

# **Fight to the Last!**

## **Speech at Philadelphia Labor Lyceum**

### **(March 19, 1910)**

This is a meeting of the working class, and I feel, therefore, very much at home. You are waging a class fight, and I am not here today to theorize or philosophize. I am here to fight. There is no reason why this strike should not be won absolutely.<sup>1</sup>

There has been a great deal of talk about arbitration. No workingman should use the word "arbitration" in strikes; he should not use it in this strike. There is nothing to concede and there is nothing to arbitrate. I appeal to you workers to stand absolutely for the whole program. Your demand is such a very modest one that if you concede anything you lose everything.

Why are there any workers at work in Philadelphia at this time? Why are they not out today on strike? You are fighting their fight, and they ought to know it. But they are held in restraint by the sanctity of a contract. In a word, a contract with a capitalist is more important than their lives and the lives of their wives and babes. If I had the power I would destroy every such contract in the United States. I have no respect for any contract that is made at the expense of the working class.

### **Conscienceless Piracy**

If there was a time when the working class should be united in one solid phalanx it is right here and now in Philadelphia. For years you have been dominated by as conscienceless a crew of pirates as ever robbed a municipality anywhere.

I am going to speak very deliberately today, and I stand absolutely responsible for every word I utter. I was told, on my way here, that perhaps I might not be allowed to speak at all, but if any steps had been taken to silence me I would not have turned back like a sheep. When the time comes that I can not stand erect like a man and exercise my right to speak for my class I will die right there!

I am not here in the capacity of a leader, nor as an orator, but simply as a workingman. I have earned my right to a place in the working class,

and there is where I belong; there is where I am, and when there is a fight of the working class, here or anywhere, I recognized that it is my fight. I discharge my duty as I understand it. I have said, and I repeat, that you can, if you will, win the strike. Not, however, by showing the white feather; not by being cowards and poltroons but by being men; by standing erect and presenting a solid front, making your demand and standing by it. Don't be afraid to sacrifice, because if you lose you may lose everything; you sacrifice a great deal more in defeat than you do in fighting manfully for your rights.

What are you asking for? Just a pittance of what you are entitled to. You are the Philadelphia Traction Company. Without you there is no such enterprise. You operate it in every essential department, and you are asking for just enough to enable you and your wives and your little ones to live; just enough to provide yourself and them with coarse food, scant clothing, and shelter enough so that you may recuperate sufficiently to enable you to return to your work the next day and perform your dreary round. And so on, day after day, you grind away your life as a wage-slave, until at last, in old age, death comes to the rescue and still the aching heart, lulling the victim of capitalism to sleep.

### **Demands Too Modest**

You are asking for a very small and modest part of what you are entitled to. Stand up for that and concede nothing. If you can not win on that basis you can not win at all.

In the Philadelphia press this morning Mahon<sup>2</sup> is quoted as saying that he is perfectly willing to leave the entire matter of settlement with George H. Earle, Jr.,<sup>3</sup> but I do not believe that he made any such statement, because if any leader would make such a statement, why not place the matter in the hands of the traction company? You would say that Earle is the city's representative, but the traction company is the city. Your City Hall is simply a robber's roost.

It is time for the people of Philadelphia to arouse themselves from their lethargy, their indifference. They have submitted all too long to the indignities of these pirates, these robbers. All these outrages are being perpetrated in the name of the law. And right here let me say that every great crime committed by these pirates is done within the law. Compare this with what happens to a workingman, who, driven by hunger, enters a

railroad yard and steals enough scrap iron to buy himself a ham sandwich. He is arrested, thrown into jail, fined, and then you are told that the majesty of the law has been vindicated! These pirates steal a whole railway system and they are eminently respectable citizens. And then they have the nerve to tell you workingmen that you ought to be perfectly peaceable and law-abiding.

This is your opening, this is your chance, this is your supreme opportunity. I am appealing to you to take advantage of it. Cease to crawl, to beg; stand erect and see how long a shadow you can cast in the sunlight!

### **Two Kinds of Law**

You know that there are just two kinds of rule today. There is a professor at Harvard University who had the moral courage to say so. The economic dependence of the professor in our educational institutions acts as a curb on their tongues; they have to hold onto their jobs. If these professors have courage enough to speak their honest convictions, and these convictions happen to conflict with the interests of the ruling class, they professors profess no longer. They retire to private life. But this professor had the courage to say that there are but two kinds of rule, one being thief rule and the other mob rule. The professor said that of the two he preferred mob rule, and that expresses my sentiments.

