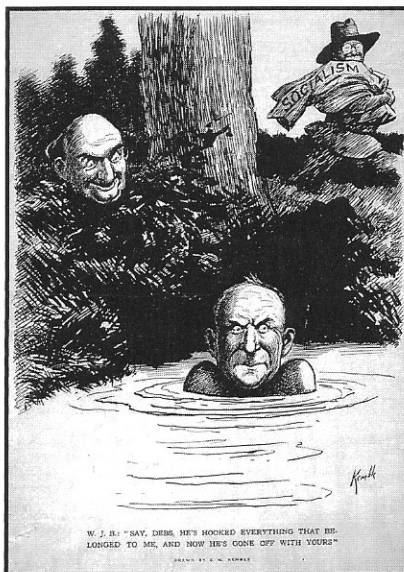


The Debs Foundation Newsletter

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



SPRING 2000



A Cartoon from 1912 illustrating how ideas promoted by Debs since 1900 were being adopted by the major parties.

issues and build an agenda which would force the major parties to cease ignoring the rights of women and children and working Americans of all types. The extent to which Debs and the Socialists succeeded is suggested in the political cartoon above, portraying the extent to which by 1912 the major parties had begun competing for the ideas which Debs had been extolling since 1900.

It is fitting that on this 100th anniversary year the Debs Foundation and Indiana State University hold a scholarly conference assessing the influence of Debs on 20th century America, including consideration of predecessors and the social context in which he operated, what Debs and the party accomplished, and the extended shadow this giant of late 19th and early 20th century has cast over the entire 20th century.

A committee of Indiana State University professors who are foundation members are planning the conference. Professors from Economics, History, Political Science and Sociology are involved, and high interest is evident from early publicity of the conference. The dates are November 10 and 11, Friday and Saturday, the weekend of the foundation's annual award banquet.

The conference program will be printed in the fall issue of the foundation's newsletter. If you or someone you know would be interested in participating on the program, contact us for further information (812-237-3443, or soking@scifac.indstate.edu). All sessions -- Friday afternoon and Saturday morning and afternoon -- will be held on the ISU campus and open to the public.

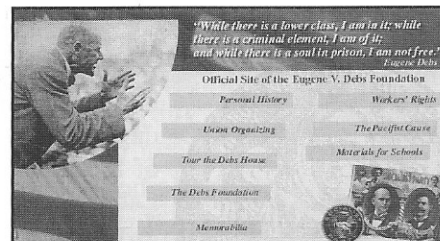
DEBS' IMPACT ON 20th CENTURY AMERICA

A Conference on a Third Party Which made a Difference

The year 2000 marks the 100th anniversary of Eugene Debs' entry into national political life as the Socialist Party candidate for President. It was the year 1900 when he shifted from his career as union leader and made his first of five runs for the nation's highest elected office. History records that he failed in all five attempts. True, he did not get elected, but this hardly came as a surprise to Debs. He knew that ours is basically a two party system, and third parties can do little more than play a role of spoiler, and in some instances just might help to determine who gets elected.

Eugene Debs had a mission greater than to play the spoiler role. His was a vision for a better society, and his mission was to educate and inspire Americans to dream big and act to build a society pervaded by equality, social justice and peace. His goal was to shape political debate, define the

GONE HI-TECH



By the time you read this the Debs Foundation will be on the Internet with its webpage up and running. Check us out at eugenevdebs.com. You will find that the welcome page has several links you can click on: Debs' life (chronology), his major causes, the Debs Home, foundation information including how to join, upcoming events, and memorabilia for sale.

The webpage is meant to be both educational and promotional. It is hoped that researchers and information seekers of all ages -- middle school on up -- will find helpful information as well as suggested sources for further reading. We also expect the webpage to promote memberships, contributions and the sale of memorabilia.

