
Branstetter in Interview With Eugene V. Debs: Wilson Gag on Socialist Prisoner.

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CHICAGO. — “Gene was never in the ‘hole,’” said Otto Branstetter, National Executive Secretary, Socialist Party, “nor did he suffer any personal mistreatment. He was denied the right to write or receive mail, or to see visitors.”

“His guards have the deepest respect and even affection for him, and the matter of personal mistreatment is unthinkable. His rights have been restored, at the discretion of the warden, and it seems as if the matter of his gagging is an ugly incident of the past, the last foul smelling act of the discredited Wilson regime.”

First to See Debs.

Branstetter was the first outsider to see and speak with Debs since the revocation of prison privileges by the Wilson administration. A recent order of the Department of Justice has restored all privileges to Debs, at the discretion of the warden, and Warden Zerbst permitted Branstetter to see Debs on the occasion of his visit to Atlanta following the recent meeting of the National Executive Committee of the party in Boston, where the amnesty drive was planned.

Debs Approves Drive.

The plans for a nationwide petition, to be

presented to Congress April 13 and 14 [1921], the 2nd anniversary of the locking up of Debs, the visit of numerous delegations from a large number of cities to Washington on those days, who will seek to interview Attorney General Daugherty and President Harding, and all other means to get the attention of the American people upon the matter of amnesty were discussed by Debs, and fully approved.

Upon one matter alone, that of picketing the White House immediately, was there some question and upon Debs’ suggestion, it was decided to hold the matter of picketing in abeyance.

Parole Turned Down.

The motto adopted for the amnesty drive is “Let’s get them all out.”

Joseph M. Coldwell, fellow-political with Debs, old time Socialist Party worker, and espionage prisoner, was twice informed that the prison parole board was willing to recommend him for a parole. Coldwell, however, refused. “While Gene is in,” he said, “I will not voluntarily get out.”

Branstetter says that Debs looks well and is in excellent health and good spirits.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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