

Socialist Party Platform--1928

Preamble

We Americans are told that we live in the most prosperous country in the world. Certainly, our natural resources, our mechanical equipment, our physical power, the technical capacity of our engineers and the skill of our workers in farm and factory make it possible for us to attain a level of well-being of which our fathers never dared to dream.

Yet poverty abounds. The owners of our natural resources and industrial equipment and the government which they have made virtually their tool have not given us plenty, freedom or peace in any such degree as we have the right and duty to demand.

Men are hungry while farmers go bankrupt for lack of effective demand for food. Tenant farming has reached a proportion of almost 40 per cent; more than 40 per cent of the value of farm lands is covered by mortgages. Industrial workers are scarcely better off. In good years there are at least 1,000,000 unemployed. By a conservative estimate in these times of stock market prosperity the number has arisen to 4,000,000. About 1/3 of those of our population 65 years of age and upward are at least partially dependent upon some form of charity.

While real wages have risen for certain groups they have risen scarcely more than half the increase of productive power of the workers. And what gains have been made are far from universal as the misery of textile workers and the tragedy of the coal fields—to cite only two examples—abundantly prove. In fact, at the present time a majority of workers obtain a wage insufficient to maintain themselves and families in health and decency. Furthermore the rapid increase in the use of machinery and the growing intensity of work are leading to quicker exhaustion and greater insecurity.

Meanwhile the owning class has been using the government to curtail the power of the workers whose organized might, especially through their unions, has been chiefly responsible for whatever material gains they have made. To curb the workers, civil liberties are denied, injunctions are invoked against union activities and the courts are made the instruments of that class justice of which the Mooney case and the legalized murder of Sacco and Vanzetti were conspicuous examples.

Not only plenty and freedom but peace is endangered by this system under which the many are exploited for the profit of the few. Sons of the workers now die in President Coolidge's infamous little imperialist war in Nicaragua, as they died in President Wilson's similar wars in Haiti, Santo Domingo and Mexico, and above all in that great imperialistic war born of the trade and financial rivalries of the nations which cost our country \$40 billion and hundreds of thousands of lives.

From the wars, waste and cruelty of a system where the rightful heritage of the workers is the private property of the few only the united efforts of farmers and workers of hand and brain, through their cooperatives, unions and political party, can save us. We must make government in cities, states and nation the servant of the people. That requires our own political party. We cannot place our trust in "good men" or political Messiahs.

Bitter experience has proved that we cannot trust the alternate rule of the Republican and Democratic parties. They belong to the landlords, bankers, oil speculators, coal and power barons, in short to the capitalist class which finances them. Under their control the government by what it does and leaves undone, by its calculated inefficiency as well as its repression and corruption, makes our alleged democracy largely an illusion. Corruption is natural under parties which are the tools of the forces of privilege. It has become accepted even by the men who are victims of it.

These things need not be. The Socialist Party offers itself as the political party of the producing classes, the workers in farm, factory, mine or office. It is our political weapon in the class struggle and in its triumph lies our hope of ending that struggle. Our record proves our good faith. As the only democratic labor party in the United States, we stand now as always, in America and in all lands, for the collective ownership of natural resources and basic industries and their democratic management for the use and benefit of all instead of the private profit of the privileged few.

With this ultimate aim in view, the Socialist Party enters the presidential campaign of 1928 with the following program:

Public Ownership and Conservation

To recover the rightful heritage of the people we propose:

1. Nationalization of our natural resources, beginning with the coal mines and water sites, particularly at Boulder Dam and Muscle Shoals.
2. A publicly owned giant power system under which the federal government shall cooperate with the states and municipalities in the distribution of electrical energy to the people at cost. Only when public agencies have full control over the generation, transmission and distribution of electrical power can the consumers be guaranteed against exploitation by the great electrical interests of the country. Public ownership of these and other industries must include employee representation in the management and the principle of collective bargaining must be recognized.
3. National ownership and democratic management of railroads and other means of transportation and communication.
4. An adequate national program for flood control, flood relief, reforestation, irrigation and reclamation.

Unemployment Relief

To relieve the tragic misery of millions of unemployed workers and their families we propose:

1. Immediate governmental relief of the unemployed by the extension of all public works and a program of long range planning of public works following the present depression. All persons thus employed to be engaged at hours and wages fixed by bona-fide labor unions.
2. Loans to states and municipalities without interest for the purpose of carrying on public works and the taking of such other measures as will lessen widespread misery.
3. A system of unemployment insurance.
4. The nation-wide extension of public employment agencies in cooperation with city federations of labor.