We feel that the Debs Foundation is curator of one of the most undersold and under appreciated resources of American history, and the Internet provides us the mechanism for getting the word out to an audience many times greater than we have been able to reach. The initiation over a decade ago of a newsletter mailed twice yearly to all foundation members gave

...Continued on page 6

**SPRING BUSINESS
MEETING
APRIL 29, 2000,
1:00 PM**

Pete Culver Remembered

The Debs Foundation lost one of its most dedicated members and staunchest supports when B.G. "Pete" Culver passed away Sunday, February 20. Pete had health problems for several years, but one would hardly have noticed, given the high activity level he maintained. There were a number of causes which were consuming passions for Pete Culver: labor movement, AFL-CIO Community Services Department where he was a regional director, Wabash Valley Central Labor Council, community services locally, and, high on his priority list was work for the Eugene V. Debs Foundation.

Pete was elected a Vice President of the foundation in 1965, and was constant in his commitment to the foundation and its causes until the time of his death. He promoted good relations and better understanding between the foundation and the union of the Wabash Valley Central Labor Council and the unions at the state level. Countless union people have visited the Debs Home at Pete's encouragement, often accompanied by Pete himself, and for many this was their first step to becoming a foundation member and supporter.



Pete and Kathleen Culver received the Foundation's Service Award in 1995.

DEBS FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

Fall 2000

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.

Pete and his wife, Kathleen, were partners and soul mates in life and in their commitment to the Debs Foundation, and it was in recognition of their service that in 1995 they were as a couple given the Theodore Debs Distinguished Service Award. Our condolences go to Kathleen, and we want her to know how much Pete has been appreciated.

1999 FINANCIAL STATEMENT Eugene V. Debs Foundation

Expenditures:

Cinery	\$ 1517.48
Sewage City of Terre Haute	127.30
AT&T	1012.15
Indiana Gas	1226.07
Terminix International	522.00
ADT Security Service	261.00
Jewett Printing	4087.48
U.S. Post Office	563.00
Cash Box	215.31
Assoc. of Indiana Museums	25.00
Indiana Dept. of Revenue	22.85
Markle Insurance	857.00
Terre Haute Tribune-Star (advertising)	845.00
Quality Tree Service	500.00
ISU Dept. of Sociology	116.16
Charles King (Stamps & House)	401.89
Spring Hill Heat & AC	117.70
Inweld Corp.	20.00
ISU	1891.94
Ann Feeney	774.52
Robert Bussel	851.24
Dick McCalister & Son	35.52

Gloria Johnson (lodging)	230.00
Beth Tilles	50.00
Azar's Catering Service	3540.00
The George Meany Archive	64.50
Dennis Zigler (Masonry)	29,500.00
Don Scheiber	18.87
Meier - Johan - Wengler	290.00
Old National Bank	15.00
ISU Federal Credit Union (CD)	14,000.00
Leilani Newkirk (clerical)	120.00
ISU Statesman (advertising)	180.38

Total Expenditures	\$ 64,915.90
Total Deposits	62,006.59
Balance	-2,909.31
Balance Jan. 1999	7,777.27
Balance Dec., 1999	4,867.96

Revenue:

Dues	\$ 5,920.00
Bank New York Amalgamated	20,000.00
CD	10,350.00
House	3,286.51
Dinner Programs	14,250.00
Dinner Ticket	6,250.00
Contributions	1,950.08

Total Income	\$ 62,006.59
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Where is the Eugene Debs of the 21st century?

America the Beautiful,
2000 version:
*Oh arrogance, and avarice
And talk of "me, me, me"
For narcissistic gluttony
'We've got six cable-ready TVs!'
America, America
We shed our grace on He
and look at us, aren't
you jealous?
We've got more stuff than thee*

Eugene Victor Debs, Terre Haute's contribution to America's last populist gasp, received a farewell party of sorts as the lists on he century's greatest Hoosiers were compiled in recent weeks.

I say it's a farewell party, for Debs' words are already antiquated and it's hard to believe he will remain of much interest in a century where the accumulation of stuff will continue as the scorecard for success.

