

National Platform

Socialist Labor Party of America

*Adopted by the Thirteenth National Convention,
New York City, April 10, 1912.*

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The Socialist Labor Party of the United States of America in National Convention assembled in New York on April 10th, 1912, re-affirming its previous platform pronouncements, and in accord with the International Socialist Movement, declares:

Social conditions, as illustrated by the events that crowded into the last four years, have ripened so fast that each and all the principles, hitherto proclaimed by the Socialist Labor Party, and all and each the methods that the Socialist Labor Party has hitherto advocated, stand to-day most conspicuously demonstrated.

The Capitalist Social System has wrought its own destruction. Its leading exponents, the present incumbent in the Presidential Chair, and his "illustrious predecessor," however seemingly at war with each other on principles, cannot conceal the identity of their political views. The oligarchy proclaimed by the tenets of the one, the monarchy proclaimed by the tenets of the other, jointly proclaim the conviction of the foremost men in the Ruling Class that the Republic of Capital is at the end of its tether.

True to the economic laws from which Socialism proceeds, dominant wealth has to such an extent concentrated into the hands of a select few, the Plutocracy, that the lower layers of the Capitalist Class feel driven to the ragged edge, while the large majority of the people, the Working Class, are being submerged.

True to the sociologic laws, by the light of which Socialism reads its forecasts, the Plutocracy is breaking through its republic-democratic shell and is stretching out its hands towards Absolutism in government; the property-holding layers below it are turning at bay; the proletariat is awakening to its consciousness of class, and thereby to the perception of its historic mission.

In the midst of this hurly, all the colors of the rainbow are being projected upon the social mists from the prevalent confusion of thought.

From the lower layers of the Capitalist Class the bolder, yet foolhardy, portion bluntly demands that “the Trust be smashed.”

Even if the Trust could, it should not be smashed; even if it should it cannot. The law of social progress pushes towards a system of production that shall crown the efforts of man, without arduous toil, with an abundance of the necessaries for material existence, to the end of allowing leisure for mental and spiritual expansion. The Trust is a mechanical contrivance wherewith to solve the problem. To smash the contrivance were to re-introduce the days of small-fry competition, and set back the hands of the dial of Time. The mere thought is foolhardy. He who undertakes the feat might as well brace himself against the cascade of Niagara. The cascade of Social Evolution would overwhelm him.

The less bold among the smaller property-holding element proposes to “curb” the Trust with a variety of schemes. The very forces of social evolution that propel the development of the Trust stamp the “curbing” schemes, whether political or economic, as childish. They are attempts to hold back a runaway horse by the tail. The laws by which the attempt has been tried strew the path of the runaway. They are splintered to pieces with its kicks, and serve only to furnish a livelihood for the Corporation and the Anti-Corporation lawyer.

From still lower layers of the same property-holding class, social layers that have sniffed the breath of Socialism and imagine themselves Socialists, comes the iridescent theory of capturing the Trust for the people by the ballot only. The “capture of the Trust for the people” implies the Social Revolution. To imply the Social Revolution with the ballot only, without the means to enforce the ballot’s fiat, in case of Reaction’s attempt to override it, is to fire blank cartridges at a foe. It is worse. It is to threaten his existence without the means to carry out the threat. Threats of revolution, without provisions to carry them out result in one of two things only—either the leaders are bought out, or the revolutionary class, to which the leaders appeal and which they succeed in drawing after themselves, are led like cattle to the shambles. The Commune disaster of France stands a monumental warning against the blunder.

An equally iridescent hue of the rainbow is projected from a still lower layer, a layer that lies almost wholly within the submerged class—the theory of capturing the Trust for the Working Class with the fist only. The capture of the Trust for the people implies something else, besides revolution. It implies revolution carried on by the masses. For reasons parallel to those that decree the day of small-fry competition gone by, mass-revolutionary conspiracy is, to-day, an impossibility. The Trust-holding Plutocracy may successfully put through a conspiracy of physical force. The smallness of its numbers makes a successful conspiracy possible on its part. The hugeness of the numbers requisite for a revolution against the Trust-holding Plutocracy excludes Conspiracy from the arsenal of the Revolution. The idea of capturing the Trust with physical force only is a wild chimera.