There are times when to obey the law is a crime. The revolutionary patriots of the thirteen colonies had no respect for the laws of King George. They were called law-breakers and traitors, and were regarded as undesirables. Yet today you are teaching your children to honor their memory. If it had not been for the courage of these law-breakers in doing this, you and I would still be British subjects instead of American citizens. There is something splendid about the man who has the qualities that enable him to hold his head erect; who faces the world unafraid and alone. It makes no difference what others may say or what others may think, he is invincible in his own mental and moral resources. He takes his stand upon what he conceives to be right, and there he stands, and if he falls he falls standing there; and in due time humanity comes and stands where he stood and erects there a monument in gratitude to his manhood and nobility of nature.

It does not take an educated man, nor a college-bred man to have that simple quality that will permit you to see whether or not this is a righteous

fight. You must say to yourself: "This is my fight; I am not going to play the part of a sneak or a scab; I am going to be true to myself and my conviction of right; I will do my duty no matter what the consequence are." Then you will hear the siren's voice, and if you trace it to its source you will find that it comes from City Hall, where the brigands are in conference. When they meet it is a conference; when you meet it is a mob. They are the makers of the laws. You are the lawless. This is because you, in your ignorance, used your votes to place them where they are. I do not want to use any harsh language. Nothing would suit me better than to tell them face to face what I am saying to you now. But if they were treated as they should be treated before the law upon their merits and in accordance with justice, every one of them would be in a felon's cell today.

### **Settlement or Paralyzed Industry**

I remember the streetcar strikes — there were two of them — in Terre Haute, the city where I live. I happened to be away when the first occurred. They telegraphed to me to hasten home. I broke all my engagements and responded to the call.<sup>4</sup> At that time the company was owned by local capitalists. We gave them just so much time in which to settle everything with us and gave them notice that if they didn't we would paralyze every industry in town. The strike was a success.

A year or so later there was another strike.<sup>5</sup> Again I happened to be away from the city. They again wired me to return. I found that the men were absolutely right in their demands, which were very modest. I said to them: "Stand where you are, we will issue a call and next Saturday we will have a demonstration of the working class along the entire length of Main Street, and show the respectable citizens what this beast, the working class, is. You are such inferior beings, you live in the hovels and the caves on the outskirts of the city. They do not come in touch with you; they can not suffer themselves to be in the same section or vicinity with you. We will now show them the character of this working class beast." We issued a call to all the workers in the city. Promptly the newspapers sent reporters to see me and said that if there was any bloodshed it would be on my head. I said that I could stand it. In the meantime the cars were being run by the scabs.

On Saturday morning, the day set for the demonstration, the workers began to pour in from all directions. Among others there were 6,000

miners. They came in their working and fighting clothes. They fell in line, the procession extending from the river to the city limit. The working class was out in full force, and when the working class is out in full force it is the people. They ran the cars into the barns and sent for me. They asked me upon what terms we would settle, and I said we demanded absolute surrender. They called me into the office and said that they were in a “peculiar position,” that they were perfectly willing to do the fair thing, but they wanted to be let down, but they wanted to be let down decently. I told them that we had no desire to humiliate the company before the public, and asked them what they would suggest. They said let us arbitrate and we will appoint you the fifth member of the board. The company appointed two men, the strikers appointed two men, then they chose me as the fifth. I okayed the grievances of the men and the strike was settled. We arbitrated that strike by giving the men everything they asked. The only fault I found with the men was that they didn’t ask for one-half of what they were entitled to.

It is so often the case that the men who become successful as labor leaders serve the capitalist class. You don’t hear them glorifying me in these parts, although I have been three times candidate for president on the Socialist ticket. You don’t find my name in the capitalist papers. This is as it should be; my name doesn’t belong there. But I want to serve notice upon you that I’m going to put it there before I’m through.

### **A Typical Union Man**

Now I’m going to tell you about a typical union man who figured in this strike in Terre Haute. He had been born into capitalism poor, never had a chance to get any schooling, but he had the true dignity of a man: quiet, unobtrusive, firm — absolutely to his convictions. He was the chairman of the committee. When the strike broke out I formulated the grievances to be presented to the company, gave them to him, and told him to take them to the office of the management, and told him to be firm. He didn’t say a word, but took the papers and went on his errand.

