
Declination of Nomination for President of the United
States at the Convention of the SDP
(March 8, 1900)

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The Rev. F.O. McCartney, of Rockland, Massachusetts, nominated Mr. Debs. The name was perfunctorily presented, but not so received. The delegates cheered and danced. Other shouted, and women wept. Mr. Debs, white and serious, arose and said:

For certain reasons which are sufficient but not necessary to be stated, it is not possible for me to accept the honor you wish to confer on me. Strange as it may seem to you, I say that I can not accept the nomination. I am not considering my own honor, but only that of the Social Democratic Party, of which I am only a simple member. There are conditions of health, known to me, which make it necessary for me to decline.

This was received with loud negative expressions. Near to Mr. Debs was Mrs. Margaret Haile, of Boston. She was weeping, and she begged him to reconsider and accept, as his acceptance meant an impetus that would permanently advance the socialist movement. Others, including the Rev. Mr. McCartney, begged him to reconsider, but Debs sat with a white, immovable countenance, sometimes shaking his head. Job Harriman arose and implored him to accept for the sake of socialism, and offered him a recuperative trip to California. Mr. Debs steadfastly refused.

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Last night [March 8, 1900] Mr. Debs was surrounded by friends in his room at the Occidental. They begged him to accept the nomination, and pledged him a rest before the campaign. It seems, from the explanations of friends, that Debs has been for years applying his earnings to the extinction of the debt against the American Railway Union, and that he did not want to cease when the debt was almost paid.

The debt amounted to several thousand dollars. Debs received assurances that the debt would be taken care of, and that he would receive a rest of three months before entering the Presidential canvass....

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