

The Debs Foundation Newsletter

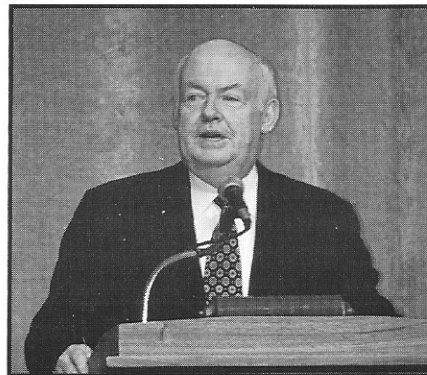
P.O. BOX 843, TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA 47808-0843



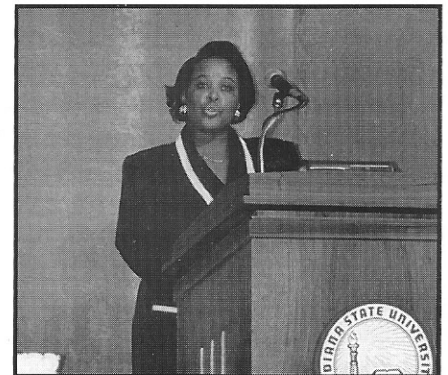
SPRING, 1998



Sweeney receives plaque from Sheinkman.



Sweeney's acceptance speech.



Seipati Tlaka, South African student, brought greetings.

1997 Banquet Debs' Progressivism Alive Today

The agenda for progressives in the American labor movement has always been to educate, agitate, and organize. Eugene Debs did these for his generation, and in the modern era the AFL-CIO is emphasizing these strategies with renewed vigor under the leadership of its top officials. In receiving the Debs award from the hands of Jack Sheinkman, who is foundation president and president emeritus of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, John Sweeney referred to Sheinkman as a pioneer in all that which the AFL-CIO is now trying to do. And Sweeney sees a direct comparison between the spirit and the agenda of the Federation in our day and what Debs did for the early labor movement. Debs, one of the greatest of American orators and organizers, called vigorously on labor to set higher standards for itself, to fight for social justice for all workers and for a fair share of the fruits of their labor.

Sweeney described the several facets of the AFL-CIO program: a culture of organizing, from apple pickers to hotel workers to parts manufacturers supplying the automobile industry; revision of antiquated labor laws in order to reverse the tilt toward corporate

advantage in the legal and judicial system; organize more effectively in the community through invigorated central labor councils; gain more political clout by seeing that union families register to vote, and having more union members running for political office (2,000 union members running for political office in the year 2000); and building alliances with organized labor globally for more effective confrontation of multinational corporations in the global economy. Fight fast track trade agreements which ignore human rights abuses and make a folly out of the principle of social justice!

John Sweeney began his visit to Terre Haute with a tour of the Debs Home. He was deeply impressed with the rich collection of historical memorabilia which tell the story of Eugene Debs, and vowed to return for a more leisurely and reflective tour of the Home, and also to educate the tour guide, who was the foundation secretary, on the number of Irish names which show up here and there throughout the Home. The evening was inspiring and enjoyable, and rest assured that Brother Sweeney is welcome anytime for another tour of the Debs Home and Memorial Gardens.

1998 Banquet On November 7

Planning is well underway for the 1998 awards banquet which will be held Saturday, November 7. Howard Zinn will be given the Eugene V. Debs award, and Noel Beasley will receive the Theodore Debs Distinguished Service award. Howard Zinn has a reputation as a specialist in American history, but with a twist. His focus is on a workers history of this country, the worker who built America rather than history written from the perspective of the tycoons who paid for it and got very rich in the process. He also has a well-earned reputation as a union activist.

The distinguished service award is being given to Noel Beasley for fifteen years work as Executive Vice President of the foundation. Beasley is a Regional Director of UNITE, Chicago Joint Board and an International Vice President. More information on the banquet, including ticket order information, will be in the fall issue of the *Newsletter*, which should be mailed in September.

From The Editor's Desk

A Note on Continuance

I can hardly realize that I have been secretary of the Debs Foundation since 1985! And this newsletter was initiated with a spring issue in 1986. When I accepted the invitation to become secretary (approved at the Fall, 1984 business meeting), I assumed that the outside limit on the number of years I might serve would be ten, because I would be retiring from the faculty at Indiana State University in 1995. Funny things happened along the way. The ten years passed swiftly, and given the pleasure I get out of teaching sociology, I decided not to retire that year. Further, over the years I have found that the rewards from working for the Debs Foundation greatly exceed the frustrations and disappointments.

Yet, time does move along, and the last year or two I have found it to be a bit more of a struggle to maintain the performance standards I set for myself. I go home at night sometimes with a bit more than just a "good tired" feeling, and I struggle to meet deadlines. So, I plan to retire from Indiana State University at the end of this year, with the fall semester being paid leave. However, I have decided to continue as foundation secretary for a couple of years. I mentioned these developments at the foundation's business meeting last fall. They said they were glad I would be continuing on as secretary, and I responded that I am

DEBS FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

Spring, 1998

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.

pleased that they feel that way.

