
On the Proposed National Platform

by Eugene V. Debs

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Every member ought to read carefully the draft of the new platform of the Socialist Party recently submitted to the party membership for final action. The importance to the party and to our propaganda of a sound platform, a clear and ringing declaration of what the party stands for and what it stands against, cannot be overestimated.

The platform now before us doubtless had the most careful thought and conscientious attention of the committee that framed it and it is certainly well written, its propositions are clearly stated, and its indictment of capitalism and militarism strongly drawn; yet it would be expecting too much to find it free from objection.

My own objections are three in number and are herewith submitted as follows:

First. The class struggle should be more clearly and specifically stated and more emphatically declared.

Second. The platform should declare in positive and unequivocal terms in favor of revolutionary economic organization, and state the reason for it. This omission is, in my opinion, a grave defect. It has been the weakness of our party in the past and it will be still more the weakness of our party in the future. Hundreds of militant, red-blooded Socialists have quit the party and their invaluable influence has been lost to us because of the party's evasive, not to say cowardly, trade union attitude. We have too long feared to give offense to reactionary trade unionism, bowed to it, catered to it, and been inoculated with it, instead of maintaining inviolate our uncompromising integrity and inoculating the union movement with the virile spirit of the revolution.

If the Socialist Party is a revolutionary party it is in logic and in fact bound to declare its recognition of and adherence to the revolutionary industrial union as against the reactionary craft union, and take its position accordingly. Honesty to the workers no less than party consistency demands this, regardless of how many craft union leaders may be offended. We are not setting traps to catch votes, but framing a platform that appeals to men.

The industrial organization of the working class is the foundation of the Socialist movement, and without it Socialism is impossible, and this truth the Socialist Party must teach to the workers and declare it to the world.

Against Militaristic Streaks.

Third. I am opposed with every drop in my veins to the two declarations in favor of war. If these are permitted to stand the party might as well declare openly in favor of militarism.

The first of these objectionable features is found in the words, **“and the necessity of effective defense in war.”** Ruling class war? Of course. There is no other. And working class slaughter? Of course, and for the same reason.

The second objection appears in the words **“except in the case of an invasion of its own territory.”** This is putting the party back upon the same ground it occupied in Europe when on that very account it was swept into the hell of slaughter in which our comrades by the millions are now perishing. Every nation in Europe, taking its own word for it, is fighting a war of defense and resisting invasion.

In that phrase lurks the bolt of destruction. To hell, I say, with the doctrine that would send the working class there!

What has the working class to lose by “invasion”? Its chains? Yes, and that’s all and that is what it will be fighting against, the loss of its chains, when in its patriotic fervor and its fear of offending its master, it enters his war and is slaughtered to save his country from “invasion.”

These two phrases embody a deadly peril in the party. They ought to be stricken out. Our declaration against war must be positive and unequivocal and our hostility to militarism absolute and uncompromising. We are not nationalists, but internationalists. Let the capitalists fight their own wars and resist their own invasion. We know but one war, and that is the war of the working class against the capitalist

class, the war of all the workers of the world against all the capitalists of the world.

Long enough have the workers been humbugged by capitalist wars. If the Socialist Party is true to itself and the working class it will take its stand staunchly in favor of the class war, the only war that can put an end to all war, and quite as staunchly against every war waged by the ruling class to rob and kill and enslave the working class.

Comrades, I appeal to you in the name of your class — the class that has always been the victims of ruling class slaughter — to strike these military declarations — capable of the most vicious interpretation and fraught with incalculable danger to the party, from the new platform!

Capitalism and militarism are one and inseparable and there is not a feature of either that may be recognized by the Socialist Party without treason to itself!

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Edited by Tim Davenport

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