

“They May Shelve Me If They Like” :  
Statement to the *Philadelphia Times*  
(July 30, 1901)

*Eugene V. Debs was not unprepared for the story from Indianapolis that the Springfield faction of the socialists' unity convention was in the majority and sought to repudiate him as a leader.<sup>1</sup> He is kept at home by the serious illness of his wife, his own mother, and his wife's mother. He said when he read the press report that he was to be shelved:*

They may shelve me if they like. It is simply an effort on the part of the Eastern faction to dictate to the Chicago faction, of which I am a member. But they cannot dictate socialism's future. It is clear to me that if the Indianapolis convention does not act in harmony that the time for socialism's debut as a strong, active party is not here.

When the time comes it will sweep into power. It needs no leader. No leader can make socialism, and no would-be leader can unmake it. There must be men to head the movement, but no leader can dictate its course. It is a party of men, and not of a man.

I have no desire to be a leader. If I had been politically ambitious I could have found a profitable home in one of the old parties. No man can truthfully accuse me of being of a grasping disposition. If I had been I would not today be striving to upbuild socialism.

Published as “Future of Socialism” in *Philadelphia Times*, whole no. 9433 (Aug. 1, 1901), pg. 2.

---

<sup>1</sup> Debs' absence from the Joint Unity Convention in Indianapolis fueled press speculation that he was being reduced in stature in the forthcoming united organization — a report which was addressed by the convention with a resolution declaring such a report false. Debs was quoted here in the interim.