Only two programs—the program of the Plutocracy and the program of the Socialist Labor Party—grasp the situation.

The Political State, another name for the Class State, is worn out in this, the leading capitalist Nation of the world, most prominently. The Industrial or Socialist State is throbbing for birth. The Political State, being a Class State, is government separate and apart from the productive energies of the people; it is government mainly for holding the ruled class in subjection. The Industrial or Socialist State, being the denial of the Class State, is government that is part and parcel of the productive energies of the people.

As their functions are different, so are the structures of the two States different.

The structure of the Political State contemplates territorial “representation” only; the structure of the Industrial State contemplates representation of industries, of useful occupations only.

The economic or industrial evolution has reached that point where the Political State no longer can maintain itself under the forms of democracy. While the Plutocracy has relatively shrunk, the enemies it has raised against itself have become too numerous to be dallied with. What is still worse, obedient to the law of its own existence the Political State has been forced not merely to multiply enemies against itself; it has been forced to recruit and group the bulk of these enemies, the revolutionary bulk, at that.

The Working Class of the land, the historically revolutionary element, is grouped by the leading occupations, agricultural as well as industrial, in such

manner that the “autonomous craft union,” one time the palladium of the workers, has become a harmless scare-crow upon which the capitalist birds roost at ease, while the Industrial Unions cast ahead of them the constituencies of the government of the future, and, jointly, point to the Industrial State.

Nor yet is this all. Not only has the Political State raised its own enemies; not only has itself multiplied them; not only has itself recruited and drilled them; not only has itself grouped them into shape and form to succeed it; it is, furthermore, driven by its inherent necessities, prodding on the Revolutionary Class by digging ever more fiercely into its flanks the harpoon of exploitation.

With the purchasing power of wages sinking to ever lower depths; with certainty of work hanging on ever slenderer threads; with an ever more gigantically swelling army of the unemployed; with the needs of profits pressing the Plutocracy harder and harder recklessly to squander the workers’ limbs and life; what with all this and the parallel process of merging the workers of all industries into one interdependent solid mass, the final break-up is rendered inevitable, and at hand.

No wild schemes and no rainbow-chasing will stead in the approaching emergency. The Plutocracy knows this—and so does the Socialist Labor Party—and logical is the program of each.

The program of the Plutocracy is feudalistic Autocracy, translated into Capitalism. Where a Social Revolution is pending, and, for whatever reason, is not enforced, REACTION is the alternative.

The program of the Socialist Labor Party is REVOLUTION—the Industrial or Socialist Republic, the Social Order where the Political State is overthrown; where the Congress of the land consists of the representatives of the useful occupations of the land; where, accordingly, a government is an essential factor in production; where the blessings to man that the Trust is instinct with are freed from the trammels of the private ownership that now turn the potential blessings into a curse; where, accordingly, abundance can be the patrimony of all who work; and the shackles of wage slavery are no more.

In keeping with the goals of the different programs are the means of their execution.

The means in contemplation by REACTION is the bayonet. To this end REACTION is seeking, by means of the police spy and other agencies, to lash the proletariat into acts of violence that may give a color to the resort to the bayonet. By its manoeuvres, it is egging the Working Class on to deeds of fury. The capitalist press echoes the policy, while the pure and simple political Socialist party press, generally, is snared into the trap.

On the contrary, the means firmly adhered to by the Socialist Labor Party is the constitutional method of political action, backed by the industrially and class-consciously organized proletariat, to the exclusion of Anarchy, and all that thereby hangs.

At such a critical period in the Nation's existence the Socialist Labor Party calls upon the Working Class of America, more deliberately serious than ever before, to rally at the polls under the Party's banner. And the Party also calls upon all intelligent citizens to place themselves squarely upon the ground of Working Class interests, and join us in this mighty and noble work of human emancipation, so that we may put summary end to the existing barbarous class conflict by placing the land and all the means of production, transportation and distribution into the hands of the people as a collective body, and substituting for the present state of planless production, industrial war and social disorder, the Socialist or Industrial Commonwealth—a commonwealth in which every worker shall have the free exercise and full benefit of his faculties, multiplied by all the modern factors of civilization.

Please report errors to

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