Labor Legislation

The lives and well-being of the producers and their families should be the first charge on society. We therefore urge:

1. A system of health and accident insurance and of old age pension as well as unemployment insurance. As long as workers are dependent primarily upon their employers rather than on the community for protection against the exigencies of old age, sickness, accident and unemployment, employers hostile or indifferent to the labor movement will be able to use their private insurance schemes as powerful weapons against organized labor.
2. Shortening the workday in keeping with the steadily increasing productivity of labor due to improvements in machinery and methods.
3. Securing to every worker a rest period of no less than two days in each week.
4. Enacting of an adequate federal anti-child labor amendment.
5. Abolition of the brutal exploitation of convicts under the contract system and substitution of a cooperative organization of industries in penitentiaries and workshops for the benefit of convicts and their dependents, the products to be used in public institutions, and the convict workers to be employed at wages current in the industry.

Taxation

For the proper support of government and as a step toward social justice we propose:

1. Increase of taxation on high income levels, of corporation taxes and inheritance taxes, the proceeds to be used for old age pensions and other forms of social insurance.
2. Appropriation by taxation of the annual rental value of all land held for speculation.

Civil Liberties

To secure to the people the civil rights without which democracy is impossible, we demand:

1. Federal legislation to enforce the first amendment to the constitution so as to guarantee effectually freedom of speech, press and assembly, and to penalize any official who interferes with the civil rights of any citizen.
2. Abolition of injunctions in labor disputes.
3. Repeal of the espionage law and of other repressive legislation and restoration of civil and political rights to those unjustly convicted under war time laws with reimbursement for time served.
4. Legislation protecting foreign born workers from deportation and refusal of citizenship on account of political opinions.
5. Modification of immigration laws to permit the reuniting of families and to offer a refuge for those fleeing from political or religious persecution.
6. Abolition of detective agencies engaged in interstate business.

Anti-Lynching

As a measure of protection for the oppressed, especially for our Negro fellow citizens, we propose:

Enactment of the Berger anti-lynching bill making participation in lynching a felony.

Political Democracy

The Constitution of the United States was drafted in 1787 and was designed to meet conditions utterly different from those prevailing today. In order to make our form of government better suited to exigencies of the times, we propose the immediate calling of a constitutional convention. A modernized constitution should provide, among other things, for the election of the President and Vice-President by direct popular vote of the people, for reduction of the representation in Congress of those states where large sections of the citizens are disfranchised by force or fraud, and proportional representation, and for the abolition of the usurped power of the Supreme Court to pass upon the constitutionality of legislation enacted by Congress.

Credit and Banking

For our emancipation from the money trust, we propose:

Nationalization of the banking and currency system, beginning with extension of the service of the postal savings banks to cover every department of the banking business.

Farm Relief

The Socialist Party believes that the farmer is entitled to special consideration because of the importance of agriculture, because of the farmers' present economic plight and because the farmer is unable to control the prices of what he buys and what he sells. Many of the party's demands, including public development of electrical energy, nationalization of coal and railroads, and reform of the credit system will be of distinct benefit to the farmer. As a further means of agricultural relief, we propose:

1. Acquisition by bona fide cooperative societies and by federal, state and municipal governments of grain elevators, stockyards, storage warehouses and other distributing agencies and the conduct of these services on a non-profit basis.
2. Encouragement of farmers' cooperative purchasing and marketing societies and of credit agencies.
3. Social insurance against losses due to adverse weather conditions, such as hail, drought, cyclone and flood.

International Relations

We are unalterably opposed to imperialism and militarism. Therefore we propose:

1. Immediate withdrawal of American forces from Nicaragua and abandonment of the policy of military intervention in Central America and other countries.
2. That all private loans and investments of American citizens in foreign countries shall be made at the sole risk of the bondholders and investors. The United States government shall not resort to any military or other coercive intervention with foreign governments for the protection of such loans and investments.
3. Cancellation of all war debts due the United States from its former associated powers on condition of a simultaneous cancellation of all interallied debts and a corresponding remission of the reparation obligations of the Central Powers and on the further condition that our debtors reduce their military expenditures below pre-war level. The Socialist Party especially denounces the debt settling policy of our government in favoring the Fascist dictatorship of Italy and thereby helping to perpetuate the political enslavement of the Italian nation.
4. Recognizing both the services and the limitations of the League of Nations, the need of revision of its covenant and the Treaty of Versailles, we unite with the workers of Europe in demanding that the League be made all inclusive and democratic, and that the machinery for the revision of the peace treaty under article 19 of the covenant be elaborated and made effective. We favor the entry of the United States at the time and under conditions which will further these clauses and promote the peace of the world.
5. The recognition of the Russian government.

6. Aggressive activity against militarism, against the large navy and army program of our present administration, and in behalf of international disarmament.

7. Treaties outlawing war and the substitution of peaceful methods for the settlement of international disputes.

8. Independence of the Philippines on terms agreed upon in negotiations with the Filipinos; autonomy for Porto Rico and civil government for the Virgin Islands.