EUGENE VICTOR DEBS:
THE KANSAS YEARS

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A two-story house stands in the four hundred block of North Eighth Street, Terre Haute, Indiana. This ten room house was once the home of Eugene Victor Debs. Debs was a leading socialist advocate and candidate for the presidency on the Socialist party ticket from 1900 to 1920, except 1916.

Socialism and socialists were always in the minority. Debs, however, did not mind this for he felt that the whole world's history had been made by minorities. Addressing the dying Progressive party in 1924, he stated:

I have somehow been fortunately all of life in the minority. I have thought again and again that if I ever find myself in the majority I will know that have outlived myself.¹

Debs never found himself in the popular majority.

This man dedicated himself to unpopular causes, when success as a respected labor leader or a complaisant politician could have been possible. He declared war on his own age. Yet he carried on this fight, writes

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., in a spirit so authentically American--so recognizable in the American democratic tradition--that under his leadership the Socialist movement reached its height.²

It is important to emphasize that Debs was "so recognizable in the American democratic tradition." Though he often spoke of revolution, violence he deplored; though he often used the imagery of battle, he conceived the coming cooperative commonwealth as gradual, evolutionary, and to be achieved through the democratic process of the ballot; though he urged the adoption of an equalitarian cooperative society, he did not neglect the American quest for greater individual freedom. These are basic paradoxes in Debs' thinking, but he was able to hold them in vital balance; a vital balance that placed him in the center of American socialism.³

On Debs' right was Victor Berger, a viable politician and editor of the socialist Milwaukee Leader. Berger's political organization was based on trade unions, and socialists were to work or "bore" within the existing


American Federation of Labor. He was strong on political action and long-term strategy to overcome capitalism. And with the eventual capture of capitalism, Berger would not confiscate the trusts, but offer to pay compensation. He was also cautious in talking about the class struggle.

Debs, however, was not timid in discussing the class struggle. He was aggressively class conscious, and urged workers to form industrial unions to effectively accomplish the socialist cause. Though Debs rejected socialist participation in the craft unions of the AFL, he, nevertheless, opposed dual unionism, that is, the establishment of a second organization within a craft union. Consistently Debs advocated political action and denounced sabotage and violence.

William D. Haywood, who was left of Debs, rejected political action and advocated dual unionism and violence. Haywood was Secretary-Treasurer of the Western Federation of Miners, and principal organizer of the Industrial Workers of the World. Haywood shared with

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the syndicalists a vision of society reorganized around
the factories, mines, and other places of production.
This apocalyptic vision of the revolution was to be
realized through a general strike. Haywood's view
seemed too visionary to Debs.

This thesis will attempt to examine Debs' polit­
ical and social thought during the Kansas years, which
cover the period from January, 1907 through September,
1913 when Debs was on the editorial staff of the Appeal
to Reason. The Appeal to Reason was a four-page socialist
paper published in Girard, Kansas during the first
two decades of this century. Debs' editorials in the
Appeal are the basis for this thesis.

The first chapter will examine the social, polit­
ical, and economic milieu of the period from 1865 to
1912, particularly the impact of industrialism upon the
worker, rural and urban. Then the specific issues Debs
discusses in the Appeal will be noted, namely, the judi­
cial system, the Negro issue, and child labor. The Negro
issue will be viewed to see at what point--economically,
politically, and socially--the Negro is accepted or re­
jected in American society. Finally, three general re­
sponses to industrialism will be observed, particularly
as the responses focus on the judicial system, the Negro issue, and child labor. The three general responses are: the conservative defense, the progressive attitude, and the socialist response. Under the latter, Debs' attitude toward the courts, the Negro, and child labor will be introduced, and in a later chapter expanded.

Since the editorials of Debs are to be examined, it becomes necessary to study the background of the Appeal to Reason. The Appeal story will be related, especially noting when Debs came on the staff. His style of writing and content will be also viewed in the second chapter.

The third chapter will canvass Debs' appeal through the Appeal. His attitude toward the judicial system will be scrutinized. To accomplish this the writer categorized Debs' articles around three court cases, namely, the Moyer, Haywood, and the Pettibone case (1906, 1907); the indictment of Fred Warren (1909-1911); and the McNamaras' case (1910, 1911).

The last chapter will treat Debs' views concerning social reform and two issues will be examined: the Negro question and child labor. On these two issues, Debs was at the forefront of social reform. The writer has found some primary material which lends greater strength to the view that Debs favored equality for the Negro
Debs was a man ahead of his time.

Several things should be mentioned in connection with Debs' articles in the Appeal. One is that Debs was neither a systematic nor an original socialist theorist; he simply championed the socialist cause in a practical manner, though his thoughts are not always lucid. He was always striking out at capitalism and proclaiming socialism as the only permanent panacea for the inequalities of American life. And because of his passion for socialism, Debs used every possible means to expose the shortcomings of capitalism, but he does not elucidate on any one fault very long. As mentioned above, the writer will attempt to expand a little later on what Debs wrote concerning social reform, but even here there is a scarcity of material in the Appeal.
CHAPTER I

THE MILIEU OF THE PERIOD, 1865-1912

When the Civil War ended, business resumed as usual. Only now business became unusually big. Monopolies were being formed, and the few titans of industry began to accumulate great wealth. Big business began to control government, state and federal.

The 1840's and 1850's had been years of prosperity, with the exception of the Panic of 1857. Economic growth, however, sagged during the Civil War.¹ Thomas Cochran says that contrary to the popular generalization that the Civil War speeded up the Industrial Revolution, the United States Bureau of the Census' Historical Statistics support the argument that "the Civil War retarded American industrial development" in certain major domestic industries.²

The Civil War did aid industry in a political sense. The War shifted political power from planters to

¹Thomas C. Cochran, "Did the Civil War Retard Industrialization?" Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLVIII (September, 1961), 197-210.
²Ibid., p. 199.
industrialists. The legislation passed by Congresses dominated by northeastern businessmen stressed stronger central banking, high tariffs, the Homestead Act to develop interior markets, land grants to the railroads, and a contract labor law for employers to import cheap foreign labor. The industrialists received a great deal of political help during the Civil War which helped them "to build a superstructure (though it was towering) on a solid foundation which had been constructed before the war."3

Great industrial power was developed in the United States but the price of growth came high. As efficient machines produced more and more industrial and agricultural goods, overproduction resulted. In the twenty-five years after 1873, half were years of depression: 1873-78, 1882-85, and 1893-97. The struggle in the eighties was devastating. Agricultural and industrial prices fell rapidly. Between 1880-84 business failure tripled in number to almost 12,000 annually.4

A few profited from these depressions. Andrew


4Ibid., p. 8.
Carnegie later acknowledged in discussing the Panic of 1873:

So many of my friends needed money, that they begged me to repay them. I did so and bought out five or six of them. That was what gave me my leading interest in this steel business.5

And after buying the Homestead plant in the 1883 crisis, Carnegie commented: "I've enjoyed this flurry after all!"6

Huge monopolies were being formed which added to its economic and political prestige while at the same time eliminating its rivals. John D. Rockefeller by various methods in connection with the railroads got rebates and drawbacks which enabled the Standard Oil Company to obtain over 90 per cent of oil refining. Railroads were being combined under "Rail Kings" like Cornelius Vanderbilt and James Hill. Meat packing was being cornered in Chicago by Swift and Armour. The American Tobacco Company was eliminating other competitors. Finance and banking were controlling more and more the prices and wages of the American people. A financier like J. P. Morgan had enormous power in

6Ibid.
The farmers were confused by the new economic conditions. One recalls how Thomas Jefferson believed that the farmer was the backbone of the country. Yet in the closing decades of the nineteenth century the farmer was suffering both economically and socially. Socially, he was laughed at as a dumb "hick" and a "hayseed." Economically, the farmer was suffering too. Being a small entrepreneur he was at the mercy of supply and demand as well as the uncertainties of nature. Beside these there was the trend toward the cities.

New England was affected most by this urban trend. Of 1502 townships in New England, 932 had a smaller population in 1890 than in 1880. This mobility, however, was not possible to the tenant farmers and sharecroppers in the South. They were virtual prisoners of the land due to the lien system. Local merchants took a lien on future crops while they sold merchandise and clothing to the farmer at prices often 50 per cent above the cash price. The farmer was caught in a vicious circle which forced him to buy at the highest price and sell his goods at the lowest. Cotton being a cash crop,

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easy to levy on, creditors insisted that the farmers concentrate on it. The South was "thus bound disastrously to a one-crop system." And this one-crop, cotton, was selling for six cents a pound for a few years in the 1890's and this was two cents less than the cost at which it could be profitable raised!9

The West was in no better position. The West not only fought the forces of nature, but economic forces that burdened them: high interest rates, low prices, and high costs of commodities and transportation. With the opening of new lands after 1865 and under the impact of farm mechanization, the production of wheat and cotton soared higher and higher. From 1873 to 1882 wheat production jumped from 368,000,000 to 555,000,000 bushels, but prices slumped from $1.52 per bushel in 1876 to 77 cents in 1877; rose to $1.19 in 1881, but went down to 68 cents in 1887 and 54 cents in 1893.10

Linus Brockett, a magazine writer of the period, feared that the wealth of the West would lure settlers

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away from education and other "civilizing influences" and turn them into followers of any man on a horse. When the men on horseback turned out to be Oliver Kelley, Ignatius Donnelly, Gen. James B. Weaver, and William Jennings Bryan, the farmers in the West followed them because of poverty, not because of prosperity.11

The farmers slowly came to terms with the industrial forces. This process of adjustment gave birth to a number of agrarian protest movements between the Civil War and the turn of the century: the Grangers, the Greenback movement, Alliances, and the Populist party. Populism, founded in 1890, writes Norman Pollack, was not a backward-looking movement, but "a progressive social force" which accepted industrialism and social change, but criticized sharply certain aspects of human existence in industrial society.12 It encouraged the Negro to join, and C. Vann Woodward writes that "Negroes became prominent as organizers of the new party and several found high office in the party organization."13


While the farmer feared and fought seemingly irrevocable forces, his grown-up children, who streamed to the urban centers, were also wrestling with forces that left them bewildered. The cities were growing at a fantastic rate. The amenities of life just had to wait. Most streets were unpaved, and water supplies often were polluted. The housing conditions became appalling, and those who could correct the situation usually profited from it.

The large immigration population in many cities made it even more difficult to correct slum conditions or effect reforms. One reason was that many were unaccustomed to democratic procedures or government. Another is that their votes often sustained the power of the political machines, for the ward boss was generally a second-generation immigrant himself and perhaps the only individual to whom the newcomer could turn for sympathy and understanding.\(^1\)

The immigrant presented a problem for the labor movement. The businessman was always anxious to have cheap imported workers. This available or surplus labor left the native worker at the mercy of the employer.

Labor unions had attempted to aid the worker, but most of them were weak and ineffective. Prior to the late 1880's, organized labor feared the wage system and it concentrated on political and economic measures to encourage ownership of the means of production. But, finally, realizing that the wage system was a permanent fact, the wage-earning working class became primarily concerned with selling its service at favorable prices.\textsuperscript{15}

The new movement found expression in the American Federation of Labor formed in 1886. The AFL made full use of such economic weapons as the strike, the union label, and the boycott. Under the leadership of Samuel Gompers who was president from 1886 to 1924 (except 1894), the membership grew rapidly and in 1904 it stood at 1,676,000.

The AFL was confined to skilled workers. This automatically excluded most Negroes, and Negroes were usually excluded from local unions. Samuel Gompers, in his early days of labor agitation, urged the unions to organize "irrespective of color...as the division of workers was a means whereby employers kept down the wages

of both groups." But by 1895 he was strongly declaring that "...the caucasians are not going to let their standard of living be destroyed by negroes, Chinamen, Japs, or any other." Between 1899 and 1902 the AFL abandoned even the formality of equal status for Negro workers.

Gompers had begun with a relatively advanced attitude toward Negro workers. But the attitude was based on a narrow trade unionism, and when the trade union leaders attacked his principles by excluding Negroes, it was "easy for him to retreat to a policy of jim-crowism."

Jim-Crowism developed slowly after the Civil War. By the turn of the century, however, practically all of the Southern states and some of the Northern states had "Jim Crow" laws. The "Jim Crow" laws were segregation statutes which sanctioned "physical separation of people for reasons of race" and attempted to remind the Negroes

17American Federationist, XII (September, 1905), 636.
18Mandel, op. cit., p. 49.
19Ibid., p. 59.
of their "inferior position" in society. This separation and ostracism extended to all forms of public transportation, to hospitals, and ultimately to funeral homes and cemeteries.

