
Our Platform for the 1916 Campaign: As Drafted by the National Executive of the Socialist Party

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Minority language moved from an appendix and inserted editorially at appropriate point.

Here is the draft of the 1916 Socialist Party platform as it will be submitted to the party membership by referendum. The ballots will go out immediately and the results should be known in 60 days. This draft was originally drawn up by the joint meeting of the outgoing and the incoming National Executive Committees in conference with the Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates.¹ The draft published in the minutes of the National Executive Committee meeting in the "Official Business Supplement," issue of July 1 [1916], was the platform as first prepared and before it was revised. The Socialist Party, as in previous years, is the only party that will have a platform adopted by the rank and file of the party membership.

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Draft of Party Platform.

In the midst of the greatest crisis and bloodiest struggle of all history the Socialist Party of America reaffirms its steadfast adherence to the principles of international brotherhood, world peace, and industrial democracy.

¹ *Outgoing NEC*: Adolph Germer, George Goebel, Jim Maurer, Walter LeSueur, Emil Seidel. *Incoming NEC*: Victor Berger, Morris Hillquit, Anna Maley, John Spargo, John Work. *Presidential ticket*: Allan Benson and George "Kirk" Kirkpatrick.

[Regular plank of majority report:]

The great war which has engulfed so much of civilization and destroyed millions of lives is one of the natural results of the capitalist system of production. Fundamentally it was the desire of competing national groups of capitalists to grasp and control the opportunities for profitable foreign investments and trade which brought about the war, and it is that same desire which prompts the present organized effort to fasten upon this country the crushing burdens of militarism. Not until the capitalist system of production is replaced by a system of industrial democracy will wars for markets cease and international peace be securely established.

[“Alternate Plank” of minority report:]

The great war which has engulfed so much of civilization and destroyed millions of lives is one of the natural results of the capitalist system of production. The Socialist Party as the political expression of the economic interests of the working class calls upon them to take a determined stand on the question of militarism and war and to recognize the opportunity which the Great War has given them of forcing disarmament and furthering the cause of industrial freedom.

An armed force in the hands of the ruling class serves two purposes: to protect and further the policy of imperialism abroad and to silence by force the protest of the workers against industrial despotism at home. Imperialism and militarism plunged Europe into the world war. America's geographical and industrial situation has kept her out of the cataclysm. But Europe's extremity has been the opportunity of America's ruling class to amass enormous profits. As a result, there is a surfeit of capital which demands the policy of imperialism to protect and further investments abroad. Hence the frenzy of militarism into which the ruling class has mad every attempt to force the United States.

The workers in Europe were helpless to avert the war because they were already saddled with the burden of militarism. The workers in the United States are yet free from this burden and have the opportunity of establishing a working class policy and program against war. They can compel the Government of the United States to lead the way in an international movement for disarmament and to abandon the policy of imperialism which is forcing the conquest of Mexico and must, if carried out, eventually plunge the United States into a world war.

The working class must recognize the cry of preparedness against foreign invasion as a mere cloak for the sinister purpose of imperialism abroad and industrial tyranny at home. The class struggle like capitalism is international. The proletariat of the world has but one enemy, the capitalist class, whether at home or abroad. We must refuse to put into the

hands of this enemy an armed force even under the guise of a "Democratic army," as the workers of Australia and Switzerland have done.

Therefore the Socialist Party stands opposed to military preparedness, to any appropriations of men or money for war or militarism, while control of such forces through the political state rests in the hands of the capitalist class., the Socialist Party stands committed to the class war, and urges upon the workers in the mines and forests, n the railways and ships, in the factories and fields the use of their economic and industrial power., by refusing to mine the coal, to transport soldiers, to furnish food or other supplies for military purposes and thus keep out of the hands of the ruling class the control of armed forces and economic power, necessary for aggression abroad and industrial despotism at home.

The working class must recognize militarism as the greatest menace to all efforts toward industrial freedom, and regardless of political or industrial affiliations must present a united front in the fight against preparedness and militarism.

Hideous as they are, the horrors of the far-stretched battlefield of the old world are dwarfed by the evil results of the capitalist system, even in normal times. Instead of being organized to provide all members of society with an abundance of food, clothing, and shelter, and the highest attainable freedom and culture, industry is at present disorganized and conducted for the benefit of a parasitic class. All the powers of government, and all our industrial genius, are directed to the end of securing to the relatively small class of capitalist investors the largest amount of profits which can be wrung from the labor of the ever increasing class whose only property is muscle and brain, manual and mental labor-power.

The dire consequences of the system are everywhere apparent. The workers are oppressed and deprived of much that makes for physical, mental, and moral well being. Year by year poverty and industrial accidents destroy more lives than all the armies and navies of the world.

To preserve their privilege and power is the most vital interest of the possessing class, while it is the most vital interest of the working class to resist oppression, improve its position, and struggle to obtain security of life and liberty. hence there exists a conflict of interests, a social war within the nation, which can know neither truce nor compromise. So long as the few control the economic life of the nation, the many must be enslaved, poverty must coexist with riotous luxury, and civil strife prevail.

