
Letter to the Editor of the *Chicago Tribune*
(June 21, 1897)

Chicago, June 21 [1897].

Editor of the *Tribune*:—

For the first time in my life I spoke on a question of personal privilege before the convention this morning. I have never before attempted to defend myself from personal attacks, but I decided on this occasion to make an exception to the rule. I also wished to speak more fully in regard to our plans.

Desiring to be correctly quoted I notified each of the newspapers and asked that a representative be sent. I was surprised to find in an evening paper the statement that I favored a “policy of war” and advocated “force, if necessary,” to advance our plan. I was misquoted in the text of the article and misrepresented in the headlines.

The following is a correct report of that portion of the speech which was misunderstood:

Note what I say [addressing the reporters]. We propose to proceed upon perfectly constitutional and peaceable lines and to continue our operations prudently within lawful limitations. There are those who insist that, even if we do, the federal judiciary and standing army will suppress us. This may be true; with all my heart I hope these great questions can be solved in a peaceable and orderly way. If, however, there is an attempt on the part of the federal power to suppress us while in the exercise of our constitutional rights and prerogatives as citizens, then they become the rebels and are arrayed against the flag, and when they send out the troops they will be kept busy on the road across the country, and when they reach the state line of Washington they will find 300,000 American patriots prepared to meet them.

Eugene V. Debs.

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