
Speech at a Mass Meeting: Madison Square Garden — June 10, 1919.

by Dennis Batt

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Lusk Committee Hearing Testimony and Executive Session Transcripts, pp. 459-465.
NY State Archives, collection L0026-89, microfilm reel 1.

Comrade Chairman, Comrades, and Friends:

Each ruling class as it stands tottering on the brink of its own grave, becomes more ruthless. Each ruling class as it stands facing the class that is about to conquer it, sinks lower in the methods that it uses to suppress its opponents. The act committed by the government of this country in the raid upon the Soviet Bureau in New York City is only one of the instances in the great class struggle that is going on just as ruthlessly here in America as in any other point upon the face of the globe.

We have in the United States government, in spite of all its democratic forms, the most ruthless, brutal government upon the face of the earth. (*Applause.*)

I wish to call your attention to that. I say that as an American, whose family has been in this country for 200 years, I say that as an American whose grandfather trekked out into the state of Michigan over 100 years ago with an ox wagon. You cannot tell me to go back where I belong. (*Laughter and applause.*)

And, as I see it, this demonstration here this evening, while it serves its purpose, we have as members of the socialist movement serious work before us. We cannot expect, and neither do we expect, anything but a fight, and a very nasty fight from the capitalist class. We do not expect anything from them, except their iron heel, if they

will give it to use, because we know, after having studied the proposition, that there is only one thing that the capitalist class of this or any other country understands, there is just one argument that they can listen to — and that is power.

You can appeal to them and to their sense of justice. You can argue about right and wrong, but until such time as the working class of America has generated the force to overcome the position, until such time we will have to put up with such outrages as the raid upon the Bureau of the Soviet government, as the imprisonment of Eugene Victor Debs (*Great applause, the audience rising. A voice: "Three cheers for Eugene Debs!"*)

I am sure if Eugene V. Debs should know of this meeting tonight, he would be happy in his cell. Debs is not all. There are others who, perhaps, are not as dear in the hearts of the American working class as Gene, but who, nevertheless, have given the best that is in them in the struggle for the emancipation of the working class. These men have been ruthlessly thrown in jail. Others perhaps will follow; and I think, I think any one of our comrades who has gone to jail would regret to think that we would jeopardize for one instant the class struggle in which we are engaged in order to liberate them. I do not think the Russian Soviet government would care to have us jeopardize in any way the class character of our socialist movement in order to secure for them recogni-

tion from the capitalist government here in America.

I feel quite certain that the work that we have to do, in order to do away with these outrages upon the working class, the thing that we must do is to first conquer our own ruling class.

I feel certain that we can best help the Russian Bolshevik government, I feel that we can best aid in the liberation of political prisoners in America, by building up such a strong and such a revolutionary socialist movement that the capitalist class will tremble in their boots. (*Applause.*)

We have begged. We have supplicated in the past to the courts and the officials of the capitalist class here in America, and have received nothing. We can learn one lesson — that the proletarian pressure swung open the gates of the prison for Karl Liebknecht in Germany, and the proletarian pressure will do a like thing for Eugene Victor Debs and the rest here in America. (*Applause.*)

But this thing is not going to be done by merely making speeches. It is not going to be done by merely attending meetings. We have before us a great, a gigantic task — placing in the minds of the American working class a revolutionary concept of things, giving them a real proletarian psychology. That is the task before us. We have to train them and instill in the men the spirit of the proletarian fight; and we need in this work, not merely men that can speak — they are the littlest in the movement. We need here the hearty cooperation of every member of the rank and file in

spreading to the American working class the revolutionary message.

We must teach them the nature of the slavery that they undergo, and we must organize them to break the bondage of their slavery. We must tell them, we must teach them, that ultimately, in the last analysis, they must take control of society, establish a proletarian dictatorship, and expropriate the [capitalist class]. (*Applause.*)

That is a great and mighty task. It is no task for weaklings; but I can assure you those who understand it at all, approach that task with a light heart. Why should not we? Already the working class controls 2/3 of Europe. Nobody quite knows where the revolution will break out next.

The ruling classes of France, Italy, and England are acting like they were sitting upon a hot lid. (*Applause.*) Soon — nobody can tell just when — the proletarian revolution will break out in one or the other of those countries. It is only a question of time when the working class are going to control all of Europe; and I feel happy, and I think we all should feel glad, that we can be a part of that movement. (*Applause.*)

I would not have lived in any other period in the history of the human race than now. Things have never moved as fast as they are moving now. It is the greatest time in the history of mankind; and we can feel cheerful, and we can feel happy, for over the hills of the future is rising the red sun of the new day. I thank you. (*Applause.*)

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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