

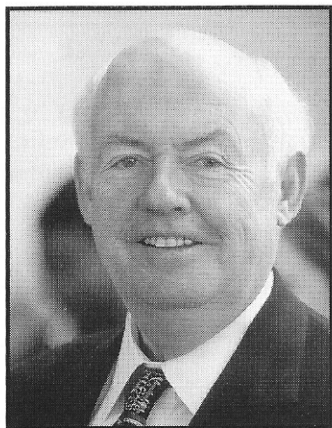
# The Debs Foundation Newsletter

P.O. BOX 843, TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA 47808-0843

35th Anniversary

FALL, 1997

## Progressive Labor Leader To Receive Debs Award



JOHN SWEENEY

**J**ohn Sweeney, President, AFL-CIO will be honored with the Debs Award at the foundation's annual banquet October 25, in Terre Haute.

The award is given annually to someone with a distinguished career in activities and organizations which promote the leading causes championed by Gene Debs, turn-of-the-century labor and political activist, namely, industrial unionism, social justice, and peace.

John Sweeney was elected President of the AFL-CIO at the federation's biennial convention in October, 1995. At the time of this election, Sweeney was serving his fourth four-year term as president of the Service Employees International Union, which grew from 625,000 to 1.1 million members under his leadership. He also was vice president of the AFL-CIO and chair of the Executive Council committees on Health Care and Organizing and Field Services. Sweeney's first job in the labor movement was with the International Ladies' Garment Workers, and he began his SEIU career in 1961 when he first joined

Local 32B in 1976, and led two citywide strikes of apartment maintenance workers, during the 1970s.

In 1996 he wrote *America Needs A Raise, Fighting for Economic Security and Social Justice*. He co-authored *Solutions for the New Work Force* in 1989 and co-edited the UNA-USA Economic Policy Council's *Family and Work: Bridging the Gap* in 1987. Born in 1934 in the Bronx, Sweeney graduated from Iona College with a degree in economics, and lives in Washington with his wife, Maureen, a former New York City school teacher, and their two children, John and Patricia.

Sweeney's distinguished career as a union activist places him very much in the Debsian tradition, so the foundation's officers feel. Presentation speaker will be Jack Sheinkman, foundation president and President Emeritus, UNITE.

Sweeney joins a long list of labor, civic and education leaders who have received the annual award since the foundation's founding 35 years ago and its first Debs award given in 1965 to John L. Lewis. Awards have been given to such prominent labor leaders as Walter Reuther, A. Philip Randolph, and Dolores Heurta, and to prominent public service figures such as Dorothy Day, Frank Zeidler, Jessie

...continued on back page.

## Banquet Day Opportunities

**Gravesite ceremony at 2 p.m.  
Visiting the Debs Home 1-5 p.m.  
Social Hour at 6 p.m.**

The annual award banquet is the highlight of the day and year for the Debs Foundation. It celebrates the achievements of an individual whose work has been in the "Debsian" tradition, and at the same time is the opportunity for a host of like-minded individuals to meet old friends, make new acquaintances, and be inspired and reinvigorated in spirit. A special feature during the banquet is to hear and sing songs which are such an important part of labor's heritage. Again this year Mitch Rice, Bloomington, Indiana labor-musician, will lead this section of the program. Songs of the Wobblies are among his favorites.

The day offers other opportunities as well. The Debs Home will be open to visitors from 1:00 to 5:00. If you've never been there or haven't paid a visit in several years, you will be in for a pleasant surprise. Regulars at our banquets will notice that we are back in Hulman Center. We hope to pack the house!

We occasionally have other programs earlier in the day. Last year's special was a 2:00 p.m. gravesite ceremony on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of Debs' death, and it has been decided to repeat that feature this year, with the ceremony at 2:00 p.m. If you have never visited Debs' grave, this will be the opportunity for that first visit. The site is relatively easy to locate in Highland Cemetery. You may go directly to the ceremony, the cemetery is on east Wabash Avenue (U.S. 40 east), or you may meet at the Debs Home about twenty minutes early and travel there in a group. See you banquet day!