It's hard to believe that Debs once was not that far from the mainstream back in the days when labor unions represented the worker rather than the leadership.

"While there is a lower class, I'm in it; while there is a criminal element, I am of it; while there is a soul in prison, I am not free," he said in what was probably his most famous quote.

Oh Eugene Debs, it's good that you died in 1926, before your words became as archaic as the inkwell.

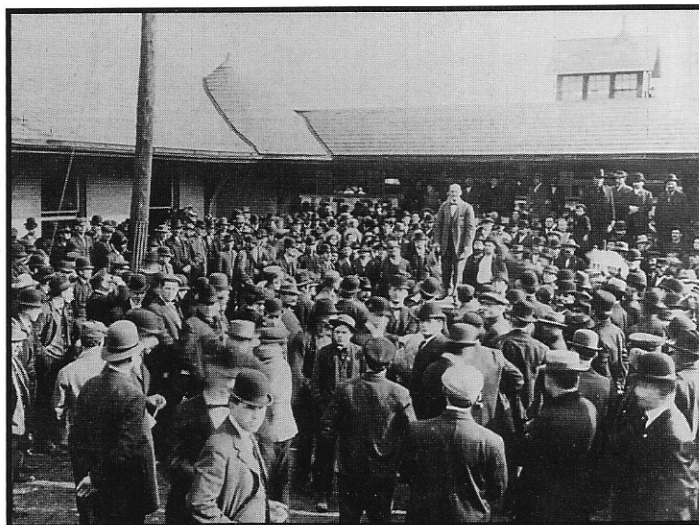
As we tiptoed into 2000, politicians and their twin brothers in the big media made one thing clear - America rocks.

To support this contention, the media clones pointed to our victories at war, the emancipation of women and minorities. They pointed to our big homes, our big cars, our big stock markets and our big celebrities.

The subtext among all the Y2-Kraziness could be boiled down to this — how can a country with so many SUVs and laptops and Palm Pilots and exploding NASDAQ numbers be anything but great? The answer was self-evident. It's an embarrassment of riches, but few are embarrassed.

America is still the land of dreams in 2000. But while the dreams of the wealthy know no bounds, the dreams of the poor are in shackles.

To say that the rich are getting richer, that the poor have no voice, that there is a system in place that keeps



Gene Debs could move an audience. Here a pause for the camera.

poor people poor and stupid people stupid — to say those things is to be labeled a liberal lunatic in 2000 America. Politicians and media have told us all that things are great. Who wants to doubt them?

But faces don't lie, and it doesn't take too long to explode the myth that we deserve unrestrained kudos. Go anywhere you usually try to avoid, a license branch, a courtroom a dirty bar, a rusty trailer park, a rickety housing

project. You will see the forgotten. Look into their eyes if you can and wonder why such a disgracefully wealthy country allows these things without even a token uproar.

Part of our spiritual malaise can be attributed to a lack of true leaders. Who is our Eugene Debs today, our conscience? When was the last time you heard a politician at any level say something that made you yearn for their dream? When President Bill Clinton and Gov. Frank O'Bannon touted the state's welfare system earlier this month, it was in terms of dollars saved and the number of people moved from one type of poverty to another. Hurray.

It is easy to make fun of the sixties now, funny looking rich kids spouting self-righteous platitudes. But we lack even the pretense of social concern in 2000.

Right about now, I'd like a little less George and Al and John and Bill. I'd like a little more Chicago Seven, some Angela Davis, Some H. Rap Brown and Stokely Carmichael.

We need angry men and women calling for a revolution and making us squirm in the La-Z-Boy.

Write this off as a silly, liberal rant if you'd like, But put down this paper and look around you. Not just at your 52-inch television and remote control the size of a book, but at the neighborhoods you avoid on your way to work. Is this what Jesus would do? Is this what the men who created this country envisioned as the outcome of their dream in 2000, a country not of "us," but of "us" and "them."

