

# The Debs Foundation Newsletter

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



SPRING, 2003

## A FADED IMAGE, BUT UNTARNISHED REPUTATION

Is Eugene Debs alive? I am asked that question more times than I can count by phone solicitors. Others ask to speak to Mr. Debs or to the company's purchasing officer, director of public relations, etc. My answer is to the effect that Mr. Debs is both—a historic figure who died in 1926, but whose legacy is very much alive and whose message is just as relevant, as untarnished, as ever.

This past December I had occasion to be in the Greater Seattle, Washington area, near Everett, so I contacted one of our foundation members whose address showed that he lives a few doors from my daughter and son-in-law. David Clay was happy to talk on the phone and to meet me. As I suspected, he works at Boeing, in Everett, where the giant B-747 is built. David is a union activist, a jig and fixture builder, a 25-year member of IAM&AW Local 751-C, and a union steward for 23 years.

I readily took Dave up on the offer to visit in Everett the site of a plaque honoring Debs. The site is now the property of an Everett bank, but it was formerly an opera house, where Debs spoke in 1895. The plaque is faded but stands, nevertheless, thanks to the Everett Park and Recreation Department, as a memorial and tribute to Debs. Dave Clay hopes to enlist support for refurbishing the sign before it deteriorates further or is lost. Debs' visit to Everett was apparently part of an organizing trip for the ARU taken during the brief period of freedom after the Pullman Boycott and subsequent trial and appeal, just before beginning to serve his sentence later in March, 1895.

The wording on the plaque is as



DEBS PLAQUE, EVERETT, WASHINGTON  
CHARLES KING (L), DAVID CLAY (R)

follows:

When Eugene Victor Debs first came to Everett March 16, 1895, he was just becoming a nationally known figure. Then president of the American Railway Union, Debs found sympathy in Everett for his great nationwide railroad strike against the Pullman Company of Chicago. Built on the hopes of a railroad that didn't happen and knowing well the dangerous life a railroadman had, Everett had many residents who resented the harsh tactics dealt by railway officials. When Debs arrived he was met on the east side with a carriage and band and taken to the Central Opera House, where he addressed an audience of 600, standing room at a premium. Debs gave a history of the railroad strike and what had led up to it and held his audience spellbound for two hours.

The prison photo used in the plaque happens to come, incidentally, not from his imprisonment in Woodstock, Illinois in 1895, but rather from his stay about 25 years later in Atlanta Federal

## THE 2002 AWARD BANQUET

### *Two Great Movements: Civil Rights and Organized Labor*

The 2002 banquet honoring Julian Bond played on these two great movements and their common goals. Mr. Bond began his speech commenting on the contributions of union leaders to the NAACP during his years of service as Board Chairman. The two movements represent the interests and concerns of the working men and women of America: decent wages, job security, and equal rights regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, or gender are shared goals. We stand in opposition to the reckless and foolish war being embarked on in Iraq. We stand in solidarity against threats from the Global Economy and commit to prevent Right Wing control of Congress. Julian Bond is a highly effective communicator. His command of language catches attention, and he can mix just enough wit with solemn, even stern, delivery of his message to hold the complete attention of his audience. It was an informational as well as inspirational message, an action-packed evening which nonetheless concluded at 9:35 P.M.

**SPRING  
BUSINESS MEETING  
SATURDAY, APRIL 26  
at the DEBS HOME**

Penitentiary, where he was serving time, not for labor activities, but for his anti-war speech during WWI. Both are not bad causes for which to go to jail: in support of the rights of workers and in protest of war. A reputation thus gained doesn't fade or tarnish with the passage of time.

## THE SPIRIT OF EUGENE V. DEBS

### *A Play in one act, by Jonothan Myers*

This short play on Debsian themes will be performed in Terre Haute April 10, as part of an Human Right Day event called "Creating Freedom: Arts and Human Rights." The plot involves a fictional coal miners family living in a factory and coal mining town, and how a speech by Eugene Debs inspires and shapes their values. Scheduled for ISU's Dede I, performances are at 1:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

Playwright Jonothan Myers is a Terre Haute native, son of John Myers who is a member of IBEW Local 725. Jonothan is completing requirements for an M.A. in Theater from Indiana State University. *The Spirit of Eugene V. Debs* received first place in the American College Theater Festival region III One Act Play Competition. It will be published along with other regional winners in *Best Student One Acts*, Vol. 9. It also will be produced by Indiana State University at the ACTF Region III Conference next January. The Debs Foundation is one of the co-sponsors for the Human Rights Day celebration which is open to the public free of charge.

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## BUCKING THE TREND, SORT OF

Giving to not-for-profits is down sharply after 9/11, or due to the threat of terror, state of the economy, or whatever explanation a given analyst chooses. We are happy to say that Debs Foundation income through February 1, 2003 has held relatively constant. There has been no significant change, and that is good. However, there has been a change in our operating budget. The main increase has come with the professionalization of the position of Museum Director-Curator. Making that a paid position takes roughly a \$16,000 bite out of our operating budget. It will require some increase in annual income from all sources—dues and contributions as well as banquet ticket sales and dinner program ads—for the foundation to avoid operating in the red.

