

---

# Said By Debs:

## Quotations from Speeches Made on the 1908 Campaign Trail

### by Eugene V. Debs

Published serially as "Said By Debs" or "Said By Genial Gene" in *Appeal to Reason*, whole no. 668 (Sept. 19, 1908), pg. 4; whole no. 669 (Sept. 26, 1908), pg. 4; whole no. 670 (Oct. 3, 1908), pg. 4; whole no. 671 (Oct. 10, 1908), pg. 4; whole no. 672 (Oct. 17, 1908), pg. 4.; whole no 674 (Oct. 31, 1908) pg. 4.

Possibly collected for publication by Theodore Debs.

#### I.

- The courts of the country are the bulwarks of capitalism.
- The Democratic platform is a political omelet made of stale eggs.
- The working class work together and they are going to vote together.
- Roosevelt was elected by the biggest debauchery fund in political history.
- If the workingmen are to be emancipated, they must emancipate themselves.
- The capitalists are the upper classes. That is because they are on your backs.
- Workingmen made the tools and use them. Who has a better right to own them?
- The hour you workers unite, that hour you will become the masters of the earth.

- Socialism is not a scheme or plan. It is the next inevitable step of progress.
- Republicans would stop the rules of economic evolution; Democrats would reverse them.
- Taft has gained what popularity he has by issuing injunctions paralyzing labor unions.
- The ruling class have no use for us, because we know them, and they know we know them.
- We did not begin this class struggle, as others charge, but we are going to end it for others.
- In the light of experience, why should your vote for either the Republican or Democratic parties?
- Taft refers the sufferers at the hands of their employers to the Almighty — but he accepts their votes.
- The employer advertises for a hand, not a head. He has a head of his own and uses it to control your hands.
- Capitalism has had its day and is doomed. Socialism is dawning. It is at work all hours of the day and night.
- There are just two classes in this world. One owns tools it cannot use, and the other uses tools it does not own.
- The capitalists have the tools, which they cannot use. Workingmen have not the tools, without which they cannot live
- We have won all the victories in the world's history for somebody else. Now we are going to win a victory for ourselves.
- Bryan wants to enact a law guaranteeing bank deposits. How does that help us? How many of you have bank accounts?

- Carnegie never made enough steel to furnish the eye of a cambric needle, and yet he is the steel king — and in more senses than one.
- If Carnegie and Rockefeller would take an airship and leave for the moon tonight you would never know it unless you read it in the *Omaha Bee*.
- The Republican stands for the system as it is; the Democratic Party for the system as it was; the Socialist Party for a new system, the Socialist republic.
- The Republican Party does not guarantee you a job. The Democratic Party guarantees you only the bank deposits which you haven't got. The only party which guarantees you a job is the Socialist Party.
- We propose to enfranchise woman. She has been the victim of all the ages. She has no rights. She is politically dead. She is compelled to obey all laws, yet she has no part in the making of them. Man is her lord. She is his property, his chattel. It is said that politics will debase woman. What will debase a woman will debase a man.

## II.

- If there is a crime that should bring the crimson wave of shame to the cheek of man, it is child labor.
- This year will prove to be historical in American politics, for it will mark the political waking of the workers.
- We have today capitalistic class government. Every department is controlled absolutely by the capitalist class.
- There were no tramps fifty years ago. The word had not been coined then. How many tramps are there now?
- It takes study to make a Socialist. In the old parties I have known votes to be made by a glass of beer and a cigar.

- If the logic of Socialism fails to penetrate your mind the logic of capitalism will not fail to penetrate your pocketbook.
- The politician may tell you that the beads of perspiration on your brow are more precious than the jewels of a coronet, but he does not wear that kind of jewels.
- You imagine that Socialists are going to take all you have and divide it among the tramps We don't want your paltry little capital. It would do us no good. We want the earth.
- Why this depression? It comes because the workingman receives only 15 percent of the wealth he produces.
- There is not a single right accorded man that should not be accorded to woman.
- Socialism is not a finality. It is but the next step in our evolution. You can hasten it or retard it, but you can no more prevent it than you can prevent the rivers from finding their way to the seas.
- Do not tell me that there are a large number who are unwilling to work. If that is so, what do you think of a system that produces a large number who do not like work? It is not work that a man shirks from, it is slavery. No human being is willing to be a slave. He may be apparently submissive, but in his heart of hearts he protests.

