
Debs, Hero of ARU Strike Nearly 30 Years Ago, Talks for Federated Press Readers

by Eugene V. Debs
(For The Federated Press)

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Tom Mooney and Warren Billings are still in the penitentiary. The whole world knows they are absolutely innocent but that makes no difference under the laws of California. They have been railroaded by the traction interests and the Chamber of Commerce, the foul breed that rule with an iron fist, and from their decision there is no appeal. Governor Stephens is their tool and Hiram Johnson, the alleged progressive, dare not open his mouth in protest against the infamous outrage. As for the courts, they are as rotten as the rest of the state government.

California stands disgraced before the civilized world, and the time will come when she will wish she might tear that black page from her history and erase that foul blot from her memory.

I know Tom Mooney as I do my brother, and a cleaner, manlier man, a whiter soul never drew breath, and that is precisely why the silk-tied and white-livered wrecking crew that has California by the throat are determined to murder him.

Until Tom Mooney and Warren Billings are free, organized labor, for which they offered up their lives, is in disgrace for submitting to the outrage perpetrated upon it by the California freebooters in treating its bravest leaders like convicted felons.

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It is gratifying to know that The Federated Press is making active preparations to enlarge its capacity and improve its service in anticipation of the national campaign this year that will be of special interest to the working class.

The Federated Press now serves some 80 papers scattered over the country and the number is steadily increasing. Many of these papers suffered in the general upheaval of the war period and The Federated Press itself had its trials, which happily are now over, and the prospect for a prosperous and progressive future could scarcely be brighter. The managing editor [E.J. Costello] and the business manager [Tom Tippet], a lusty team, are supported by an executive board composed of some of the most capable and wide-awake newspaper men in the labor movement.

There was never the urgent need, the imperative demand for a competent press service for the working class than there is today. Labor can only get truthful reports and reliable news through its own press service and this year and in the ones to follow, above all others, the very life of the labor movement will be in the balance and everything will depend upon having its own agencies of publicity and comment.

The Federated Press has rendered invaluable service to the working class, especially to the Socialist and labor movement in the past, and this

service can be greatly enlarged and improved in the immediate future and we should all bend our utmost energies to that end.

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There is one man in Tennessee that I have especial respect for. His name is J. Cohen and he is the editor of a labor paper in Memphis. A press dispatch says that Judge J.W. Ross of the US District Court sentenced him to 6 months in jail and fined him \$1,000 for publication of an editorial referring to men who took the places of strikers as “scavengers.” It is highly offensive to a judge seated by the corporations to refer to the gentlemen they employ to break a strike as “scavengers.” Cohen, foolishly believing that under the constitution of the United States he had the right to call a thing by its right name, may now repent at his leisure and conclude that there’s a reason for a federal judge having special solicitude for a scab and strikebreaker. Anyway, I would rather keep the company of Cohen the jailbird than that of Ross the federal judge.

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I have been asked if my citizenship had been restored since my release from imprisonment. It has not. I have not the honor, or otherwise, of being a citizen of the country in which I was born. President Harding told me my citizenship might be restored at a later time, but evidently the Chamber of Commerce and the American Legion object, and I am not anxious to be a citizen of a country they rule, and I literally despise a government that keeps Tom Mooney, Ralph Chaplin, and 70 more labor heroes and apostles locked up in foul dungeon cells as convicted felons.

A long time ago I said that the jail is the castle of fame.

That the government of the United States is the corruptest and cruelest in existence is ac-

counted for by the fact that the United States is the richest nation in the world. Riches, corruption, and decay, when the riches are in the private hands of a few parasites as in this country, have gone hand in hand down through the centuries from Nebuchadnezzar down to Rockefeller. There is not the exception in history, from Egypt and Rome down to Russia. The handwriting blazes on the walls in the United States, but the bacchanalian revellers in high (!) life are drunk with power and blind with greed and will realize their inevitable fate only when they are swept into the abyss.

There is not another government on the face of the earth that would keep Ralph Chaplin and Tom Mooney caged as convicts in a pestilential prison-hole.

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The bonus law has been knocked in the head. President Harding was for it in his campaign speeches but he had to veto it in the White House. The banking, railroad, and shipping interests could not spare the money.

Say, you soldier folks, do you remember what we Socialists told you when they drafted you for the slaughter, and what the profiteering pirates who vetoed the bonus bill had us sent to the penitentiary for? You will see that we knew the gang who put you in the trenches while they gutted the treasury, and because we dared to tell them the truth, to save you from being murdered and mutilated in a criminal war of their making, they caged us as convicts and robbed us of our citizenship. They told you that nothing would be too good for you on your return. We knew they lied and said so, and took the consequences. Thousands of you are not a week ahead of the county house, and they have no more interest in you than if you were vagabond dogs. That is how plutocrats reward their heroes (?) who fight to protect their stolen millions. They say they don’t want the dollar mark to profane your “patriotism,”

but they are not so sensitive and solicitous about their own rotten “dollar-a-year” brand of patriotic bunk. The billions you fought and were gassed and shell-shocked for are safely in their steel vaults, and as their ex-heroes you are now at liberty to beg at their back doors for a handout, if their dogs will let you.

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There need be no argument about the United States government’s incomparable corruption. Not one of the gang of pirates and freebooters who bled the nation white during the war and lines their vaults with their stolen billions has been prosecuted, to say nothing of being sent to prison — the criminal crew that got a billion dollars for building airships for the war and never furnished a solitary ship. They are all at large on velvet and up to their necks in scented clover. The only men who are in prison are the honest, conscientious, and patriotic citizens who tried to save the country from the eternal infamy and crime. This tells the tale in tragic numbers, and it requires no prophetic vision to foretell what the harvest will be.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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