It is strange to think that this is the last issue of the newsletter which I will have to produce under the twin pressures of foundation deadlines and the mirade of responsibilities of being a full-time faculty member. What I have enjoyed doing as foundation secretary I expect to enjoy more and perform more effectively the next few years. Cheers! C.K.

MINUTES -- Spring Business Meeting

Eugene V. Debs Foundation

April 25, 1998

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m., Noel Beasley presiding.

The date for the 1998 awards banquet was announced for November 7. The Debs award recipient will be Howard Zinn. The presentation speaker is yet to be selected. Ideas were explored for a possible special program for banquet day (a.m. and/or p.m.), one involving Mr. Zinn and possibly the presentation speaker. Also discussed were ways to promote the banquet, and possibilities for a musician for the dinner program.

Treasurer's Report. Creason reported optimistically on the investments in the Endowment Fund and on the balance of income and expenditures for the past year. The foundation took in approximately \$14,000 more than was spent during 1997. The treasurer's report for fiscal year 1997 is to be included in the Spring issue of the newsletter.

Secretary's Report. King reported that the project to repair the Home's foundation brick has not yet been undertaken, but is recognized as essential maintenance and it is a project which will absorb a big chunk of the budget surplus reported by Creason. Brief mention was made of recent suggestions and nominations for future honorees for the Debs award and the Distinguished Service award. It also was mentioned regarding the Endowment Fund that the trustees of the fund perceive that an unnecessarily large amount of money is being held more or less in reserve, drawing low interest in a money market account. Beasley committed to take this matter up with the fund's account

manager.

Curators. It was announced that Karen Brown has been serving as head curator for a half year and plans to continue for another year. Arrangements have been made for an assistant curator for the summer, and for the year beyond. Mention was made of one designated gift which was for the re-framing, using acid free matting, of several historically significant photographs. This donation came from a museum visitor who is knowledgeable about preservation techniques and was concerned with evidence of aging and deterioration on some important photographs on display.

New Business. Dennis Cheshier mentioned that he has contact with an individual who owns an early photograph of John L. Lewis which he would consider donating to the Debs Home Museum. Dennis was encouraged to communicate our interest in receiving this item of historical interest.

Regarding the foundation's aid to education awards, the possibility was discussed of establishing an annual scholarship award in honor of a key figure in the founding of the Debs Foundation. The scholarship would be funded by a 50-50 match between outside sponsors and the foundation, as has been the arrangement with the Lillian Hanna Memorial Scholarships. The motion was made, seconded and passed unanimously to explore possibilities for the establishment of such a scholarship.

After a reminder that May 28 is Workers' Memorial Day, the motion was made, seconded and passed unanimously to adjourn, at 1:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
(signed) Charles King
Secretary

Supporting Actors and "Bit Players"

This "subscription" card was found by Paul Burkett, foundation member, in a used book recently purchased from Kerr Publishing Company. It is an amazing tidbit of radical memorabilia. Did Judson O'Neal, Treasurer (of the Socialist Party of Vigo County, Ind.) send this card to some like-minded person who hopefully would return it with a commitment of financial assistance? The recipient must have been sufficiently like-minded to keep the card, but possibly for no greater use than as a bookmark left in a volume about radicals. (There was no indication of who previously owned the book.)

Yes, obviously the Socialist party of Vigo County (and Terre Haute) was trying actively to build its campaign fund in 1914, and Judson O'Neal was treasurer. Correspondence between Debs and Judson O'Neal or his twin brother, James, shows that Judson was held in high regard. James O'Neal, better known nationally, was state secretary of the Socialist party in Indiana, and in 1915 assumed the same position in Massachusetts. But Judson (1875-1919) remained in Terre Haute, was active in the local Socialist party and wrote occasional articles for the state party's *Bulletin*. Although appearing usually in footnotes to various letters, comments indicate how Debs felt about Judson. In a P.S. to a letter to James O'Neal, September 28, 1918, Debs wrote: "Jud was in the other day. He is looking fine. Jud is a loyal soul. We love him. None better anywhere." On March 25, 1919, Theodore Debs (writing for Eugene) in a letter to David Karsner wrote: "I am glad the little tribute to Jud O'Neal pleased Jim. Jud deserved it and much more. His whole life was a tragedy and

I often marvelled at his fine courage and infinite patience. He was a fine soul, pure gold, crucified by the fates." Reference here is to a tribute in *Call*, March 23, 1919, titled "Farewell to Judson O'Neal," in which Debs praised Judson as a man who "had but one purpose in life, and that was to serve the working class."