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## What's In A Name?

*What is in a name? A rose by any other name would smell just as sweet.*  
*Shakespeare*

These lines from Shakespeare are often quoted and accepted as profoundly insightful and true. Within limits, this holds for persons as well as places and things, but personal names have the potential to be shaping influences on attitudes and values, and can influence the way other people view and act toward us. Most often the name is of an esteemed person of the past or present, whether a relative or a public figure. This name selection is indicative of the attitudes and values of the parents, which values they will try to instill in their children.

Around the turn of the century many children were named Eugenie (for a girl) or Eugene (a boy). The Debs Foundation has members with both of these names. One such person was Eugene Debs Selmanoff, who by all accounts in his life demonstrated that he had learned well the lessons of youth as these influences are suggested in the name he was given. A great person was lost in his recent death. Mr. Selmanoff had been living in Santa Rose, California. To reflect their high regards for his life, its commitments and work, a number of relatives and friends made contributions to the Debs Foundation as a memorial. The sentiments expressed by one contributor likely was shared by all those involved in this initiative: "My brother... who was a living memorial to Eugene Debs." Contributions came from Pompero Beach, Sonoma and Van Nuys, in California, from Chicago, Baltimore and Hamden, Connecticut, and from Ottawa and Toronto in Canada, a total of eight contributors, the amount exceeding \$300. Given the wide geographic dispersion, it is apparent that respect for Eugene Debs Selmanoff was widespread and genuine. The foundation's officers extend condolences to wife, Pat Selmanoff, and to his many relatives and close friends, and wish also to express our appreciation for the number of years the Selmanoffs were contributing members of the foundation at the \$25 support level.

## Seating Policy

Many of you know our policy for seating guests: first come-first served (seated). This policy seems best for allowing everyone to locate himself or herself in line with personal preference. Come early in the social hour and you have lots of choices, come late and your choices likely will be limited, but given the layout of the banquet hall, all seats are not that far from what we might call near the 50 yard line. Not yet nor ever do we expect to see any big fusses or fights over a table or couple of seats claimed early, marked, but then left briefly while the claimants move about to enjoy the social hour.

This laissez faire seating policy reflects a definite inclination for egalitarianism. It hopefully gives everyone, whether coming as individuals, couples or groups, the opportunity to make choices and act in accordance with preferences. It also expresses our desire to see people moving about and meeting new faces, especially where they sit. Ours always is a highly diversified guest list, including person from labor, education, and civic life, local, state and regional, and the Debs banquet offers you the opportunity to celebrate and share greetings with old friends, but also with other fellow travelers. So remember, if you come late and have trouble finding a seat, we'll try to assist, but don't ask us to assign you a particular table.

## DEBS FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

Fall, 1997

Published by

The Eugene V. Debs Foundation

Box 843

Terre Haute, IN 47808

Foundation Officers:

Jack Sheinkman, *President*

Noel Beasley, *Executive Vice President*

Charles King, *Secretary*

Woodrow Creason, *Treasurer*

The *Debs Foundation Newsletter* is published twice yearly for distribution to members and friends of the Foundation. The Eugene V. Debs Foundation is a non-profit, private organization which maintains the home of Eugene and Kate Debs as a museum and shrine to labor, and carries on educational and informational programs which aim to honor and promote the goals for which Debs struggled: industrial unionism, social justice, and peace. For those wishing to become members, an application form is provided elsewhere in this issue.