Oddly enough, the Supreme Court played a part in hastening the return of white supremacy. The Court in the 1870's determined to restore balance and to return to the states the powers guaranteed them in the Constitution. Therefore, in the cases brought before the Court under the Civil Rights Acts passed after the Civil War to protect the Negro, the Justices reduced many of the clauses by declaring them to be violations of the police powers of the states. The Fourteenth Amendment was interpreted as not conferring new privileges and immunities on citizens, but simply reaffirming old ones and guaranteeing citizens against infringement of those rights by state action. In other words, actions committed by private citizens or groups were not state responsibilities and hence not in violation of the Constitution.

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In 1883 the great Civil Rights Act of 1875 which had given equal rights to Negroes to use hotels, theaters, public transportation, and parks, was struck down by the Court as unconstitutional on the ground that Congress had exceeded its constitutional powers under the Fourteenth Amendment. Only abuses on the part of the states were prohibited by the Amendment. It did not guarantee the protection of civil rights, said the Court. Attempts on the part of the federal government to protect the Negro in the South were checked.22

Then in Plessy v. Ferguson, decided in 1896, the Court subscribed to the doctrine that "legislation is powerless to eradicate racial instincts" and laid down the "separate but equal" rule for the justification of segregation.23 This ruling continued until the Supreme Court, under Chief Justice Earl Warren, on May 17, 1954 delivered a unanimous opinion of the Court that "the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place" in the field of education.24

As the Court was conservative in interpreting

22Ibid.
social legislation affecting the Negro, so it was conservative in its attitude toward labor unions. The federal courts retarded the growth of labor unions. This they did by issuing injunctions to prevent strikes and by interpreting the Fourteenth Amendment and the Sherman Antitrust Act (1890) to mean that "labor had no right to strike and that states could not pass laws regulating hours and wages." 25

Before the end of the nineteenth century the Supreme Court had seriously stymied the labor movement. The conservatism of the Court was clearly demonstrated in the case In Re Debs. This case climaxed an era of violence in labor-management relations. Strikes, labor's ultimate weapon, had been broken by force. The Homestead strike (1892) against the Carnegie Steel Company was broken up by 300 armed Pinkerton detectives. In Coeur d'Alene, Idaho striking miners protesting the drop in the price of silver, were beaten down by federal troops. The Panic of 1893 caused the greatest strike of them all. The Pullman Palace Car Company in Chicago drastically cut wages, but at the same time did not cut the salaries of

the officers of the company. It was rumored that the company was in excellent financial condition and had at that time a surplus of over four million dollars. The bitterness of the employees was promptly shown by the calling of a strike by the American Railway Union which had recently been formed by Eugene V. Debs. One hundred and fifty members of the union ceased work, affecting twenty-three railways lines in twenty-seven states. Violent fighting broke out in Chicago. Although the progressive governor of Illinois, John P. Altgeld, had not requested federal aid, President Grover Cleveland, claiming that the mails had been interrupted, intervened and sent in federal troops. He also requested a blanket injunction from the federal Circuit Court and received it.

The injunction prohibited Debs and his union members from interfering with the operation of the railroads in any way whatsoever. A week later Debs was arrested on the charge that he had violated the Sherman Antitrust Act, in that he had conspired to restrain trade. This charge was a new and "unforeseen interpretation of that law."26 After being charged with that violation, he was released on bail only to be arrested again on another charge--contempt of court for having violated the federal

26Ibid., p. 171.
injunction. Debs appealed to the Supreme Court for a writ of habeas corpus. The Court denied the writ.

In the light of this case, one can better understand Debs' angry articles in the *Appeal to Reason* aimed at the judicial system. He felt that the courts, especially the federal courts, cared little for the working class. The articles in the *Appeal* treat his disdain and distrust of the capitalistic judicial system, as well as his concern for the neglected Negro worker, and the child worker.

Debs' reaction to industrialism and laissez-faire capitalism, especially in reference to the judicial system, the Negro, and the child worker, was a radical response. The word radical is used to describe one who advocates drastic and widespread changes in the existing social and political structures. Debs advocated such widespread changes as the overthrow (by ballot) of capitalism, the confiscation of trusts and monopolies, the abolition of child labor for any sixteen and under, the recall of judges,27 and the granting of political and

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social equality to the Negro.\textsuperscript{28} Thus, Debs represents the radical response to industrialism and laissez-faire capitalism.

There were two other responses to the social, economic, and political milieu of this period: the conservative defense, and the Progressive response. The conservative defense found able advocates in men such as William Graham Sumner and Elihu Root. The Progressive response is perhaps best typified in the thinking of Theodore Roosevelt.

Political conservatism has its roots in the founding of the nation, but it was always held in tension by the liberal tradition. However, 1873 is an important date, for it marks, as Robert McCloskey believes, "the point in our intellectual history at which the democratic strain in the American tradition begins its subservience to political conservatism."\textsuperscript{29} This was the year in which an Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court, Stephen J. Field, filed a memorable

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{28}Eugene V. Debs, "The Negro in the Class Struggle," \textit{International Socialist Review} (November, 1903), 257-260.
\item \textsuperscript{29}Robert McCloskey, \textit{American Conservatism in the Age of Enterprise} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), p. 1.
\end{itemize}
dissenting minority opinion. In the slaughter-house cases he maintained that the right to profit from butchering livestock in Louisiana was an inalienable right which the state could not destroy. Field made use of Jeffersonian terms, but interpreted them differently. For example, he used the term "liberty," which Jefferson used to mean freedom of conscience or moral liberty, to denote the freedom of business enterprise. For him and others who followed him, economic liberty and democratic liberty were inextricably associated. Field made use of the reverence attached to democratic symbols "to harness the horsepower of democracy to the conservative cart."30

During these years it seemed imperative that a conservative rationale should be fashioned--fashioned by one who wore the mantle of a scholar, yet shared the simple materialism of his less-educated contemporaries. This need was filled mainly by William Graham Sumner (1840-1910), who was called to Yale in 1872, and remained there over thirty years teaching the social sciences. His books and essays were enormously influential.

30Ibid., p. 20.
Sumner was a conservative although he would have violently rejected the label, for the term suggested to him a sentimental attachment to the past. Nevertheless, he was a conservative, for his inquiry led him to support the right of men to acquire as much property as they wished and to dispose of it as they willed. He was opposed to the democratic concept of popular sovereignty, and his views led him to a glorification of the business leader.  

Great inequalities of wealth were also justified. Sumner felt monopolists were beneficial, and to hinder these captains of industry "would be like killing off our generals in war." A certain amount of poverty and misery (including child labor) must be endured so that society can enjoy the benefits which the rich industrialists will shower upon it later. Sumner also believed in the "inherent inferiority of the Negro."  

Sumner deplored any extension of the state's 

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33 Ibid., pp. 50-2.  
activity in economic matters. He was bold enough to write:

The truth is that the social order is fixed by laws of nature precisely analogous to those of the physical order. The most that man can do is by his ignorance and conceit to mar the operation of the social laws.35

Since all political contests were struggles of interests for more, the government should not interfere.36

Conservatism was further buttressed during the Progressive period by Elihu Root. Root was a corporation lawyer when he was selected by President William McKinley, in 1899, to become Secretary of War. As Secretary of War from 1899 to 1904, he established a sound colonial system and created the General Staff Corps. As Secretary of State from 1905 to 1909, he attempted to adjust diplomacy to the country's new role in world affairs. As a senator from New York from 1909 to 1915, overborne by "the onrush of a progressivism he could not accept, he waged a sincere, sane, rear-guard defense of conservatism."37 In 1915 he voluntarily retired from


36Ibid., p. 621.

the United States Senate. The New Republic, a liberal magazine, after paying him high tribute for his ability and usefulness, criticized him for failure to grasp the larger moral issues of the hour, concluding:

Elihu Root has failed to fire the imagination of his fellow citizens, not merely because he has lacked initiative but because he has lacked vision....No man can lead a people who has his back to the future.38

Root had been a continual spokesman for conservatism. In an age anxious for constitutional change, he opposed practically every alteration: direct election of senators, the initiative and the referendum, and, especially the recall of judges.39 The Socialist party was for all of these--no wonder Root fought socialism so zealously!

Root had an "inherent distrust of movements led by the people."40 He was rather tight-lipped on controversial nonpolitical issues. One can only surmise his thoughts on the activity of labor unions, the use of the injunction to curb strikes, child labor, and the Negro.

38 Ibid., p. 7.


41 Leopold, op. cit., p. 20.
His biographer, Richard Leopold, goes so far as to write: "Not only as a lawyer but also as a citizen, Root seemed inured to the social evils of the day."41 This statement itself says much about the man! This is not to suggest that Root was a greedy or a cruel man—he was not. But he was a standard-bearer for constitutional conservatism, and it is known that he had little concern to improve the lot of slum dwellers.42 And, as Secretary of State, he sanctioned Roosevelt's desire to "reduce the number of Negro appointments" in the South.43 Historian George Mowry calls him a racist, along with others of his day, who opposed the flood of "indigestible" aliens coming from south Europe.44 Imperialism abroad and "Jim Crowism" at home were justified with the same argument: the nonwhites are inferior and are the white man's burden.45 Thus, as conservative spokesmen, Sumner and Root shared certain basic attitudes of the judicial system and capitalism in general, the Negro, and child labor.

41Ibid. 42Ibid., pp. 70-83. 43Mowry, op. cit., p. 166. 44Ibid., pp. 92, 93. 45William E. Leuchtenberg, "Progressivism and Imperialism: The Progressive Movement and American Foreign Policy, 1896-1916," Mississippi Valley Historical Review XXXIX, 3 (December, 1952), 483-500.
The second response to industrialism, Progressivism, will be now examined. President Theodore Roosevelt will be discussed as an outstanding progressive of this period. Roosevelt is selected because he popularized progressive ideas and had the power to give them impetus.

The cultivated middle-class young men after the Civil War usually considered politics as dirty, and so when young Theodore Roosevelt told his friends about his desires to enter politics they were horrified. His desire to enter politics was not for "boodle." Searching for goals that were lofty, he was bent on some national service which the rich disdained.

Yet it is interesting to note how many groups he disdained: the rich, the laboring masses, the Negro, and certainly the reformers. Until his post-presidential years, when he underwent his tardy conversion to a more "radical" progressivism, most reform movements received his scorn. His writings are dotted with tart characterizations of "extremists," "muckrakers," and "the lunatic fringe." 46

With the assassination of McKinley in 1901, Roosevelt became president of the United States. For a while no one was quite sure about the policy of the new president, and no one was ever quite sure what Roosevelt would do. Yet there was a pattern in his life, says Eric Goldman, one that was "scattered and cross-stitched but a pattern nevertheless, and the pattern was that of patrician reform."47

As previously stated, Roosevelt had entered political life with a demand for clean government. As late as 1896, he was combating the whole idea of using governmental powers to aid lower-income groups. A few years later, friends noticed that he had developed a patrician's disdain for greedy businessmen, a noblesse oblige toward the poor, and "a patrician's fear of socialism or some other 'riotous, wicked' surge from the bottom groups."48 Goldman makes the observation:

Out of an urge to reform and a fear that some reformers would go too far, Theodore Roosevelt was emerging the first President of the United States who represented the progressive movement.49

As President, Roosevelt was certainly no paragon

48Ibid., p. 162. 49Ibid.
of reform. He was evasive about trusts, compromising on social legislation, and, at times, brutally militaristic. Yet he preached the progressive doctrine of executive leadership. Even though his leadership seemed to wobble, it did move slowly into the use of federal powers to promote clean, efficient government, and to come to the aid of the lower-income groups, and for tougher laws on child labor.

It should be stated that few leaders of the Progressive Era believed that modern society needed a major overhaul. Or, changing the analogy, as Henry May strikingly phrased the feeling of the progressives: "We must drive the moneychangers out of the temple; the temple itself is perfectly sound."

Roosevelt wanted to "drive the moneychangers out" and give the people a "square deal," so he dusted off the Sherman Antitrust Act and made use of it, at least, in a way that trust magnates became a little more cautious. He hammered away on the subject of conservation until he secured from Congress the power to withdraw about 234,000,000 acres from private exploitation. With the goading

of the President, Congress made railroad rebates illegal, strengthened the power of the Interstate Commerce Commission, and passed a pure food and drug law. During a national coal strike, Roosevelt cracked down on the operators and forced them to arbitrate. Certainly Roosevelt pulled the federal government away from the business-is-always-right position. Although Roosevelt was a strong executive leader, it must be admitted that industry wanted federal supervision, to use Ray Ginger's succinct phrase, as a "paper barricade against more effective manifestations of public displeasure."

