
Statement to the Press Awaiting Commitment to Jail, Chicago — July 17, 1894

by Eugene V. Debs

Published as "Debs Goes to Jail" in *Indiana State Sentinel*, July 25, 1894, pg. 6.

Chicago, July 17 [1894].— Eugene V. Debs, George W. Howard, L.W. Rogers, and Sylvester Keliher, the officers of the ARU, were committed to jail today by Judge [William Henry] Seaman in the United States Circuit Court for alleged violation of the injunction issued by Judges [William A.] Woods and [Peter S.] Grosscup.

The four leaders of the strike in reality went to jail in default of bail, for the court offered them their liberty until next Monday [July 23] when they will have a hearing on the charge of contempt. Their bail was fixed at \$3,000 each, but the men refused to give it and the court committed them....

This morning District Attorney [Thomas] Milchrist filed information in court charging the officers of the union with violating the injunction and asked for a writ of attachment for contempt. It was not necessary to issue a writ for Debs, for he was in court when the information was filed. When the injunction was issued by Judges Grosscup and Woods, the usual chancery summons was issued and those named in the injunction were directed to appear in court yesterday to answer. That was what brought Debs into court with the attorneys who have been retained to defend him and his brother officers....

* * *

While seated in the jail awaiting the preparation of his cell, Debs said:

“Well, this means a few days of rest and quiet at least. I have not had much rest for over a month and I am badly in need of it. No, sir, we shall not give bonds. Our bonds are \$3,000 each, but we would not give bonds if they were 5 cents each. We are not posing as martyrs, neither do we ask for sympathy. All I have to say about our arrest today is that matters have come to that point in this free country when it is held to be a crime to advise a man what to do when he seeks your advice. We are guilty of no crime unless the simple expression of an opinion is a crime. We are not responsible for this strike. Pullman is responsible for it.”

The men were placed in the debtors’ department of the jail, Debs and Howard being given a cell and Keliher and Rogers one adjoining.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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First Edition.