
Letter to S.S. McClure in New York from Eugene V. Debs in Terre Haute, July 22, 1904.

Published in *Appeal to Reason* [Girard, KS], whole no. 452 (July 30, 1904), pg. 1.
This material does not appear in J. Robert Constantine's 3 volume collection,
Letters of Eugene V. Debs.

Terre Haute, Ind.,
July 22, 1904.

Mr. S.S. McClure,
McClure's Magazine,
New York, NY.

My Dear Sir:

Your favor of the 15th inst. returning the MS of my article was received during my absence from the city.¹ I note that you were disappointed with the article and must with equal frankness confess that I am not disappointed at your refusal to publish it. If a statement of absolute facts taken from the official records and made in decorous language is not a "sober" statement it is simply because the facts do not admit of sober treatment. I quite realize that there is "nothing so eloquent as the facts," but when the facts prove the highest public

¹ Reference is to Debs' article written in reply to a piece by ex-President Grover Cleveland in the July 1904 issue of *McClure's Magazine*. Cleveland vigorously defended the federal government's role in the 1894 Pullman Strike in Chicago, which ultimately broke Debs' American Railway Union and sent Debs to jail for contempt of court for having violated the terms of an omnibus injunction issued against him and the union. In his July 15, 1904, letter of rejection, publisher S.S. McClure criticized Debs by saying that "Instead of giving a plain narrative of the strike seen from your point of view, you have taken up most of your space in calling to witness the unfairness of the other side and abusing the same. Now, we should like very much to print an article from you on this question if you would write it very soberly and with the full realization that nothing is so eloquent as the facts; let them speak for themselves."

official of a great nation to have debauched his trust at the behest of corporate capital they may not appear so eloquent to him or to his friends, but they lose none of their charm of eloquence for men whose record and character are such that they can face the facts without fear of dishonor. You know that Mr. Cleveland is the idol of the American plutocracy and you also know the reason why; and I am strongly inclined to think that it is this reason that prompts the rejection of my article rather than the tone or temper in which it is written.

In answering Mr. Cleveland I wrote under great restraint to keep within the bounds of prudent expression and I would rather far have the article rejected than have it appear emasculated, a miserable apology, deserving of contempt. The “facts” in the case of Mr. Cleveland and the railroads is where the objection comes in and not to the manner in which they happen to be presented. In any event I shall not allow Mr. Cleveland’s libel to go unchallenged. I shall simply avail myself of other channels of communication to secure a hearing in defense of the outraged victims of the ex-President’s calumny, and before I have through with him he will wish he had not undertaken to trample upon them when he thought they were crushed beyond the means of self-defense.

I think that the “spirit” of my article would compare pretty favorably with the spirit of Miss [Ida] Tarbell in dealing with Rockefeller and Mr. Lawson’s spirit in dealing with the same gentleman his capitalist confederates. Mr. Cleveland is not a character, nor his record a subject, for the spirit of a saint, and while I would like to comply with your wishes I cannot do so in justice to the subject nor to my own self-respect.

Thanking you in all kindness, I am

Very sincerely yours,

Eugene V. Debs.

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport

1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR · February 2017 · Non-commercial reproduction permitted.
Second Edition. First Edition was 2007.