Strangely enough, Roosevelt and other progressives remained mute about the plight of Negroes, although racial wars were causing more suffering than any other conflict in American society. The progressives attacked poverty, wasteful competition, child labor, and called for political and judicial reforms—but said very little about the economic, political, or social situation of Negroes. From the writings of this period it is evident that the Negro was not included in the progressive program. Progressivism in the South, C. Vann Woodward notes,

51 Mowry, op. cit., p. 124.
52 Ibid., pp. 123-142.
was "progressivism for white men only." This observation on the South was generally true of the whole movement, though some progressives did help in the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909.

Soon after Roosevelt had become President he invited Booker T. Washington to dinner at the White House. He felt an affinity with Washington because the latter advocated economic betterment for the Negro while deprecating the political and social roles of the Negro. Roosevelt agreed wholeheartedly. He was for the economic advancement of the Negro, but not for the social or political advancement.

Despite Roosevelt's wooing of "Lily-whites" during his first administration, many Negroes supported him in the 1904 campaign. Even Booker T. Washington urged the Negroes not to "lose their heads as a result of Roosevelt's policy."

Roosevelt ran into real difficulties with the

54 Logan, op. cit., p. 343.
55 Mowry, op. cit., p. 165.
56 Logan, op. cit., p. 386.
Negro electorate and Congress over the Brownsville affair. On the night of August 3, 1906, a dozen or so Negro soldiers from the 25th U.S. Infantry, angered by the treatment accorded them by the citizens of Brownsville, Texas went on a shooting spree, killing one citizen. During the official investigation no one of the 160 men in the three Negro companies would inform upon his fellows. On November 5, the day before the congressional election, the President discharged "without honor" every man in the three companies, observing that if no one admitted guilt all would have to pay the penalty. This inference of guilt by association was serious, because it meant the loss of all pensions for the men. Since the northern Negro vote was almost solidly Republican, it had important political implications. The President's order was met with a wave of approbation from the South and with a storm of criticism from the North. Protests rolled in from numerous northern cities urging Roosevelt to rescind the discharge. But Roosevelt remained adamant on the subject.

Congress was split over the issue, with the majority opposing the President. The miserable affair dragged on for two years. Many felt that Roosevelt remained adamant to propitiate the South. This is only
It is not a conjecture that Roosevelt believed in separation of the races—including Orientals—and by his silent administrative support, the "Jim Crow" system continued to flourish in the South. He felt that the Negro was intellectually inferior, and opposed the progressives and socialists who disagreed with him.

Though Roosevelt vigorously opposed the socialists, he once reluctantly admitted that there were "plenty of people who call themselves socialists, many of whose tenets are not only worthy of respect but represent real advances." It is at this radical end of the spectrum that one comes to understand Eugene Victor Debs.

To understand Debs one must recognize the power of events to change men. Eleven years before the great railroad strike of 1894, which established Eugene Debs as America's most militant and radical labor leader, Debs had written in the Firemen's Magazine: " Strikes are the..."
-34-

knives with which laborers cut their own throats."61
A few years after the American Railway Union strike
Debs was to sign his letters, "Yours for the Revolution;"
in the early 1880's he signed them, "Yours in Benevo-

lence, Sobriety, and Industry."62

Until the late 1880's, Debs firmly held the
interests of labor and capital to be harmonious. Even
the American Federation of Labor assumed a conflict of
interests between labor and capital! Debs thought that
only a small "fossilized class of railroad managers" did
not share his view of the ideal in labor relations.63
However, the strike on the Chicago, Burlington, and
Quincy in 1888 disturbed his ideal and jolted him into
a slow revision of his views. But as late as a few
months before the great Pullman strike of 1894, he
could denounce the goals of socialists as "castles of
moonshine" and charge that socialism would dwarf the
individual out of sight and create an absolutist state.64

After the Pullman strike and Debs' six months in

62Ibid.
63Ibid., p. 362.
64Ibid., p. 363.
the Woodstock jail, he emerged as a socialist. The strike proved to the workers and to Debs that the constitutional provisions of the Fourteenth Amendment designed to protect the individual were being "turned by judicial decisions into instruments whereby he became the more completely enslaved to the big corporation."65

The year 1894 was an ominous one for laborers and farmers, those at the top of the economic ladder, and those filled with bitterness at the bottom. Goldman aptly calls 1894 the "année terrible."66

Two years after the "terrible year," Debs gave up hope that either of the old parties would do anything for the common people and turned his attention toward the organization of "The Brotherhood of the Cooperative Commonwealth." The Brotherhood was composed of the remaining skeleton of the American Railway Union convention which met in Chicago in June, 1897. The ARU dissolved and the Social Democracy of America was founded with a major emphasis on colonization, although a political platform was adopted upon the urging of Debs and


66Goldman, op. cit., p. 53.
others. Those for colonization hoped that a western territory could be settled and made into a model of socialism for the nation.

The action of the convention brought forth criticism from both radicals and conservatives in the party. One socialist attorney from New York got at the core of the criticisms when he said:

People cannot be kept enthusiastic in 44 states over the prospect of establishing a model commonwealth in the 45th on easy monthly payments.67

Debs worked hard for the colonization plan for a year and could raise only twenty-five hundred dollars. He found himself in sympathy with those who criticized colonization.68

When the second convention of the Social Democracy met in June, 1898, a deep split existed around the question of colonization. When the convention voted to continue the colonization plan, the political action group bolted, and founded the Social Democratic party. With no hesitation, Debs announced his support of the


68The story of one such colonization plan is told by Wilbur S. Shepperson, Retreat to Nevada (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1966).
The new party platform advocated the public ownership of all monopolies, trusts, railroads, water and gas, telegraph, and minerals. The government was to be controlled by all, irrespective of sex. There were planks calling for the reduction of hours for the laborer, and accident and unemployment and old age pensions. They also adopted a plank urging the adoption of the initiative, referendum and the recall. The Social Democrats won a few local and state offices in 1898 in Wisconsin, Indiana, and Illinois.

The victories in these states helped the party to grow. The party then benefited from the dogmatism of Daniel DeLeon (1852-1914); a large faction of the Socialist Labor party--called "Kangaroos"--revolted against DeLeon and appeared at the Social Democratic convention in 1900 and proposed cooperation and merger. Debs received the nomination and polled 96,878 votes. The two groups finally merged (including other small

70Ibid., p. 208.
71Ginger, op. cit., p. 212.
groups) in Indianapolis in July, 1901 as the Socialist party. Debs ran for president on the Socialist party ticket through 1920, except 1916. And from the beginning the Socialist party was firmly committed to the ballot box to attain its objective, the cooperative commonwealth. And the cooperative commonwealth would not involve a redistribution of all economic goods, but a cooperative ownership of all the means of production.

The Socialist party, and Debs in particular, attacked the capitalistic system on the issue of child labor. Child labor was the heinous phase of grasping capitalism. And when critics proclaimed that socialism would destroy the home, Debs retorted: "No, we are not going to destroy the home, but we are going to make the home possible for all, for the first time in history." Debs felt deeply about the matter of child labor. In 1918 Debs was scathing the Supreme Court on its attitude toward child labor:

Why, the other day, by a vote of five to four, they declared the child labor law


73 Debs: His Life, Writings and Speeches (Girard, Kansas: The Appeal to Reason, 1908), p. 483.
unconstitutional... and this in our so-called Democracy, so that we may continue to grind the flesh and blood and bones of puny little children into profits for the junkers of Wall Street.\footnote{Speech at Canton, Ohio, June 16, 1918. \textit{Ginger, op. cit.}, p. 357.}

Debs looked upon the federal courts as the bulwarks against change. The courts had taken away the political rights of Negroes, blocked the progress of labor unions, and even now winked at the suffering toils of children. Debs' utter contempt for the capitalistic judicial system will be discussed later.

The laboring class, as Debs saw it, permitted this injustice and defeated its own purposes by forming craft or trade unions. It would be far better to have all laboring men in one big union. This is what he had in mind when he organized the American Railway Union in 1893. And at the first convention of the ARU in 1893, Debs asked the delegates to admit Negro workers. He failed but thereafter he never missed an opportunity in his union organizing career to plead for equality in the unions.\footnote{Eugene V. Debs, \textit{"The Negro Question," American Labor Journal} (July 9, 1903), 7.}

The organization of the Industrial Workers of
the World in 1905 excited Debs because of its proposed interest in organizing the unorganized and becoming a socialist-oriented center for the existing industrial unions. At its formation, both Debs and William Haywood urged the IWW to accept the Negro. But few locals were organized, the already organized industrial unions were reluctant to join the IWW, and the locals that did affiliate spurned the Negro. For these reasons, plus the growing tendency on the part of the IWW to reject political action and to refuse to sign time contracts when victories were won, Debs quietly dropped his membership around 1908.77

Debs' interest in the Negro never waned. There are three primary articles that Debs wrote concerning the Negro, of which the one entitled, "The Negro Question," has already been noted. The other two articles are: "The Negro in the Class Struggle,"78 and "The Negro and his Nemesis."79 These articles will be

77 Weinstein, op. cit., p. 33.
treated fully in a later chapter. However, it is necessary to say that one cannot read the articles without realizing that Debs believed in full economic, political, and social equality for the Negro.

Debs was confident that when socialism finally crushed capitalism underfoot it would solve such problems as race wars, child labor, and rectify judicial injustice. And of its eventual triumph Debs was convinced, and heartily agreed with the socialist editor of the weekly Appeal to Reason, Julius A. Wayland, when the latter wrote in 1902:

Socialism is coming. It's coming like a prairie fire and nothing can stop it... the next few years will give this nation to the Socialist Party. 80

This socialist paper will be examined in the next chapter, for it plays an important role in the life of Eugene Debs.

80 Julius A. Wayland, editor, Appeal to Reason (Girard, Kansas), May 3, 1902, p. 1.
The future editor of the *Appeal to Reason*, Julius Augustus Wayland, was a "Hoosier," born in Versailles, Indiana in 1854. His youth was marked by extreme poverty. He recalled one winter of comparative luxury when the family had a pig, some meal, and a barrel of potatoes, and his mother saying they would not starve that winter.\(^1\) Wayland had only two years of formal education, but he was eager to learn, and he became interested early in the printing business. He started a small printing shop when he was nineteen, but gave up the business in 1877 to go West with a recently acquired wife. They settled in Harrisonville, Missouri where his wife had relatives.

He soon became editor of the *Cass News*, a county Republican paper. His Republican views were in conflict with the predominantly Democrat area. The conflict increased when President Rutherford B. Hayes rewarded Wayland for his services to the party with a

postmastership, a job he did not want, and the young publisher earned from the Democrats the opprobrious sobriquet of "carpet-bagger."2

As the social ostracism mounted, Wayland decided to return to Indiana. But once in Indiana he was not satisfied, so he and the family, in 1882, moved to Colorado. It was here that Wayland came under socialist influence, especially the missionary efforts of a William Bradford who often talked to him and supplied him with a number of Fabian tracts. Fabian socialism came from England where the majority of socialists had disagreed with the Marxist emphasis on violent revolution and "insisted that the achievement of the socialist society could come only from peaceful, gradual, democratic tactics."3 Fabian socialists emphasized "cooperation rather than conflict" between the classes.4

Wayland labored tirelessly in the Populist campaign of 1892, becoming an editorial writer for the


4Ibid., p. 59.
Populist Coming Crisis. Through his "One Hoss Printing Shop," which he owned and operated, he distributed thousands of Populist leaflets. During the campaign the power of propaganda greatly impressed him and he mulled over the idea of founding a paper to proclaim the socialist gospel to the man in the street. The Populists were triumphant in the state of Colorado, winning most of the significant offices. And Wayland played an important part in promoting what Leon Fuller calls "Colorado's Revolt Against Capitalism." 5

After the election of 1892 Wayland sold all his business interests and, he and his family, again returned to Indiana, settling in Greensburg. He set up a printing operation and on August 29, 1893 he started publishing the Coming Nation. The paper was a hybrid of Populism and socialism. He supported the Populist clamor for increased silver coinage and the classic socialist demand for government ownership of the means of production and distribution. 6

The Coming Nation under his nurturing care

5Leon W. Fuller, "Colorado's Revolt Against Capitalism," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, Vol. XXI, No. 3 (December, 1934), 343-360.

6Quint, op. cit., p. 591.
reached a circulation of 50,000 in little more than a year, and there was a financial surplus. He was concerned about the surplus and asked the advice of his readers. The majority favored organizing a colony. Wayland went along with the idea, for he was anxious to leave Greensburg because his family was ostracized by the community. Wayland purchased 2,000 acres in Tennessee, and with 125 socialist settlers, Ruskin village was founded near Tennessee City. There were certain disadvantages connected with the location of the new commonwealth. There was no water nearer than half a mile. The first winter was very trying for the colonists; many deserted, being "thoroughly convinced" that socialism was "better in the books than in Tennessee." Dissension and quarreling made matters worse. The crescendo increased until the Wayland family finally decided to get out, leaving an investment of $100,000 behind, including the presses and the Coming Nation. Wayland was finished with any and all Utopian ventures—and he paid highly for the lesson!

