
C.E. Ruthenberg Hurried from Canton Workhouse to Testify in Debs' Free Speech Trial: Prosecution Introduces St. Louis Program Over Objections by Stedman — Government Trusts Boy Office Stenographer with Taking Down Address on which Indictment is Based.

by J. Louis Engdahl

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(CLEVELAND) — The government completed its testimony in the case against Eugene V. Debs Wednesday [Sept. 11, 1918].

The court is yet to rule on the question of whether a record of the indictment and conviction of William Haywood, IWW leader, shall be placed before the jury.

Seymour Stedman, attorney for Debs, announced a few minutes later that the defense also rested its case.

Debs will participate in the arguments of the defense to the jury, said Stedman.

After a consultation between government and defense attorneys, Judge Westenhaver ruled that the argument would be limited to 2 hours and 15 minutes for each side.

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(CLEVELAND) — Grown gaunt and emaciated as the result of many months' imprisonment, but smiling as ever, Charles E. Ruthenberg, member of the Committee on War and Militarism of the St. Louis Socialist convention of April 1917, suddenly was placed on the witness stand here in the trial of Eugene V. Debs, charged with making a speech at Canton on June 16 [1918].

Ruthenberg had been hurried from the workhouse at Canton, where he is serving a year's sentence, as a last desperate effort on the part of the prosecution to get the St. Louis proclamation before the jury that is hearing evidence in the Debs trial. Aided by favor-

able rulings from the court, the government attorneys were successful and the St. Louis war proclamation was read to the jurors.

Candidate for Congress.

Before being sent away for one year, Ruthenberg was city organizer for the Cleveland Socialists. One year ago he was the candidate for mayor and polled a heavy vote. This fall he is their candidate for Congress.

He identified a referendum ballot of the St. Louis majority and minority declarations, and compared it to a version published in *The International Socialist Review*, the former Chicago Socialist monthly.

The prosecution first sought to get the St. Louis proclamation before the jury by placing Clyde Miller, reporter for *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, on the stand. Miller had been sent to Canton to report the Ohio Socialist state convention and Debs' speech.

Miller said he had interviewed Debs in the lobby of a Canton hotel before the meeting.

Debs Denies Repudiation.

"I asked Mr. Debs," said Miller, "if the reports were true that he had repudiated the St. Louis proclamation. He declared these reports were not true. He said he favored the St. Louis proclamation when it was adopted, in spirit and in substance, but that he favored a restatement in the light of recent events, especially in view of the Russian situation."

Miller said he questioned Debs about the conviction of A.L. Hitchcock, Cleveland, and Rose Pastor Stokes, and declared Debs had replied that the conviction of Hitchcock would result in an increase of 25,000 Socialist votes in this city, and that Mrs. Stokes' conviction meant 100,000 more Socialist votes in the nation.

It was on the basis of Miller's conversation with Debs that the prosecution sought to introduce the St. Louis proclamation.

Seymour Stedman, counsel for Debs, objected on the grounds that Debs had not been in attendance at the St. Louis convention. The court refused to exclude the proclamation, which was not read, however, until after Ruthenberg had been put on the stand.

Policies at Variance.

On cross examination by Stedman, Miller admitted he knew there was hostility between the policies of the *International Socialist Review* and those of the Socialist Party.

Through the evidence of Virgil Steiner, aged 20, an office employee of the Hercules Motor Co., Canton, it was brought out that the government had depended on this inexperienced youth to furnish it with a copy of Debs' remarks, and that it was on this incomplete version that the indictment had been based.

Steiner admitted he had left out words, parts of sentences, and even paragraphs; that he had never taken down a speech before; that all of his stenographic work had consisted of writing letters as the result of his office duties.

It was not until E.R. Sterling, lawyer and former court reporter, Canton, was put on the stand that the jurors got any real idea of what Debs had said. Sterling said he had had 7 years' experience as court reporter and that he had been hired by the Socialist Party to take down Debs' speech.

Steiner Missed Much.

He said the inexperienced government stenographer, Steiner, had missed from 25 to 30 percent of the speech.