As I told you, the strike was won completely, but after it was all over the manager of the company said: “Debs, the strike is over and I am very glad that it is. I have no fault to find with the terms of the settlement, but I have a personal grievance that I want to lay before you. The chairman of your strike committee at the beginning of the strike came to me. In my

office were present three or four members of the board of directors. Your chairman rushed in without knocking. Keeping his hat upon his head, he thrust out his hand and said: 'Repatore, put your "Hancock" on this document.' I said to him, 'Please excuse me for a moment, I am busy.' 'Come now, no monkey business — put your hand to that.' Now do you think this was fair treatment?"

"I can hardly believe," I said to the manager, "that he would subject you to such harsh treatment. I'll send for him and see what he has to say." I sent for him and said: "Did you say so and so to Repatore?" He said: "Yes, don't you remember, you told me to be firm?" "What do you understand by being firm?" I asked him. "Why, to give him hell from the word jump!"

There's a true type of the working class leader. He had no frills, no furbelows, but he had all the true attributes of manhood. He stood pat; he won out, and if we had more of that type there would be no trouble in winning out everywhere.

If you don't win out here in Philadelphia, it is your own fault. Fight without quitting. And the first thing I would do would be to serve notice upon the rapid transit company that it is a fight to the finish. We have given you all this time, you have spurned us with contempt. We have conceded practically everything. You have granted nothing. In the interest of peace we have all but given our cause away and from this hour forward there is to be a change of deal, there is to be a new program. We withdraw our proposal to arbitrate anything. We serve notice upon you that we are going to fight you along the economic line as well as along the political.

### **Banking on Your Meekness**

I want to tell you men that J. Pierpont Morgan could settle this strike here in Philadelphia in just five seconds. All he would have to do would be to press a button in his office. If you want to settle you have got to fight for it. They are banking entirely upon your meekness, your submissiveness; upon your cowardice. They know that if they wait long enough your case becomes hopeless.

I can read their papers between the lines. I can tell you that in reading one of Earle's interviews I could see what was written between the lines and I want to tell you that if you allow yourselves to be deceived by all this talk of peace and arbitration you will go down in defeat. And the result

will be the blacklist for your bravest men and the destruction of your organization. What in the name of sense are you workingmen of Philadelphia waiting for? If you don't fight now, when do you expect to? Every loyal workingman in this city ought to throw down his tools on Monday and not do another tap of work until this is settled.

If you allow the streetcar men to be defeated your time will come next. Let these men go down in defeat and let their organization be destroyed, let these men who fought most bravely be placed on the blacklist and hounded out of Philadelphia, from city to city, until some seek escape through the back door of suicide; allow all this to be done through your treachery, your cowardice, and you will suffer the penalties which you can not hope to escape. If I could only, by some magic power, talk in my one voice to all the workers in Philadelphia I would paralyze your plutocratic administration.

### **No Concession or Compromise**

The working people of Philadelphia are being held back by mere threads. They are in a peculiar restraint. They are timid and afraid; they do not know what to do. What they need is to stand erect upon a vigorous and absolutely true policy, and not upon one of concession and compromise. This uncertainty is disastrous. The men don't know where they stand or what tomorrow will bring forth.

A very important industrial battle is being fought. Why do you allow yourselves to be destroyed in detachments, regiment by regiment? Why do you not present the solid front of the entire industrial army? If the workers of Philadelphia would come out in one general strike it would be won in two hours' time. Then you would not have to go down on your knees and beg for arbitration that you might gain a few more crumbs of stale bread for your children. You have the power; you only need to exercise it. If you fail it is your own fault and you are responsible for the consequences and you will not escape the penalties.

I appeal to each one of you to go out from here as an emissary of the working class. Go out among the workers, make your appeal to them to be true to the working class in this fight. Suppose you do lose your jobs — it is better than losing your manhood. The man who thinks more of his job than he does of his manhood loses both.

## **Traction Officials and City Officials Are One**

I have read some of the interviews of the officials of the traction company in the city of Philadelphia. You needed discriminate between a city official and a traction official. The official is the official of both. Let us say traction official and we have said all. The Philadelphia city authorities are the clerks of the traction company. You must realize that the traction magnates are few compared to you. You are in the overwhelming majority. If you united for one minute you would not need to fight them. The victory would come without the strike, without the fight.