7Wayland, op. cit., p. 28.
8Kansas City Star, July 4, 1897.
Poorer but still by no means penurious, Wayland started afresh in Missouri, this time in Kansas City. He thought about starting another socialist paper, calling it Wayland's Weekly. But one of his friends, T. E. Palmer, suggested the name, *Appeal to Reason*, and an old German socialist clinched the matter by saying, "Give it a name that in time will be better known than the man who made it!" The first issue of the *Appeal to Reason* came off the presses on August 31, 1895.

The early months of its existence were precarious. It was not the instantaneous money-maker that the *Coming Nation* had been. In fact, Wayland was losing on each issue as the circulation hovered around 11,000. Wayland decided to relocate where costs would be lower, and so he moved to Girard, Kansas, a small town in southeastern Kansas.

Almost immediately the paper had another difficulty: the Spanish-American War. The paper almost went under as circulation tumbled. The War had midwestern support and Wayland vigorously opposed it. Wayland himself termed the difficulty of keeping the paper going as "the gloomiest period of his life." But after the War

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10 Ibid.  
11 Ibid.
the circulation of the paper began to increase and continued to increase until it was "by all odds the greatest single unofficial organ of the movement."12

The Appeal, as most people referred to it, had a homespun quality about it. Its folksy approach and epigrams were consumed by thousands of avid readers. The political cartoons of Ryan Walker which revealed the "folly" of capitalism and the "wisdom" of socialism were easily understood. Hundreds of "Jimmie Higgenses," as the rank and file socialists were called, helped sell subscriptions to the Appeal. Since the Appeal sold for only twenty-five cents a year, when sent as a bundle to one address, it could and did get into the poorest of homes with its emotional brand of socialism. "The Appeal's purpose," writes David Shannon, "was to introduce people to Socialism."13 The paper certainly fulfilled its mission for scores of people were introduced to socialism through the Appeal.

There is an interesting anecdote in connection with the Appeal that has a humorous element and also  

12Ibid.

reveals something about the owner, J. A. Wayland. On one occasion the employees of the paper organized and went on strike, much to the amusement of capitalists. But Wayland shrewdly ended the walkout by granting a 47-hour week and higher wages, and adding such unheard-of benefits as a two-week paid vacation, life insurance and pensions! The union negotiators quickly went back to work and Eugene Debs, Wayland's advisor at the time, commented that "the Revolution probably has been advanced by thirty minutes!" 14

At the close of 1900, the paid subscribers numbered 141,000. Wayland had backed Eugene Debs on the Social Democratic party ticket for president. Socialism could be brought about in the United States only by vigorous political action, Wayland believed. While agreeing on the necessity of educating the American people in the principles of socialism--he held he was doing this himself--he was impatient with the "permeation" tactics advised by such Fabian socialists as Edward Bellamy and the Rev. William D. P. Bliss, the Christian socialist organizer. Wayland contended that socialist gains at the polls accomplished infinitely

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more than the slow procedure of propaganda and education. He never forgot how Populism swept all before it in Colorado, and socialists could do the same.

Wayland was an incurable optimist when it came to the future of socialism. He believed fervently in its ultimate triumph and worked ardently for its coming victory. George Brewer wrote glowingly of Wayland as "the greatest and most successful personal propagandist the Socialist movement of America has ever had."\(^\text{15}\)

Most people, however, were not awed by Wayland and the *Appeal to Reason*. Many of the townspeople of Girard sarcastically referred to the paper as "the Squeal of Treason!"\(^\text{16}\) But the vitriolic epithet was not local; it included "ardent conservatives" all over the country.\(^\text{17}\)

But the *Appeal* had many strong supporters too. One of these was Eugene Debs, whom Sinclair Lewis once called the "John the Baptist of American socialism."\(^\text{18}\)


\(^\text{16}\)Shannon, *op. cit.*, p. 28. \(^\text{17}\)Ibid.

Debs had an affinity with Wayland for both of them had come the same route to socialism, not "through Marx, but via utopianism and dizzy cooperative-colony schemes," writes Daniel Bell.19 Debs had written an article for the Appeal as early as October 26, 1895 on "Money Power Exerts Barbaric Sway," and several years later an article entitled "The Coming Republic."20

Wherever Debs went, he found the farmers and workingmen delighted by the epigrams and rambling anecdotes of the four-page weekly. From Xenia, Ohio, June 6, 1899 Debs wrote a letter to Wayland about the Appeal:

Its friendly face appears everywhere. It is literally honeycombing capitalism. Wherever the Appeal is at work, and that seems everywhere, socialism has at least a nucleus and the light is spreading.... More power to the Appeal.21

Occasionally during the first six years of the twentieth century, Debs contributed articles to the Appeal. Then in the latter months of 1906, Debs began to feel that the Appeal offered a real opportunity to further the cause of socialism. He wanted to be a part

19Ibid.


of this cause. Early in January, 1907 he wrote to Julius A. Wayland about his intention to come to Girard, Kansas. Several weeks later he arrived in Girard and talked with Wayland, owner of the Appeal, and its editor, Fred D. Warren. Warren, known among the socialists as "the Fighting Editor," was receptive to the idea of Debs working on the Appeal. Debs was hired at a salary of a hundred dollars a week as a contributing editor.

Thus began one of the happiest partnerships in the history of the radical movement. Wayland had masterfully combined sound business management of the paper with its socialist purpose. When Wayland stepped aside in 1904, Warren perfected these practices. By the time Debs joined the staff, the Appeal employed more than a hundred men and women. Its mailing costs and payroll each amounted to more than twelve hundred dollars each week. The paper furnished Debs with an extensive audience. And the Appeal would certainly benefit from Debs' weekly articles and lectures in its behalf.

The writings of Debs are not easy to analyze because of the nature of the man and the content of the articles. Debs was not a systematic thinker; he was a

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22 Ibid., p. 249.
propagandist. He attacked capitalism and used every possible means to expose its evils; no one evil, however, is discussed fully. The writer will expand in the following chapters on what Debs said concerning the judicial system, the Negro issue, and child labor.

Again, it must be stressed that the articles by Debs are basically propaganda. His verbal paint brush colored issues in bold white and black. Socialism was always white! And what one reporter said of his speaking may appropriately be applied to his writings: "Debs talks in epigrams. It is as though he were gathering himself each time to hurl a brick."23

As previously mentioned, Debs worked for the Appeal until September, 1913. Doubtless, the Appeal lost much of its appeal for Debs after the death of Wayland. Wayland was to appear in court at Fort Scott, Kansas to answer the charge of sending defamatory material through the mail. He had visited the federal prison at Leavenworth, Kansas, and was appalled by the conditions, especially the treatment of prisoners. After returning to Girard, he immediately wrote an

editorial in the *Appeal* condemning the conditions at Leavenworth. So acrimonious were his remarks that a court order was immediately forthcoming demanding he appear before the federal court. Also, a false rumor was circulating that Wayland had taken a young girl employee to Joplin, Missouri for immoral purposes. Wayland's wife had died some months previous, leaving him despondent. The ugly rumor, the government charge, and the loneliness he felt after his wife's death—together they were too much—and so on Sunday evening, November 10, 1912, leaving a brief note in his copy of Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, he shot himself with a 32-caliber revolver. The note read: "The struggle under the capitalist system isn't worth the effort. Let it pass."24

The *New York Times* carried the story of his suicide and played up the theme that "he had become a millionaire through the success of the *Appeal*" and claimed that "he owned the greater part of Amarillo, Texas."25 The *Times* further emphasized that he was in "disfavor with the bulk of his party," and had "exploited

24Ibid., p. 313.

the cause for his personal interest."26

The Indianapolis News carried his suicide on the front page but omitted the elements of wealth and the insinuation of disfavor with the party which the New York Times had stressed.27 The News had another article stating Wayland's suicide "Will Not Stop Prosecution."28 However, prosecution was stopped. And so with the death of Wayland, one of the most colorful editors on the American scene disappeared. Debs stayed with the paper, publishing occasional articles, until his final resignation in September, 1913.

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26 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
CHAPTER III

DEBS' ATTACKS UPON THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM

This chapter will examine Debs' attitude toward the judicial system as reflected in the Appeal to Reason. Because his articles come in a flood-fashion when they do come, the writer will categorize them around the three significant court cases, namely, the Moyer-Haywood-Pettibone case (1906, 1907), the indictment of Fred Warren (1908, 1910), and the McNamaras' Case (1910, 1911). In the following cases one will notice Debs' suspicion and contempt for the judicial system.

The Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone Case

The rich ore taken from the Coeur d'Alene mines in Idaho stood in sharp contrast to the poor plight of the miners. When the workers could stand the conditions no longer, a general strike was called in 1904 by the Western Federation of Miners. At the beginning of the strike, Frank Steuenberg was Governor of the state. He was elected as a trade-unionist. He was a printer who carried a union card, and consequently received the
union vote.

When the strike came he declared martial law and called in state troops. The strikers viewed him as a betrayer; one who had received the votes of the union members and then deserted them and joined the enemy when the strikers were fighting for their existence. Governor Steuenberg's term expired while the strike was on; he left Boise, the capital, and went back to his home in Caldwell, a small town about thirty miles from Boise.

On the evening of December 30, 1905 the town of Caldwell was startled by a loud explosion. The residents fleeing from their homes discovered that a bomb had been placed at the gate of the former governor and he lay dead. An investigation was begun immediately. Within a few days, a man by the name of Harry Orchard was arrested. He had stayed a few days in Caldwell at the hotel, but had no apparent business in town. When he was arrested his valise contained dynamite and wire. He was traced back to Denver, Colorado, and as the coils of evidence tightened around Orchard, he made a confession. He claimed that Charles Moyer and William D. Haywood had given him the money to come to Idaho and kill Steuenberg, and that George Pettibone was connected
with the plot. Moyer was the president of the Western Federation of Miners and Haywood was acting secretary. Pettibone had been once active in the union in the Coeur d'Alene district. He now ran a store in Denver but continued his enthusiastic support of the union cause. All three were in Denver at the time of the bombing.

On Thursday, February 15, 1906 Idaho police got off the train in Denver, but agreed with Colorado officers not to serve the warrants until Saturday evening. The warrants were served late Saturday evening and in the early hours of Sunday morning the three men were put on a private coach headed for Idaho. They received neither legal counsel nor were they permitted to talk with friends before being swiftly transported to the penitentiary in Idaho!

Eugene Debs belched fire and smoke over the event. He wrote such a stricture concerning the situation to the Appeal to Reason that even Wayland and Warren hesitated to publish the article. Finally, they resolved to face whatever consequences would result and printed it. The fist-pounding article was entitled,

"Arouse, Ye Slaves!" and, in part, the author exploded:

The latest and boldest stroke of the plutocracy, but for the blindness of the people, would have startled the nation. .....

Labor leaders that cringe before the plutocracy and do its bidding are apotheosized; those that refuse must be foully murdered.

If they attempt to murder Moyer, Haywood and their brothers, a million revolutionists, at least, will meet them with guns.

If the plutocrats begin the program, we will end it.2

The labor movement, and especially the socialists, rallied to the cause of the imprisoned men. Clarence Darrow and his associates in Chicago were called in to defend Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone. A kidnapping charge was brought against the arresting sheriff. The supreme court of Idaho held that the defendants were not kidnapped. Darrow appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States and waited patiently for its decision.3

If Darrow was willing to bide his time until the Supreme Court rendered its verdict, Debs certainly was not. On April 28, 1906 the Appeal carried Debs' defiant message:

There is no evidence against the leaders of the Western Federation of Miners who are now locked up in the prison pens of Idaho. To the

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rescue, ye toiling millions! Your leaders have been ambushed by the enemy, and their cry should arouse you like a trumpet blast on the field of war.

Sound the alarm! To the rescue! Arouse, ye sleeping hosts, the working class must write the second chapter and it shall not end in tragedy. The issue is as clear as the light at noontide. The life of the labor movement is at stake.⁴

Debs stumped around the country trying to arouse the working class to its obligation to rescue the labor leaders in Idaho. Emotionally enervated because of the death of his mother in the spring of 1906 and his father's death in the fall, Debs had to force himself on.⁵ The anguish promoted by the tragedies in his family and the furious activity for Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone aggravated a number of bodily ills. Recurrent attacks of rheumatism forced him back to Terre Haute. Because of the number of speeches given daily he had to see a throat specialist in Cincinnati, Ohio.

