

National Platform

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“There is in the land a certain restlessness, a questioning.”

The words were uttered by President Johnson in his January 17, 1968, State of the Union Message. They understated the case.

The American people in 1968 are assailed by foreboding and bitterness, frustration and fear, bewilderment and doubt. It is not the Socialist Labor Party alone that makes this severe assessment. Late in 1967, the National Committee for an Effective Congress issued a report in which it declared:

“At all levels of American life, people share similar fears, insecurities and gnawing doubts to such an intense degree that the country may in fact be suffering from a kind of national nervous breakdown.”

Why? The Socialist Labor Party declares that when a sickness of this scope and intensity grips a nation it signifies that something very extraordinary is taking place, something far greater in a historical sense than division and dissent over a criminal and unconstitutional war, greater even than the crisis in race relations with its dire prospect of urban insurrection and, worse, of genocide.

The Socialist Labor Party declares that what this mortal national—really universal—sickness signifies is a vague and undefined, but mounting distrust in the ability of society *as presently organized* to cope with the problems that have arisen under it.

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It is a serious error to imagine, as most people do, that revolutions occur when the mass of the people are starving and otherwise suffering intense deprivation. On the contrary, experience shows that revolutions occur when expectations of a better, more secure and more happy life are rising—and when these expectations are prevented from being fulfilled by outmoded laws and institutions. “Evils which are patiently endured when they seem inevitable,” wrote de Tocqueville, “become intolerable when once the idea of escape from them is suggested.”

Material justifications for rising expectations abound today on every hand. Since World War II industrial and scientific advances have been phenomenal. Output of the nation’s industries is now more than twice as great as it was in 1950. In the past 10 years it has swollen an incredible 60 percent.

Why, then, in the face of such material progress, do massive poverty and insecurity persist? What explains the dismal failure of President Johnson’s “Great Society” reforms and the “war on poverty” on which billions of dollars have been spent without even beginning to solve a single problem?

The conspicuous failure of reforms, which raised the hopes of many so high when enacted, is not the least contributing reason for the despair, frustration and doubt that pervade this nation.

The Socialist Labor Party declares and proves that the maladies afflicting our society—maladies ranging from the monetary inflation that erodes the living standards of all workers, combined with fierce capitalist resistance to increase wages to offset it, to the frightening surge of crime and violence, from deadly pollution of the natural environment to a crisis in race relations—have, not many causes, but *one* cause. This one cause is a social system—capitalism—that is outmoded, destructively competitive and profit-motivated. The Socialist Labor Party warns that if we keep this outmoded form of society, in which wealth is produced for the private profit of a few, not for the welfare and benefit of the people, catastrophic

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consequences, of which today's fears are a portent, are sure to follow.

The alternative to the rapidly disintegrating capitalist world is a world organized on a sane foundation of social ownership and democratic administration of the industries and services, and production to satisfy human needs instead of for sale and private profit. The alternative to a contradiction-ridden capitalism is a Socialist world of cooperation and human brotherhood.

In this hour of deadly peril when the whole world seems to be trembling on the very brink of chaos and cataclysmic disaster, the Socialist Labor Party appeals to all workers of all races, and to socially minded people generally, to reflect on the logic and downright common sense of a fundamental Socialist reconstruction of society.

Once society—which means all of us, collectively—gains control of the nation's productive facilities, once social production is planned and decisions respecting production are determined by human needs and desires, poverty will be speedily eliminated. The nation's immensely productive resources will be mobilized, not to wage criminal and brutalizing wars, not to enable a small class of capitalist parasites to accumulate mountains of wealth, but constructively to replace slum areas with parks and habitations fit for humans to live in, to purify our polluted rivers, lakes and air—in short, to repossess America from the vandal capitalist class and make of it the heaven on earth it can be and ought to be.

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 geographical 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

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production in the interests of the people, we need an *industrial democracy*, a government based on industrial constituencies.

In Socialist society there will be neither masters nor slaves. 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.

The democratically elected administrators and planners of Socialism will concern themselves 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 various industries; the erection of plants of production and educational, health and recreational facilities; the development of new technology; the planning and rebuilding of cities; the conservation of resources and the restoration of the natural environment and its preservation for all time.

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 material 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 it is a curse, a job-killer, which adds terrifying dimensions to worker insecurity.

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

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The United States 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—and by “workers” we mean all who perform useful labor, teachers, technicians, stenographers and musicians, as well as machinists, assembly-line workers, longshoremen and miners—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 consolidate our economic forces on the industrial field in one integral Socialist Industrial Union to back up the Socialist ballot with an irresistible and invincible power capable of taking and holding the industries, locking out the outvoted capitalist class, and continuing social production without interruption.

Thomas Carlyle is credited with saying: “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 to 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,” the so-called New Left 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 nonpolitical 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
Of America by Robert Bills*

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