
Debs Trial Opens Monday [Sept. 9]; Defendant Makes Speeches As Lawyers Prepare Case: Seymour Stedman, Attorney for Defense, Says No Attempt Will Be Made to Excuse or Apologize for Any Statement by Veteran Socialist — Recognizes Trial as Attack on Socialism.

by J. Louis Engdahl

Published in *The Milwaukee Leader*, v.7, no. 233 (Sept. 9, 1918), pp. 1, 3.

(CLEVELAND) — While lawyers here were arranging the final details of his defense, Eugene V. Debs, four-time Socialist candidate for President and prominent spokesman for Socialism in the United States, was making speeches to huge gatherings in Detroit.

Debs goes to trial in the federal court Monday [Sept. 9, 1918] for statements alleged to have been made in an address before the Ohio Socialist state convention at Canton, June 16 [1918].

Seymour Stedman, Chicago, leading counsel for Debs, on the eve of the opening of the trial declared:

No Apologies Made.

“No attempt will be made to excuse or apologize for any statement made by Debs in his Canton speech. Debs and those associated with him recognized this case as an attack on Socialism and the freedom of discussion.

“The speech contained in the indictment, it is contended, is only a fraction of the entire address. The entire speech will be placed before the jury by a court reporter who took it down in shorthand.”

Debs has instructed his counsel that they must not, under any circumstances, consider him in this case; that the Socialist movement, the Socialist Party, and preservation of fundamental American rights must be of paramount consideration. Debs’ position is as follows:

“I amount to nothing in this. Tens of thousands have gone to prison; thousands have been executed;

who am I that I should do less for the cause that means so much to the working class? I propose to keep my self-respect, and I can not retract anything that I have said and do so. I would rather go to prison with the consciousness of being true to myself than to escape through any subtleties of the law.”

Debs has changed very little except that he has grown slightly thinner.

When someone remarked about this, he replied: “If they send me to prison, there will not be much left of me. I will have fed pretty near all of me that is worth anything to the Socialist movement.”

The jury venire, from which the jury will be chosen, is made up of men well along in years, it being claimed that the average age is close to 70. With few exceptions the prospective jurors are said to be conservative men in opulent circumstances.

Four Attorneys on Defense.

Associated with Seymour Stedman in the case are William A. Cunnea, Chicago; Joseph Schartz, Dayton; and Morris H. Wolf, Cleveland.

The case is attracting nationwide attention. Among those already here who will attend part of the trial are Rose Pastor Stokes, New York, who has been convicted and sentenced to serve 10 years in the federal prison at Jefferson City, Mo.; William Bross Lloyd, Socialist candidate for United States Senator in Illinois, who has furnished bonds for several indicted Socialists; Scott Nearing, under indictment in New York City; Isaac Edward Ferguson, Chicago, an expert

on the interpretation of war legislation adopted by Congress; and Mrs. Marguerite Prevey, Akron, O., who has been instrumental in securing improved conditions for imprisoned Socialists in this state.

Debs Makes Speeches.

Debs has been active making speeches during the past few weeks. He addressed an immense throng at Akron, the great rubber town, Labor Day. He was also greeted by a record gathering at Rochester Thursday [Sept. 5, 1918].

Those who have visited various sections of the country recently declare the spirit of jingoism is more rampant in Cleveland than in any other large city in the land. This is explained in part by the fact that this is a great war production center and the war profiteers want no interference. They therefore desire that all Socialist activity be ruthlessly stamped out. On the other hand, the Socialists of Cleveland have held more and larger meetings than anywhere in the country with the exception of New York City.

Profiteers are Busy.

This clash of interests has had its results. A.L. Hitchcock, Socialist member of the school board, is now serving a 15 year sentence at the federal prison in Atlanta for statements he is alleged to have made in a conversation in a home gathering. The two Socialists in the city council, Noah Mandelkorn and John Willert, were ousted from the city council, the Republican and Democratic aldermen acting as judge, jury, and prosecutor, with no appeal from their decision.

C.E. Ruthenberg, city organizer and former candidate for mayor; Alfred Wagenknecht, state secretary; and Charles Baker, state organizer, are serving one year terms at the Canton workhouse for statements they are alleged to have made before open air gatherings in the public square in May and June, last year. Some of these gatherings had a total attendance of 10,000 persons; a collection of \$600 having been taken up at one of them.

Printing Plant Seized.

Then there is a case of the Robitnyk Printing & Publishing Co., which published a Ukrainian Socialist daily. It was raided by federal authorities and its editors and managers indicted. Paul Ladan, editor, and Charles Switenko, business manager, pleaded guilty to failure to file translations of articles with the post office and were fined \$250 each and sentenced to 3 months in jail. A severer charge, based on language used in the leading article in the May Day edition, was dismissed. An effort was made to remove the printing plant to New York City, but when everything had been put aboard a freight car it was seized by the federal authorities, who still have it in this possession. Many of the Socialist and radical books taken belong to New York publishing houses.

Another local case is that of a Socialist indicted for selling a copy of [George] Kirkpatrick's book, *War — What For?* This indictment was dismissed.

Trial to Be Short.

It is expected the Debs trial will be completed before the week is over. Debs will then continue his speaking tour. In his speeches he devotes considerable toward proving it is the ruling class and its political parties, and not the Socialist Party, that is pro-German. He shows how Republicans and Democrats united in wining and dining Prince Henry of Prussia while on a visit to this country; how Theodore Roosevelt, while on a visit to Germany, expressed great admiration for the kaiser's military machine; and how the minds of the junkers here in the United States move in the same channel with the minds of the junkers in Germany.

Debs is out on \$10,000 bail, having spent only one night in jail as the result of his arrest Sunday, June 30 [1918], the day following the return of the indictment against him here. One of the charges against him is that he said:

“If Rose Pastor Stokes is guilty, so am I.”

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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