
Indiana Governor Incites Legion Lawlessness Toward Debs!

by Frederic Heath

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Unsigned article attributed to editor Frederic Heath.

In the issue of *The Indiana Times*, of Indianapolis, for Jan. 12 [1922], appears the following local news item containing a reference to inflammatory speeches by both the governor of the state and also the Indiana American Legion commander, a man named Gregg:

McCray Raps Debs at Post Meeting — State Legion Leader Joins in Attack.

Full naval honors were accorded Gov. Warren T. McCray when he attended a meeting of the George Dewey Post No. 3 of the American Legion at the Chamber of Commerce last night [Jan. 11, 1922].

Gov. McCray, in speaking of Eugene V. Debs, said: "I am sorry — extremely sorry that the one arch-traitor of our country should live in the state of Indiana. *I believe he will be taught a lesson by the American Legion, however.*"

Claude E. Gregg, Indiana commander of the Legion, in a vigorous attack against Debs, said he had challenged the Americanism of the Legion.

The service fund of the Hilton U. Brown, Jr. Post of the Legion was increased by about \$100 by admission to a dance given at the Denison Hotel last night. More than 200 people attended. Announcement was made that the meeting place would be changed from 16th and Illinois Streets to the Board of Trade building.

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Upon learning of these rabid speeches Emma Henry, State Secretary of the Socialist Party of Indiana, wrote the governor the following protest:

Mr. Warren McCray,
Governor of Indiana.

Sir:—

In the city press of Jan. 12 [1922], I notice a report of a speech delivered by you before the John Dewey Post, American Legion. You are quoted as using some very harsh terms and names in your denunciation of Eugene V. Debs,

in particular, and all the Socialists of Indiana, in general; for my part as an American citizen and a citizen of Indiana, I feel that it is to be deplored that we have a man elected as chief executive of this state who will so far forget the high office he occupies, as to use the terms you have been reported as using, *terms which tend to incite lawlessness*. An official of the state who is sworn to uphold the law should be the last person to use language that will *incite to unlawful acts*.

I feel sure you have never read the speech for which Mr. Debs was sentenced to serve 10 years in the federal prison. It would be well for every citizen to read this speech before resorting to vile names. I have the complete speech taken from the court records, which I will furnish you upon request, so you may judge for yourself what the speech contains that is un-American, as you term it.

We Socialists stand for real Americanism, the principles for which our forefathers fought, the rights that are guaranteed to every citizen under the constitution of the United States and the state of Indiana; that is freedom of speech, press, and assemblage. I feel that generally the Socialists understand American traditions as well, if not better, than the average citizen.

We are not in harmony, it is true, with the present system of things, where a few profiteers rule, and the great mass of American workers are on the verge of starvation; not because they are not willing to work, but because they are denied the opportunity under this capitalist system. We do not advocate the destruction of anything; we are for construction, we are for changing the system for the benefit of all.

We believe that instead of the trusts owning the nation, the nation should own the trusts.

Yours for justice,

Emma Henry.

Indianapolis, Jan. 13, 1922.

At present writing no answer has been received from his "excellency."

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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