American century? Yes, But our victory rings as hollow as our soul.

Highlights of the 1999 Awards Banquet

For those of us directly involved in making the foundation's annual award banquet happen, it sometimes feels that each one is going to be a real drag, but then the pieces fall in place, or at least most of them do. Then each banquet seems somehow the best. It's the combination of the tone set by the award recipient and keynote speaker, and by the sense of *esprit de corps* which elevates the "dinner" to genuinely festive "banquet" proportions.

This banquet was no exception. This time the flowers for the head tables remained in a kitchen cooler until Monday, and the technicians failed to tape the event. Nevertheless, Gloria Johnson was an appreciative award recipient, a captivating speaker, and a person who elicits respect and admiration when she talks unpretentiously but sincerely about the struggles she has engaged in and the causes she has served. She expressed how fortunate she feels to have been involved in three great movements which in combination have enabled her to feel she has been able to make a difference: the



Gloria Johnson: A Captivating Speaker



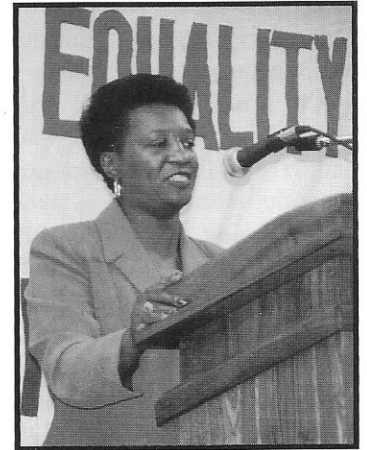
Gloria Johnson admires her award.

movements for civil rights, for women's rights, and the union movement. All three benefitted from the leadership skills and commitments of Gloria Johnson. The addresses of both keynote speaker Jean Hervey and award presenter Jack Sheinkman were tributes to Gloria Johnson and the great movements in which she has served.

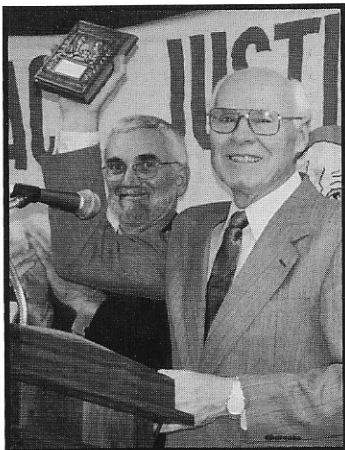
Foundation Secretary Charles King was honored for fifteen years of service in that position. Noel Beasley made the presentation to him of the Theodore Debs Distinguished Service Award. In his brief acceptance speech King mentioned some of the well-springs of his commitments to such causes as the Debs Foundation, these resting in the influences of religion, family upbringing, and professional training as a Sociologist.

And how to describe the musical presentation by guest artist Anne Feeney! Anne is talented, entertaining, and her songs are of protest and social criticism, all wrapped in a pleasant and provocative package of song and monologue. We hope her first appearance at our banquet will not be her last!

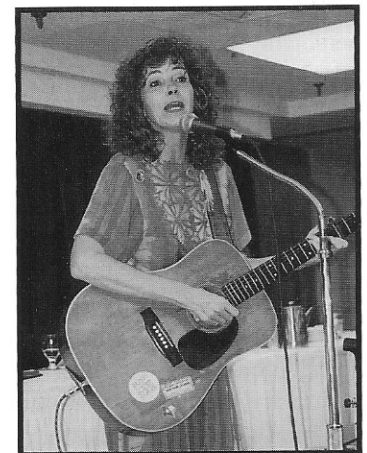
One could feel like saying: "It was one of the best! Til next time!"



Jean Hervey's Keynote Address



Charles King accepts Distinguished Service Award



Anne Feeney, a guitar and a song with a message.