While Debs was recuperating, the Supreme Court of the United States was hearing the case and planning to render its verdict. On December 3, 1906 the Supreme Court announced its decision in the Moyer, Haywood, and


⁵Ginger, op. cit., p. 248.
Pettibone case. The majority opinion was read by Associate Justice John Marshall Harlan. In part, he announced:

Looking, first, at what was alleged to have occurred in the state of Colorado touching the arrest of the petitioner and his deportation from that state, we do not perceive that anything done there, however hastily and inconsiderately done, can be adjudged to be violation of the Constitution or laws of the United States.  

One Associate Justice dissented. Judge Joseph McKenna vigorously disagreed with his colleagues, saying:

In the case at bar, the states, through their officers, are the offenders. They, by an illegal exertion of power, deprived the accused of a constitutional right. Kidnapping is a crime, pure and simple. But how is it when the law becomes the kidnapper? When the officers of the law, using its forms, and exerting its power, become abductors? This is not a distinction without a difference.

The majority opinion signified that the case would now be tried in Boise, Idaho before a jury. Labor leaders were shocked at the Supreme Court's decision. Samuel Gompers of the AFL "denounced the outrage against constitutional rights" but he made no recommendations at the convention at the end of the year for "financial aid

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7 Ibid., p. 159.
or a campaign to secure justice for the victims of the frame-up." 8

While recovering from his illness, Debs wrote an article entitled, "Show Your Hand," and sent it to the Appeal. 9 In the article he criticized the opinion of the Supreme Court of the United States, saying its decision is "the blackest chapter" of that tribunal because it "legalizes kidnapping" and leaves the working-man without hope, for he has "no rights the capitalist is bound to respect." 10 The working class must show its hand with a "monster demonstration" opposing what is taking place in Idaho. 11

The editor of the Appeal, Fred D. Warren, wanted to dramatize the injustice of the Supreme Court's decision. Warren asked his readers if the Court would feel the same way if the person kidnapped was a capitalist? At that time there had been a political feud between the incumbent Governor of Kentucky, William Taylor, and the aspirant for the office. The aspirant was mysteriously killed and the state wanted to question

9Appeal to Reason, January 5, 1907, p. 1.
10Ibid. 11Ibid.
Taylor, but he fled to Indiana, whereupon the Governor of Indiana refused to extradite him to the authorities of Kentucky. Warren offered a thousand dollars in gold to anyone who would kidnap Taylor and return him to the authorities in Kentucky. Warren stated that he was not interested in the Kentucky feud, but wondered if the Supreme Court would hold to its recent decision if the person kidnapped were a Republican and a capitalist. \(^{12}\) This event had legal consequences for Warren which will be developed later, but one sees Warren's line of reasoning and his concern for his comrades in Idaho.

Earlier the *Appeal* had mentioned that Debs would soon be "on deck" to help put out a special edition. \(^{13}\) By the last of January, 1907 the *Appeal* carried on the front page in big bold print, Debs' flashing message:

*We Must Fight*

The Supreme Court and the president of the United States have left us no other alternative. We have got to stand up like men or crawl on our bellies like cravens. The class struggle is clearly reflected in the Supreme Court decision....All the powers

\(^{12}\) *Appeal to Reason*, January 12, 1907, p. 1.

\(^{13}\) *Appeal to Reason*, January 19, 1907, p. 1.
of capitalism, from Standard Oil down, are against Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone.

It is not a case of punishing crime that law may be vindicated, but the violation of law that crime may be committed...all of us are in the same boat, and we must go to port or go to the bottom together.14

Debs proclaimed what must be done: protest meetings should be held and reports of the meetings sent to the President of the United States and to Congress; Justice McKenna's dissenting opinion should be circulated; and an attempt made to get a jury of workingmen to judge the defendants.15

The first defendant to be tried would be William D. Haywood. The trial was to begin in March, 1907, but it was postponed. Debs wrote that his lawyers have urged a speedy trial since the beginning, but the delay of one year "is due to capitalist combines."16 But the delay was utilized to awaken the working class to the crisis.

The Appeal attempted to awaken the working class by various means. One of these, which appeared in the February 16 edition of the paper, was a picture of

14Appeal to Reason, January 26, 1907, p. 1.
15Ibid.
16Appeal to Reason, February 9, 1907, p. 1.
Haywood's six-year old daughter with a poem entitled "Will Papa Die?" One refrain expresses the essence of the poem:

O, ye lads of fair Columbia  
Listen to the cry,  
Hear that fair-faced babe of Haywood's  
Ask, "Will Papa Die?"17

The question rang even louder the next day when the special "Kidnapped Edition" came out.18 By the middle of March Debs could write that Congress would investigate the kidnapping.19

Debs took special delight in calling to the attention of the readers of the Appeal that William Jennings Bryan, in his newspaper The Commoner, was reticent about the case and had taken no definite stand himself. "Let it be remembered," Debs pungently wrote, 
"that he whose lips are sealed while labor is being murdered can never again pose as the friend of toil."20

The trial date was set for May 9, 1907. Debs wrote in mid-April that the Appeal staff and he would be going to Boise, Idaho to report the trial.21 Strangely

17 *Appeal to Reason*, February 16, 1907, p. 1.  
18 *Appeal to Reason*, February 17, 1907.  
enough Debs never went to Idaho because the chief defense attorney, Clarence Darrow, asked him not to come. The reason for this request still remains unclear, although Haywood surmised years later that Darrow just wanted the limelight himself.\footnote{William D. Haywood, \textit{Bill Haywood's Book} (New York: International Publishers, 1929), p. 207.} It is quite possible that Darrow feared that Debs' presence would have further prejudiced the jury.

One known fact is that Darrow was quite worried about the trial. Even the defendants sensed it, and George Pettibone jokingly said that he knew it would be hard on Darrow to lose this great case, but added: "You know its us fellows that have to be hanged!"\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 206.}

Debs, too, was concerned but felt that ultimately the defendants would be vindicated. He hailed Haywood as "the Lincoln of labor," and believed the other defendants were "loyal sons of destiny" who had "fought a good fight" and that they would never retreat.\footnote{\textit{Appeal to Reason}, May 18, 1907, p. 1.}

Debs and Darrow had reason to be worried. In
a speech, President Theodore Roosevelt likened certain industrialists to "the so-called labor leader who clamorously strives to excite a foul class feeling on behalf of some other leader who is implicated in murder." Debs quoted Roosevelt as saying he was for "law and order," and quickly challenged the President to prove it by denouncing the kidnapping act. But to the contrary, on the eve of the trial, Roosevelt described a railroad owner as "at least as undesirable a citizen as Debs, or Moyer, or Haywood." Debs accused the President of trying to lynch the two miners mentioned. The President denied the implication, but Debs charged the President with "lying." Roosevelt then referred to the Appeal to Reason as a "vituperative organ of pornography, anarchy and bloodshed."

The real concern of Debs was over the apathetic attitude of the working class toward the trial. On June 8, 1907 he wrote an article entitled "The Trial and Its

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27Selvin, op. cit., p. 160.
28Ibid.
29Ibid.
Meaning," in which he stated:

Perhaps the most unfortunate thing about the trial now in progress in Idaho from the working class point of view, is that so few understand its true meaning. ... It is one of the strange freaks of history that its makers are not to be understood by their contemporaries, but that they, especially the greatest among them, must die ignominiously and wait for the succeeding generations to interpret their works and do them justice. 30

Debs called the working class to be vigilant in this important hour. He kept hammering away at this theme up until the end of the trial. The very day Darrow was giving the summary and defense of Haywood, Debs' article appeared in the Appeal saying:

Be Ye Vigilant

The trial which has attracted the attention of all the civilized world is now drawing to a close. It is universally admitted among the people of fair-mind that the prosecution has utterly and wretchedly failed. That there has been no evidence introduced to sustain the charge against the defendants. That Orchard, the chief prosecuting witness, is serving in the role as informer and that his story is fabricated for the one purpose of criminating the leaders of the Western Federation and dealing a death-blow to that powerful organization. 31

Yet, Debs warned his readers, there is a possibility that

30Appeal to Reason, June 8, 1907, p. 1.

the jury may bring in a verdict of "guilty." "Giant corporations" are fighting these men and a "not guilty" would be a terrific blow to them, so "be ye vigilant."32

Saturday, July 27, had been an unusually long one for Clarence Darrow. He had given a long defense and as night came he could not sleep. He walked the streets, and everywhere "little knots of men," wrote Darrow, "were standing at the corners discussing the case and prophesying what the jury would do."33

The jury debated and voted all night. On Sunday morning at eight o'clock the judge arrived, the lawyers were in their places, the courtroom was packed, and the people were crowding into the courthouse yard. The verdict was handed to the clerk and he read it slowly: "Not Guilty!" The crowds rushed out and the streets were swarming with people.

Darrow went over to the jail to tell the defendants. Haywood and Pettibone were jubilant. Charles Moyer was shaving; he only said a word or two and kept on shaving. He was "as calm and cool as a glacier."34

The next edition of the Appeal carried Darrow's

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32Ibid.
33Darrow, op. cit., p. 154. 34Ibid., p. 155.
defense, and superimposed on it in red ink, the words:

"Not Guilty." Darrow had passionately stated:

I don't plead for Haywood. Don't think for a moment that if you kill Haywood you will kill the labor movement of the world or the hopes and aspirations of the poor. Haywood can die, if die he must. But I plead for the poor, and the weak, and the weary.

Millions of men and women and children stand here with me tonight stretching out their hands and imploring God to guide your judgment and imploring you to save Haywood.

The jury saved Haywood.

Six months later George Pettibone was acquitted, and the next day, January 5, 1908 the case against Charles Moyer was dropped for lack of corroborating evidence, the Washington Post reported. The confessed murderer of former governor Frank Steunenberg, Harry Orchard, was later sentenced to be hanged. However, the State Board of Pardons commuted his sentence to life imprisonment, even though Orchard had told his attorney that "he hoped efforts to save him from the gallows would fail." Thus an unusual legal case came to a

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35 Appeal to Reason, August 3, 1907, p. 1.
36 Ibid.
37 The Washington Post, January 5, 1908, p. 3.
close. And certainly the Appeal to Reason and Debs' editorials played a significant role in creating interest in and sympathy for the defendants.

The Fred D. Warren Case

In January, 1907 the United States government charged the Appeal to Reason with sending "scurrilous, defamatory, and threatening" material through the mails. The January 5th and 12th issues of the Appeal had carried two articles that the Postal authorities found offensive. They were written at the height of the defense campaign for Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone. The first article was written by Debs in which he contended that the Supreme Court's refusal to grant habeas corpus in the Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone case was "the blackest chapter in the history of that tribunal," and left the workingman with "no right the capitalist is bound to respect."40

The second article was written a week later by editor Fred Warren who went a step further. A former governor of Kentucky, William Taylor, was wanted in his

39Ginger, op. cit., p. 290.

40Appeal to Reason, January 5, 1907, p. 1.
native state in connection with the murder of a political rival. Taylor had fled to Indiana where the governor refused to extradite him. As previously mentioned, editor Warren saw the situation analogous to the case in Idaho. If the Supreme Court seemed unusually calm in the kidnapping of the union leaders, would their reaction be as unruffled if the person kidnapped was a capitalist and a republican politician? Warren offered in the article a $1000 reward to anybody who would seize former governor Taylor and turn him over to the Kentucky authorities.\(^4\)

The case against Warren was postponed for two years. The federal government asked and received four continuances from the federal court in Ft. Scott, Kansas. In March, 1908 Debs wrote a vehement article claiming the federal government wanted to "intimidate" and "bankrupt" the Appeal.\(^4\)  "The trial," wrote Debs, "which opens May [proved to be May 4, 1909] in Ft. Scott will be the trial of the radical press of the United States."\(^4\) Debs further

\(^4\)Appeal to Reason, January 12, 1907, p. 1.
\(^4\)Appeal to Reason, March 28, 1908, p. 1.
\(^4\)Ibid.
The attack on Warren was conceived in revenge. It is an attack on labor and the reason for it is plain enough. Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone escaped the gallows. 44

A little over a month later, Debs wrote that "Fred Warren is a thorn in the capitalist flesh, a fly in the capitalist ointment, and must be removed." 45 It was during this period, from 1908 through 1911, that Debs was "in editorial charge" of the Appeal. 46

Fred Warren's case finally came to court on May 4, 1909. Attorney Clarence Darrow was on hand to defend Warren, and the small courtroom was packed with friends and foes. The case took only two days, with the jury taking a day to decide—that Warren was guilty. The Appeal claimed Warren was "convicted by a packed jury." 47 Warren was sentenced in July. The Appeal quoted Judge John Pollock: "I was in doubt when this matter was first brought to my attention. I am still in doubt whether there has been a violation of the law." 48

44Ibid.
45Appeal to Reason, May 2, 1908, p. 1.
Judge Pollock's doubts didn't keep him from sentencing Warren to "pay a fine of $1500 and serve six months in the Ft. Scott jail." Attorney Darrow had pleaded that "The mailing of reward cards [on fugitives] has received the sanction of every postoffice authority and every district attorney until they wanted Fred Warren." Darrow immediately appealed the case to a higher court.

