

## **National Platform**

*Adopted by the Nineteenth National Convention,  
Cornish Arms Hotel, 311 West 23rd Street, New York City,  
April 25–28, 1936*

The capitalist system has outlived its usefulness. If progress is to be the order of society in the future as in the past, this outworn system **MUST** give way to a new social order. Social development points in but one direction—to an Industrial Union Government, an administration of things in place of a political rule over men.

The avowed purpose of governments is to insure life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness to the useful members of society. Whenever a given social system, and its corresponding government, fails in or becomes destructive of these ends, it has outlived its usefulness, rendering it imperative for the exploited and oppressed class to organize its forces to put an end to the outworn economic and political system. This historic duty and necessity now confront the working class of America.

Social systems and their corresponding forms of government come into being as results of social and economic forces. The history of mankind has been the history of class struggles, with Progress ever as the aim. Ancient autocracies fell before ancient republics, the slave labor systems gave way to feudalism, feudalism broke down before the onslaught of capitalism. Capitalism, with its concomitant—wage slavery—is the world system which has been the vanguard of progress through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the United States of America capitalism has reached the highest point of development; here also may be traced the most rapid decay.

When a ruling class can no longer live and exploit as

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previously, and the exploited class can no longer be fed and cared for while rendering useful social service, *the hour of Social Revolution has struck.*

At this crucial period, accordingly, the Socialist Labor Party, in National Convention assembled, April 27, 1936, reaffirms its former platform pronouncements and, in accord with international Socialist principles, declares:

For close to a decade now, millions of the working class have had to be fed by the exploiting masters, instead of, as heretofore, feeding and keeping the masters in luxury. The richest country in the world, with the highest degree of productivity in the world, has been turned into a gigantic poorhouse, with vast numbers of its useful and able workers turned into mendicants, suppliants for a hand-out to keep body and soul together. History's pages record no greater disgrace than this.

A decaying system creates nothing so surely as its own grave-diggers. The germs of destruction are active within American capitalism. Competition is the very life of capitalism; markets constitute the indispensable condition for its continued existence.

The early termination of capitalism was clearly indicated when the fact was revealed that a few giant corporations virtually control the entire production and distribution machinery of the nation. "Rugged individualism" has gone by the board. There is no possibility for the "average man" to become a capitalist. The small farmer, the small manufacturer, and the business man with small capital who still hangs on, are perpetually on the verge of bankruptcy. In most cases the farmer is but a tenant farmer or a "sharecropper" working for some banking house; the small business man is but a repair man or an agent of some large corporation.

The markets, foreign and domestic, are becoming extinct. A social system will flourish only while there is room within it for expansion. The possibilities for expansion in the United States of America seemed unlimited during its first 150 years. Ships,

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canals, railroads, bridges, roads, farms, machinery of all sorts were the crying need of expanding and progressing capitalism. This called for millions of workers, skilled and unskilled, in mines, mills, factories, on railroads, on the land, in shops, stores, offices and the technical trades. This, in turn, opened a tremendous market for other commodities—houses, furniture, clothing, food, and the so-called public service industries. “Prosperity” ruled; capitalism was in its full flower.

With the beginning of the twentieth century reaction had already set in. The frontier had gone; internal improvements were approaching a limit and commenced to slacken; American capitalism for a decade had been on a sharp look-out for foreign markets. The era of imperialism was at hand.

In the world market America encountered Great Britain, a formidable rival, the erstwhile “workshop of the world.” Germany, France, Japan were stepping up, with Italy and Russia in the offing. The World War brought the rivals together with a clash. World expansion turned into a battle of “survival of the fittest,” with every one struggling with the view of destruction of all rivals. The *progress* of capitalism had stopped; decay and degeneration had definitely set in.

There was one avenue, however, where progress under capitalism DID NOT STOP, for that avenue and that alone leads to the future, viz., the invention and perfection of machinery. The World War gave this a tremendous impetus which has not relaxed since. As a result, production is keyed up tremendously. The increased productive capacity of the system demands more markets, and when no markets are forthcoming, the abundance of products results in social degeneration and decay.

To bolster up market prices by creating artificial scarcity, millions of dollars’ worth of products have been destroyed—plowed under, or allowed to rot, or burnt or dumped in the ocean—and this was done while millions of workers were poorly housed, underfed and insufficiently clothed. Decay and degeneration of a social system cannot go further than that.

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Ever more and better machinery is the demand of capitalism. As the machines go into a factory, the workers go out. Millions of those who are unemployed today will never again under capitalism have regular, useful employment.

The Socialist Revolutionary hour in America is at hand. For forty-five years the Socialist Labor Party has been moving upward to this historic opportunity. The working class of America cannot afford to, must not, at the peril of its own existence, and that of future generations, allow to slip by this moment of opportunity to free the world from wage slavery.

Where a social revolution is pending and, for whatever reason, is not accomplished, reaction is the alternative. Every reform granted by capitalism is a concealed measure of reaction, exemplified by the NRA, AAA, TVA, CCC, WPA, etc.<sup>1</sup> He who says reform says preservation, and he who says that reforms under capitalism are possible and worth while thereby declares that a continuation of capitalism is possible and worth while. But capitalism has grown into an all-destroying and all-devouring monster that must itself be destroyed if humanity is to live. Fascism, Nazism, Absolutism in government—in short, Industrial Feudalism—are but means in the attempts to preserve capitalism.

American capitalism, along with capitalism in the rest of the world today, is trembling in the balance between decay or progress, reaction or revolution. **THIS IS THE HISTORIC HOUR OF THE AMERICAN WORKING CLASS.**

The class struggle, which rages today, is destined to be the last. There is no exploited or enslaved class below that of the exploited working class. When the workers take possession of the government and the social means of production, they are

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<sup>1</sup> The National Recovery Act, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Tennessee Valley Authority, Civilian Conservation Corps and Works Project Administration were several of the 100 “alphabet agencies” created under the “New Deal” administration of depression era president, Franklin D. Roosevelt. For more detailed information search the Web for “alphabet agencies” or “New Deal.”

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bound to do so in the name of society as a whole. That means the abolition of all classes, the abolition of private property and the inauguration of a Socialist Industrial Republic, where the means of production will be the collective property of society, operated by all able workers, for the benefit of all. Social or collective ownership—administered by an Industrial Union Government of, by and for the workers—of the already socially operated means of production will be the fulfillment of the promise implicit in social evolution throughout the ages!

At this crucial moment in history, the Socialist Labor Party of America, earnestly and deliberately, calls upon the working class of America to rally at the polls under the banner of the Socialist Labor Party, the only Party with a program that meets the needs of the hour, i.e., a progressive and revolutionary program.

The Socialist Labor Party also calls upon all other intelligent citizens to place themselves squarely upon the ground of working class interests, and join in this might and noble work of human emancipation, so that we may put summary end to the existing barbarous class conflict and insane contradictions between unlimited wealth and wealth production, and the poverty and wretchedness suffered by those whose labor created all this wealth.

We, therefore, call upon the workers of America to organize into Socialist Revolutionary Industrial Unions in shop, mine, mill and factory, and on the land, to provide a lever to place the land and the means of production and distribution in the hands of the useful producers as a body organized into a national Industrial Union Administration to take the place of the present outworn political or territorial government.

So shall come into being the Socialist Industrial Commonwealth of Emancipated Labor—a commonwealth in which every worker shall have the free exercise and full benefit of his faculties, multiplied by all the factors of modern civilization.

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

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