DEBS 100 YEARS AGO

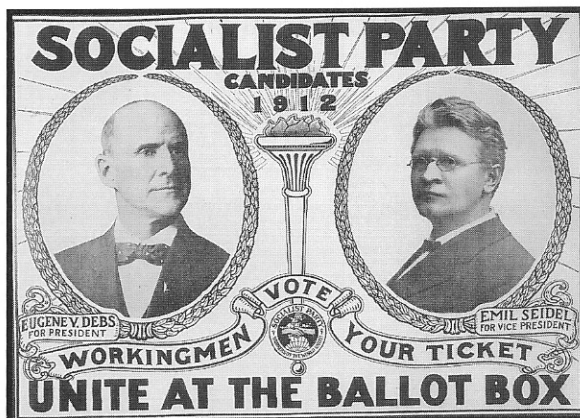
A Major Career Change

There is much in the news daily about the frequent career changes which workers have to undergo due to rapid and dramatic changes in production technologies and industries that surge and decrease in market share, and where in global factory production is carried out. These changes are challenging for the worker to say the least and sometimes painful. It was a major career change when middle-aged Eugene Debs became a Socialist Party leader and presidential candidate. It was a change of career, but no change of cause or direction of life commitments. The cause was still the same, namely, to champion the cause of the working class and the poor. For the last two decades of the 19th century, Debs had used the union movement as a vehicle of change. His dynamic leadership had turned the floundering Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen (BLF) into one of the strongest of the railroad brotherhoods, and had built the BLF *Magazine* into a progressive voice for social criticism and change with a readership which extended well beyond the BLF membership and included others inside and outside the labor movement who were interested in progressive issues of the day.

It is a definite change of career, but no formal training and re-tooling was available nor was it needed. The same skills which had served Debs well as union leader would be required: dynamic public speaker, forceful journalistic style and, above all, a burning compassion for the cause. The founding of the American Railway Union initially showed promise to take his union leadership to new heights, but then came the Pullman Strike, when the united front of all railroad owners, the government and the legal system, not to mention an extremely hostile press, effectively broke the strike, drove the ARU members out of employment in the industry, and jailed Debs and six other leaders for failing to comply with an injunction against the strike. So the industrial-type union which had for a couple of years seemed to be the wave of the immediate future for the labor movement was effectively destroyed. The ARU was left with a sizeable indebtedness. Although assured that he personally could not be held liable, Debs insisted in assuming personal responsibility for paying every penny, a task which required much of his energy in the years after his release from a Woodstock jail.

Debs had learned a lot from the frustrations of union leadership. The experience with the brotherhoods, organized along craft lines, had led him to innovate an industrial form of organization to unite all the crafts and skill levels in an industry. Thus the founding of the ARU. Then, the disastrous effects of the Pullman Strike taught him more. Debs saw clearly that changes had to be made in our legal system and governmental regulatory structures before the labor movement could advance.

There is a popular misconception that Eugene Debs was either too inept or too extreme to ever get elected to anything. Such is not the case. As a young man in Terre Haute, Debs had run



successfully for two public offices, running as a Democrat, and winning handily in each occasion. Once was for two terms as City Clerk, beginning in 1879, and as State Representative to the Indiana General Assembly in 1885. His public service overlapped his duty as Grand Secretary of the BLF, and it was Debs' choice to give up public office to devote all his time to union work.

Fortunately for America, after the Pullman Strike Debs chose again to

become involved in politics, this time at the national level. However, there was a great deal of seeking and searching among alternatives before Debs joined the newly formed American Socialist Party in 1900. He had been wooed by Socialists since his prison stay. Victory Berger was one recruiter. Berger came down from Milwaukee and talked with Debs in Woodstock prison, leaving Debs an autographed copy of Karl Marx's *Capital* (this copy is on display in the Debs Home). Debs' leanings had always been progressive, and had over the years shifted from a somewhat moderate stance (Debs initially had opposed strikes by the brotherhoods) to more radical positions. Yet, Debs was not ready immediately to align with any political group or symbol. Debs was the choice of the Populists People's Party in 1896, but he declined to accept the nomination. In 1897, Debs helped form a political body called the Social Democracy of America. Its leadership was the same men who had led the ARU, and they promoted a colonization plan as pathway to a "cooperative commonwealth." Its political platform included public ownership of all monopolies and utilities, a shorter work day, and public works for the unemployed.

