Eugene Debs, August 20, 1915: Clemency Plea to the Governor

In this letter, Eugene Debs asks Gov. William Spry to grant clemency to Joe Hill. Clemency means lenience or mercy. Eugene Debs was a co-founder of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and ran for president of the United States five times as a socialist. [Changed for easier reading.]

Dear Governor Spry**,**

Please allow me to say a word on behalf of Joseph Hillstrom (also known as Joe Hill). From reports that have come to me from trustworthy sources, I am convinced that there is more than reasonable doubt about the guilt of this unfortunate brother of ours in the cause of labor. He was convicted on circumstantial evidence and denied the right to choose his own attorneys. At the same time, there was definitely a strong bias against him because of his involvement in the labor movement.

Joe Hill is a poet, a writer of songs, a man of soul and a tender and sympathetic nature. The crime of murder is as unthinkable to him as it would be to anyone else like him. For this reason and others I will not trouble you with, I beg you to take a serious look at the case of Joe Hill. If you do, I am confident that you will grant him legal clemency. Joe Hill is not a murderer; he is a man, and the great state of Utah (where murder is so hated) cannot afford to take his life.

Thank you sincerely, for myself and for the working people in whose behalf Joe Hill has labored and suffered and made many sacrifices. I remain,

Yours very truly,

Eugene V. Debs

Link to a picture of the original letter:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1d_nAiwu7N8OBQk1DWdIck9-Q155JvXYR/view