## Endowment Fund Growth

The Foundation's endowment fund continues to grow, although no new contributions were made in the first half of 1997. The fund is still far short of an amount which would enable us to attain one major goal, which is to have a fund growing at such an amount that a portion of the annual increase could be drawn upon to underwrite the salary of a museum Curator-Director. This policy of drawing off approximately one-half the yearly gain would leave the principal untouched and still growing to keep up with inflation. As of July 1, 1997, the following was the market value of endowment fund assets:

U.S. Treasury Notes	\$114,024
The Vanguard Group	218,418
Checking Account	10,932
Total Market Value	\$343,374

Knowing that the total of \$343,374 is available for emergencies and other unscheduled expenses not anticipated in the foundation's operating budget is a considerable source of satisfaction. Do you know of any potential contributors who would assist us in growing this fund to the amount when we can begin to make active use of some of the proceeds?

## Bryant Spann Memorial Prize Winner

The winner of the 1997 Bryant Spann Memorial prize in literature is Eric Leif Davin, for his "The Last Hurrah? The Defeat of the Labor Party Idea, 1934-36." This highly interesting essay focuses on the debate over whether labor would benefit more from independent, political action than from an alliance with the Democratic party. It was published in *We Are All Leaders*, which is a collection of essays on labor unionism published by the University of Illinois Press in 1996. Copies of this book likely will be available for purchase at the Debs banquet.

This prize in literature is given annually in the amount of \$1,000 for an item of prose or poetry, published or unpublished, which is in the progressive, social criticism vein. Information on how to submit material for next year's competition may be obtained by addressing your inquiry to Bryant Spann Memorial Prize, Department of History, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, IN 47809.

# Debs 100 Years Ago

## A Year of Transition, of Trial and Error

There is no consensus on Debs' place in history. He has been honored and revered by many but reviled by just as many, a not uncommon fate for persons who dare to follow dreams, fight for causes, and impact society in ways which reshape the social order. People with power and money never have enough, and fight to hold their advantages. But opposition from one side or another is not the only obstacle to change. It is not an easy task to bring about social change which in even a small way redistributes power and influence, but just as difficult even to envision the shape and form of the new. It involves real social invention to create the institutions and rules which can provide power to those formerly powerless, as well as social justice and the full rights of participatory citizenship to all members of society.

We today are inclined to think of innovation or invention as a clearcut process, certain in outcome, an experimental procedure requiring scientific theory, mind and money in order to create things bigger and faster, to find new materials or to pull off such wonders as to send craft hurtling into space with preciseness and certainty of mission attainment. But social invention is not simply the quick result of scientific experimentation. We cannot get away with tampering with people's lives in experimental fashion until the right outcome is achieved. In social invention, the procedure could be described as mental or imaginary tinkering with things. You start with a dream, an idea, and you put the best efforts of intellect and heart to the task of conceiving a better way and how to get there. Then you have to share your aspirations and your plans, to sell them to the people, and this usually involves trial and error until you find or build something which does sell.

A hundred years ago Eugene Debs' career was very much in a transitional phase, a state of flux and experimentation as to how to build a society along the lines of his dream of a society where peace, justice and democratic participation would be available to all. He had held his dream for a long time, and had worked to bring it to reality through the railroad brotherhoods, and then through an industrial union called the American Railway Union. There had been problems and signs of weakness which became more apparent at the very time the unions grew stronger. Inter-union rivalry and competition between types of workers were depleting the strength of the union movement. It took the experiences of the Pullman Boycott to teach another lesson. The bias of the legal system, the political system and the press in support for the owners of business, rendered organized labor virtually powerless in the face of this solid wall of opposition. There clearly was the need to get into the political arena and work for changes in the legal system, but Debs' early efforts here were clearly experimental. When Debs considered socialism it was not with the specific intent of leading a third party and being its presidential candidate five times.

