Do You Expect A Tax Cut?

Or, do you need a tax cut? Such questions seem to be much on the minds of a lot of people, reflecting an appetite for a higher material standard of living, fueled by self interest and sparked by self-seeking politicians. The Republicans started out proposing a tax cut for everyone with income under \$200,000, then reduced the ceiling to \$95,000. Democrats have talked about upper limits around \$75,000. It would be a strange usage of the word to use any of these figures as cutting points between needy and non-needy or well-off and not well-off in America. In 1991, family income in the United States was as follows (Bureau of The Census):

Income Level	Percent Distribution
\$50,000 and over	31.9
\$35,000 to \$49,999	19.5
\$25,000 to \$34,999	15.6
\$15,000 to \$24,999	16.0
\$10,000 to \$14,999	7.2
\$ 5,000 to \$ 9,999	6.1
Under \$5,000	3.6

I'd like to hear a candidate for political office say something like this. So, you are part of the 20 percent in the income bracket \$35,000 to \$49,999. You can afford to pay taxes at the current rate. Those of you in the 32 percent earnings \$50,000 and over, you can all afford to pay more (progressively) in taxes in order to help the 48 percent of families receiving less than \$35,000. Such talk would not get a person elected; for one thing, because he or she would have difficulty raising big money for the campaign. But the effort could prove to be highly educational, and that educational role, like the one Eugene Debs performed, is sorely needed in this country today.

Income and Wealth in the United States

In the period 1977 to 1989, about 60 percent of the growth in after-tax income among all families in the United States went to the wealthiest 660,000 families. The average before-tax income of these families rose from \$315,000 to \$560,000 - a staggering 77 percent increase. By contrast, in this same period the bottom 40 percent of families experienced actual decline in income (Nasar, 1992, as quoted in Schaefer and Lamm, 1995).

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 843
Terre Haute, IN 47808-0843

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.

The 1994 Award Banquet

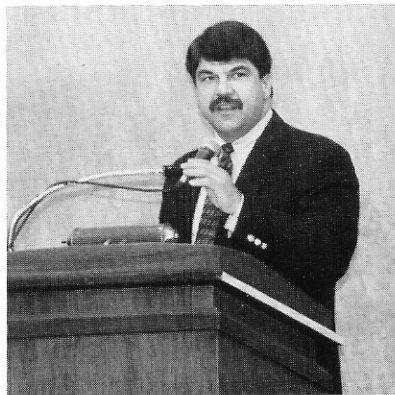
The banquet honoring Richard Trumka was the enthusiastic and spirited occasion we have come to expect. UMW President Trumka was highly appreciative of the honor. The way he mixed with the miners present showed that he is a union leader in touch with the rank and file membership. His acceptance speech showed an awareness of the history of the union movement and Debs' role in it. His was a call not to forget the past, but to learn from it, and to combine the idealism and high sense of purpose of the early labor movement with the tough realities of contemporary economic and political situations.

Eugene Debs spent most of his career in inspirational and educational efforts to give workers a sense of human dignity and worth, and to lead them to think clearly and act intelligently in pursuit of noble causes. His was not a call to narrow self interest and personal greed. It is doubtful that Debs would have bought the idea of a so-called middle class tax cut so appealing today to Republicans and Democrats alike. His was the cause of universal rights of humankind, to equity in treatment, to social justice and to freedom from want.

The Debs banquet was held virtually on the eve of the fateful 1994 national elections. It is small comfort to observe that many of the speakers made warnings and predictions, including Trumka and LaBaff, but also DuBose, Deppert, Hanna and others, which would justify a post election "I told you so." Better than that for the results of this election to serve as a wake-up call to those of us who should be aware of what a small, highly motivated and organized segment of the population can accomplish for its interests, especially when the majority are not informed and don't even bother to vote.



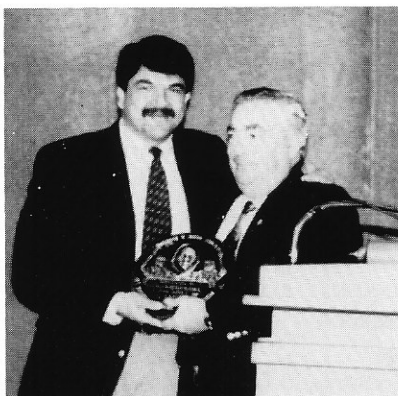
Plaque Unveiling Ceremony
TCU President DuBose and Union Members
display banner used in Pullman City Parade



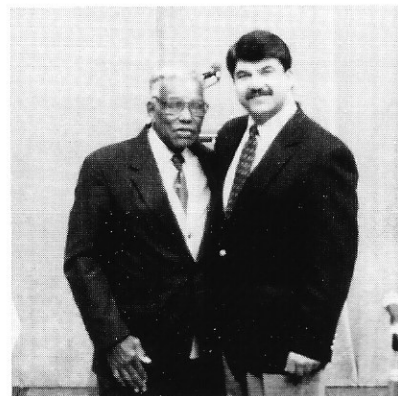
Richard Trumka
An enthusiastic acceptance speech



Hilton Hanna
An Oldtimer has his say



Trumka and LaBaff:
A Keynoter high on Trumka
and on "Debsian" ideals



Trumka with Hanna:
A Foundation Oldtimer

Socially Relevant Citings

We have less insecurity in the military sphere and more insecurity in the personal and community spheres... There is no society that is saying, we don't have the problem of poverty, unemployment, or social integration. More than 1 billion people in the world live in extreme poverty, over 120 million are officially unemployed, and the gap between rich and poor is increasing, conference leaders point out. Despite the importance of these issues....

—Chile's UN Ambassador, in a *New York Times* interview.

Of the 11.2 million U.S. children living in poverty in 1990, about 4.7 million were non-Hispanic whites. About 3.7 million were African American, about 2.4 million were Hispanic, about 337,000 were Asian or Pacific Islander, and about 254,000 were Native American.

—*Population Today*,
March, 1995.

A point that is often lost in the

high school government classes, and in the post-cold war parlance of daily life, is that capitalism and freedom of enterprise are not the same animal, any more than are slander and the freedom of speech. Enterprise is Annie's General Store; capitalism is the economic imperialism of the new Wal-Mart that has forced Annie to file for bankruptcy. The freedom of individuals to decide to work for themselves is a crucial aspect of any free society, and therefore any socialist society. The goal of a socialist society in this regard is then to ensure that enterprise and trade is fair and unexploitative of the people and their interests, and that the welfare of society is not endangered by the abuse of such enterprise by capital.

—Andrew Hammer,
Socialist, Nov/Dec, 1994

Look at the housing subsidy. All people taking a tax deduction for the interest part of their mortgage live in federally subsidized housing. Privileges do not exist in a vacuum. The money not gained here must come from

other sources. Since housing is a necessity, most of us have no problem with this, but the person with a \$500,000 home gets a much larger subsidy than those who live more humbly. 80% of the money deducted for this entitlement went to those making more than \$50,000 a year.

—Lee Hubert, "Exposing The Real Welfare Kings and Queens,"
Socialist, Nov/Dec, 1994

If one word could summarize the lost opportunities in how we typically build, it would be "compliance." Buildings are increasingly delivered as products: "fast and cheap with a pretty face." Developers, construction managers, and owners will sometimes brag that their building "meets every code." In fact, if that is all they do, it is a confession. A more appropriate statement would be: "If I built this building any worse, it would be against the law."

—Randolph R. Croxton, in
Audubon House: Building the Environmentally Responsible, Energy-Efficient Office.

EUGENE V. DEBS FOUNDATION

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