

National Platform

*Adopted by the Forty-fourth National Convention,
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The 44th National Convention of the Socialist Labor Party of the United States, assembled in Santa Clara, California, on the 12th day of April 1999, reaffirms its previous national platforms and further declares:

Few sentient people, if any, will deny that the world these days appears to be in a constant state of upheaval. That is reflected in the widespread anarchy, turmoil and conflict, not only in the highly developed industrial nations, but also in the developing nations throughout the world.

The fact that such conditions prevail generally throughout the world, and have prevailed for a long time, logically suggests the presence of a dominant common social factor. That common social factor, the Socialist Labor Party has repeatedly demonstrated, is the capitalist system that does not and cannot work in the interests of the majority. It is a social system in which society is divided into two classes—a capitalist class and a working class. The capitalist class consists of a tiny minority—the wealthy few who own and control the instruments of production and distribution. The working class consists of the vast majority who own no productive property and must, therefore, seek to work for the class that owns and controls the means of life in order to survive.

It is a relationship that forms the basis for an economic tyranny under which the workers as a class are exploited of the major portion of the social wealth that they produce.

However, the beneficiaries and defenders of this economic

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tyranny never tire of declaring that it is the “best of all possible systems”; and they repeatedly hail U.S. capitalism as the “best” of the “best.” Yet, today, after decades of new deals, fair deals, wars on poverty, civil rights legislation, government regulations, deregulations and a host of other reform efforts, capitalist America presents an obscene social picture. Millions, who need and want jobs, are still unemployed despite the official claims that unemployment is at its lowest rate in years. Millions more are underemployed, many not earning enough to maintain a decent standard of living for themselves and their families despite the fact that they are working. The despicable evil of racism is on the upsurge; so, too, is contemptible discrimination against minorities generally. The nation’s educational system is a mess and getting worse. The health system, despite heated debate for years, still fails to meet the nation’s needs. The country’s infrastructure continues to crumble. Widespread pollution of our environment continues. Crime and corruption are pervasive at every level of this capitalist system. Slums and abject poverty abound, and many homeless men and women—even children—roam the streets.

That description is by no means the full picture of horrors and miseries that modern-day capitalism is imposing on society. Over 100 years ago, when the Socialist Labor Party was organized, there were no jet planes, no computers, no nuclear power plants, no satellites and space stations, and no nuclear weapons. Nor was there great concern regarding pollution of the land, air and water on which all species—the human species included—depend on for life. But there was widespread poverty, racial prejudice, discrimination against minorities, spreading urban chaos, brazen violations of democratic rights, the material and economic conflicts that contain the seeds of war, and a host of other economic and social problems. And most, in fact all, of those problems still plague this capitalist society and beset humanity.

These long-standing problems and the failure of numerous reform efforts to solve them or even alleviate them in any

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meaningful degree have imposed decades of misery and suffering on millions of workers and their families. Those deplorable conditions still continue today despite the claims of capitalism's apologists and soothsayers that the nation's "incredible 'eight year' expansion" is bringing prosperity and a sense of security to all levels of U.S. society. That capitalist propaganda—and propaganda is what it is—not only says much about capitalist integrity and honesty, it also reflects a considerable degree of callous indifference for the working-class victims of this ruthless "expansion."

Against this insane capitalist system, the Socialist Labor Party raises its voice in emphatic protest and unqualified condemnation. It declares that if our society is to be rid of the host of economic, political and social ills that for so long have plagued it, the outmoded capitalist system of private ownership of the socially needed means of life and production for the profit of a few must be replaced by a new social order. That new social order must be organized on the sane basis of social ownership and democratic management of all the instruments of social production, all means of distribution and all of the social services. It must be one in which production is carried on to satisfy human needs and wants. In short, it must be genuine socialism.

That is precisely the mission embodied in the Socialist Labor Party's Socialist Industrial Union program—a program calling for both political and economic organization and action. That program also is based upon the SLP's recognition and unqualified acceptance of the fact that the revolutionary change to socialism must be the classconscious act of the workers themselves!

Accordingly, the SLP calls upon the workers to rally under its banner for the purpose of advocating this revolutionary change, building classconsciousness among workers and projecting a program of organization that the workers could implement toward this end. That program also calls for the organization of revolutionary socialist unions. These are

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essential to mobilize the economic power of the workers not only to resist the ever-increasing encroachments of the capitalists more effectively, but ultimately to provide the essential power to enforce the revolutionary demand. Capable of assuming control and continuing to administer and operate the essential industries and social services, they can exercise the power and provide the decisive leverage to “swing” the revolution. Moreover, they have the structure that provides the necessary foundation and structural framework for socialist society. It is the workers who will fill out the new societal framework and make the people’s ownership, control and administration of the new social structure a reality.

We also call upon all others who realize the critical nature of our times, and who may be increasingly aware that a basic change in our society is needed, to place themselves squarely on working-class principles. Join us in this effort to put an end to the existing class conflict by placing the land and the instruments of social production in the hands of the people as a collective body in a cooperative Socialist Industrial Commonwealth. Help us build a world in which everyone will enjoy the free exercise and full benefit of their individual faculties, multiplied by all the modern factors of civilization.

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*Transcribed for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party
Of America by Donna Bills*

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