The Socialist Party would end these conditions by reorganizing the life of the nation upon the basis of Socialism. Socialism would not abolish private property, but greatly extend it. We believe that every human being should have and own all the things which he can use to advantage, for the enrichment of his own life, without imposing disadvantage or burden upon any other human being. **Socialism admits the private ownership and individual direction of all things, tools, economic processes and functions which are individualistic in character and requires the collective ownership and democratic control of those which are social or collectivistic in character.**

We hold that this country cannot enjoy happiness and prosperity at home and maintain lasting peace with other nations, so long as its industrial wealth is monopolized by a capitalist oligarchy. In this as in every other campaign all special issues arising from temporary situations, whether domestic or foreign, must be subordinated to the major issue — the need of such a reorganization of our economic life as will remove the land, the mines, forests, railroads, mills, and factories, all the things required for our physical existence, from the clutches of industrial and financial freebooters and place them securely and permanently in the hands of the people.

If men were free to labor to satisfy their desires there could be in this country neither poverty nor involuntary unemployment. But the men in this country are not free to labor to satisfy their desires. The great industrial population can labor only when the capitalist class, who own the industries, believe they can market their product at a profit. The needs of millions are subordinated to the greeds of a few. The situation is not unlike that of a pyramid balanced upon its apex. Often times this pyramid tumbles and industrial depression comes. There was such a crash in 1907. If the capitalist owners had been willing to get out of the way, industry could have been revived in a day. But the capitalist owners are never willing to get out of the way. Their greeds come first — the people's needs, if at all, afterward. Therefore business did not quickly revived after the industrial depression of 1907. Mr. Taft was elected to bring good times but in four years failed to bring them. Mr. Wilson was elected to bring good times, but not all of the measures he advocated had the slightest effect upon industry. The European war has brought to this country tremendous orders for military supplies and has created a period of prosperity for the few. For the masses of the people there is but an opportunity to work hard for a bare living, which is not prosperity,

but slavery. As against the boast of the present national administration that its political program, now fully in force, has brought prosperity to the masses, we call attention to the statement of the Federal Public Health Service that \$800 a year is required to enable a family to avoid physical deterioration through lack of decent living conditions, that more receive less than that amount, that nearly a third receive less than \$500 a year, and that one family in twelve receive less than \$300 a year.

The capitalist class for a great many years has been trying to saddle upon this country a greater army and a greater navy. A greater army is desired to keep the working class of the United States in subjection. A greater navy is desired to safeguard the foreign investments of American capitalists and to “back up” American diplomacy in its efforts to gain foreign markets for American capitalists. The war in Europe, which diminished and is still diminishing the remote possibility of European attack upon the United States, was nevertheless seized upon by capitalists and by unscrupulous politicians as a means of spreading fear throughout the country to the end that, by false pretenses, great military establishments might be obtained. We denounce such “preparedness” as both false in principle, unnecessary in character, and dangerous in its plain tendencies toward militarism. We advocate that sort of social preparedness which expresses itself in better homes, better bodies, and better minds, which are aline the products of plenty and the necessity of effective defense in war.

The Socialist Party maintains its attitude of unalterable opposition to war.

We reiterate the statement that the competitive nature of capitalism is the cause of modern war, and that the cooperative nature of Socialism is alone adapted to the task of ending war by removing its causes. We assert, however, that even under the present capitalist order, additional measures can be taken to safeguard peace, and to this end, we demand:

Measures to Insure Peace.

(1) That all laws and appropriations for the increase of the military and naval forces of the United States shall be immediately repealed.

(2) that the power be taken from the President to lead the nation into a position which leaves no escape from war. No one man,

however exalted in official station, should have the power to decide the question of peace or war for a nation of 100 million. To give one man such power is neither democratic or safe. yet the President exercises such power when he determines what shall be the nation's foreign policies and what shall be the nature and tone of its diplomatic intercourse with other nations. We, therefore, demand that the power to fix foreign policies and conduct diplomatic negotiations shall be lodged in the Congress and shall be exercised publicly, the people reserving the right by referendum to order Congress, at any time, to change its foreign policy.

(3) That no war shall be declared or waged by the United States without a referendum vote of the entire people, except for the purpose of repelling invasion.

(4) That the Monroe Doctrine shall be immediately abandoned as a danger so great that even its advocates are agreed that it constitutes perhaps our greatest single danger of war. The Monroe Doctrine was originally intended to safeguard the peace of the United States. Though the Doctrine has changed from a safeguard to a menace, the capitalist class still defends it for the reason that our great capitalists desire to retain South and Central America as their private trade preserve. We favor the cultivation of social, industrial, and political friendship with all other nations in the western hemisphere, as an approach to a world confederation of nations, but we oppose the Monroe Doctrine because it takes from our hands the peace of America and places it in the custody of any nation that would attack the sovereignty of any state in the western world.

(5) That the independence of the Philippine Islands be immediately recognized as a measure of justice both to the Filipinos and to ourselves. The Filipinos are entitled to self-government; we are entitled to be freed from the necessity of building and maintaining enough dreadnoughts to defend them in the event of war.

