
Letter to Frederic Heath in Milwaukee

[excerpt]

(August 6, 1900)

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Returning from Danville, I find your telegram asking if I accepted [the nomination] to [Springfield SDP National Secretary William] Butscher and announcing that your boys are wild. I am sorry to hear this, and all I have to say is that they will simply have to get tame again. There are fools and fanatics on our side as well as the other who would sacrifice the ticket and sink the movement to gratify their miserable spite and resentment. It has been said that war is hell and the same is true of the man who is the candidate of such dwarfish creatures. You know under what circumstances I accepted the nomination.¹ Besides a thousand other objections I had to it, it knocked me out of at least \$2000 financially and from that day to this hell has been popping around my ears in token of grateful appreciation.²

I have made up my mind to do as I please, that is to say, as I think right and if the wild men who nominated me do not like it all they have to do is nominate somebody else to dance on with hobnail shoes.

I have accepted the ratification of my nomination by the Springfield party. I did it in the interest of the Socialist movement compared with which all parties so far developed in this country amount to less than nothing. Had I done otherwise, I would have been as small and contemptible and as unworthy of the position I occupy as those in the other party our people are making so much fuss about. * * *

Published in Howard H. Quint, *The Forging of American Socialism: Origins of the Modern Movement: The Impact of Socialism on American Thought, 1886-1901*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1953; pp. 366-367. Not included in J. Robert Constantine (ed.), *The Letters of Eugene V. Debs: Volume 1, 1874-1912*.

¹ A promise had been made to assist Debs with the outstanding legal debt of the American Railway Union, which he had been slowly in the process of repaying through honoraria generated by scores of paid lectures.

² In round numbers, 40 lost speaking dates to generate \$2,000 would mean an average net to Debs of \$50 per speech.