I have seen some of their interviews, and I can see that they hold you in contempt and don't hesitate to say so. And when I come to think seriously of it I can hardly blame them. They don't like the socialists, but I can tell you that in their heart of hearts they respect them. You don't find us around City Hall down on our knees with our hats in our hands begging for crumbs. They know that we represent a revolutionary movement; that we are not begging, but that we are going to take what we want in due time. They tell us that if we are only law-abiding everything will come our way. Just be quiet and meek while you starve and there will be no trouble. Just starve to death like good law-abiding slaves and they will have no fault to find with you. But do they obey their own laws? Bear in mind that they enact all of hem. They don't consult you any more than if you were sheep or hogs.

Government, so called, is simply a combination of clerks in the service of the capitalists. The government belongs to the capitalists in every department. I know who pulls Reyburn's<sup>6</sup> strings, and all the rest of them. These officials are all alike; they are all the tools of corporate power, that is why they have been placed where they are. They could not serve you if they would. They have been placed where they are because they are subservient to the ruling economic masters. Don't you know that the economic master is always the ruler? In feudal society and in modern society it is the masters who make the laws and the workers who have to obey the laws. But those capitalists do not obey their own laws when the laws interfere with their conspiracies to plunder the public.

## **Sovereigns Seeking Jobs**



Let me give you just one concrete illustration. When they demand that you shall obey the law, when they tell you not to touch the man who takes your job, there is one thing that is impressed upon you, and that is that you do not own a job. When a man takes your job it is because it is not your job. You have no right to defend your job because you have none. Do not let the logic of this proposition escape you in this strike. They tell you that you are sovereigns. Ask them how you can be a sovereign when you don't even own a job. Just think of a sovereign looking for a job!

When you attempt to speak to the man who is about to take your job from you, you violate the law. The courts have so declared. The laws always serve as fetters for the workers, and as instruments in the hands of the ruling class to gain their ends. In this way they have legalized the kidnapping of workingmen. That is what the Supreme Court decided in the case of Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone. It is because of this that Pettibone lies today in his grave.<sup>7</sup> If it had not been for the uprising of the working class all over the land Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone would have been hanged.

The traction magnates have all this power, although they are few in number. They have only to press a button and Reyeburn comes, like a jumping-jack, and performs with alacrity just like a monkey in a circus. Then they press another button connected with the judicial department; then one connected with the councils and the department of justice. Under capitalism all our judicial nets are so adjusted as to catch the minnies and let the whales slip through. Then they press another button and the Department of Public Safety responds. Did you ever hear of such sarcasm as a Department of Public Safety in the City of Brotherly Love?

Public safety! When innocent children are shot dead in their tracks for being in a thoroughfare. And women, and others, who happen to be in the line of the bullets because, perhaps, they happen to be in sympathy with the striking workingmen.

### **Socialists Want No Compromise**

They talk about the department of justice, about the department of safety. It is this organized crime behind which are entrenched the capitalist pirates that the socialists are organized to destroy. We know them, and they know us; and they know that we are not asking for any kind of a compromise. We, however, know them better than they know us. They

think they have defeated us when we are crushed beneath the iron heel of their power. That is where they are mistaken, for every time they crush us we rise with power renewed and increased. When they think they defeat us, they simply screw down the safety valve; they increase the pressure, and when they have screwed down that safety valve far enough, and create a pressure strong enough, there is going to be an explosion.

They keep telling you that you must not do any overt act. All the capitalists and all their pliant tools tell you to observe the peace. Of course this is a battle and in a battle they would have you use nothing stronger than eau de cologne and attar of roses.

Don't strike a blow. Don't object to having your job taken away from you. Don't mind such a small thing as seeing your wife starving or your children hungry and perhaps homeless, about to be evicted because the rent can not be paid. Just remember that you ought to be a law-abiding citizen and allow them to die.

Now let us analyze the solicitude of the capitalist for the observance of the law. Let me show you the hypocrisy of it, which I hope will not offend the tender sensibilities of these traction magnates, who, by the way, are headed by a Wolf,<sup>8</sup> fangs and all. He is very properly named. Now when you sheep fight a wolf don't use your teeth, they tell you. Just allow him to shear you and be submissive.

