

The Socialistic Labor Party of North America

National Platform

*Adopted by the Fifth National Convention, at Cincinnati, Ohio,
October 5–8, 1885*

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Labor being the self-evident creator of all wealth and civilization, it is but equitable that those who perform all labor and thus create all wealth should enjoy the product of their toil.

But this is rendered impossible by the modern system of production, which, since the discovery of steam-power and since the general introduction of machines, is in all branches of industry carried with such gigantic means and appliances as but a few are able to possess.

The present industrial system is coöperative in *one respect only*, which is: That not, as in former times, the individual works alone and for his own account, but dozens, hundreds and thousands of men work together in shops, in mines, on huge farms and lands, coöperating according to the most efficient division of labor, while the fruits of this coöperative labor are not reaped by the workers themselves, but are in a great measure appropriated by the owners of the means of production.

This system, by gradually extinguishing the middle class of people, necessarily separates society into two classes: The class of the wage-workers, and that of the great bosses.

It brings forth as its natural outgrowths:

The planlessness and reckless rate of production.

The waste of human and natural forces.

The commercial and industrial crisis.

The constant uncertainty of the material existence of the wage-workers.

The misery of the laboring masses.

The accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few.

These conditions which under the present industrial system cannot but become more and more aggravated, are inconsistent with the interests of mankind, and with the principles of justice and true democracy, as they destroy those right which the Declaration of Independence of the United States hold to be inalienable in all men; the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

These conditions shorten and imperil life by want and misery. They destroy liberty because the economical subjection of the wage-workers to the owners of the means of production leads immediately to their political dependence upon the same sources, and finally frustrate the pursuit of happiness, which is never possible when life and personal liberty are constantly endangered.

In order therefore to abolish these humiliating conditions, we strive to introduce the *perfect* system of cooperative production—that is, we demand that the workers obtain the undivided product of their toil.

This being only feasible by securing to the workers control of the means of production,

We demand:

That the land, the instruments of production (machines, factories, etc.,) and all the products of labor become the common property of the whole people; and,

That all production be organized cooperatively, and be carried on under the direction of the commonwealth; as also the cooperative distribution of the products in accordance with the service rendered, and with the just needs of the individuals.

And to realize our demands, we strive by all proper means to gain control of the political power.

The Socialistic Labor Party claims the title, “Labor Party,” because it recognizes the existence of an oppressed class of wage-workers as its fundamental truth, and the emancipation of this oppressed laboring class as its foremost object.

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DEMANDS

For the Immediate Amelioration of the Condition of the Working People.

The Socialistic Labor Party strives for a radical revision of the Constitution and Statutes of the United States, the States and Municipalities, according to the following demands:

a. SOCIAL DEMANDS.

1. The United States shall obtain possession of the railroads, canals, telegraphs, telephones, and all other means of public transportation.

2. The municipalities to obtain possession of the local railroads, or ferries, and to supply the light to streets and public places.

3. Public lands to be declared inalienable. They shall be leased according to fixed principles. Revocation of all grants of lands by the United States to corporations or individuals, the conditions of which have not been complied with or which are otherwise illegal.

4. The United States to have the exclusive right to issue money.

5. Congressional legislation providing for the scientific management of forests and waterways, and prohibiting the waste of the natural resources of the country.

6. The United States to have the right of expropriation of running patents, new inventions to be free to all, but inventors to be remunerated by national rewards.

7. Legal provision that the rent of dwellings shall not exceed a certain percentage of the value of the buildings as taxed by the municipality.

8. Inauguration of public works in times of economical depression.

9. Progressive income tax and tax on inheritances; but smaller incomes to be exempt.

10. Compulsory school education of all children under fourteen years of age, instruction in all educational institutions to be gratuitous, and to be made accessible to all by public assistance (furnishing meals, clothes, books, etc.) All instruction to be under the direction of the United States and to be organized on a uniform plan.

11. Repeal of all pauper, tramp, conspiracy and temperance laws. Unabridged right of combination.

12. Official statistics concerning the condition of labor. Prohibition of the employment of children in the school age, and the employment of female labor in occupations detrimental to health or morality. Prohibition of the convict labor contract system.

13. All wages to be paid in cash money. Equalization by law of women's wages with those of men where equal service is performed.

14. Laws for the protection of life and limbs of working people, and an efficient employer's liability law.

15. Legal incorporation of trades unions.

16. Reduction of the hours of labor in proportion to the progress of production; establishment by Act of Congress of a legal workday of not more than eight hours for all industrial workers, and corresponding provisions for all agricultural laborers.

b. POLITICAL DEMANDS.

1. Abolition of the Presidency, Vice Presidency and Senate of the United States. An Executive Board to be established, whose members are to be elected, and may at any time be recalled by the House of Representatives as the only legislative body. The States and Municipalities to adopt corresponding amendments of their constitution and statutes.

2. Municipal self-government.

3. Direct vote and secret ballots in all elections. Universal and equal right of suffrage without regard to color, creed, or sex. Election days to be legal holidays. The principle of minority representation to be introduced.

4. The people to have the right to propose laws (initiative) and to vote upon all laws of importance (Referendum.)

5. The members of all legislative bodies to be responsible to and subject to recall by the constituency.

6. Uniform law throughout the United States. Administration of justice to be free of charge. Abolition of capital punishment.

7. Separation of all public affairs from religion; church property to be subject to taxation.

8. Uniform national marriage laws. Divorce to be granted upon mutual consent, and upon providing for the care of the children.

RESOLUTION.

WHEREAS, the Socialistic Labor Party of the United States is so far chiefly a propagandistic party;

WHEREAS, it is a good means of agitation to participate in municipal, county, State and congress election; therefore,

Resolved, that the Socialistic Labor Party utilizes this means, and leaves it to the option of the different sections to participate in the elections or not, but it

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urgently recommends to enter into political action only when there is really a prospect of success or at least an opportunity for agitation.

Sections participating in any election shall under no circumstances enter into any combination with any other party as against the Labor Party; all other parties are to be considered reactionary.

[Transcribed by Joh-Paul Catusco for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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