### III.

- When the big capitalists get through with you, you will be ready for Socialism.
- The man no longer counts. It is the principle for which he stands that counts.
- If the logic of Socialism fails to reach your brain, the logic of capitalism will reach your purse.

- Socialism will restore to the worker the tools of production, which will enable him to be the master of his own job.
- Through all the ages the badge of labor has been the badge of servitude, when it ought to be the badge of honor.
- Society has always been organized and is now organized for the exploitation of the many in the interest of a class.
- The ownership of the machine by a capitalist class which controls the government has separated the worker from the product of his labor.
- Old party orators insult your intelligence by flattering your ignorance, while Socialist orators arouse you to intelligence by telling you of your ignorance.
- The workers are beginning to think and when they think they will act in the class-conscious capacity, and when they do that they will abolish wage slavery.
- You have heard of the monkey dinners the swell set gives. You help furnish the money for those dinners. And those people wouldn't even give you an introduction to one of the monkeys.
- So far from Socialism telling men what it will do for them and with them, it tells them that it will merely establish an industrial democracy and enable them to work out their own salvation under perfect freedom.
- We have reached the present state of dependence on the few rich owners of railroads and manufacturing plants because these men have come to own the machine, and exact their tribute by virtue of that ownership.
- Capitalist politicians accuse us in one breath of endeavoring to stir up class animosities by attempting to array class against class, and in the next breath they say there are no classes in this country.

- The meetings we hold are not of the old conventional gatherings, harangued by old party politicians in the battle for spoils. Politics of the future is to be based upon sound morality and there is to be a conscience in it.
- Even the farmer is becoming a wage worker to a large extent, as the machinery of the farm is growing and making it impossible for a man of small capital to work as extensively and as efficiently as can the wealthy farmer.
- The capitalist system under which we live has about run its historic course, and on every hand we see unerring signs of a change. It has begun to write again its record of bankruptcy and failure, of idleness and distress, of despair and death.
- There is a new spirit abroad. It is expressed in the rising movement of the people. They are tired of the old struggle and the old strife. They are ahunger and athirst for the gospel of the coming day. Such a crusade as this the world has never known. Men, women, and children are consecrating themselves with religious fervor and with an enthusiasm that is irresistible.
- If it were merely the triumph of a party, the encouragement and glory of it all would be but small indeed. It is only when we reflect that it means the freeing of all men and women from economic want and the lifting of the world to a higher and juster plane, the giving of equal opportunity to every child, and the laying of a sound economic foundation that shall give basis for a grander idealism than ever prevailed in this weary world, that the outlook for Socialism is transfigured and glorified by the outlook of a regenerated earth.

#### IV.

- You can't feed a man out of a job on an anti-injunction plank.
- You workers make everything and the capitalists have everything.
- you make the fine silks for your masters' wives and are content to see your own dressed in linsey-woolsey and calicos.

- What the workers on the farms and elsewhere want to know is what they are to get out of improved methods of producing wealth.
- The capitalists can no longer control industry. They can no longer employ the working class. The system has again broken down.
- You argue that you don't want to throw away your vote. That's right. Don't vote for freedom — you might not get it. Vote for slavery — you have a cinch on that.
- We have the highest tariff in the history of the country. We have the gold standard. We live under the full dinner pail administration, and never were there so many out of work.
- We see thousands idle in the midst of plenty, punished, not because they were lazy, but because they have produced more than they can buy back. This intolerable condition is to end.
- A new system, a new era has begun. Socialism comes because nothing else can come. The competitive system has become disastrous; it was useful, for it paved the way to the Socialist commonwealth.
- The great army of the unemployed sweeps from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the Lakes to the Gulf, and when you turn to the chief exponent of the Republican Party he complacently refers you to the Almighty, but is perfectly willing to accept your votes by proxy. Whatever may be said of Mr. Taft, there is nothing the matter with his nerve.
- There are four million children, in their early, tender years, when they ought to be in school and playground and sunshine, now under the hunger whip, working for a pittance which barely suffices to keep their protesting souls in their little bodies. When their cheeks ought to be blooming with the red roses of health, we see in them the pale lilies of death. This is why there are multiplied thousands of failures in the capitalist system.
- The time has come, not for a change of parties, but for a change of systems. When Socialism comes, we shall not live to work, but

