

“You Are Doomed to be a Sorely Disappointed Man” :
Open Letter to Samuel M. Jones
(October 8, 1900)

Terre Haute, Ind., Oct. 8, 1900.

Mr. Samuel M. Jones,
Mayor, Toledo, Ohio

My Dear Mr. Jones:—

Your communication of the 25th ult. was received some days ago, but I have been too busy to make earlier reply.¹ In all you say you are kind and gentle, and I trust that there may be no lack of the same spirit in my answer, although I shall be perfectly candid in the expression of my views touching your recent action in allying yourself with the Democratic Party and doing battle against the cause of socialism.

Do not, I pray you, tell me that you have not “joined” the Democratic Party. That is puerile, if not disingenuous, for it implies evasion of responsibility for an action from which your own conscience would seem to shrink in disapproval. With David B. Hill² you have declared, if not in words, in deed, which is more conclusive, “I am a Democrat,” and you are today as much a part of the Democratic Party as Croker and his Christless gang who are levying blackmail upon moral affliction to save (!) our republic (?) from “imperialism.”

You sign yourself, “a man without a party.” Permit me to observe that you are not that now, but when the Democratic Party gets through with you, you will indeed be “a man without a party.”

Let me now quote briefly from your letter. You say, “Suppose I am never again elected to office,” etc. You must know it is not the office, per se, that is in question, and yet to a man with whom serving the people is a consuming passion, I imagine that if my prediction proves true you are doomed to be a sorely disappointed man.

As for the implied spirit of martyrdom which characterized your action, it should be said that no great self-sacrifice is required to join the majority, the strong, in crushing the minority, the weak. Had you, as a

professed socialist, taken your stand on the side of socialism, instead of joining hands with its avowed enemies, the case would be different and your contention might be urged with some degree of consistency.

You say you are for "all the people." Do you think you are for the poor negroes of the South who have been disfranchised by your party, the party you are supporting with pen and speech? Do you really think you are for the working class, the prisoners of private property and competitive conquest which your party is pledged to perpetuate? If you really think so, then I say for these voiceless victims, deliver us from such a friend.

Are you for the exploiters as well as the exploited, the masters as well as the slaves?

Moses was not for all the people; Jesus Christ was not for all the people; Jehovah himself, if he is correctly quoted, was not for "all the people." They smote their enemies and they smote them hard. Only Mr. Jones of Toledo is for "all the people," and being for "all the people," as a matter of fact he is for none of the people.

Ultimately I am for "all the people," but not now. Till the fight is fought and won I am for the working class and against their exploiters, the capitalist class. In your effort to perform the miraculous feat of being upon both sides of the class struggle, you have somehow gotten on the side that represents your class interests. I will not accuse you of capitalist class consciousness, but simply observe in a spirit of charity that you have committed political suicide, and this you have done, not for a principle, but against a principle; and that you are conscientious in the matter makes your demise all the more pitiable.

You may remember what I said in a previous letter about your alleged socialism, and your extreme popularity with such papers as the New York Journal and Cincinnati Enquirer.³ When these papers are entirely through with you, they will relegate you to obscurity only equaled by the prominence into which they boosted you to serve their own capitalistic designs.

All the popularity and influence these papers developed in you have been cast with the exploiting class and against the working class. The working men and women of the country will never forget that in a critical hour of the contest you, their professed and trusted friend, joined the enemy and turned against them.

The only ground upon which you attempt to justify your attitude is your pretended fear of "imperialism." is it possible? Did I not know you as I do, I would openly question your sincerity. You certainly cannot be in

ignorance of the fact that this so-called issue is simply an effect of private ownership and of competitive warfare inherent in the capitalist system. You are opposed to the fruit of the system, but you have joined the party pledged to perpetuate the system, and such influence as you still have you are now using to prolong the barbarous struggle which in the past you denounced with such passionate severity and condemned as void of a single redeeming feature.

You may still be esteemed as the modern apostle of the “golden rule,” at least until the election is over, but I cannot imagine how you can enjoy mental serenity when you contemplate your connection with, and your activity for, a party explicitly committed by its own platform to revive and renew and intensify and continue forever the competitive strife you have so fervently denounced, as with tears streaming from your eyes you recited its agonizing woes for the listening multitude. In what I have had to say I have not questioned your motive. I leave that entirely with your own conscience. I have simply discussed your action from my point of view and this, I trust, I have done in all kindness consistent with perfect candor. Since you have seen proper to give your letter to the press I may avail myself of the same privilege.

With the strength of all my being pledged to socialism, come it soon or come it late, socialism as uncompromising as truth, I remain

Most truly yours,

Eugene V. Debs,
A Man With a Party.⁴

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¹ Jones’s letter to Debs of September 25, 1900 is reprinted in full in J. Robert Constantine (ed.), *Letters of Eugene V. Debs: Volume 1*, pp. 149-152. This open letter published in response is not.

² David Bennett Hill (1843-1910) was a Democratic US Senator from New York from 1892 to 1897. He had previously served as Governor of that state, following Grover Cleveland in holding that office.

³ The letter has not been preserved.

⁴ This signature parodies Jones’s signature to his Sept. 25 letter, “A man without a party.”