The history of social movements is written largely in terms of the "stars" such as Eugene Debs and the supporting actors such as his brother, Theodore, and the major events, none of which ever would have happened without the efforts of a lot of "bit players" such as Judson O'Neal of Terre Haute, Indiana.

Information on the O'Neal-Debs correspondence was obtained from *Letters of Eugene Debs*, Volume 2, edited by J. Robert Constantine.

Subscription to the Socialist Campaign Fund

Terre Haute, Ind.,....., 1914

I, the undersigned, do hereby agree to pay into the campaign fund of the Socialist Party of Vigo County, Ind., the sum opposite my name.

..... \$.....

Payable

Address,

Judson O'Neal
Treas

1997 FINANCIAL STATEMENT Eugene V. Debs Foundation

Expenditures:

Indiana-American Water Co.	\$ 327.89
Indiana Gas Co.	1454.77
Cinergy (PSI)	1,000.56
AT&T	245.83
GTE North	604.41
City of Terre Haute (Sewage Disposal)	58.80
US Postmaster	665.61
Indiana Department of Revenue	105.00
Markle Insurance Agency	861.00
Mackville Station	528.00
C D	18,005.00
Indiana Museums	40.00
Leilanie Newkirk	196.00
Jewett Printing	5,240.12
Indiana State University.....	3,211.00
Sears	134.00
City of Terre Haute	10.00
Bedding Plants & Wintergreen	59.53
Sejute Tloka	650.00
Terminix International	324.00
ADT Security Services	186.00
Paitson Bros.	767.31
Just Copies	131.50
Sean Boron	12.00
Ketner & Sons Electric, Inc.	59.20
Inweld Corp.	20.00
Eric Davin (Spann Award).....	1,000.00

UAW Local 662	25.00
Mitch Rice.....	100.00
Heinl's Flowers	57.50
Signature Inn	56.10
Azar's Catering	4,517.50
Terre Haute Tribune Star	734.58
University of Illinois	445.61
Indiana Statesman	198.00
Merchants National Bank	15.00

Total Expenditures \$ 42,046.82

Revenue:

Dues	\$ 6,125.00
Dinner & Programs	30,025.00
House (Memorabilia).....	1,220.75
Contributions	1,225.00

Total Revenue \$ 38,595.75

Balance as of Dec. 31, 1996 \$ 9,818.69

Total \$ 48,414.44

Total Expenditure \$ 42,346.82

Balance Jan. 1, 1998 6,067.62

C D	\$ 18,005.00
Money Market	2,500.00

Images of American Radicalism

by Paul Buhle and Edmund B. Sullivan. Hanover, MA: The Christopher Publishing House. 552 pages. \$60.00. Reviewed by Edward K. Spann.

In reading this book, the word "torrent" comes to mind, a torrent of words and illustrations covering virtually every kind and period of a broadly conceived radicalism in America: Labor radicals, intellectual radicals, ethnic radicals, black radicals, and feminist radicals, Shakers, Owenites, Fourierists, Abolitionists, Spiritualists, Atheists, Free Lovers, Marxists, Fabians, Socialists, Communists, the Old Left and the New. Strangely, the authors overlook the native American anarchist tradition of Josiah Warren and Benjamin Tucker -- a major omission, but nearly everything else is here. And there are numerous biographical sketches of noted rebels of their day from "Johnny Appleseed" and Walt Whitman onward. The greatest strength of the book is its wealth of illustrations, Woodcuts, photographs, broadsides, posters, political buttons, and paintings -- mostly in black and white but many also in color. Fortunately, it is indexed so that it is easy to find the person, event, or picture that we want.

There are some weaknesses. When the authors misdate the Boston Massacre by four critical years and repeat the myth that Crispus Attacks was a hero of the American Revolution, we have some reason to question their scholarship, and this reviewer is convinced that they might have better understood social radicalism if they had used his *Brotherly Tomorrows: Movements for A Cooperative Society in America* and several other readily available scholarly works. Generally, they are indiscriminate in the praise which they shower on their subjects. The biggest weakness is inherent in the character of

the book. If a torrent brings abundance, it also tends to obscure meaningful distinction. Here, the authors often move from one important movement to another, one key individual to another, in a single paragraph, blurring distinctions and denying anything like a meaningful picture of either movements or individuals.

If this book fails to win the complete appreciation of the scholar, however, it likely will appeal to many readers. For those who want a rapid ride on the numerous twisting roads of the radical past, this book will be interesting and informative. In its numerous depictions of the often unjust and brutal treatment of radicals, it helps us see the dark side of the American past. In its enthusiasm for those who dared challenge injustice and ignorance, it leads us to a greater appreciation of the sources of positive change in our society. Add the numerous illustrations and we have a book which many will take pleasure in possessing and reading. It is a worthy complement to Buhle's *Encyclopedia of the American Left* published several years ago.

Edward K. Spann

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.

EUGENE V. DEBS FOUNDATION

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