
As to the Labor Defense Council

by Eugene V. Debs

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My attention has several times been called to a matter in reference to the Labor Defense Council which requires a word of explanation.

This Council was organized to provide defense for Communists prosecuted under so-called criminal syndicalism and other laws because of their activities in the labor movement, the purpose of the defense being the preservation of the right of free speech, free assemblage, and other civil rights in the United States. I gladly accorded to this body the use of my name in raising funds and consented to be named as Vice President in its list of officers. I did this not so much for Foster, Ruthenberg, Minor, and others as individuals, but to back then up in the defense of their civil rights. That fight is also my fight.

When a man is attacked on that ground I am his defender, and for this I want no credit. It is my simple duty, and I do not care what union the victim belongs to, or if he belongs to any union at all. And so, notwithstanding the Communists as a party refused to lift a finger to help me out of prison, I stand with the Communists of whatever name or number as I would with any others in their fight for free speech and I shall gladly do all in my power to keep them out of prison.



Now the point in question is this: some unscrupulous Communist propagandists are using my connection with the Labor Defense Council as a means of discrediting the Socialist Party by spreading the report in a surreptitious way, in accordance with “underground” methods, that I am really with the Communists and a Socialist in name only. It would seem unnecessary to deny such an idiotic lie but some comrades insist that it be done, and so I do it on their account.

The claim that I am with the Communists and against the Socialists is on a par with some other falsehoods published in Communist organs to which my attention has been called, and which I have uniformly ignored. That kind of propaganda will take care of itself and requires no encouragement from me.

Now if hereafter any Communist whispers it into your ear that I am with the Communists in anything except their right to free speech and other civil rights, just answer by turning your back upon him and leaving the vulgar falsifier to himself.

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