(6) The Government of the United States shall call a congress of all neutral nations to mediate between the belligerent powers in an effort to establish an immediate and lasting peace without indemnities, or forcible annexation of territory, and based on a binding and enforceable international treaty, which shall provide for concerted disarmament on land and at sea and for an International Congress with power to adjust all disputes between nations, and which shall guarantee freedom and equal rights to all oppressed nations and races.

Working Program.

As general measures calculated to strengthen the working class in the fight for the realization of its ultimate aim, the Cooperative Commonwealth, and to increase its power of resistance against capitalist oppression, we advocate and pledge ourselves and our elected officers to the following program:

Political Demands.

1. Unrestricted and equal suffrage for men and women.
2. The immediate adoption of the so-called "Susan B. Anthony amendment" to the Constitution of the United States granting the suffrage to women on equal terms with men.
3. The adoption of the initiative, referendum, and recall and of proportional representation, nationally as well as locally.
4. The abolition of the Senate and of the veto power of the President.
5. The election of the President and Vice-President by direct vote of the people.
6. The abolition of the present restriction upon the amendment of the constitution so that the instrument may be made amendable by a majority of voters in the country.
7. The calling of a convention for the revision of the Constitution of the United States.
8. The abolition of the power usurped by the Supreme Court of the United States to pass upon the constitutionality of legislation enacted by Congress. National laws to be repealed only by act of Congress or by a referendum vote of the whole people.
9. The immediate curbing of the power of the courts to issue injunctions.
10. The election of all Judges of the United States Courts for short terms.
11. The free administration of the law.
12. The granting of the right of suffrage in the District of Columbia with representation in Congress and a democratic form of municipal government for purely local affairs.

13. The extension of democratic government to all United States territory

14. The freedom of press, speech, and assemblage.

15. The increase of the rates of the present income tax and corporation tax and the extension of inheritance taxes, graduated in proportion to the value of the estate and to nearness of kin — the proceeds of these taxes to be employed in the socialization of industry.

16. The enactment of further measures for general education and particularly for vocation education in useful pursuits. The Bureau of Education to be made a department.

17. The enactment of further measures for the conservation of health and the creation of an independent department of health.

18. The abolition of the monopoly ownership of patents and the substitution of collective ownership, with direct rewards to inventors by premiums or royalties.

Collective Ownership.

1. The collective ownership and democratic management of railroads, telegraphs and telephones, express service, steamboat lines, and all other social means of transportation and communication and of all large-scale industries.

2. The immediate acquirement by the municipalities, the states, or the federal government of all grain elevators, stockyards, storage warehouses, and other distributing agencies in order to relieve the farmer from the extortionate charges of the middlemen and to reduce the present high cost of living.

3. The extension of the public domain to include mines, quarries, oil wells, forests, and water power.

4. The further conservation and development of natural resources for the use and benefit of the people:

(a) By scientific forestation and timber protection.

(b) By the reclamation of arid and swamp tracts.

(c) By the storage of flood waters and the utilization of water power.

(d) By the stoppage of the present extravagant waste of the soil and of the products of mines and oil wells.

(e) By the development of highway and waterway systems.

5. The collective ownership of land wherever practicable and in cases where such ownership is impracticable, the appropriation by taxation of the annual rental value of all land held for speculation or exploitation.

6. All currency shall be issued by the Government of the United States and shall be legal tender for the payment of taxes and import duties and for the discharge of public and private debts. The Government shall lend money on bonds to counties and municipalities at a nominal rate of interest for the purpose of taking over or establishing public utilities and for building or maintaining public roads and highways, and public schools — up to 25 percent of the assessed valuation of such counties or municipalities. Said bonds are to be repaid in twenty equal and annual installments, and the currency issued for that purpose by the government is to be cancelled and destroyed seriatim as the debt is repaid. All banks and banking institutions shall be owned by the Government of the United States or by the States.

7. Government relief of the unemployed by the extension of all useful public works. All persons employed on such work to be engaged directly by the government under a workday of not more than 8 hours and at not less than the prevailing union wages. The government also to establish employment bureaus; to lend money to states and municipalities without interest for the purpose of carrying on public works, to contribute money to unemployment funds of labor unions and other organizations of workers, and to take such other measures within its powers as will lessen the widespread misery of the workers caused by the misrule of the capitalist class.

Industrial Demands.

The conservation of human resources, particularly of the lives and well-being of the workers and their families:

1. By shortening the workday in keeping with the increased productiveness of machinery.

2. By securing the freedom of political and economic organization and activities.

3. By securing to every worker a rest period of not less than a day and a half a week.

4. By securing a more effective inspection of workshops, factories, and mines.
5. By forbidding the employment of children under 18 years of age.
6. By forbidding the interstate transportation of the products of child labor and of all uninspected factories and mines.

Minority Report.

Substitute for that part of the second paragraph of the Preamble of the Majority Report, commencing with the word “fundamentally” and ending with the last word of that paragraph:

*[“Alternate Plank” text moved above
to appropriate insertion point.]*

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport

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