

National Platform

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Cornish Arms Hotel, 311 West 23rd Street, New York City,
April 27–30, 1940*

Socialism or Capitalism—that is the crucial issue confronting the workers of America!

Shall we institute a society of collective property, production for use, plenty for all and international peace, or shall we allow predatory capitalism to drag society back into a new dark ages?

The Socialist Labor Party of America, at its 20th National Convention in the City of New York, April 29, 1940, reiterates that capitalism cannot be mended, but must be ended. Indisputable evidence of hopeless social decay is apparent nationally in the concentration of wealth and power, on the one hand, and perpetual mass unemployment, and insecurity among the workers, on the other. Internationally the breakdown of capitalism reveals itself in world chaos—a desperate death struggle between capitalist nations over the world's markets and spheres of influence.

We hold that the existing contradiction between the theory of democratic government and the fact of a despotic economic system—the private ownership of the natural and social opportunities—divides the nation into two classes: the non-producing but owning, Capitalist Class, and the producing but propertiless Working Class; throws society into the convulsions of the Class Struggle; and invariably perverts government to the uses and benefit of the Capitalist Class.

The incompetence of the Capitalist Class and its unfitness to rule any longer stand conspicuously demonstrated. Capitalist Class rule has created slums in the cities faster than it has torn

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them down. It has thrown millions of workers on the industrial scrap-heap barely to exist on the degrading pittance of relief. Its minimum wage has placed the stamp of approval on a starvation wage and in great industrial areas the “minimum wage” has become the *maximum* wage. In its insane efforts to raise prices and create scarcity, it has hailed droughts as blessings and bumper crops as a curse. Through its executive committee, the Political State, it has wantonly destroyed the surplus while millions were ill fed.

Capitalist political henchmen have placated the workers with sops and relief and the promise of jobs with the restoration of production. But when production soared above the 1929 peak, in December, 1939, its staunchest apologists admitted that higher production had been effected without reducing unemployment. In spite of billions spent for relief and additional billions spent to “prime the pump,” in spite of scores of reforms acclaimed as “victories” for the workers, in spite of prodigious programs for rehousing, reclamation, resettlement, and work relief—unemployment and insecurity among the workers are as rampant as ever.

To swell its profits, the capitalist class seeks in the laboratory still newer means of cheapening commodities, new methods of eliminating workers, thus consigning them to permanent unemployment.

Private ownership stands as a solid wall between the useful producers and the product of their labor. The Socialist Labor Party declares that this wall shall be battered down and the wealth of the nation be made available to all who perform useful labor. Under Socialism, machines, collectively owned and operated for the benefit of society, can be made to fulfill the promise of the age and bring an end to unemployment and poverty. Instead of eliminating workers, socially owned and constantly improved machinery will eliminate hours from the working day, giving leisure and affluence to all.

Unable to solve the problems at home, the capitalist class diverts attention from its failures to the anarchy abroad. The

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long anticipated war is now an irrevocable fact. Capitalist democracy is perishing in its flames. The belligerents which boasted the broadest liberties have scrapped the conquests of centuries of struggle for freedom over night. Perceptibly America is being drawn into the bloody vortex. Its exports have shifted from grain, fruit and plows to war-planes, guns and munitions. On this grim traffic is its “prosperity” based. War feeds on commerce; commerce feeds on war. Under the pretext of “national defense” and to a chorus of declamations for peace, its statesmen, New Deal, old deal, liberal and conservative alike, gird the nation for its fateful role. Punchinello-like, the political henchmen of the capitalist class move as their masters pull the strings.

War referendums, pacifism and anti-war resolutions are futile, childish gestures. We hold that, given the capitalist system with its mutual antagonisms and relentless struggle for markets, American involvement in the European war is inescapable. Capitalism means war; one plank of capitalism means the whole of capitalism. To oppose one plank only is to leave all others standing and thus render abortive all seeming success against the monster. It is the capitalist system itself which must be destroyed!

Against this insane social system the Socialist Labor Party raises the banner of revolution and calls upon the working class to organize politically and industrially for the conquest of power.

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION: The Constitution of the United States provides for its own amendment. The Constitution thereby recognizes and legalizes revolution. Our people hold the government in the hollow of their hand. We propose, therefore, that the revolutionary change be effected by the peaceful and civilized means of the ballot.

In presenting the issue—Socialism or Capitalism—and a program for its solution, the Socialist Labor Party stands alone. All other parties, whether Republican, Democratic, “Socialist,” “Labor,” “Progressive,” or “Communist,” propose reforms which

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tend to preserve capitalism but fail to improve the lot of the workers. Therefore, we call upon the toilers of America, in order to implement their hope for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, to cast their ballot for the Socialist Labor Party, for the abolition of the capitalist system.

ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION: Recognizing the simple truth that RIGHT without the MIGHT to support it is useless and meaningless, we call upon the workers of America to organize themselves into integral Socialist Industrial Unions to enforce the demand for collective ownership proclaimed through the ballot. But we at the same time caution the workers that such unions *must be organized*, for none now exist. The C.I.O., A.F. of L., and similar organizations are agencies of capitalism for the reason that they are pledged to maintain the system of private property, and structurally they lend themselves preeminently to furthering of capitalist interests.

Organized *as a class*, along industrial lines, the workers can act instantaneously, and with such momentum that no power on earth can stop them. Only the thoroughly integrated Socialist Industrial Unions can block a brutal reaction, should the outvoted, expropriated capitalists rebel against the explicit decision of the majority.

SOCIALIST ADMINISTRATION: More than an invincible force behind Labor's ballot, the Socialist Industrial Union organizes the workers intelligently *to carry on production*, thus avoiding a chaotic period of transition. Finally, the Socialist Industrial Union becomes *the Government of the Socialist Republic*, supplanting the outworn, reactionary and inefficient capitalist Political State. *Democratically elected representatives* of the industrial constituencies will form an Industrial Union Congress, the duties of which will be the simple ones of directing, coordinating and supervising production for the benefit of all.

Workers of America! The issue of our age can no longer be postponed! Vote for the Socialist Republic! Organize the

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Socialist Industrial Union NOW to put a speedy end to barbarous capitalism. Unite under the banner of the Socialist Labor Party NOW to demand—

THE WORKSHOPS TO THE WORKERS!

THE PRODUCT TO THE PRODUCERS!

ALL POWER TO THE SOCIALIST INDUSTRIAL UNION!

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

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