As a matter of fact, Debs' search for effective solutions

had led him in 1896 to join with Illinois Governor Altgeld and other Democrats in maneuvering an intra-party revolt against the policies of President Grover Cleveland, a Democrat who had shown no sympathy for the workers in the Pullman Boycott. Debs also declined Populist party overtures that year to be its candidate for President. By 1897, Debs had experienced crushing defeats for his efforts, both in the failure of the Pullman Boycott and the crushing of the ARU, and in the electoral defeat in 1896 of strong Democratic Party candidates including such close allies as Clarence Darrow and Altgeld. In late 1896, Debs had supported a movement for formation of the Brotherhood of the Co-operative Colony, to be created in some Western state. Although Debs appeared to waffle on the plan, he in June, 1897 led the remains of the ARU to dissolve the union and to found the Social Democracy of America, and to advocate the co-operative commonwealth. Every member of the new party's executive board had been in Woodstock Jail.

The actions in 1897 which involved the dissolution of the ARU and the formation of a new party pleased few, and brought forth a storm of criticism from both radicals and conservatives. While the Social Democracy did not survive as a political force, one could argue that its proposals and actions were important background information when in 1898 the Social Democratic Party was formed, a party consciously disavowing utopian ideas of colonization and espousing political action.

So the year 1897 was a pivotal year for Debs, one he had to go through, but still transitional, for the struggles of the past had yet to germinate, sprout and grow as the political party which would occupy Debs' best efforts for the remainder of his life. As a matter of fact, Debs still was very much a labor activist. That year he was invited by United Mine Workers president, M.D. Rathford to assist in a coal strike in West Virginia. Debs, along with other labor stalwarts such as Samuel Gompers, toured the coal fields that summer trying everywhere to rally the miners. The strike was successful, but Debs had to withdraw for health reasons before victory was reached. (Too many outdoor rallies, hatless, in blazing sun.) So history does not record for Debs in 1897 any great achievements or defeats, but he actively was pursuing dreams and trying things that might work. His imprint on American society was still very much in the making.

The poet wrote: "A man's reach should exceed his grasp, else what's a heaven for." (Browning) How fortunate for the world that Eugene Debs dreamed big dreams and had a long reach, and he kept reaching and reaching until he grasped some of that dream. Debs was not willing to give up and accept the status quo, but kept reaching and trying again and again to reshape the political and economic landscape. Plenty of that dream of social justice and peace is still unattained, still there for us to reach and strive for.



# 1996 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

## Eugene V. Debs Foundation

### Expenditures:

Utilities:	
Indiana-American Water Co., Inc.	\$ 189.83
GTE North	554.31
AT&T	578.10
PSI Energy	1,188.69
Indiana Gas	1,445.56
Terre Haute Sewage Disposal	97.56
Jewett Printing	3,460.35
Terre Haute Postmaster	567.93
Hulman Center	1,566.00
WTWO	15.00
ADT	312.00
Heinl's Flower Shop	61.83
House Expenditures + Office Supplies	830.28
Cambridge Documentary	98.95
Mitch Rice (musician)	100.00
Marriott (dinner)	2,815.00
Victor Navosky (travel)	398.00
Indiana Statesman	38.00
National Pen Corp.	449.57
Media Technologies	65.44
Tribune-Star	269.30
Merchants National Bank	30.00
Leilani Newkirk	166.00
Donnelly Colt	320.00
Indiana Museums	20.00
Taxes Indiana	59.50
Markle Insurance	913.10
ISU Controllers (reproduction)	162.95

Laughrey Brothers	316.35
Inweld Corp.	15.00
Terminix International	342.00
Lowe's	68.07
Paitson Brothers	312.77
ISU Foundation (scholarship)	600.00
Bed & Dresser (refinishing)	764.42
Kramer & Sons Electric	1,078.00
Meier Johnan-Wangler, Inc.	205.00
ISU Library	1,000.00
Great American Carpet	333.96
Harriet Hyman (Spann Award)	1,000.00
Hemminghouse Signs	394.80

Total Expenditures      \$ 23,203.62

### Revenue:

House Income	\$ 3,147.33
Membership Dues	5,930.00
Debs Dinner	16,772.00
Contributions	1,000.00
Interest	152.98

Total Deposits      \$ 27,002.31  
Total Expenditures      23,203.62  
Balance 1996      3,798.69  
Balance 12/31/95      7,642.00  
CD      5,000.00  
Savings      2,642.00

## A Dinner Program Listing For You

The foundation's souvenir dinner program has a greetings section where large organizations pay to send greetings and congratulations to the award recipient and the foundation. These large listings are too expensive for individuals. It is our feeling that individual participation is important, for the greetings section is both revenue enhancing and an indication of support for what the banquets and award ceremonies accomplish in providing public recognition for those who struggle for certain causes and ideals.