### **Traction Wolves Tenderhearted**

You know this wolf and he is only one of a type. I have no quarrel with him or with any individual. If it were not for his official capacity I would probably never have heard of him. Now you know this wolf and the other wolves are heartbroken when they hear of a scab being hit with a brick. But it does not disturb them in the least to know that children are ground up in the mills of mammon into rich man's gold. They are born into tragedy; they start on the downward road, and if you trace them a little while along that track you will find them behind the red curtains of a house of shame. All this does not disturb the wolves. But if you dare touch a scab then they cry out that you are breaking the law.

Let me show you how they obey the law when it interferes with their purposes. I am going to repeat a bit of history, but first listen to the inspiring battle cry of one of the greatest of our poets, Shelley:

Men of Labor, heirs of Glory,  
Heroes of unwritten story.<sup>9</sup>

Let this inspiring battle cry be your shibboleth during the remainder of this fight, and keep it up until your cause is crowned with victory.

### **Courts Set Aside People's Will**

Let me show you how they obey the law, and when they talk to you about the law fling this into their teeth. In Colorado in 1899 the miners and smelter men were partly organized, and through their efforts the state legislature enacted an eight-hour law. This was because of the fact that men were dying because they were compelled to inhale the deadly fumes of the ores in the reducing processes. They were working 10, 12, and 14 hours a day, and the people said their workday must be shortened. The legislature responded to the public sentiment and enacted the eight-hour law. Follow this carefully, and when they talk to you about the law tell them this story. Just after this law was placed upon the statute books the supreme court, which consists of judges who are lickspittles and tools of the Guggenheims,<sup>10</sup> and belong body and soul to the Smelter Trust, declared that law unconstitutional.

Now the working class didn't get excited; they didn't go out on strike, but simply said that if that law is unconstitutional they would present an amendment to the constitution. And, in 1902, they had that amendment submitted to the people, and by a majority of 47,600 it was adopted. All of the 100 candidates, both Republican and Democratic, for the legislature stood upon a platform which committed them to vote for the eight-hour law. The majority had ordered their servants, the legislature, to reenact that law. They themselves had just made it constitutional. But the legislature was bought, just as Armour buys mutton, and the legislature refused to enact that law. I said then, I say now, and will always say, that the workers of Colorado should have instituted an insurrection, there and then.<sup>11</sup>

They had appealed to the law and they had been turned away. The people had been insulted and outraged. The capitalists do not only not obey their own laws, but they trample upon them with impunity.

At the head of the Western Federation of Miners stood Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone. I don't believe in anything like hero worship, but it is appropriate that you applaud the names of these men for the way in

which they fought the Mine and Smelter Trust. The Smelter Trust did not have money enough to buy Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone. They didn't have power enough to intimidate them. In spite of all their force and all their threats these men stood true as steel to their class.

The Smelter Trust owned everything in Colorado — the legislature, the courts, newspapers, also the judges and the pulpiteers. At the order of the Smelter Trust, Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone were kidnapped in the dead of night and carried a thousand miles and lodged in jail in Idaho. It was [detective James] McParland who declared that they would never leave Idaho alive. There sits on this platform one of the ablest fighters in that battle for the lives of these three workingmen — Comrade Luella Twining.<sup>12</sup> She was one of those who aroused the workers all over the country, until from coast to coast the slogan “If Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone die, 20 million workers will know the reason why.” It didn't take them long to let go. The capitalist papers had said that these men were redhanded murderers, and that they would be hanged, and they would have been hanged if it were not for the fact that we had something of a press of our own. It was the working people of this country that saved Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone, and what you did for them you can do for yourselves.

This is an example which shows how the capitalists themselves obey the law. Did the Smelter Trust obey the law in Colorado when, after a majority of the people ordered them to reenact the eight-hour law, they refused to do so?

### **Merciless as Hawks to Doves**

They have no respect for the people. They never have had. They talk about laws and democracy. There never has been any democracy. There has never been a time when the people ruled themselves.

After this country freed itself from England it established itself as a republic, where the people were going to rule. Alexander Hamilton had no respect for the people, he held them in contempt. He tried to have the president elected for a life term. He said, just change the name of King to President and tell the people that they are free and they will believe you. He wanted the president to exercise absolute veto power to enable him to repeal entirely and cancel any law that might be initiated by the people. He tried four times to get this clause put into the Constitution, and every time it was put up it was defeated by an overwhelming majority.

