
Debs and the United Front: An Open Letter to Eugene V. Debs from C.E. Ruthenberg, April 14, 1923

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April 14, 1923.

Eugene V. Debs
Terre Haute, Ind.

Dear Comrade Debs:

My attention has been called to a statement published by you, setting forth what purports to be disruptive activities of members of the Workers Party in relation to public meetings which you have addressed.

I am sending this letter to you to inform you that no member of the Workers Party has been directed or authorized to carry on such activities in relation to your meetings.

The attitude of the Workers Party in regard to a United Front among all working class organizations is well known. It has repeatedly been expressed in public statements and appeals to other working class organizations.

I am enclosing a copy of our statement *For a United Front of Labor*, addressed to all labor unions, all organizations of working farmers, the Farmer-Labor Party, the Socialist Party, the Proletarian Party, the Socialist Labor Party, and the Industrial Workers of the World, from which I quote the following:

The Workers Party proposes that all working class organizations, labor unions, workers' benefit organizations, working class political parties, and working farmers' political and economic organizations get together to present a united, common front against the common enemy — the employing class. To achieve this united front of labor, the Workers Party proposes that all working class organizations, regardless of political differences, get together and marshal their forces on the basis of the following immediate program:—

1. Amalgamation.

Immediate concrete steps should be taken to amalgamate the present craft unions into fighting industrial unions.

2. For the protection of foreign-born workers.

All workers in America, native and foreign-born, have but one enemy — the employing class. The separation of the American worker into English and foreign language speaking is one of the greatest obstacles to unity of action and class consciousness in the ranks of the working class. The employers capitalize this condition to advance their own ends of exploitation and oppression. All the workers must get together against their common enemy and repeal the attack of the capitalists against the foreign-born workers — an attack which is only preliminary to and an integral part of the onslaught against the whole working class in America.

3. The International labor movement.

The struggle of the working class is international. The workers of America cannot wage a successful struggle against their own exploiting class and at the same time put their trust in organizations that have been and are hampering and betraying the struggles of their brothers in other countries. The American workers must therefore repudiate the Second, Two-and-One-Half, and Amsterdam Internationals.

4. Recognition of Soviet Russia.

The workers of Russia have won their strike against their Tsarist oppressors, capitalist exploiters, and the foreign imperialist invaders. The workers of Soviet Russia have succeeded in ending the rule of the landed and moneyed tyrants. They have established a government of the city workers and poor farmers. And this government is growing ever stronger despite the blockade and wars of the French and British imperialist lords of finance and industry.

The American workers must help the Russian workers maintain their victory and in this may help themselves. We must fight for the full recognition of the Soviet Government. The workers of America must aid their Russian brothers in their efforts to rebuild their country and resist the attacks of the foreign capitalist plunderers.

5. For the Removal of Governmental Obstacles.

The organization of the American government is replete with the most clever and effective devices to block the development of a powerful, militant working class movement. We propose the removal of all such governmental obstacles now hindering the workers in their struggle against the exploiting class. The united workers should fight to abolish:

(a) The present rigid conditions making it almost impossible to amend the Constitution.

- (b) The Supreme Court and the veto power of courts over legislation.
- (c) The United States Senate.
- (d) The veto power of the President.
- (e) The present committee system in Congress stifling even the faintest voice of protest that a workers' representative might make.
- (f) The present 48 states system of law serving as a fig leaf for the centralized dictatorship of the employing class, the Federal Government, confusing and making more difficult the struggle of the workers for remedial legislation and further buttressing the whole notorious system of checks and balances on which the American government is based.

6. For a Labor Party.

In the struggle of the workers against the employers the government fights the battles of the exploiting class. The class struggle is therefore a political struggle. The workers must organize an independent working class political party consisting of all workers and working farmers' organizations, regardless of political differences, and unreservedly committed to the protection of the interests of the industrial and agricultural working masses. The organization of such a mass labor party is indispensable to the establishment of a government of, by, and for the city and rural working masses — a WORKERS' GOVERNMENT.

We do not propose organizational unity between the organizations included in this call, but a United Front on these issues, leaving each organization to continue its work as an autonomous body.

In view of the statement above referred to, we would appreciate very much an expression of your views in regard to the organization of a United Front of Labor on the issues stated.

Fraternally yours,

C.E. Ruthenberg,
Executive Secretary.

CER:RP

Edited by Tim Davenport

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