work to live; we shall create no surplus value; the badge of labor will be the only badge of aristocracy; wage slavery will be abolished, the class struggle will be ended forever. Having solved the problems of the unemployed, the army of tramps will be mustered out; prisons and insane asylums will be depopulated; woman shall have every right that man enjoys.

## V.

- Workers should not and will not be satisfied until they get all they produce.
- We no more need owners of the railroads and other great machines than we need a king.
- There is machinery enough to produce wealth for all. There is no necessity for poverty or the fear of want.
- Shall this country be owned by the few, or shall it be owned by all and operated in the interest of all?
- In two hours a man can earn his day's wage. All the time he works after that is surplus produced by reason of the tools.
- If you did not put a boycott on your own brains you would not have to deform your hands in order to make a wretched living.
- Socialism is to prevail in the very near future. Machinery is to civilize us in spite of ourselves. This means good to all and evil for none.
- We have the absurd condition today of able-bodied men idle and in want or in fear of want in the midst of machines and full warehouses.
- The Republican Party swept into power upon the issue of chattel slavery. The Socialist Party is going to sweep into power upon the issue of wage slavery.

- Some people say that we are freeborn Americans, but we must work for the man who owns the tools, and the man with the tools is the workingman's master.
- Every few years the workers have produced more than their masters can sell, and they are thrown out of work and compelled to starve until the goods can be sold.
- The workingman pays strict attention to the cultivation of his hands. Under this system he is no longer a man. He is a "hand" — and he is often reduced to a hand-out.
- Eighty-five percent of the production is done by machines owned by capitalists but used by workingmen. This is the cause of the class conflict which is shaking the civilized world.
- It has been charged that the workingmen have no brains, and it is painful to have to admit that there is some truth in the indictment. If they have brains they have been making mighty poor use of them.
- All women and all little children can have all the beautiful things of life if the men, who have the votes, once understand that there is machinery enough to produce all the necessities and luxuries for all.
- The great trouble with the present system is that the workingman does not own his own job. He has no right to live if he has no right to work, and he has no right to work if he does not own his own job.
- When the working class rules there will be no beautiful thing destroyed. On the contrary, homes will increase in beauty, and the cities that now boast of their attractions will seem poor and ugly when compared with what they are under Socialism.
- There is a beautiful time coming for those who work. It is near at hand. Political progress is to be even more rapid in the next few years than ever was industrial progress, and that has gone ahead faster in the past 50 years than in all the thousands of years before.

## V.

- Machinery is to civilize the world in spite of itself.
- Political progress is to be a terrific pace from now on.
- The new order will give the superior man greater opportunities than he has today.
- There never was a movement for reform that did not have its beginning among the lower classes, among the oppressed.
- All great movements have in their inception been marked by abuse of those taking part in them, because they have their start among the undesirables.
- Socialism is not a dream but a certainty of the immediate future. It is not half so dreamy as talking across the seas without wires, or even talking across the seas with wires.
- In the past fifty years man has invented machinery which wrests from nature a great deal more than can be consumed, even if all who work live so that they want for no material thing.
- There will be no trouble about the necessities of life when the working class takes over the machinery. They will have all the best food they need, the best homes that can be built, the best schools — no child labor, no grinding toil — and all the beautiful things will be for everyone.

*Edited by Tim Davenport*

1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR · August 2015 · Non-commercial reproduction permitted.