This is the third year you have this opportunity to participate in sending greetings. Your greeting may be in two forms. For a listing of your name (one or two persons), send \$20. For a listing by name including your personal greeting not to exceed 20 words, send \$30. Each participant should indicate if not attending the banquet in order that a copy of the souvenir program can be mailed. This order must be received by October 10. Make checks payable to the Debs Foundation and mail to P.O. Box 843, Terre Haute, IN 47808.

### REMINDER: DID YOU PAY 1997 DUES?

Please use this form for new memberships, or for paying 1997 dues. Dues notices for 1998 will be mailed after the fall business meeting.

#### Membership Dues: The Eugene V. Debs Foundation

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
STREET \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

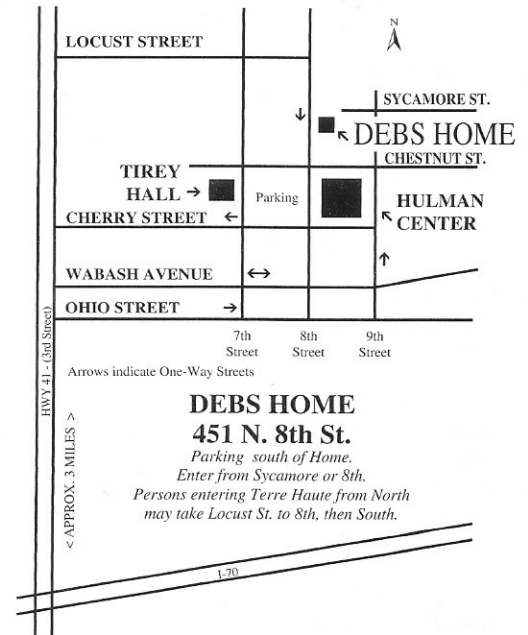
\_\_\_\_\_ \$ 5.00 Student Member      \_\_\_\_\_ \$100.00 Sustaining Member  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$10.00 Regular Member      \_\_\_\_\_ \$250.00 Life Members  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$25.00 Supporting Member      \_\_\_\_\_ Other

Enclose remittance. Make checks payable to the Debs Foundation.

The Debs Foundation  
P.O. Box 843  
Terre Haute, IN 47808-0843

Your dues and contributions are tax deductible. The Foundation owns and maintains the Debs Home and offers several educational and cultural programs. We are a voluntary organization with no paid staff.

<b>ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET</b> <b>TERRE HAUTE</b> <b>October 25</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>1997</b></span> <b>Honoring</b> <b>John Sweeney</b>	
<b>SCHEDULE OF EVENTS</b> <b>Afternoon</b> 2:00 p.m. Gravesite Ceremony, Highland Cemetery 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.: Open House at Debs Home  <b>Evening</b> 6:00 p.m.: Social Hour and Reception (cash bar), Hulman Center 7:00 p.m.: Banquet Honoring John Sweeney	
The fall business meeting will be Sunday, October 26, at 9:00 a.m. at the Debs Home	



*Parking is free in lot west of Hulman Center.*  
*Enter Hulman Center through West doors.*

## Dinner Ticket Order

(\$25 per ticket)

<b>NOTE</b> We offer a choice of entrees. Please indicate your choice of prime rib or fish <b>when you order tickets and also at the door.</b> Tables may be purchased for 7 (\$175) or 8 (\$200). However, all seats are available on a "first-come, first-serve" basis.
---

Name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ X \$25 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 number of                      amount  
 tickets                          enclosed

Prime Rib Dinner(s) _____
Fish Dinner(s) _____

Tickets must be paid in advance.  
 Please check one of the following options.