Debs decided to take the case to the people as quickly as possible. A lecture tour was arranged under the auspices of the Appeal. The local sponsor in each city agreed to sell a thousand tickets at twenty-five cents each, of which fifteen cents went to the Appeal and each purchaser of a ticket received a forty-week subscription to the socialist weekly. Thus every speech by Debs would gain a thousand readers for the Appeal.

The tour began in November at Fred Warren's home town of Rich Hill, Missouri. Debs was deeply convinced that there was no basis for the indictment and attempted to make the people of Rich Hill understand the greatness of their local son.

As the tour went on, Debs strictures against the
courts increased. One epigram he constantly reiterated: "Under capitalist misrule the judicial nets are so adjusted as to catch minnows and let whales slip through."52

Large crowds in the midwest turned out to hear Debs lambast the courts and speak in favor of the people's right "to recall" the judges.53 The circulation of the Appeal, which was 368,791 when the tour began, averaged more than five hundred thousand for the year.54

Fred Warren gained many supporters for his cause. The most outstanding person to come to his support was Miss Helen Keller. Miss Keller wrote the Appeal a letter which appeared on the front page. In part, it read:

Dear Appeal: I enclose a check to be used for subscriptions to the Appeal to Reason. I am prompted to this by indignation at the unrighteous conviction of the editor, Mr. Fred Warren.

I believe that the conviction is unrighteous, although I have arrived at this conclusion with some hesitancy... I have come not only to doubt the divine impartiality ascribed to our judiciary but also to question whether our judges are conspicuous for simple good sense and fair dealing.55

52Appeal to Reason, January 1, 1910, p. 1.

53Ibid.; also Appeal to Reason, Aug. 8, 1908, p. 4. Debs advocated the recall of judges as early as 1897.


After sketching briefly the details of the case as she understood it, Miss Keller continued:

One need not be a Socialist to realize the significance, the gravity, not of Mr. Warren's offense, but of the offense of the judges against the Constitution, and against democratic rights... It has been my duty, my life work, to study physical blindness, its causes and its prevention. What surgery of politics, what antiseptic of common sense and right thinking, shall be applied to cure the blindness of our judges, and to prevent the blindness of the people, who are the court of last resort? 56

It was rumored that Miss Keller herself had joined the Socialist party in 1909; however, her endorsement of the movement did not become public knowledge until 1912. 57

Shortly before Christmas, Debs returned to Terre Haute to spend the holidays with his wife Kate. He was jubilant over the growing support for Warren. Only a few weeks earlier he had written of Warren as having triumphed. His pen poignantly proclaimed: "Warren has triumphed and today the cell rises above the bench" and the jail of freedom is "as glorious as the temple of despotism is contemptible." 58 The reference to "the temple of despotism" was to the federal and state courts.

56 Ibid.


58 Appeal to Reason, December 10, 1910, p. 4.
Debs later wrote that the day Warren goes to jail will be the day when the American people rise "against judicial despotism in the United States," and he was thrilled that the people were anxious for "a demonstration of protest" in Warren's behalf. 59

Fred Warren was to start serving his sentence of six months on January 21, 1911. Debs urged the people to write letters to the President and to their representatives. He hammered home to the people: "If there is anything in you that has the ring of revolt and the gleam of self-respect, now is the time to show it." 60

All the effort seemed worthless, for a higher court turned down Warren's appeal, and so he started serving his six months jail sentence.

President Howard Taft, however, decided to exercise his executive clemency on February 2, 1911. He struck down the six months' imprisonment and reduced the fine to a hundred dollars. An official pardon was delivered to Fred Warren in Girard. The pardon did not bear a union label. Warren was delighted and seized this opportunity to laugh at the President. Fasting on the

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60 Appeal to Reason, January 21, 1911, p. 1.
document a huge sticker: "Demand the Label on All Your Printing," he returned it to Taft. The next issue of the Appeal carried a reproduction of the pardon and Warren declared that he would not pay the fine of $100 except in "form of Appeal sub cards." But President Taft, more cautious than his predecessor Theodore Roosevelt, refused to engage in public discussion with the socialist weekly. Warren never did pay the fine.

The McNamaras Case

Before Fred Warren was pardoned, Debs was entangled in an even more heated court battle. On May 1, 1910 the Los Angeles metalworkers, organized into the American Federation of Labor Structural Iron Workers, went out on strike. The Los Angeles City Council promptly passed a drastic antipicketing ordinance. Union lines and parades were broken with guns and clubs, and the city jails were filled with strikers and their supporters.

Early on the morning of October 1, the Los Angeles Times building was destroyed by dynamite. The

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62 Ginger, op. cit., p. 304.
managerial and editorial staff had already left, but twenty workers were killed by falling walls and the fire that followed the explosion. General Harrison Gray Otis, publisher of the Times and a strong advocate of the open shop, held the entire labor movement responsible for the crime. "All union men," said Otis, "were murderers at heart."63

Eugene Debs quickly rebuked General Otis, and pointed the finger of guilt at him and the capitalist press on the Pacific coast. Debs related that Otis had maligned him in the railroad strike of 1894, and claimed the Los Angeles Times was "the most venomous foe of organized labor in the United States," and there is "no crime too abhorrest for it to commit to wreak its vengeance on the labor movement."64 Debs offered his view of the incident:

I want to express it as MY DELIBERATE OPINION THAT THE TIMES AND ITS CROWD OF UNION-HATERS ARE THEMSELVES THE INSTIGATORS, IF NOT THE ACTUAL PERPETRATORS OF THAT CRIME.65

Months slipped by and no arrests were made for the bombing. Finally, two brothers, officials of the

63Ibid.

64Appeal to Reason, October 15, 1910, p. 1.

65Ibid.
AFL Structural Iron Workers, John J. and James B. McNamara, were arrested in April, 1911. John was arrested in Indianapolis, Indiana, and James in Detroit, Michigan. Both were quickly shipped to Los Angeles without regard for the laws governing extradition. The essential events were a repetition of the Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone case five years earlier.

Debs was one of the first men to rise to their defense. Charging their arrest was "Another Kidnapping Plot," he bellowed out:

Sound the alarm to the working class. No one not feebleminded will be deceived by the 'plants' of dynamite and explosive appliances which were 'discovered' by the sleuths of the corporations. Organized Labor had everything to lose and the corporation criminals everything to gain by this tragedy.66

A few weeks later, Debs entertained the idea that even if the brothers were guilty, the fact of kidnapping was the paramount issue at the present. Debs wrote:

But we are told, they may be guilty. That question, for the present, does not concern us. They have been kidnaped and that is all we know for the present, and when that question is settled, we will be ready for the rest of the program, and not before.67

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67 *Appeal to Reason*, May 13, 1911, p. 4.
He continued:

The capitalist press, responsive to the interest of its owners, is making a great howl about dynamite and explosions to conceal the crime of kidnaping which constitutes the real issue before the people. Debs asked his readers if they had ever heard of "one of these capitalist patriots, these plutocratic lords, being blown up in any of these explosions?" Debs urged that anti-kidnaping meetings be held across the country, and he took to the rostrum for the McNamaras, touring the entire summer on their behalf. He believed them to be innocent labor leaders.

The American Federation of Labor secured a most reluctant Clarence Darrow for the defense. Darrow entered the case with a foreboding that amounted to virtual conviction that given the background and the Los Angeles situation the outlook was almost hopeless. Until Darrow arrived on the scene, the defense was directed by the socialist attorney, Job Harriman. In May the Los Angeles Socialist party nominated Harriman for mayor.

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68Ibid.  
69Ibid.  
The primaries were held on October 31, and Harriman received 20,000 votes, 4,000 more than his closest opponent.\(^{71}\) Even the most optimistic socialists were surprised at their show of strength. The Socialist party in Los Angeles was campaigning on its usual reform platform—honest government, a single telephone system, completion of a deep water harbor, municipal ownership of public utilities, and a graduated tax system. Regardless of the platform, everyone knew the real issue was the McNamara trial, and organized labor was thoroughly aroused. Interestingly enough, two Socialist-backed Constitutional amendments—woman suffrage and the initiative, referendum, and recall—were voted into law. It was no secret that the socialists intended to use the recall to remove the McNamara trial judge, the same judge who the previous year had issued anti-picketing injunctions.\(^{72}\)

It dawned on the socialists that they really had a chance to win. Money and literature poured into the campaign. Labor support for the socialist candidates rose rapidly. Unfortunately, Harriman was so occupied

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\(^{72}\)Ibid.; also *Appeal to Reason*, Oct. 21, 1911, p.1.
with the campaign that he was completely unaware of the negotiations between Darrow and the prosecution that were to result in disaster for all concerned.73

Darrow had taken up the defense of the McNamaras with little hope for success. But he had attempted to be thorough and added local attorneys and private detectives to the defense staff. However, he soon became convinced of the guilt of his clients and their inevitable conviction.

Darrow informed the brothers that their conviction and execution were certainties. He proposed that they plead guilty to escape the death sentence, and negotiate with the prosecution. The compromise was that John was to receive fifteen years and James a life sentence, provided they confessed before the election of December 5. On December 1 Darrow took his clients into court and pleaded them guilty.74

The American Federation of Labor immediately denounced the McNamaras and their attorney, and insisted that the AFL was "innocent of everything but credulity."75

73Stone, op. cit., p. 293.
74Ibid., p. 294.
75Los Angeles Times, December 2, 1911, p. 1.
Socialists frantically pointed out that the McNamaras were not socialists but Democrats who used capitalist methods of violence. Socialist A. M. Simons even attempted to deny that socialists had ever called for the McNamaras defense and that "the Socialists alone come out of all this mess with unsmirched character." Job Harriman, who read the confession in the newspaper headlines, issued a public statement that he had nothing to do with the McNamaras' defense since the campaign. The voters did not swallow Harriman's statement and he was defeated, 87,000 to 50,000.

Debs alone seemed unperturbed over the outcome of the case. He summarized in an article, "McNamara Case Reviewed," his own views and reflections. All along he felt the McNamaras were innocent, and added, "and I have not changed my mind. Jim McNamara may have placed the dynamite, but who placed Jim McNamara?"

Debs accused the following of setting the example for the McNamaras: the militia who shot down "workingmen in a peaceful parade," the unions wrecked by company-sponsored violence, the President of the United States.

77Ibid. 78Kipnis, op. cit., p. 356. 79Appeal to Reason, December 16, 1911, p. 1.
who called honest labor leaders "undesirable citizens," and the congress which permitted "government by injunction." These had "placed" the McNamaras.

Thus the same issue of the Appeal to Reason which carried A. M. Simons denunciation of the McNamaras carried Debs' defense of them as brave but misguided men who had fought back with "the brutal methods of self-preservation which the masters and exploiters of their class have forced upon them." It is ironic, concludes William Preston, Jr., that the socialists "were victimized by the violence of the American Federation of Labor!"

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{81}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{82}William Preston, Jr., \textit{Aliens and Dissenters} (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 48.
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CHAPTER IV

DEBS AND SOCIAL REFORM

Debs' disdain and distrust of the judicial system has been viewed. In this chapter Debs' attitude toward social reform will be noted, particularly, the Negro question and child labor. Of course, Debs believed that the ultimate remedy to these problems would be the triumph of socialism.

The Negro Question

The present writer has altered his view of Debs' attitude of the Negro from an earlier draft. Previously, the available evidence seemed to reflect a willy-nilly attitude on the part of Debs—that he was a fence-sitter. However, a closer examination of the evidence, plus some fresh material, reveal Debs as a thoroughgoing radical. He was in favor of social acceptance as well as guaranteeing economic and political rights to the Negro. Before examining Debs' attitude, a brief resume of the labor movements'
response to the Negro is in order.