The promotion of the co-operative commonwealth brought forth a storm of criticism by both radicals and conservatives. Chances of success were not helped by Debs' inclination to temporarily suspend his organizing efforts for the new cause when the opportunity arose to involve himself in various labor strikes, as in the coal fields. Another distraction was Debs' health, mainly in the form of severe headaches brought on by sunstroke. The colonization program was eventually shelved, but Debs and his group were one of the many factions among those of Socialist persuasion who, when they began to feel that a common ticket would greatly enhance chances for real gains at the polls, united in the Social Democratic Party and chose Eugene Debs as their Presidential candidate in 1900.

In spite of the odds against the Socialist Party, including the factionalism within the ranks of leadership, and the handicap of being a Third Party in a basically two-party political system, Debs did fairly well in 1900, garnering approximately 100,000 votes. It is clear that Debs' lifelong commitment was to the cause of the working class and the poor and powerless, but he entered the Twentieth Century having left union organizing and having chosen to carry on his struggle within the political arena. The result is a fascinating story of a remarkable man who made a difference.

Robert Bussel on Powers Hapgood

As usual there was an educational event Saturday afternoon prior to the award banquet, this year focusing on Powers Hapgood, a Hoosier progressive much in the Debs tradition. Attendance was good, interest was high and the audience was participatory. Bussel's presentation was based on his recently published biography of Hapgood and centered on the conflicts Hapgood experienced in having a social and political agenda too progressive for organized labor and the CIO in late 1930s and early 1940s America. Hapgood (1899-1949) was one of those young intellectuals and reformers who tended to Socialist political views and who became committed to the cause of the working class. After Harvard, Hapgood took jobs and learned the hard way what it was to be a wage worker, then became a

successful CIO labor organizer.

Kurt has described Hapgood as "a man I met and nearly went to work for after coming home from the Second World War." Indianapolis was hometown for both men. In Vonnegut's novel, *Jailbird*, he used a statement from Hapgood as to why one from the privileged class would become so passionately associated with persons, one might think, who were not his kind. Why? "The Sermon on the Mount," had been Hapgood's reply during an inquiry in a case involving a disturbance on a CIO picket line. One thing which made this session especially interesting was the presence of an Indianapolis librarian who had assisted in collecting resource materials on Hapgood, and Powers Hapgood's daughter, Berta Hapgood-Monro, of Indianapolis, was present. Berta and her brother, Powers, also from Indianapolis, have become Life Members of the foundation as a result of contracts made relative to this event.

HI-TECH *continued from page 1*

us a voice which has moved us forward and promoted awareness of the foundation and its programs, but as you know, the Internet knows no boundaries of organization, politics or geography; the entire world is our potential audience,

The webpage will be updated and extended as necessity dictates. It is fairly easy, almost too much so, to start just any webpage, but to do it right requires the technical equipment and know-how of professionals, and this we have had from a Terre Haute firm, High Ground Digital, which has extensive experience in high-tech productions for internet as well as for publishing. George Amies, company President, has a personal interest in this project, having followed foundation activities over the years, attended our banquets and visited the Debs home several times. George also sees this project as an opportunity for his company to gain exposure to a potential market niche of historical museums, so he has several motivations to do us a superb job.

You be the judge of the product as it has been launched. Your opinions can be sent by e-mail to soking@scifac.indstate.edu. See you on the internet!

EUGENE V. DEBS FOUNDATION

P.O. Box 843

Terre Haute, Indiana 47808-0843

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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.

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