
Indicted, Unashamed and Unafraind.

by Eugene V. Debs

Published in *The Eye Opener* (Chicago), v. 9, no. 34, whole no. 280 (March 16, 1918), pg. 2.

Sunday morning, March 10 [1918], the press dispatches in the daily papers announced the indictment the day before in the federal court at Chicago of Adolph Germer, National Secretary; Victor L. Berger, member of the National Executive Committee; J. Louis Engdahl, editor of *The Eye Opener*; William F. Kruse, Secretary of the Young People's Socialist League; and Irwin St. John Tucker, writer and lecturer, all of the Socialist Party.[†] The charge against them is seditious utterance and interference with the prosecution of the war.

The indictments were found Feb. 2 [1918], we are told, but secrecy was preserved regarding the proceeding until the administration at Washington could be consulted and its sanction secured before entering the prosecution.

It is thus made clear that this indictment, while ostensibly directed against certain individuals, is in fact the indictment of the Socialist Party by the national administration at Washington.

If Germer, Berger, Engdahl, Kruse, and Tucker are guilty, so are we all. They have but spoken and written what the Socialist Party stands for, and if Socialism, the thing we stand for and shall continue to stand for, is criminal and subject to indictment and prosecution, then the administration, to be logical and consistent, should indict, prosecute, and imprison not only the spokesmen of the party but its entire member-

ship of more than 100,000 social rebels, who in opposing the damnable profiteering system which has precipitated this bloody deluge upon humanity are alike guilty of sedition and disloyalty in the bleared eyes of the autocratic rulers of this country.

The indictment of our comrades, therefore, charging them with disloyalty, disloyalty to the profiteering, plundering, war-waging master class, is the highest proof of their loyalty, loyalty to the victimized, oppressed, robbed, and ravished masses of the people.

I confess to feeling half-ashamed not to have been included in this indictment. I have said and done all the things my comrades are charged with and the administration knows it and has the proof of it, as I happen to know, and yet I am slighted and no call is made upon me by a federal grand jury to defend myself against the charge of disloyalty to the plutocracy of the United States.

The fact that certain editorials of mine, a considerable number of them, posted to the Social Revolution and never reaching it, were systematically "lifted" from the mails, doubtless by the agents of our democratic (!) censorship, may have some significance and perhaps give promise of recognition by some grand jury in the future.

We must understand that the Espionage Act under which our comrades have been indicted is in its essence and intent pure despotism and dic-

[†]- Louis Engdahl was targeted for having previously served as editor of *The American Socialist*, the official organ of the Socialist Party, which ceased publication in 1917 due to its banning from the mails by the Wilson regime. Irwin St. John Tucker was targeted for having briefly served as the head of the SPA's Literature Department — although he quickly left that post due to a personality conflict with Executive Secretary Adolph Germer.

tatorship. Under its ample provisions anybody can be indicted and convicted for anything, and for nothing at all. Any criticism of the administration may be construed as treason and punished accordingly. Anyone in the least objectionable to the warlords may be imprisoned at will. He may be absolutely void of offense but it is an easy matter to put words into his mouth by one of the convenient tools employed for that purpose, as in the case of Kate O'Hare, and sentence him to the penitentiary.

Free speech, free assemblage, and a free press, three foundation stones of democracy and self-government, are but a mockery under the espionage law administered and construed by the official representatives of the ruling class.

I do not sympathize with our indicted comrades, I congratulate them. In fact I almost envy them.

I am surprised only by the blind folly of the ruling masters. Their sublime stupidity has surpassed itself. They have aimed a blow at the So-

cialist Party that will give the party greater impetus and more vital force than could be imparted to it by a thousand of its most effective agitators.

The party indicted is brought in a flash completely to its senses. All its passive spirit is aroused and all its latent power developed. It accepts at once plutocracy's insolent challenge and becomes militant, aggressive, and resolute in its purpose to maintain its position and fight for its principles.

Comrades of America, in the indictment of our leaders we are all indicted! We are indicted for being socialists, for opposing capitalism and its profiteering, plundering plutocracy upon the one hand and its brutal and debauching wage-slavery on the other hand.

The trumpet-blast of the Revolution now sounds the call to duty and as true socialists we must all unite as one, face the enemy without flinching, stand our ground without fear, and fight with all our might for the triumph of democracy and freedom throughout the world.

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport.

Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2006. • Non-commercial reproduction permitted.