

We Will Have 5,000 Open Air Speakers:
Statement to the Press
(June 1, 1908)

I will begin my campaign at Chicago on the first of September and a after a tour through the different cities will wind it up in Chicago two days before election. Every indication points to a large Socialist vote this year. Of course, I do not expect to be elected, but the result of the election will show that in spite of all obstacles the socialist idea is growing and will continue to grow.

We will have 5,000 open air speakers when the campaign opens and the Countess of Warwick¹ is coming here in the fall and will take an active part in it. The 5,000 speakers will speak from trucks or soapboxes wherever there is a chance. I shall speak in New York probably twice at least during the campaign.

It will be noticed in the platform of principles adopted by the party this year that the immediate demands on the government are more comprehensive than in any other declaration of the kind. Before socialism takes the place of capitalism the way will have to be paved for it by gradual reforms.

There is not the slightest doubt in my mind that the Socialist vote this year will be larger than it ever was before in this country. One reason is the large number of people out of work. There are 400,000 railroad people alone who are out of work. I was in Chicago a day or two ago and was sown a line a mile long of mogul locomotive engines which were standing idle. This in itself to my mind is a good argument for socialism.

The Republican Party has thrown its traditions to the one side, and whether the Republican national convention nominates Taft or is stampered for Roosevelt, it is not the solid, homogeneous party it once was. The Democratic Party will probably be united to some extent by Bryan, but the ranks of neither party are so solid as they were four years ago.

Asked what he thought the effect of the organization of the Christian Socialist Fellowship and the Ministers Socialist Conference would be,² Debs said:

I believe the effects will be the spreading of socialist propaganda in new channels which the regular socialist propagandists do not reach. It

will also help to do away with a good deal of the prejudice which has existed in many quarters against socialism among people who without taking the pains to study the matter thought socialism was bad and dangerous. The ministers who are trying to spread socialism are doing so because they sincerely believe, as I do, that socialism is the best condition and are acting as their consciences dictate.

I have the utmost respect for the opinions of those who honestly differ with me. I believe in being tolerant of other people's beliefs and I believe in socialism and am a socialist by conviction because I believe, whether the time is long or short, it is bound to become the system of the future and that matters are tending surely that way.

Debs said that as the South was the weakest as far as socialism was concerned organizers would be sent to the southern states before the campaign. He would make a tour through Oklahoma and Texas in July and August, he said.

Published as "Debs Discusses Campaign Before Leaving for West" in *New York Call*, vol. 1, no. 3 (June 2, 1908), p. 4. A short snippet including a few of these remarks also appeared in the *New York Times* of the same date.

¹ Frances Evelyn "Daisy" Greville (1861-1938) was the London-born wife of Francis Greville, eldest son and heir of George Greville, the fourth earl of Warwick. She was won to socialism by Robert Blatchford and became a member of the Social Democratic Federation in 1904. She was active in socialist causes and philanthropic work. In 1923 she ran for the House of Commons on the Independent Labour Party ticket.

² Debs was a keynote speaker on May 31 at the third national conference of the Christian Socialist Fellowship, held at Carnegie Hall in New York. Secretary of the organization was John Dietrich Long of the independent Parkside Church, Brooklyn.