
Eugene V. Debs — Hail and Farewell!

A Statement on His Death by
the International Labor Defense
[event of Oct. 20, 1926]

by James P. Cannon

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The militant labor movement, of which the International Labor Defense is a part, mourns today the death of Eugene V. Debs.

The cause of the class war prisoners suffers an especially heavy loss in the death of Comrade Debs. His name is linked with every labor defense struggle that took place during his life of activity in the labor movement. The prisoner of Woodstock and Atlanta was close kin to all persecuted and imprisoned workers. Comrade Debs was not one of those who shrug shoulders at the imprisonment of workers as though it were a matter of small concern. He burned with indignation at every case of capitalist persecution and was always in the vanguard of the fight for its victims, whoever they might be and whatever their political views or affiliations.

He rose above the narrow partisanship that seeks to destroy the spirit of unity and solidarity in the labor defense movement. Although a member of the Socialist Party, he had nothing in common with these elements represented by the *Jewish Daily Forward* who fire from ambush at the movement for united labor defense. He helped to build where they try to disrupt. His consistent stand for unity and solidarity on this issue is the strongest rebuke to them.

Comrade Debs rendered great service to the International Labor Defense. He hailed its formation as a big step forward towards unity of all forces in the fight for the class war prisoners and became a member of the National Committee, serving until his death. He responded generously to the many calls made upon him by the International Labor Defense, despite the constant sickness that harassed him, and frequently reiterated his endorsement of its work. His appeal to the American workers in behalf of Sacco and Vanzetti, his last public document, was written for the International Labor Defense during his last illness.

Eugene V. Debs left to the workers' movement a life record of unceasing struggle on the side of the oppressed, of dauntless spirit and careless disregard for personal rewards or hazards. It is a priceless heritage. That heritage belongs to the revolutionary workers. Let them claim it for their own.

Today the grief of the militant workers is heavy indeed, but the grave of Comrade Debs is not the place for tears. He was a warrior and at his grave we raise a battle cry and begin again the forward march.

International Labor Defense,
James P. Cannon, Secretary.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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