

National Platform

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Humanity stands today on the threshold of a new social order. The old order—capitalism—is doomed; it is an outmoded system charged with fatal inner contradictions.

On the one hand, since World War II, there have come into being productive industrial and scientific forces which no former epoch in human history ever experienced. On the other hand, there exist unmistakable symptoms of social anarchy, dissolution and decay. “Everything seems pregnant with its contrary.” Automated machinery, gifted with the wonderful power of freeing mankind from want and arduous toil, becomes a menace, intensifying the insecurity of the workers.

It is a grim and portentous fact that for the mass of mankind, that is, for the wage workers who perform the mental and manual labors of society, the future never loomed more threateningly. At the very time when, because of the great upsurge in population, youths are pouring into the labor market in unprecedented numbers, automation is wiping out jobs at the rate of more than 2,000,000 a year. And there is every evidence that this rate will rise as new automation techniques and systems, already completed and tested, spread through America’s offices and factories.

President Johnson has attested that by 1970 “this country, because of increased productivity, will be able to match the output of the 1960s with 20 million fewer workers.”

Against this bleak background, the antipoverty “wars” recently declared by the politicians of both major parties—to

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the accompaniment of much self-glorification—are exposed as hypocritical exercises in utter futility.

The forces under capitalism that breed poverty and that make the lives of workers more insecure, are in the ascendant. Therefore, reform attempts at lessening poverty must inevitably fail.

In opposition to the capitalist politicians with their phony antipoverty “wars,” the Socialist Labor Party proposes a plan, not for lessening poverty, but for its total abolition. We present a summary of the plan here and earnestly urge its serious consideration by all thoughtful voters.

In all previous epochs of human history poverty for the mass of the people was inescapable. There was simply not enough to go around. It was unavoidable that some should suffer deprivation in order that others might have the freedom from want and the leisure in which to develop science and culture.

Not so today. The most luminous fact of our age is this: *There is no longer any excuse whatever for the involuntary poverty of a single member of society.* Material conditions have changed so radically that, far from insufficiency, there is today the material possibility of abundance for everyone, and the promise of leisure in which to enjoy it.

Accordingly, today—right now—the material foundations exist for a world of general affluence, cooperation and social harmony, which is to say, for a Socialist world. In this world, all the means of production, distribution and social services will be socially owned and democratically controlled and administered in the interest of all society. The insane contradiction of poverty in the midst of plenty will be completely eliminated. Private profit, as the objective of human endeavor, will be abolished. Instead, every decision will be determined by human needs and human desires. The ugly, unsanitary workshops of capitalism will be turned into pleasant, sanitary production laboratories. Factories will be designed and constructed to insure the greatest possible measure of safety, health and efficiency.

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Work itself will cease to be an ordeal in tedium, a spiritless repetition of motions for someone else's profits. Wherever possible tasks that are hazardous or strenuous will be mechanized. Where this is not possible, special dispensations will be made, such as shorter hours of work for those performing these tasks. Meanwhile, in this Socialist world, the working day, week and year for everyone will be cut to a fraction of what it is today.

The whole concept of work will undergo drastic change. Education, emancipated from the anti-intellectual conditions and restrictions of capitalism, will be greatly expanded and revolutionized. Every youth will have the widest possible opportunity to develop all his potentialities for living fully, cooperatively and constructively.

In this Socialist world all who perform useful work will receive, directly and indirectly, all that they produce. And this will be equivalent of several times the average income of workers today.

In our Socialist world, democracy will be a vibrant, meaningful reality, not the mask for economic despotism that it is today. There will be no such ridiculous thing as a political government based, as today, on wholly arbitrary and artificial demarcations. (Some of our state boundaries were determined by a king's grant two and a half centuries ago; they are meaningless in the industrial age!) To administer social production in the interests of the people we need an *industrial democracy*, a government based on industrial constituencies.

In this society there will be no capitalist masters, and no political or bureaucratic masters either. We will vote where we work, electing our representatives to administrative and planning bodies on an ascending scale. But note this: The people whom we elect to administrative posts will have the privilege to serve, never the power to rule. For the same rank and file that elects them will have the power to recall and replace them at will.

Unlike the politicians of capitalism, who spend their time

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pulling the wool over the eyes of the workers, the democratically elected administrators and planners of Socialism will be concerned with such practical things as what and how much to produce to insure an uninterrupted flow of the good things of life in abundance; the number of working hours required in the various industries; the erection of plants of production and of educational, health and recreational facilities; the development of new technology; the disposition of machinery; the erection of new housing in the proper places; the de-pollution of streams and lakes; the conservation of resources and the restoration of the natural environment and its preservation in perpetuity.

All that stands in the way of this heaven on earth, a world in which all may enjoy good housing, abundant and nourishing food, the finest clothing, and the best of cultural, educational and recreational advantages, is the outmoded capitalist system.

This is no exaggeration. Nor merely a beautiful dream. It is based on the solid foundation of present facts. Automation, the supreme triumph of technology, has brought this heaven on earth within our reach. Yet, privately owned, as are all productive instruments under capitalism, automation is a blessing only to the capitalist owners; for workers—white collar and blue collar alike—it is a curse, a job-killer, which adds terrifying dimensions to their insecurity and suffering.

Thus the question we face comes down to this: In the words of Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas: *“When the machine displaces man and does most of the work, who will own the machines and receive the rich dividends?”*

The American Constitution, in effect, legalizes revolution. The right to alter or abolish the social system and form of government is implicit in Article V, the Constitution’s amendment clause. The Socialist Labor Party proposes to the American workers that we use our huge majorities at the polls to outlaw capitalist ownership and to make the means of social production the property of all the people collectively.

The Socialist Labor Party proposes further that we workers

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consolidate our economic forces on the industrial field in one integral Socialist Industrial Union to back up the peaceful Socialist ballot with an irresistible and invincible might capable of taking and holding the industries, locking out the outvoted capitalist class, if it defies the victory at the ballot box, and continuing social production without interruption.

The Scottish essayist and historian, Thomas Carlyle, is credited with the following statement: “We must some day, at last and forever, cross the line between Nonsense and Common Sense. And on that day we shall pass from Class Paternalism . . . to Human Brotherhood. . . ; from Political Government to Industrial Administration; from Competition in Individualism to Individuality in Cooperation; from War and Despotism, in any form, to Peace and Liberty.”

We must cross that line some day—why not now? Repudiate the Republican and Democratic parties, the political Siamese twins of capitalism—and reject also the self-styled “radicals” and “liberals” whose platforms consist of measures to reform and patch up the poverty-breeding capitalist system, which is past reforming and patching. Study the Socialist Labor Party’s Socialist Industrial Union program. Support the Socialist Labor Party’s entire ticket at the polls. Unite with us to save humanity from catastrophe—and to set an example in free industrial self-government for all mankind, in affluence and enduring peace!

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*Transcribed for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party
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