

## **My Personal Finances**

**(April 20, 1912)**

A comrade whom I hold warmly writes to tell me that he has had an argument with a speaker for the Men and Religion Forward Movement<sup>1</sup> over my “vast possessions of wealth” and to ask me if I am willing to answer a few questions in the *Appeal to Reason* as to my income, the stocks and bonds I hold, the amount of money I have on deposit, the real estate I own, etc., etc.

Ordinarily I would pay no attention to such a communication, as I make it a rule to ignore personal attacks. I have no time to answer foolish questions, nor is there any reason why I should afflict *Appeal* readers with my personal affairs. But these same questions have recently been asked so persistently that I am convinced that someone is systematically spreading falsehood, and it is more on account of my friends that I now answer these questions publicly than on my own account.

On the eve of the last national election an Associated Press dispatch was sent out of my home at Terre Haute to the effect that I had engaged non-union workmen to make some repairs on my home. It was absolutely untrue. I was not at home at the time. At my request Phil K. Reinbold, the organizer of the AF of L located at Terre Haute, personally investigated the matter and reported that the story was a malicious falsehood. The union grafter who originated the story was expelled from the Central Labor Union and the editor of the little sheet that sent out the story disappeared with the union’s funds. And yet this malicious story persists to the present day.

I have in my hands a Canadian paper with a marked article giving an account of a lecture delivered by a priest claiming to hail from Ohio in which he told his audience that I was a millionaire, owned vast stocks, lived in a grander mansion than the president occupied at Washington, and had autos, carriages, and servants galore.

Now the fact is that I never owned an auto, nor a horse, nor carriage in my life. All the real estate I own is a 50-foot lot and the house on it, bought and paid for 26 years ago, lost during the ARU strike, and recovered about 12 years afterward.

The only servant we have in our house is my wife, except as we of our family are all servants. I own no stocks or bonds of any description,

have no financial interest in the *Appeal* or investment in any enterprise, and not a dollar in the bank.

The *Appeal* pays me \$100 per week, but this I divide with my brother who has charge of the office we maintain at Terre Haute at our own expense. For years we have answered all the correspondence that comes to us and distributed socialist leaflets, tracts, and pamphlets, of which a supply is constantly kept on hand for free distribution.

Out of the \$100 weekly received from the *Appeal* we pay office rent, typewriter, postage, stationery, telegraphing, free literature, etc., etc., salaries and household expenses for my brother and myself, and the rest, when there is any, I give to those who need it more than I do.

I have frequently refused five times what the *Appeal* pays me from Lyceum and Chautauqua bureaus.<sup>2</sup>

The only reason I own a home is on account of my family, but for whom I would deed it to the Socialist Party without the delay of a day. When I pass on I do not want the private ownership of one inch of God's earth in my name.

I trust this sufficiently covers the questions I have been asked to answer in these columns.

Published as part of "Notes on Various Topics" in *Appeal to Reason*, whole no. 855 (April 20, 1912), p. 4.

<sup>1</sup> The Man and Religion Forward Movement was an organization founded by a YMCA leader named Fred Smith. The organization was evangelical in intention and targeted men, having been spurred into existence by the growing influence of women in church and mission work. It sought to promote masculine physical fitness and non-sentimental religious interpretation to bring a new cohort of vigorous male members and leaders into Protestant churches. The organization held a series of eight-day religious revival meetings from September 1911 to April 1912 as its primary organizing tool before being abandoned. The group might be best understood as a forerunner of the Promise Keepers organization of the 1990s.

<sup>2</sup> While this is undoubtedly correct it should also be noted that Debs did speak for pay on the summer Chautauqua circuit in 1903, 1905, 1906, and 1907, with at least one appearance booked and subsequently canceled in 1909. In addition he made various other private speaking tours, grossing perhaps \$100 per speech in honoraria.