

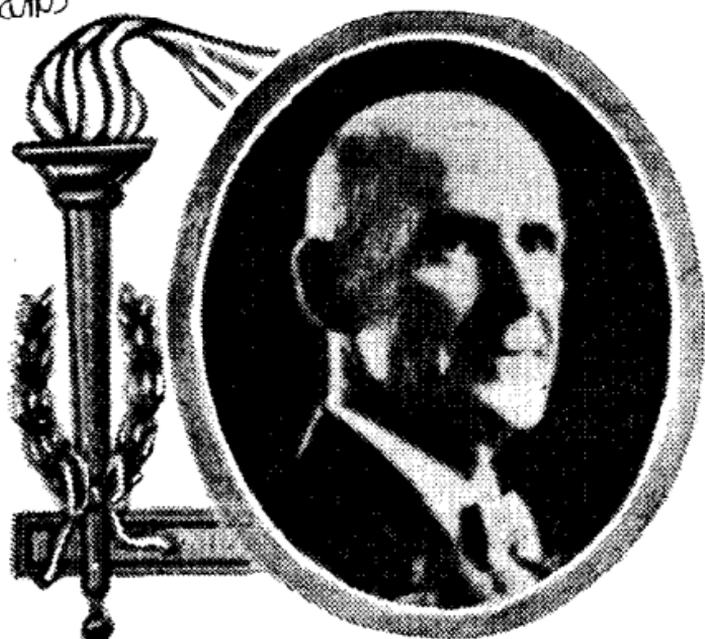
Help Debs Appeal

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EUGENE V. DEBS

Eugene V. Debs, foremost of American Socialists delivered a speech at Canton, Ohio, June 16th. On June 30th he was arrested for alleged violation of the Espionage Law. On September 12th he was found guilty by a jury of retired farmers and merchants and sentenced to 10 years in prison.

Judge Westenhaver has allowed fifty days to perfect an appeal to the Supreme Court of the United States where the case will finally be fought out on the question of the constitutionality of the Espionage Law. Thousands of dollars will be needed to carry this case up. Debs is 62 years old and appealing the case is the only possible method by which we may keep him from ending his days in prison.

Debs made an impassioned plea in his own defense to the jury in which he contended that the Espionage Law was unconstitutional and that he had a perfect legal right to deliver the speech he

did under the protection of the first amendment to the Federal Constitution. His speech was a masterful defense of free speech, free press, democracy and Socialism.

We give below a few extracts from the speech to the jury:

"For the first time in my life I appear before a jury in a court of law to answer to an indictment for crime.... I do not fear to face you in this hour of accusation..... Standing before you charged as I am with crime, I can yet look the court in the face, I can look you in the face, I can look the world in the face, for in my conscience, in my soul, there is festering no accusation of guilt.

"Gentlemen, you have heard the report of my speech at Canton on June 16th, and I submit that there is not a word in that speech to warrant these charges. I believe in the constitution of the United States. The very first amendment to the constitution reads: 'Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition the government for redress of grievances.' That is perfectly plain English. That is the right I exercised at Canton on the 16th of last June, and for the exercise of that right I now have to answer to this indictment.

"I cannot take back a word. I cannot repudiate a sentence. I stand before you guilty of having made this speech.... I am the smallest part of this trial. There is an infinitely greater issue that is being tried today in this court. American institutions are on trial here before a court of American citizens.... My fate is in your hands. I am prepared for the verdict."

Before sentence was passed, Debs was asked if he had anything to say. We give below a few extracts from his statement to the court:

"Your honor, years ago I recognized my kinship with all living beings, and I made up my mind that I was not one bit better than the meanest of earth. I said then, I say now, that

while there is a lower class I am in it; while there is a soul in prison, I am not free.

"I have listened to all that was said in this court in support and justification of this law, but my mind remains unchanged. I look upon it as a despotic enactment in flagrant conflict with democratic principles and with the spirit of free institutions.

"I have no fault to find with the court or with the trial. Everything in connection with this case has been conducted upon a dignified plane, and in a respectful and decent spirit.

"Standing here this morning, I recall my boyhood. At fourteen, I went to work in the railroad shops; at sixteen, I was firing a freight engine on a railroad. I remember all the hardships, all the privations of that earlier day and from that time until now, my heart has been with the working class. I could have been in congress long ago. I have preferred to go to prison.

"I believe your honor, in common with all Socialists, that this nation ought to own and control its industries. I believe as all Socialists do, that all things that are jointly needed and used ought to be jointly owned—that industry, the basis of life, instead of being the private property of the few and operated for their enrichment, ought to be the common property of all, democratically administered in the interests of all.

"There are today upwards of sixty million Socialists, loyal, devoted, adherents to this cause, regardless of nationality, race, creed, color or sex. They are all making common cause. They are all spreading the propaganda of the new social order. They are waiting, watching and working through all the weary hours of the day and night. They are still in the minority. They have learned how to be patient and bide their time. They feel—they know, indeed—that the time is coming, in spite of all opposition, all persecution, when this emancipating gospel will spread among all the peoples, and when this minority will become the triumphant majority and, sweeping into power, inaugurate the greatest change in history.

"Your honor, I ask no mercy. I plead for no immunity. I realize that finally the right must

prevail. I never more clearly comprehended than now the great struggle between the powers of greed on the one hand and upon the other the rising hosts of freedom.

"I can see the dawn of a better humanity. The people are awakening. In due course of time they will come to their own.

"When the mariner, sailing over tropic seas, looks for relief from his weary watch, he turns his eyes toward the southern cross, burning luridly above the tempest-vexed ocean. As the midnight approaches, the southern cross begins to bend, and the whirling worlds change their places, and with starry finger-points the Almighty marks the passage of time upon the dial of the universe, and though no bell may beat the glad tidings, the look-out knows that the midnight is passing—that relief and rest are close at hand.

"Let the people take heart and hope everywhere, for the cross is bending, the midnight is passing, and joy cometh with the morning.

"He is true to God who is true to man. Wherever wrong is done to the humblest and weakest 'neath the all-beholding sun, that wrong is also done to us and they are slaves most base whose love of right is for themselves alone and not for all the race.

"Your honor, I thank you, and I thank all of this court for their courtesy, for their kindness, which I shall remember always. I am prepared to receive your sentence."

There are just fifty days from September 14th in which to perfect the bill of exceptions and file the appeal. The last day for filing is November 3rd. We must raise every dollar we can before that time. Send all money by registered mail to Oliver C. Wilson, Room 405, 803 West Madison Street, Chicago, Ill.