☐ Hold tickets at the door, in the name of \_\_\_\_\_  
 (the preferred way)

☐ Mail my tickets to the following address:  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to the Debs Foundation.  
 Mail to the Debs Foundation, Box 843, Terre Haute, IN 47808.  
 Inquiries may be directed to Charles King, 812-237-3443.

## *Sweeney.. continued from page 1*

Jackson, Pete Seeger, Ralph Nadar and Jim Hightower. The annual event affords the opportunity for the meeting in Terre Haute of a diverse collection of progressives from labor, education, civic and political fields, and to be inspired and invigorated by participating not only in honoring a contemporary person of achievement, but also to be reminded of the dreams, aspirations and ideals and the sacrificial hard work which Gene Debs contributed to make our society a better place to live. Ticket ordering information appears elsewhere in this newsletter. Further information and special questions should be directed to foundation secretary, Charles King, P.O. Box 843, Terre Haute, IN 47808, or by phoning him at 812-237-3443.

### **Which Hotel?**

Terre Haute has many nice hotel/motels, all within 10-15 minutes of Hulman Center. Perhaps the nicest is Holiday Inn, but there is a problem. You've seen the ads, touting major renovations nationwide. The ads don't mention that Holiday Inn is not committed to the use of union labor in these projects, and the local inn was targeted with informational pickets earlier this year. At its spring business meeting the foundation passed a resolution stating our solidarity with labor in this situation.

**DEADLINE FOR ALL  
GREETINGS  
SECTION COPY IS  
OCTOBER 10.**

## **MATTERS OF SCALE**

### *... and of Social Justice*

Average hourly wage of workers at 2,200 factories of General Electric, Ford, General Motors, GTE Sylvania, RCA, Westinghouse, and other U.S. companies with plants in the free-trade zone of Mexico along the U.S. border .....\$1.64

Average hourly wage of manufacturing workers in the "home" country of these companies .....\$16.17

◆  
Worldwide profits of the Walt Disney Company in 1993 .....\$300 million

Amount taken home by Disney chairman Michael Eisner .....\$203 million

Amount oil and gas companies gave to political campaigns in the United States between 1993 and mid-1996 .....\$10.3 million

Value of the special tax breaks oil and gas companies received over the same period .....\$4 billion

◆  
Average annual amount the U.S. Forest Service lost on timber sales from 1989 to 1994, according to actual net cash flows on the U.S. Treasury .....\$282 million

Average annual profits claimed by the Forest Service, after essentially ignoring the costs of road building and reforestation, among other costs, which amount to large subsidies to the timber industry, several Pacific state counties and the Forest Service bureaucracy itself .....\$510 million

◆  
Amount the U.S. government allows companies to give income-tax free to employees for free parking each month .....\$155

Amount companies can give income-tax free to employees for mass transit each month .....\$65

◆  
Subsidies German taxpayers paid in 1982 to keep domestic coal production competitive with imports .....\$15,400 per coal miner

Amount paid in 1995, after subsidies doubled and employment dropped by half .....\$72,800 per coal miner

◆  
Price of a jar of Avon "skin-renewal" product being advertised on Brazilian TV and then sold door-to-door in the Amazon Basin by an army of 80,000 Avon saleswomen .....\$40

Average household income per day of the women in the region, who are persuaded to forego buying clothes or shoes in order to purchase the Avon product .....\$3

Source: *World Watch*, Vol. 10:2&3 (1997)

**EUGENE V. DEBS FOUNDATION**

P.O. Box 843

Terre Haute, Indiana 47808-0843

FORWARDING AND ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
PERMIT NO. 977  
TERRE HAUTE, IN