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# Letter to William Z. Foster in Chicago from Eugene V. Debs in Terre Haute, July 23, 1924

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This letter is not included in the 3 volume selection of Debs' letters edited by J. Robert Constantine and published by the University of Illinois Press.

*The following letter was sent by the late revered Eugene V. Debs to William Z. Foster as a reply to a letter chiding the great Socialist for accepting the National Chairmanship of the party and writing a statement approving of the party's position in joining the LaFollette movement in 1924. Taken together with the statement frequently made by Communists that Debs was sympathetic with their party and was out of sympathy with the leadership of his own party, this letter makes an interesting document in connection with the observance of Debs Memorial Day.*

*[—James Oneal.]*

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July 23, 1924.

Dear Comrade Foster:

Your favor of the 15th inst. was duly received and has been carefully read and considered. Answering I have to say that I am unable to understand why you should regard the statement of my attitude toward the recent conventions at Cleveland [Conference for Progressive Political Action, July 4-5, 1924] as an "astounding document," or why you should conclude that it "will come as a shock to thousands of workers."

I know, of course, that you have a very poor opinion of the Socialist Party — quite as poor as my opinion of the Communist Party — and I can readily understand why it should have suited you far better had the Socialist Party ended its career at Cleveland and disappeared from the scene, or remained dissevered to cut as sorry and dis-

crediting a figure as the Communist Party will in the campaign this year.

That my endorsement of LaFollette under the circumstances seemed “astounding” and “shocking” to you appears not a little strange to me in the light of the fact that the St. Paul convention, dominated absolutely by the Communists, intended, according to some of its chief spokesmen, including [C.E.] Ruthenberg and [William D.] Mahoney, to do that very thing, that is to say, endorse the nomination of LaFollette for the Presidency (the nomination of Duncan McDonald being made “conditional” with that view in end), and it would no doubt have done so had not LaFollette, knowing the record of the Communists and understanding their game, publicly denounced them and positively refused their endorsement.

Mahoney has since declared, according to a press dispatch, that he had been “double-crossed” by the Communists and that the net result of their duplicity and treachery would be a split in the ranks, if not the disruption of the Farmer-Labor Party of Minnesota.

You may be right in your criticism of my position and I may be wrong, as I have been before. Having no Vatican in Moscow to guide me I must follow the light I have, and this I have done in the present instance, as I always have in the past, and I have never yet feared, nor do I now, the consequences of my acts.

The members of the Socialist Party, as far as I know, are entirely satisfied with the position I have taken and the statement I have issued relative to the Cleveland conventions, and I see no reason why I should explain or give an account of myself to the Communists, or why I should have any concern whatsoever about their opinion of my action.

With all due courtesy to you personally, I remain

Yours fraternally,

*Eugene V. Debs.*

*Edited by Tim Davenport*

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