The past year was not only the first year that a paid Museum Director was in our budget, but there were also a number of essential repair and maintenance projects related to the preservation of the Debs Home. \$10,290 was spent on repair of the chimneys, \$2,750 for carpeting in the museum and in the Curator's apartment, \$1,050 for a new storage shed, and \$2,300 for correction of the drainage problem on the Home's north side (where the land sloped toward rather than away from the building). We have no plan for that many big-ticket repairs in 2003. However, we are on notice that the main furnace is in a bad state of repair. It is 16 or 17 years old, and the heating element may not make it another season. The unit is operating at perhaps 50% energy efficiency. Our gas bill was \$550 last month! We are also on notice that the computer for the Secretary will sometime this year be made obsolete by upgrades to the ISU computer network.

This is not a call for large sacrificial giving from foundation supporters. Just pay annual dues, maybe at a higher level, and encourage friends and acquaintances to become members. If we had 1,000 members, each paying \$10 to \$25 annually, that would be double what we now receive annually from that important source. Keep up the good work!

## DEBS FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2003

Published by

The Eugene V. Debs Foundation

Box 843

Terre Haute, IN 47808

Website: [www.eugenevdebs.com](http://www.eugenevdebs.com)

Foundation Officers:

Michael Sullivan, *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.

## WHAT 34 MILLION FRIENDS CAN DO

Thirty-four million. That's the number of dollars which President Bush, in the first act of his presidency, cut from the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA). Bush was paying debts to his ultra-conservative constituents and reinstating an ignorant and short-sighted policy from the Reagan-Bush Presidencies. It has been said with supporting evidence that a dollar spent on family planning and reproductive health care goes further to fight poverty than a dollar spent otherwise trying to fight poverty. It also works to advance women's rights. That is what UNFPA programs do, but the Bush administration had other priorities. Their agenda includes imposing our "superior morality" on all the women of the world, and with no evidence to support the claim, they say some UNFPA funds might go, directly or indirectly, to fund abortions.

In a similar disregard for women's health and reproductive rights, the U.S. was eventually alone at a recent Bangkok conference to develop a plan which would include recommendations to further the program for action of the International Conference for Population and Development. The U.S. representatives took such obstructionist stances as attempting to remove from the report all reference to "reproductive rights" and "reproductive health services" and having an American woman give a speech on the rewards and ease of using the rhythm method of birth control.

The money Bush cut from UNFPA would have been used for contraception and sex education and for maternal health care and AIDS education. It would have helped prevent 2 million unwanted pregnancies, 800,000 abortions, and 4,700 maternal deaths. Two women came up with an idea. Why can't 34 million Americans (Friends) each give a dollar or more to correct this wrong-headed policy. It is a just cause, an opportunity to offer aid as well as dissent, and a message of connection to the women of the world. The address: U.S. Committee for UNFPA, 220 E. 42nd St., New York, NY 10017.

# THE (SOCIALLY) LEFT BEHIND

Appealing and thought-provoking imagery is portrayed in *Left Behind*, a recent book series and its dramatic film version. For the uninitiated, *Left Behind* deals with some debatable aspects of eschatology (a fancy term for, roughly speaking, end times theory). Talk about exciting terms in Christian theology, the really “big bang” (my term for it) is not how the world began, but how it will all end. In a big bang, the “right” believers will all be “raptured” (called up) to meet Christ in the sky, and then they will all settle gently back to earth and Christ will reign over them in peace and prosperity for 1,000 years. According to the generally accepted geographical location of that Armageddon and subsequent reign of Christ, a lot of people now living in the so-called Holy Land would, if it happened today, be in for a very big surprise, for they would be *left behind*!

I am not one to take lightly the teachings of the Christian religion, but like everyone else, I prioritize a bit. I do some picking and choosing in my emphasis. Like Martin Luther, who said, “Here I stand,” I firmly believe that “the just shall live by faith.” I choose that tenet as part of the “vertical” dimension—Man’s relation to God—which is central to Christian thought, but this theology also has a horizontal dimension, a social ethic of the relations of persons to each other. Christ gave us his Second Commandment, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” That means that you should live so as to leave no one behind. It should be added that the imperative to leave no one behind is not met merely by cute slogans justifying certain educational reforms.

There are too many “left behinds” in the world today, too many for whom the only solace in Christian teachings is the parable of Lazarus: So what, rich man. Enjoy your extravagant,

materialistic lifestyle out there in suburbia and in your gated communities. You’d better enjoy it, for a heaven awaits where the tables will be turned. You will become the undeserving poor, the left behind, and the Lazarus types of this life will be seated at the bountiful table.

Jesus really gave a lot of attention to the socially left behinds of his day. Years ago I heard a Bible scholar who had done the counting assert that in all the direct statements attributed to Christ regarding his mission, for every reference to “saving the lost,” there are several times over that number of references to healing, feeding, looking after widows and orphans, etc. In other words, look after those who are being left behind. That Christian social ethic often gets lost in the ethic of capitalism. Former Indiana Senator Birch Bayh said that he has always been skeptical of the politicians whose run for office emphasizes support for the Ten Commandments, but whose programs reflect little commitment to Christ’s Second Commandment to love your neighbor as yourself. Whether it be tax policy, regulation of business, gun control, health care, or the family, politicians talk a good line, but their programs reward the “deserving” rich at the expense of the “undeserving” poor, the left behinds.