Notwithstanding this fact our Supreme Court, which is composed of corporation judges, is steadily increasing its own power until its power is now supreme and final. And a dove might as well appeal to a hawk for protection as a workingman to this capitalist judiciary despotism. I don't take off my hat to any judge that ever walked unless he takes off his hat to me. I don't see any halo around the head of a corporation lawyer after he gets on the bench. After they get on the bench their heads become like chipmonks and their pockets like balloons.

### **Socialists on the Job**

Law-abiding sheep should become law-defying men when that law stands between them and their right. It is the same power you are fighting today, and the socialists are with you to the finish. We are not only preaching the class struggle, but we are with you in your fight. I am with you, I will march with you in the front ranks, and if there are any heads to be clubbed I'll volunteer mine. If you have any red blood in your veins now is the time to show it. I appeal to every socialist here to fight with the carmen. You are not true to the movement unless you do. It is not sufficient to talk socialism, now is the time to show your colors. Come victory or defeat, come jail or the gallows, come what will, you will show your colors, you will prove yourself true, you will inspire the weak, you will strengthen the rank and the file, will develop the moral and physical fiber of the working class. you will bear the revolutionary banner of victory in the city of Philadelphia.

The hour has struck, this is your time: allow it to pass and you will never cease to regret it. This is your opening, this is your chance, this is your supreme opportunity. I appeal to you to take advantage of it. Cease to crawl, to beg, stand erect and see how long a shadow you can cast in the sunlight. Go out side by side, let your shoulders touch, let your hearts throb to the forward marches of the drum in this great battle. Don't turn your faces backward, but press forward, step by step, increasing your powers, developing your strength, until the enemy before you quake in their stolen boots. Keep this up day by day and then within the next three or four days there will be a transformation. Weakness and uncertainty spell disaster.

In closing I appeal to you, to each one of you. I look into your faces, I catch your spirit, and I feel myself expanding in your presence; I am simply the tongue of the working class making this appeal from the

working class to the working class. I appeal to every man, woman, and child that is present, and right here let me say that I am very glad that the women are here, for they have the true revolutionary spirit. If you want to win your fight take your wife by the hand and bring her to the meeting. Bring your wife, bring your mother, bring your sister. Let them all go into the streets, one hundred thousand of them with you, and then let them stop you if they dare.

### **Dressed-Up Degeneracy**

I spoke here a short tie ago, and there was a minister over in New Jersey — I guess you read what he had to say about my address in this hall — he said that I was guilty of high treason; that I ought to be hanged, and that he would be very glad to officiate on the other end of the rope. This comes from a meek and lowly follower of the humble Nazarene, who preached the doctrine that you must love your enemy; that if he smites you on the one cheek turn the other; if you are asked for your coat give your whole suit; if you are asked to walk a furlong walk a mile. No doubt this minister got an increase to his mess of pottage.

The ruling class have always had their retainers, their pulpiteers, their lickspittles. They have them in all our educational institutions. No degeneracy is more repugnant than that which is dressed-up. These servers of the ruling class are simply whited sepulchers. They appear to be men, but they are such in appearance only. They serve the ruling class and feather their own nests; they fawn at the feet of the corporate... O give me the workingman in his overalls and brogans, who is despised because he has a robust manhood that refuses to be bought. I take off my hat to such a man, he is the hope of the world. Looking into his face I feel myself inspired, I see in him an ally and a comrade. I clasp hands with him; I double my own strength. There are many such in Philadelphia and they are the hope of the situation. Come into the line and the revolutionary spirit will thrill and inspire you; and there will be a solidarity that will be economic, and in due course of time it will be political. Then, for the first time, you will be respected, and you will find that you are moving toward emancipation.

Do your part in this struggle: this is your chance. I can not do it for you — you must do it for yourselves. If you are defeated you will have to bear all the penalties of defeat. Let me tell you that just as certain as you

unite your forces; just as certain as you sound the uncompromising slogan, you will win a victory in Philadelphia, the effect of which will inspire the whole working class, and the report of which will sound around the world.

Published as a leaflet. Philadelphia union printer's bug, no publisher or date indicated (probably March 1910). Copy on Papers of Eugene V. Debs microfilm edition, reel 7.

