

National Platform

*Adopted by the Seventeenth National Convention,
Broadway Central Hotel, 667 Broadway, New York City,
May 12–14, 1928*

The Socialist Labor Party of the United States of America in National Convention assembled in New York on May 13, 1928, reaffirming its previous platform pronouncements, and in accord with international Socialist principles, declares:

Social conditions, as illustrated by events crowded into the last few years, have ripened so fast that the principles, hitherto proclaimed by the Socialist Labor Party, as well as the methods that the Socialist Labor Party has hitherto advocated, stand conspicuously demonstrated.

The Capitalist Social System has wrought its own destruction. Its leading exponents, even when seemingly at war on principles, cannot conceal the identity of their political views. The absence of dividing lines between the two leading political clearing houses of capitalism—the Republican and Democratic parties; the supineness, almost exultant readiness with which the leading politicians—aspirants for the presidency and other important posts in the Political State—yield themselves to the needs of ultra-capitalism, to the exclusion of the needs of the producing masses, proclaim the inner conviction of the foremost men of the Ruling Class that the Republic of Capital is at the end of its tether.

True to economic laws, from which Socialism proceeds, dominant wealth has to such an extent concentrated into the hands of a select few, the modern industrial autocracy, 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 sociologic laws, by the light of which Socialism reads its forecasts, the industrial autocracy is breaking through its

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republican-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-burly, and the resulting confusion of thought, all the colors of the rainbow are being projected upon the social mists.

From the lower layers of the capitalist class issue demands for reforms designed to check the logical tendencies of capitalism, demands covering the entire range of social visionariness. Overwhelmed by gigantic combinations in industry and finance, the middle and lower sections of the capitalist class clamor for a return of the age of competition. But even if such a return were possible it should not be effected; even if it should it cannot. To the thinker it is self-evident that the system neither can nor will return to what the Industrial Revolution has been gradually sloughing off during a century of progress.

The law of social progress pushes toward a system of production that shall crown the efforts of man—a system which without arduous toil, with an abundance of the necessaries for material existence, will allow leisure for mental and spiritual expansion. The gigantic machine of modern production is a mechanical contrivance which is solving the problem of material needs which has confronted mankind from its infancy. To smash this contrivance and to reintroduce the days of small-fry competition would 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.

From the lowest layers of the property-holding class—layers that have sniffed the breath of Socialism and imagine themselves Socialists—comes the iridescent theory of capturing the machinery of production by the ballot only, with a vague idea of government ownership and operation as the aim. But

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the “capture of the machinery of production for the people” implies the Social Revolution. To imply the Social Revolution with the ballot, without the means of enforcing the fiat of the ballot, in case the Reaction attempts 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, which can result in only one of two things—either the leaders are bought out, or the revolutionary class, to which they appeal and which they succeed in drawing along, are led like cattle to the shambles.

An equally iridescent hue of the rainbow is projected from a layer that lies almost wholly within the submerged class—the theory of capturing the machinery of production for the working class with physical force only and through underground conspiracies. The capture of the machinery of production for the people implies something strikingly different from all previous revolutions. It implies revolution carried on by the masses. For sociologic reasons mass-revolutionary conspiracy is, today, an impossibility, even an absurdity. The trust-holding autocracy may successfully put through a conspiracy of physical force. The smallness of its numbers makes conspiracy possible. The hugeness of the numbers, requisite for a revolution against the trust-holding autocracy, excludes conspiracy from the arsenal of the Revolution, and just as that autocracy at one point of the social circle boldly aims for absolutism and dictatorship in government, so this all but submerged layer at the merging point proclaims its aim to be dictatorship, thus closing the circle.

All these groups have on thing in common: they plant themselves upon the presumption of a continuation of the Political State—a presumption that is at war with logic and social evolution.

Only two programs—the program of Industrial Top-Capitalism and the program of the Socialist Labor Party—grasp the situation.

The Political State, the instrument of class rule and

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oppression, is worn out in this, the leading capitalist nation of the world. The Socialist or Industrial Government 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 Socialist or Industrial Government, being the denial of the class state, is government that is an integral part of the productive energies of the people.

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

The structure of the Political State is based on territorial representation; the structure of the Industrial Government demands representation by industries and useful occupations.

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 Industrial Autocracy has relatively shrunk, the enemies it is raising against itself are becoming numerous. Moreover, obedient to the law of its existence, the Political State not only multiplies its enemies; it has been forced to recruit and group the bulk of these enemies, and the revolutionary bulk at that.

The working class of the land, the historically revolutionary element, is grouped by occupations, agricultural as well as industrial, in such manner that—while the “autonomous craft union,” at one time the palladium of workers, has become a harmless scarecrow upon which the capitalist birds roost at ease—the Revolutionary Industrial Unions will spring logically from the modern organization of industry itself and, casting ahead of them the constituencies of the government of the future, point to the Industrial Governmental Organization.

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

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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 need of profits pressing the Industrial Autocracy harder and harder to squander recklessly the workers' limbs and lives; 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.

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

The program of the Industrial Autocracy is Industrial Feudalism. Where a Social Revolution is pending and for whatever reason is not accomplished, 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, the legislative and executive central directing authority, consists of the representatives of the useful occupations; where, accordingly, the government will be an essential factor in production; where the gigantic machines are freed from the trammels of the private ownership that now turn into a curse the blessings which these machines are instinct with; where, accordingly, abundance can be the patrimony of all who work; where 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 forcible repression. To this end REACTION is seeking, by means of industrial spies and other agencies, to lash the proletariat into acts of violence that may give color to a resort to physical force. By its maneuvers, it is egging the working class on to deeds of fury. The capitalist press echoes the policy, while the pure and

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simple reformers, pure and simple trade unionists, and “revolutionary” visionaries generally, are snared into the trap.

To the contrary, the means firmly adhered to by the Socialist Labor Party is the constitutional method of political action, backed by the industrially and classconsciously organized proletariat, to the exclusion of anarchy, underground conspiracies, 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.

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*Transcribed for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party
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Uploaded August 2002