My Christian belief rests on two fundamental pillars: the primacy of individual faith, and thou shalt love thy neighbor! Does that stand make me a fundamentalist? I don’t care what Jerry Falwell or the head of any other church thinks. Here I stand! Debs didn’t use exactly the same expressions as Luther, but his life demonstrated that kind of stand. (C.K.)

[and essay conceived on Reformation Day, 2002, and just prior to election day, Nov. 5, 2002.]

## 2002 FINANCIAL STATEMENT Eugene V. Debs Foundation

<b>Expenditures:</b>	<b>\$58,065.07</b>
Curator Total Compensation .....	\$ 15,600.00
High Ground Digital .....	\$ 1,900.00
Terre Haute City (sewer).....	\$ 91.20
Vectren .....	\$ 1,011.61
Old National Bank (Safe Deposit Box) .....	\$ 15.00
Dennis Zigler .....	\$ 85.00
Inweld Corp. (Fire Ext.) .....	\$ 21.25
Mike Newkirk (Shed work) .....	\$ 80.00
United States Post Office .....	\$ 1,041.34
Ketner & Sons (electrical) .....	\$ 447.95
Indiana State U. (Solidex Food Svc.) .....	\$ 5420.00
Anne Feeney .....	\$ 570.00
Chris Chandler .....	\$ 200.00
Heinl’s Flower Shop .....	\$ 58.95
Meierjohan Wengler .....	\$ 250.00
Midwest Restoration (chimney) .....	\$ 10,290.00
Association of Indiana Museums .....	\$ 25.00
The Great American Carpet Store .....	\$ 2,750.96
Lowes (Kitchen Stove, Supplies) .....	\$ 519.31
Menards (storage shed, supplies) .....	\$ 1,221.21
Markle Insurance Agency .....	\$ 904.00
ISU Hulman Center (rental) .....	\$ 651.10
Indiana Sales Tax .....	\$ 88.25
Clayton Creason (trash) .....	\$ 20.00
All American Sewer Drain .....	\$ 475.00
Springhill Heating & Air.....	\$ 318.98
First National Bank (service charge) .....	\$ 37.00

Terminix .....	\$ 324.00
Indiana Business Entity .....	\$ 10.00
Money Fund .....	\$ 200.00
Stamps & Supplies .....	\$ 1,005.56
Union Pen .....	\$ 233.45
Jones & Sons (Landscaping) .....	\$ 2,230.00
AT&T .....	\$ 592.22
Jewett Printing.....	\$ 5,287.83
Verizon .....	\$ 900.57
ADT.....	\$ 186.00
Cinergy .....	\$ 1,529.86
Indiana American Water Co., Inc. ....	\$ 280.46
Employer Social Security & Medicare .....	\$ 1,192.00

**Income Jan. 1, 2002 to Dec. 31, 2002: .....\$ 55,065.07**

Membership Dues .....	\$ 6,970.00
Contributions .....	\$ 4,115.67
Dinner Tickets.....	\$ 8,800.00
Dinner Program .....	\$ 19,600.00
Endowment Fund Withdrawal .....	\$ 10,000.00
Memorabilia .....	\$ 5,579.12

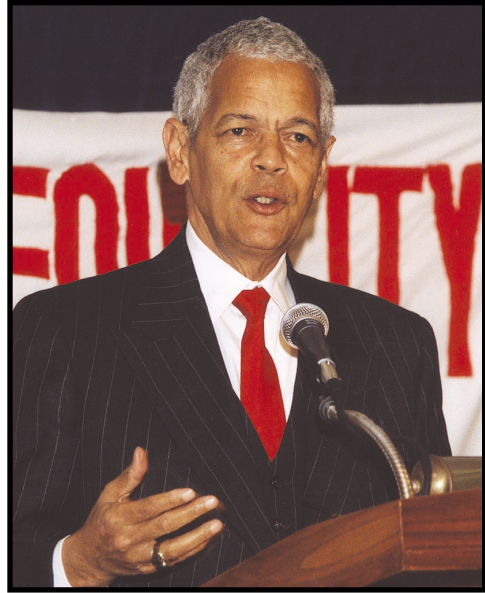
Total Expenditures .....	\$ 58,065.07
Total Income .....	\$ 55,065.07
Income Less Expenditures .....	\$ -3,000.00

Balance Dec. 31, 2001 .....	\$ 7,630.03
Balance Dec. 31, 2002 .....	\$ 3,000.00

# The 2002 Award Banquet



*Clayola Brown presented the plaque to Julian Bond*



*Julian Bond, 2002 Debs Award Recipient*



*Bob Constantine, former Foundation Secretary speaks*

## 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

We are a voluntary organization, so your dues and contributions are tax deductible. The Foundation owns and maintains the Debs Home and offers several educational and cultural programs.

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