

The Socialist Labor Party

OF NORTH AMERICA.

Platform

Adopted by the Sixth National Convention, at Buffalo, N. Y., September 1887, and approved by a general vote of the party's membership.

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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 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 on with such gigantic means and appliances as but a few are able to possess.

The present industrial system is co-operative 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, co-operating according to the most efficient division of labor, while the fruits of this co-operative 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 capitalists.

This system causes:

The planlessness and reckless rate of production,

The waste of human and natural forces.

The commercial and industrial crises.

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 rights which the Declaration of Independence of the United States holds 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 frustrates 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 co-operative production—that is, we demand that the workers obtain the undivided product of their toil.

This system, however, carries within itself the germs of a new organization of humanity in the modern industrial States, both economically and morally.

By the evolution of this system to the last stage, the proletarianized masses of workers will finally have opposed to them comparatively few industrial despots, and by reason of the unbearable uncertainty of living conditions, the former will be compelled to abolish the wage system, and establish the co-operative society.

The basis of co-operative society stipulates the substitution of public ownership for private ownership of land, instruments of labor (machines, factories, etc.), and with it co-operative production and guarantee of a share in the product in accordance with the service rendered by the individual to society.

The Socialist Labor Party bases its name, “Labor Party,” upon the acknowledgement of the oppression of the class of wage-workers by the class of capitalists.

DEMANDS.

We consider it the first duty of the Government and Legislatures to change the present economical conditions into a co-operative system of society, by proper legislation, and thus avoid a conflict between the

possessors and the non-possessors. For that purpose we strive for the acquisition of political power with all appropriate means.

SOCIAL DEMANDS.

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

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

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

4. Public lands to be declared inalienable. They shall be leased to agricultural labor associations. 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.

5. Legal incorporation by the States of local Trade Unions which have no national organization.

6. Furthering of workmen's co-operative productive associations by public allowances; such associations to be preferred in the placing of contracts for public works.

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

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

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

10. 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.

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

12. 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.

13. Repeal of all pauper, tramp, conspiracy and sumptuary laws. Unabridged right of combination.

14. 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.

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

16. Laws for the protection of life and limbs of working people, and an efficient employers' liability law.

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

POLITICAL DEMANDS.

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

2. 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 to their constitutions and statutes.

3. Municipal self-government.

4. 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.

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.

RESOLUTION.

WHEREAS, The Socialist 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 congressional elections; therefore,

Resolved, To recommend to the members wherever one or more labor parties are in the field, to support that party which is the most progressive; that is, the platform and principles of which come nearest to ours, and at least recognize the conflict between the class of capitalists and the class of laborers; but members shall not be permitted to participate in the founding of new parties, when there is no well-founded reason to believe that the same shall fully recognize our principles.

With regard to the practical application of these tactics, be it provided that if a decision has been made by the local Section or District Organization in the premises, it shall be binding upon the members; and no member shall take part in such political movement if the Section or District has decided against it.