

I Instinctively Want to Pull the Bell Rope:
Interview with the *Indianapolis Morning Star*
(January 21, 1906)

For once in an interview Mr. Debs talked very little on socialism, although he was on his way to open open one of his greatest lecture tours. From the Carolinas he goes to the anthracite coal fields of Pennsylvania, then up through the Eastern and New England states to Canada, closing the tour at Montreal about the middle of February.

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Although it has been many years since I was a locomotive fireman, whenever I am riding in a train and see a crossing ahead, I instinctively feel as if I wanted to reach up and pull the bell rope. And when I look from the car window and see an overhead bridge, I have an inclination to "duck," just as you see the brakeman, fireman, or engineman on the train. I fired between Terre Haute and Indianapolis, and even yet, although there have been many changes along the route, I can tell almost to the dot where I am by the old landmarks we knew then.

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He would not venture a guess on the possible outcome of the present national gathering [of miners].

My sympathies are most heartily with the miners now in convention at Indianapolis. The men here representing the anthracite fields no doubt are well versed on the situation there but it is hard even for them to know what is best now when the scale under which they are working does not expire for two or three months. What may seem advisable now may not be at all so by the time the agreement expires. Market conditions are said to be rather unfavorable, due no doubt to the mild winter, and this will have great bearing on the result of the convention and joint conference. But the great factor today is the introduction of machinery. The capacity of men has been increased wonderfully, and the great corporations of mine operators must look to cutting down their expenses.

There was a time when the organizations were weaker — when a combat was much like a lot of children in the prize ring. Even if they did come to blows the force was so weak that little damage could be done. Now it is

different. Blows struck today will be felt; such a combat would be a mighty one.

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