The labor movements were never receptive to the Negro. Of the thirty-two small national unions in the 1860's, none admitted Negroes, except the Knight of Labor founded in 1869. Initially, it was Uriah Stephens, a deeply religious man, who established the Knights of Labor's policy of Negro acceptance. He stated: "I can see ahead of me an organization that...will include men and women of every craft, creed and color."1 His successor, Terence V. Powderly, accepted Stephens' labor philosophy, not on religious grounds, but on economic and sociological grounds. On economic grounds, Powderly argued that the non-union Negro would be used to exploit white union labor:

The Negro is free....His labor and that of the white man will be thrown upon the market side by side, and no human eye can detect a difference between the article manufactured by the black mechanic and that manufactured by the white mechanic...both mechanics must sink their differences or fall prey to the slave labor now being imported to this country.2

The Knights of Labor did not tolerate any discrimination of Negroes at their assemblies. A Knight's


District Assembly meeting in Richmond, Virginia in 1886 refused to stay in a certain hotel when their Negro delegates were refused accommodations. The historian, Herman D. Bloch, makes the observation that during the period 1870-1886, which included the rise, progress and rapid decline of the Knights, that the organization "did modify, substantially, the white worker's anti-Negro attitude." The Knights' "One Big Union" soon began to crumble, and after 1886 the American Federation of Labor became the official spokesman for the organized labor movement.

The Negro who had gained a little from the Knights of Labor now lost that gain with the American Federation of Labor. The Knights organized all workers, unskilled as well as skilled, whereas the American Federation of Labor consisted mainly of craft unions of the skilled workers. There was only a small group of skilled Negro workers, and even these workers were excluded as the AFL retreated from a position of Negro acceptance to a policy of discrimination and segregation.

In Chapter I Samuel Gomper's retreat on the Negro

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3 Ibid., p. 347.

question from a liberal labor agitator to a conservative bureaucrat was noted. The cause for this transition, Daniel Levine succinctly concludes, is that Gompers "always placed union strength ahead of racial equality."\(^5\)

Turning now to Debs' views on the Negro question, one notes there is no transition in his views as in Gompers'. When Debs joined the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen in the 1870's, the organization excluded Negroes. But this does not mean he agreed with this specific policy. His disagreement is made clear by subsequent statements and events.

For example, as an elected official of the Indiana House of Representatives in 1885, Debs bolted his own Democratic party to vote with the Republicans on a bill to abolish all distinctions of race and color in the laws of Indiana. The bill, however, lost by three votes.\(^6\) Then in 1893 Debs made an attempt at industrial unionism (for all workers of a particular trade) by founding the American Railway Union and he

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urged the delegates to admit Negro workers. Dr. Bernard Brommel writes:

He failed but thereafter he never missed an opportunity in his union organizing career to plead for equality in the unions.7

Debs pleaded equality for the Negro in the socialist movement too. The remaining members of the American Railway Union formed the Social Democracy of America in June 1897 with colonization as one of the goals. But by June, 1898 Debs and other political activists bolted and formed the Social Democratic party. Debs argued for Negro acceptance.8

When the Socialist party was founded in Indianapolis in 1901, Debs spoke in favor of full acceptance of the Negro; the convention, however, only urged the black man to join the party and vote his way to emancipation.9 The convention was even silent on the question of discrimination. Debs, however, was not silent then or later. His opinion on the Negro question


9Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 381.
(the question of how far the Negro should be considered equal—just economically? perhaps equal politically? or both these, plus social equality?) is forceably expressed in three articles written in 1903 and 1904. In July, 1903 Debs wrote an article on "The Negro Question" for the American Labor Journal. In the article Debs recounted his efforts on behalf of the Negroes and firmly stated "All my life I have opposed discrimination."\(^\text{10}\)

He expressed the idea that the white people must not be repressive toward the black people. As he succinctly stated it: "The first requisite in elevating the Negro is to get off his back."\(^\text{11}\)

Later that year Debs wrote another article entitled, "The Negro in the Class Struggle" in the International Socialist Review. He stated that the South was so thoroughly "permeated with the malign spirit of race hatred" that even a great number of socialists share directly in "the race hostility against the Negro, or avoid the issue, or apologize for the social obliteration of the color line" in the class


\(^{11}\)Ibid.
Debs said that even "the remotest suggestion at social recognition arouses all the pent-up wrath" of the white men, and "the less ground there is for such indignant assertion of self-superiority, the more passionately it is proclaimed."  

Debs further wrote that any member of the Socialist party who could not "with pride proclaim their sympathy with and fealty to the black race" certainly lacked "the true spirit of the slavery-destroying revolutionary movement." The voice of Socialism, continued Debs, "must be as inspiring music to the ears of those in bondage, especially the weak black brethren."

The third and most lucid article of Debs', "The Negro and His Nemesis," appeared in the January, 1904 issue of the International Socialist Review. This article convincingly reveals that Debs favored social equality as well as economic and political equality for the Negro. Debs had received a letter from a socialist reader in Illinois who criticized him for his previous article. The Illinois reader told Debs he would

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13Ibid.

14Ibid., p. 260.

15Ibid.
"jeopardize the best interests of the Socialist Party" if he insisted on "social and political equality for the Negro."16

Debs retorted that the Socialist party would be false to its "historic mission" if, on account of "race considerations, it sought to exclude any human being from political equality and economic freedom."17 But Debs personally goes further, for he recognizes social equality of the Negro.

The Illinois reader had written also to Debs that the Negro would "not be satisfied with equality with reservation."18 Meaning, of course, that the Negro would want social equality as well. Debs sharply replied to the Illinois reader, quoting the man's own words: "Of course the Negro will 'not be satisfied with equality with reservation.' Why should he be? Would you?"19 Debs further stated that intermarriage was "happening everyday," and that it was not "terrible" as the Illinois reader thought.20

17 Ibid., p. 8.
18 Ibid., p. 7.
19 Ibid., p. 9.
20 Ibid.
When one scrutinizes these articles he begins to realize the great stature of Debs, and that he was a man ahead of his time on the Negro issue. Many other socialists failed to match Debs' stature. Some quietly discriminated against Negroes; others were open racists. Julius A. Wayland and Victor Berger were outspoken segregationists, the latter feeling the Negro racially inferior. Berger wrote in the Social Democratic Herald:

> There can be no doubt that the negroes and mulattoes constitute a lower race— that the Caucasian and indeed the Mongolians have had the start on them in civilization by many thousand years— so that negroes will find it difficult to overtake them.21

Berger's solution was "to change the social system, but Negroes stay on their side of the tracks."22 The Socialist party, writes Bert Cochran, "sucked up the prejudices of middle-class America and was rife with Jim Crow attitudes."23 Debs fought these "chauvinistic manifestations" with vigor.24

21Social Democratic Herald, (Milwaukee), May 31, 1902, p. 1.


24Ibid.
In fact, Debs vigorous defense of the Negroes caused some of them to be sympathetic to the socialist movement. In 1907, W. E. Burghardt DuBois, the acknowledged leader of Negro protest, declared his sympathy with the Socialist party. He wrote to his own race exhortingly:

We have been made tools of oppression against the workingman's cause—the puppets and playthings of the idle rich. Fools! We must awake! Not in a renaissance among ourselves of the evils of Get and Grab...but rather in the larger ideal of human brotherhood, equality of opportunity and work not for wealth but for Weal—here lies our shining goal. This goal the Socialists with all their extravagance and occasional foolishness have more stoutly followed than any other class and thus far we must follow them. Watch the Socialists.25

DuBois especially watched what one socialist did and said—Eugene Debs. Doubtless, DuBois was pleased when Debs attacked President Theodore Roosevelt for mishandling the Brownsville Incident. Debs criticized Roosevelt for always talking about "law and order" and then had the audacity to "dismiss a regiment of Negro troops without a hearing."26


DuBois and Debs, "the prophets of twentieth-century American radicalism," as Staughton Lynd calls them, had much in common. They both "viewed themselves as executors of an American tradition which they were proud to inherit" and both "reverenced John Brown." DuBois praised John Brown (among other things) for his "inchoate but growing belief in a more just and a more equal distribution of property." Debs wrote a eulogy in the *Appeal to Reason* to John Brown, calling him "History's Greatest Hero."

DuBois and Debs were both shocked at the race riot which occurred in Springfield, Illinois in August, 1908 in which an elderly Negro had been lynched. Debs' friend, William English Walling, a socialist and a Chicago journalist, covered the riot. Walling was appalled particularly at the complete lack of guilt on the part of the participants.


28Ibid.

29Ibid.


the part of whites in Springfield.\textsuperscript{32}

Shortly after the riot, Walling wrote an article on "The Negro Question" which spurred some whites to come to the aid of the Niagara movement founded by DuBois and others.\textsuperscript{33} Together, the whites and Negroes formed the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.\textsuperscript{34}

DuBois joined the Socialist party briefly in 1912, but withdrew to support Woodrow Wilson. Although DuBois felt Debs was the ideal candidate, Wilson appeared to be the only realistic choice.\textsuperscript{35}

It seems valid to claim that Debs gave the Negro a fair hearing, and championed their cause. It is true that he felt that the ultimate solution to the Negro issue was the eventual triumph of socialism. But


\textsuperscript{33}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 201.


this in no way made him callous or indifferent to "piece-meal" victory for the Negro, for Herbert Morais and William Cahn claim that Debs, especially after 1913, began to see that it was not necessary to await the complete change in the economic and social system to advance the cause of Negro liberation and that civil rights could be protected and "extended to all people by militant struggle carried on under present conditions."36 Thus Debs, in his own way and ahead of his time, championed the cause of Negroes economically, politically, and socially.

Child Labor

Until the rise of industrialism, the child worker was under the apprenticeship system. The system in many respects was beneficial to the child worker, where the regulations were adequately enforced. But with the growth of modern factory system, the conditions under which the children worked became increasingly hard.

Child labor laws were slow in coming and even

then proved quite inadequate. Massachusetts passed a law as early as 1836 that provided that children under fifteen employed in manufacturing should attend school at least three months a year. By 1860 four other states (Rhode Island, Maine, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania) had passed similar laws. But these laws were not strictly enforced, though better than none. Even in the 1890's, Henry Pelling writes that "child labor was limited in many states only by the requirements of school attendance—and these in turn were often lax."\(^{38}\)

Statistically, child labor in the United States reached its peak in 1910. In 1880 there were 1,118,356 children from ten to fifteen years of age (16.8 per cent of all in that age group) engaged in gainful occupations. In 1900 there were 1,750,178, or 18.2 per cent.\(^{39}\) And conditions did not improve either! Raymond Fuller could still write after his thorough

\(^{37}\)U. S. Department of Labor, Children's Bureau, Publication No. 93 (September, 1924), p. 5.


study of child labor in 1923:

A good deal has been said about it, chiefly in condemnation. A good deal has been done about it, chiefly through legislation. But facts and figures and distressing tales can be adduced to show that this horrid thing, so impossible to reconcile with humane feelings and democratic ideas, still flourishes.40

As early as 1872, the Prohibition party had included a clause against child labor in its party platform.41 This was the first group of any importance to take a stand against child labor. The Democratic convention of 1892 introduced a plank in its party platform which read: "We are in favor of the enactment by states of laws prohibiting the employment in factories of children under 15 years of age."42 The newly formed Socialist party advocated the prohibition of the employment of children of school age (14 and under) in its 1904 convention platform.43

The People's party, the Prohibition party, and the Socialist party advocated federal abolition or, at least, federal regulation of child labor in 1908.44 By

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40 Ibid., p. 20.
42 Ibid., p. 89. 43 Ibid., p. 142.
44 Ibid., pp. 155, 156.
1912 the Progressive and the Republican parties declared for a federal child labor law, and in 1916 both the Democratic and the Republican parties stood for the enactment of such a law.\textsuperscript{45}

The states were beginning to act. Observers of this period write that during the first fifteen years of this century the majority of the states adopted laws that raised "the minimum age of children in industry, excluded children from occupations that were hazardous to either the physical or moral well being" and limited their working hours.\textsuperscript{46} In 1904 the National Child Labor Committee was formed with Felix Adler as president, and this group made the fight a national one. By 1910, it had working with it twenty-five state and local committees in twenty-two states in addition to the National Consumers' League, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, and the American Federation of Labor. The result was the enactment in forty-three states, between 1902 and 1909, of new child labor laws or far-reaching amendments to old ones. "These laws and amendments made for

\textsuperscript{45}Ibid., pp. 177, 183, 199, 207.

compulsory education, the eight-hour day for children above the minimum age, the abolition of night work," commented Thomas Cochran and William Miller.47

One of the strongest voices crying for reform was John Spargo. In 1906 Spargo published The Bitter Cry of the Children, which trenchantly brought home to even the most hardened reader the painful details of what persistent poverty, inadequate housing and child labor were doing to the nation. He estimated that the number of child workers in 1900 "under fifteen" was "at least 2,250,000."48 Spargo hammered home the National Child Labor Committee report that showed one town of 7,000 in Pennsylvania where "over 150 boys," twelve years and younger, were "illegally employed" in the mines.49

The sleeping giant, the churches of the United States, began to arouse itself to the social responsibilities and obligations of the gospel. In December, 1908 the Protestant Churches formulated the "Social


49Ibid., p. 163.
The "Social Creed" dealt with industrial and social relations, and it was adopted by the then Federal Council of Churches, and stood, among other things, "For the abolition of child-labor." The Federation was quite vocal concerning child labor:

Neither Milton nor Goethe's devil could have devised a plot against mankind more diabolic than this outrage upon helpless childhood by commercial greed. Only a pagan Church could be silent about it.