Miller read his entire transcript of Debs' speech. In a well modulated voice, he clearly and distinctly

put before the jurors the remarks of the famous Socialist orator. It took Miller 2 hours to read the speech, which covered many subjects, going into detail concerning the long struggle of the Socialist Party against kaiserism, pointing out that Roosevelt and the ruling class generally in this country had not discovered their aversion for the Imperial German government until after the inauguration of the war. Debs had a good word to say for all the indicted and convicted Socialists, for the Bolsheviki of Russia, and for the Industrial Workers of the World.

He concluded with:

"In due course of time the hour will strike, and this great cause (the Socialist cause), the greatest in history, will proclaim the emancipation of the working class and the brotherhood of all mankind."

"Gene Never Deserts."

As Miller finished reading, it seemed that the suspense would be broken again by applause from the audience, but the Socialist present succeeded in suppressing their feelings, and Miller went on to read the speech by Marguerite Prevey, introducing Debs. She had referred to him as the best loved and most hated man in America, and that although some Socialists had deserted the movement, she had declared "Gene never deserts."

Miller was recalled and told of a conversation he and other reporters had with Debs following Debs' arrest here. Miller declared Debs repeated he had not repudiated the St. Louis proclamation, but he had said: "If necessary, I'll die for those principles."

Joseph Trindel, Chicago, agent for the naval intelligence bureau, was next called and stated he had attended the national conference of Socialist [state] secretaries at Imperial Hall, Chicago, Sunday, Aug. 11 [1918], and that he had heard part of Debs' speech from that occasion. He recited from memory about 30 words of Debs', which he had taken down in long-hand, and produced a copy of his notes. He admitted, however, that Debs had spoken more than 10 minutes.

Agreement with Hearst.

It was brought out in his testimony that there

was an agreement between the Department of Justice and Hearst's *Chicago Herald-Examiner* to have the Hearst reporters furnish the government with anything that happened at Socialist meetings that they thought would be of interest. Trindel said he had worked with a Hearst reporter by the name of Chapman.

The last witness of the day was a soldier in the draft army, Edward A. Evans, former reporter on *The Cleveland Press*, who had heard Debs' speech at Canton and gave his version of it from notes. He said Debs made a very vigorous speech that aroused considerable enthusiasm.

Despite Department of Justice agents again crowding the corridors of the Federal Building, the second day of the trial passed without any disturbance.

Seven Socialist Fined.

Fines ranging from \$5 to \$25 were paid by the 7 Socialists who applauded Stedman's opening address to the jury Monday [Sept. 9, 1918]. They faced alternatives of from 2 to 5 days in jail. Their hope that they would be let off with a reprimand by the court met with disappointment, as Judge Westenhaver called the demonstrators before him one by one.

M.E. Basista, whom the judge himself ordered arrested, was the first called. He reminded the judge that in a war saving-stamp speech he had likened the Germany autocracy to a snake that strikes without warning. All he asked was that the court warn him as

to a court procedure. When he applauded Monday he was attending his first court session and he was unfamiliar with its ways. He got \$5 or 2 days in jail.

Max Slotorup, printer, said he applauded because he was deeply stirred by Stedman's address. He received the same punishment as Basista. Frank Wells, a machine hand, and Edgar Delaney came next and received their \$5 fine or 2 days' jail sentence.

Mrs. Prevey Fined \$25.

Then Judge Westenhaver called Mrs. Marguerite Prevey, one of Debs' bondsmen, and fined her \$25 or 5 days in jail. She was followed by Mrs. Rose Pastor Stokes, who was a factory girl in Cleveland for 12 years before her marriage to J.G. [Graham] Phelps Stokes.

"I feel that I did a perfectly human thing, your honor," said Mrs. Stokes, "I regretted it immediately. I feel that you can with justice dismiss the offenders with a reprimand."

She, too, however, was fined \$25 or 5 days, as was J.J. Fried, another Socialist, who denied he had even clapped his hands. Mrs. Stokes wanted to serve her jail sentence in preference to paying her fine, but finally all the fines were paid and the demonstrators went back to their places in the courtroom.

Max Eastman, editor of *The Liberator*, is here for the trial. Debs is having an overflow meeting even in court, many being unable to gain admission to the courtroom, which is always crowded to capacity.

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