---

<sup>1</sup> Debs appeared in Philadelphia during a strike of streetcar workers against the Philadelphia Traction Company, with Clarence O. Pratt, head of the Philadelphia carmen's association in the chair. The appearance was part of a regularly scheduled tour by Debs of the East, with scheduled appearances in Maryland, the District of Columbia, New Jersey, and New York. The hall in which Debs spoke was packed to the rafters and the doors ordered closed by the police. Thousands who were unable to gain admission congregated in the streets outside.

<sup>2</sup> William D. Mahon (1861-1949) of Detroit was the national president of the Amalgamated Association of Street Railway Employees of America. Mahon headed the union for 52 years, finally retiring in June 1946. A strong advocate of arbitration throughout his career, Mahon was close associate of Samuel Gompers and remained a vice-president of the American Federation of Labor until the time of his death.

<sup>3</sup> George H. Earle, Jr. (1856-1928) was a conservative Philadelphia lawyer and financier deeply involved in the railroad industry. He would become the Republican candidate for mayor of Philadelphia in 1911, narrowly losing to his Democratic opponent.

<sup>4</sup> The first of these strikes began on morning of October 9, 1900, when employees of the Terre Haute Electrical Railway Company walked off the job under the banner of the Central Labor Union. Debs was at that time in the middle of the 1900 presidential campaign tour, however, and his only day home in Terre Haute in October was on the 7th, a open date following his October 6 speech in Indianapolis — that is, *before* the strike actually began. He delivered well-documented speeches at campaign meetings in Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, and points further east every evening for the rest of the month, with his only open date falling on the 15th. Whether Debs's memory fails him here or he consciously fabricates a heroic legend to inspire Philadelphia streetcar strikers, he certainly did not "break all engagements to hasten home." The 1900 Terre Haute strike was ultimately settled by a three member arbitration committee, with the strikers choosing President Van Horn of the state miners' union as their representative.

<sup>5</sup> The second Terre Haute street car strike took place in January 1902. Although details of his ongoing speaking trip are unclear, Debs was reportedly in Michigan earlier in the month before he appeared in town suddenly on January 20 to address a mass meeting of workers on strike against the Terre Haute Electric Company in a stoppage called by the Central Labor Union. The situation had been tense, with damage inflicted to cars attempting to break the strike, resulting in multiple arrests.

<sup>6</sup> John E. Reyburn (1845-1914), a former Republican member of Congress, served as mayor of Philadelphia from 1907 to 1911.

<sup>7</sup> George A. Pettibone of the Western Federation of Miners was first diagnosed with cancer during his sensational trial. After his acquittal he returned to Denver where he underwent surgery for stomach cancer on August 1, 1908, dying two days later at the age of 46.

---

<sup>8</sup> Clarence Wolf (1860-1937), a banker, was vice president of the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company and was regarded by strikers as the source of the company's intransigence in contract negotiations. Wolf was elected as a Republican to the Pennsylvania state senate in November 1908, serving a pair of two-year terms.

<sup>9</sup> Adapted from a couplet in "The Masque of Anarchy" (1819) by Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822). The original stanza reads: "Men of England, heirs of Glory / Heroes of unwritten story, / Nurslings of one mighty Mother, / Hopes of her, and one another; // Rise like Lions after slumber / In unvanquishable number, / Shake your chains to earth like dew / Which in sleep had fallen on you— / Ye are many—They are few."

<sup>10</sup> Meyer Guggenheim (1828-1905) was the patriarch of one of the richest families in the world. Born in Switzerland, Guggenheim emigrated to the United States in the 1840s and made his vast fortune in Colorado silver mining and smelting. He was the father of art collector Solomon Guggenheim, for whom is named the Guggenheim Museum in New York.

<sup>11</sup> There is no record of Debs ever having actually issued a public call for insurrection over this issue.

<sup>12</sup> Luella Twining was a Socialist Party activist who had run for superintendent of public instruction in Colorado in 1904 and a delegate at the founding of the Industrial Workers of the World. She worked as a special correspondent for the *Appeal to Reason* and helped to publicize the arrest of Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone and the trials that followed. She spoke to a number of labor groups at the time on behalf of the Western Federation of Miners, helping to raise funds and consciousness about the affair.