Many within the churches resented the "Social Creed" and the social implications of the gospel. They only wanted a personalistic "simple gospel" proclaimed. Charles Stelzle, a religious and social critic of the time, said this could not be, and succinctly wrote that the Church can no longer take refuge in the seclusiveness of the cloister, in the single purpose of preaching the 'simple gospel'... The true gospel of Jesus Christ is as wide as human need, and as deep as the human heart can feel.

Some saw the problem of child labor in extremely simplistic terms. The editor of the Washington Post had the audacity to write that child labor was the entire

51Ibid., pp. 40, 41.
fault of parents who brought them into the world! He naively stated that

So long as parents continue to bring children into the world without forethought for their welfare or provision for their nurture and education the difficulties and sorrows of child life will continue, and any general attempt to put the state in the place of the parents will only multiply the evils and consequences of irresponsible parentage—the source of the whole distress.53

Samuel Gompers of the American Federation of Labor had an intense hatred of child labor. He recalled his own experience of working long hours at the age of ten.54 But Gompers' opposition to child labor had a strange racial twist to it when he was traveling in the South. He felt that if white children in the South were kept working in the factories, they would become degenerate and illiterate, while the Negroes were advancing in their education. The result would be that more and more whites would be disfranchised by the illiteracy laws, more and more Negroes enfranchised, and "the basis would be laid for the decline of the white race and the ascendancy of the Negroes."55

53 The Washington Post, August 30, 1908, p. 4.
55 American Federationist, IX (Oct., 1902), 706, 7.
The first attempt to pass a federal law regulating child labor was in 1906 when Senator Albert Beveridge of Indiana introduced a bill in Congress. The bill provided that the carriers of interstate commerce--railroads and steamboats--should not transport the products of any factory or mind that employed the labor of children under fourteen years of age. In January, 1907 Senator Beveridge made a three-hour speech for the bill, but without success. The Beveridge bill appeared in different forms and under different sponsors each year until 1916, and each met defeat.

In 1908, the Appeal to Reason noted that the House of Representatives unanimously passed a bill prohibiting the employment of children below fourteen in the District of Columbia, but the Senate lowered the age to twelve. "This is the attitude of Congress toward child labor!" cried the Appeal.

Theodore Roosevelt was the first president to recognize the need for protecting the child worker. In his First Message to Congress, December 3, 1901 Roosevelt declared that "women and children should be protected from excessive hours of labor, from night work,

56 Appeal to Reason, May 9, 1908, p. 1.
and from work under unsanitary conditions."57 In his Fourth Message, Roosevelt stressed the dire need for "severe child-labor and factory-inspection laws."58 Unequivocally, he declared in his Eighth Message that "There must be prohibition of child labor."59 As far as the State of the Union Messages are concerned, Roosevelt's successors—namely, William H. Taft and Woodrow Wilson—were silent on the subject of child labor laws.

This is not to suggest that they were completely quiet on the subject. In fact, two very significant Child-Labor Laws were passed during the Wilson Administration: the Keating-Owen bill and Senator Atlee Pomerene's amendment to the Revenue Act. The former was signed by President Wilson on September 1, 1916 and went into effect September 1, 1917 only to be declared unconstitutional June 3, 1918.

If federal legislation could not be achieved through use of the power over interstate commerce, there were thought to be other ways to bring about the

58 Ibid., 2114. 59 Ibid., III, 2304.
same result. On November 15, 1918 Senator Atlee Pomerene introduced the federal taxing measure as an amendment to the Revenue Act. The standards were exactly the same as those established by the first child-labor law, but the new law was based on the taxing power of Congress—a tax of 10 per cent in excess of all other taxes to be levied upon the entire net profits from the sale of products of mills, workshops, canneries, factories, mines or quarries employing children contrary to the specific standards laid down by the act. This measure, passed February 24, 1919 became effective April 25, 1919, was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court on May 15, 1922.60

One's attention is now directed to Debs' attitude toward child labor. When Debs thought of childhood he became poetical—some of Debs' most lyrical outbursts centered on childhood. He even wrote an essay on "Childhood," which appears a little sentimental, yet is a sincere expression of Debs:

Childhood! What a holy theme! Flowers they are, with souls in them, and if on this earth man has a sacred charge, a holy obligation, it is to these tender buds and

60Fuller, op. cit., p. 238.
blossoms of humanity.
Yet how many of them are prematurely plucked, fade and die and are trampled in the mire. Many millions of them have been snatched from their play to be fed to the forces that turn a workingman's blood into a capitalist's gold.61

Nothing brought out the warmth and affection as much as children. Though he and Mrs. Debs had none of their own, children were attracted to him. One of the outstanding pictures of Debs is where he is surrounded by the children of Girard, Kansas.62

It was also equally true that nothing brought out the wrath and anger of Debs as child labor. In his article entitled the "Mastery of the Machine," he said that of the 30,000,000 "wage slaves," that 7,000,000 were women and "2,000,000 of them are children."63

Debs lashed out against those who were callous, or slow in understanding the problem of child labor. He had several verbal wrangles with President Theodore Roosevelt whom he considered was going at a turtle-pace in child labor legislation. Debs asked:

Is it worthwhile to argue with him [Roosevelt] that these children are having

62Ibid., front pages.
63Appeal to Reason, July 25, 1908, p. 3.
all the 'stuff' ground out of them for the benefit of the capitalist class and that there is nothing left of them when they are grown except the empty shell if they survive at all?64

The closest companion of child labor was poverty. Poverty worked hardships on people, especially on the children. Debs would snap at his audiences that "Poverty in the midst of plenty is not true civilization."65 To Debs, the "supreme tragedy" was "the poverty, suffering and despair which have wrung all the joy" out of the workers, particularly the "little children."66

In Debs' presidential campaign of 1912, he urged the workers to vote the Socialist ticket to free the "two million helpless little ones" from "the chariot wheels of modern capitalism."67 In "the name of childhood," Debs poignantly proclaimed, "you should cast your ballot for Socialism."68 Later Debs said that the Socialist party wanted child labor to cease forever.

65Appeal to Reason, July 29, 1911, p. 4.
68Ibid.
all children born into the world shall have equal opportunity to grow up, to be educated, to have healthy bodies and trained minds, and to develop and freely express the best there is in them in mental, moral and physical achievement.69

Debs felt keenly the suffering of young workers. This can be clearly seen in the Frank Lane incident. In the summer of 1910 a young immigrant by the name of Frank Lane was crushed in one of the mines near Girard, Kansas. The fifteen year old youth was sent to the hospital at Pittsburgh, Kansas and was retained there for a long time. He was crippled and would never do any hard work again. The editor of the Appeal, Fred Warren, came to the boy's aid.

Debs then urged the readers to back the Appeal in its fight for the youth. Debs vigorously stated to the readers that

Whether Frank Lane and his 600,000 brothers killed and wounded every year, are to get any consideration from the courts depends upon the extent to which you back the Appeal to Reason in its fight for human rights.70

The Appeal was backing Frank Lane in his suit against the Sheridan Coal Company and the Frisco Railroad.

69Appeal to Reason, September 28, 1912, p. 4.
70Appeal to Reason, December 17, 1910, p. 1.
suit was for $25,000. Employers had so many legal loopholes, writes John Andrews, that the injured employee's only hope was to sue.71

The fifteen year old coal digger soon became a symbol. A symbol of "600,000 American workingmen," wrote Debs, "who are crushed every year in the mills and then robbed by conscienceless courts."72 "In the name of these mutilated and suffering victims," continued Debs, "we declare war on the capitalist system."73

Debs charged the corporation with "criminal negligence" and expressed the feeling that the courts would probably give Lane nothing, for the courts were callous when it came to "justice for crippled workers;" the courts were there only "to protect the interests of the ruling class."74 Lane was neither covered by his company with insurance nor would he receive a pension due to his injury. Legal suit was the only chance of getting anything.

The Frank Lane case dragged on for two year

73Ibid.
with the Appeal to Reason paying his hospital and legal bills. Finally, in June, 1912 the case was settled with the youth receiving only 11,000 dollars.75

Debs was glad concerning the outcome, though he wished the lad had received more. In his campaign speech a few weeks later at Chicago he firmly stated:

The Socialist party is the only party that stands as a living protest against the monstrous crime of child labor. It is the only party whose triumph will sound once and forever the knell of child slavery.76

As noted earlier, child labor laws increased and with the "Great Crash" of 1929, child labor gradually disappeared.77 And Harold Faulkner writes that by 1917 "some forty states and territories had enacted workmen's compensation laws" which in many ways were "the greatest contribution to labor legislation in the period 1897-1917."78 The area of workmen's compensation also interested Debs but the subject seldom appeared in the Appeal to Reason.79

75 Appeal to Reason, June 29, 1912, p. 4.
76 Appeal to Reason, July 12, 1912, p. 1.
77 Cochran and Miller, op. cit., pp. 277-279.
79 Appeal to Reason, December 6, 1913, p. 3.
CONCLUSION

The Kansas years covered the period from January, 1907 through September, 1913 when Debs was on the editorial staff of the *Appeal to Reason*. Using only those articles with Debs' signature or initials, the writer attempted to scrutinize Debs' political and social ideas.

The first chapter dealt with the social, economic, and political milieu of the period from 1865 to 1912. Viewing the impact of industrialism upon the rural and urban worker, the interplay between unions, "Jim Crow" policy, and the courts was then noted.

The latter part of the first chapter treated the three general responses to industrialism, starting with the conservative defense, with William Graham Sumner and Elihu Root strongly arguing the case for political, social, and economic conservatism, and the status quo. The second general response came from the progressives who felt that the ship of capitalism was adequate and lasting; it was only the leading crewmen that created trouble for the passengers. The progressives were going to install better crewmen.

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Theodore Roosevelt was chosen as the progressive to examine. Roosevelt was chosen not because he was the most outstanding progressive of the period (he was not!), but because as President of the United States he was able to implement and give strength to such progressive programs as conservation, a pure food and drug act, and to reenforce the Interstate Commerce Commission. He and other progressives attacked poverty, wasteful competition, and graft—sadly, however, he said practically nothing about the political and economic situation of Negroes. He did encourage congress to consider enacting child labor laws.

The third response discussed was the socialist. The socialist reacted strongly to the impact and consequences of industrialism. Eugene V. Debs' transition to socialism was especially noted and his political and social concepts.

To go into greater detail concerning Debs' political and social ideas, it was necessary in the second chapter to view the Appeal to Reason and its editors, Julius A. Wayland and Fred D. Warren. In chapter two a background of the Appeal was given and of how the Appeal became the most read socialist paper in the United States. It was noted how Debs came on the editorial staff of the Appeal.
Debs' style of writing was also considered. He was not a systematic thinker—he was first and foremost a propagandist. He was constantly attacking capitalism, feeling that once it was replaced by socialism all the evils of society will be remedied.

In the third chapter the writer categorized Debs' articles in the Appeal around three court cases: the Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone case, the Fred D. Warren case, and the McNamara Brothers case. From these cases a view of Debs' disdain of the judicial system was derived. Also these cases reflected Debs' political thinking concerning capitalism, the judicial system, and the urgent need for socialism.

The final chapter dealt with Debs' social views toward the Negro and child labor. It was noted that Debs was against discrimination and refused to speak before segregated audiences, even in the South. Though the Negro issue was always placed in the larger context of the class question, Debs himself did realize the plight of the Negroes and urged the Socialist party to accept them on an equal level with whites. Debs was definitely ahead of his time, for he not only advocated political and economic equality for the Negro, but social equality as well. And he felt that the labor
unions must lead the way.

But the labor unions did not lead the way. Organized labor failed to see the plight of the Negro. The writer is convinced that if the organized labor movement had accepted the Negro, the history of racial discrimination would be vastly different today.

The second issue treated in the final chapter was child labor. Debs frequently and fervently attacked the horrible system of child labor. He urged vigorous federal laws, though socialism was the ultimate answer.

Debs was convinced to the last (he died on October 20, 1926) that democratic socialism was the only answer; that democratic socialism was the only worthwhile procedure for the American people. Debs always deplored violence.

Working on this thesis has indelibly impressed on the writer that social issues cannot be ignored in a democratic society. Also, the impression has been left that in a democratic society all must benefit from the growth of industrialism and wealth, or none will ultimately be secure and free in the United States.
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