

National Platform

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The social order under which we live is a serious and immediate threat to our lives. We live under the threat of nuclear holocaust. Our air, water and land are being poisoned. Growing unemployment and poverty bring hardship to millions and threaten the lives of many.

In addition, we are menaced by a host of ills that erode the quality of our lives—declining living standards for workers generally, foreign interventions and wars, racism, sexism, crime, a government that is slowly erasing our democratic rights, and more.

Our society can no longer afford to address each of these problems as separate and individual issues. We can no longer afford to rely on the empty promises of politicians and efforts to solve these problems through legislative reforms. Piecemeal solutions have been tried—and failed. They have failed because all of these problems are products of our social and economic system—the capitalist system. They cannot be solved by any means short of the abolition of that system.

The capitalist system does not and cannot work in the interests of the majority.

Under capitalism, society is divided into two principal classes—the capitalist class and the working class. The capitalist class consists of the wealthy few who own the means of production and distribution. The working class consists of the vast majority who own no productive property and who must in order to live, seek to work for the capitalist class, or for the present government it controls.

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The capitalist class is a ruling class. It makes all the crucial economic decisions that affect our lives. And it makes those decisions solely on the basis of what will increase its profits or otherwise promote its interests.

The capitalist class exploits the working class—that is, workers do not receive in wages the full value of the products they create. The capitalist receives or controls the major share of the wealth that workers create because it owns the means of production and distribution.

In short, workers live under an unjust system, an economic tyranny. Time and again, the Socialist Labor Party has demonstrated that it is the capitalists' control of production, the system's operation according to the profit motive, and the exploitation of workers under the wages system that cause the social ills that afflict the working class.

Capitalist control of production and the exploitation of the working class create an ongoing struggle between the two classes that will continue as long as capitalism exists. On the economic field, workers have fought for a greater share of the wealth they create and for better conditions, through strikes, slowdowns and other tactics. On the political field, they have protested the ill effects of capitalist rule through demonstrations, lobbying and the like.

But workers have won, at best, only limited and temporary gains. They have won only a few battles while the war between the classes goes on, and the overall condition of the working class grows worse.

The only way that workers can win the class struggle and make a safe, secure, and better life for themselves is by organizing to overthrow the capitalist system itself. The SLP, while supporting the working class in its day-to-day battles with the capitalist class, emphasizes the urgent need for workers to organize for a revolutionary change to a new social and economic system—socialism.

Socialism is a system in which the means of production and distribution are owned by society as a whole and are

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democratically controlled and administered by the workers themselves, through their industrially-based organizations. With no separate class of owners, socialism would be a truly classless society. There would be no state, no body or organization of any kind that would be superior to or exert control over these workers' organizations.

In every plant, every office and every workplace in socialist society, the workers themselves will meet in democratic assembly to determine their own workplace policies and elect committees to administer and supervise production.

To administer production at higher levels, the workers will also elect representatives to local and national councils of their respective industry, and to a central congress representing all the industries and services.

This all-industry congress will ascertain what goods and services are wanted and will determine the resources needed to supply them. It will draw up the necessary plans to carry out production and allocate the resources. The congress will also arrange a just distribution of the output with the workers receiving the full social equivalent of the labor they contributed.

All persons elected to posts in this economic administration, at whatever level, will be subject to rank-and-file control, and to removal whenever a majority of those who elected them find it desirable to replace them.

Instead of economic despotism, socialism means economic democracy. Instead of production for sale and the profit of a few, socialism means production to satisfy the human needs and wants of all. Instead of the form of government we have today—a political state controlled by the ruling class—we shall have a self-government of the organized workers themselves.

This conception of socialism has nothing in common with the so-called "socialism" that has been proclaimed to exist in other nations. No nation in the world today is socialist, for there is no nation in the world where society itself owns the economy and the workers themselves control it.

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To establish socialism, the SLP holds that workers must organize on both the economic and the political fields.

Workers must organize along industrial lines to put themselves in direct control of the economy. they must build a new union movement based on the explicit goal of replacing capitalism with socialism.

Premised on an acceptance of capitalism, the existing unions, as presently constituted, cannot serve workers' interests or the socialist goal. They can become vehicles for the working class and for socialism only if captured, transformed and restructured by a socialist rank and file that can imbue them with revolutionary purpose.

Where the present unions cannot be transformed or where none exists, as is most often the case, workers must build new unions, organized industrially and democratically controlled by the rank and file.

For these purposes, the SLP upholds the concept of socialist industrial unionism formulated by the American socialist Daniel De Leon.

Socialist industrial unions (SIUs) would aim at organizing the entire working class—employed and unemployed, blue collar and white collar, in all industries.

Through a system of elected and recallable representatives, the various SIUs would be united by industry and joined into one big union which would conduct a united struggle against the capitalist class.

While fighting day-to-day battles for improvements in wages and conditions, the SIUs would never lose sight of their revolutionary socialist goal.

By organizing and uniting workers as the point of production itself, the SIUs would give workers a potent weapon to use in the revolutionary struggle. Workers would have the power to take, hold, and operate the industries under their own authority, thereby cutting off the source of the capitalists' power.

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Following the takeover of the industries and the removal from power of the capitalist class, the SIUs would form the basis for socialist self-government.

To build an SIU movement and to effect the revolutionary transition to socialism, a socialist political party is necessary.

Such a party is necessary to persuade workers of the urgent necessity and desirability of the socialist goal and to raise workers' classconsciousness. For only a classconscious working class—a working class that understands that it has common class interests, that it is exploited as a class, that capitalist rule is the source of its misery, and that it must replace capitalism with its own self-rule—can act to take control of the economy and build a socialist society.

In raising classconsciousness, a socialist party must also aid the process of organizing an SIU movement and recruit the forces needed to build such a movement.

Finally, a socialist party must assist the revolutionary transformation to socialism itself. It must seek to contest the control of the existing political state by the capitalist political parties and to capture the political state for the express purpose of dismantling it.

The overall purpose of a socialist political party is to promote and assist the revolutionary process. But in doing so, it must not substitute itself for the workers as the revolutionary force, nor as the future instrument of workers' rule.

Thus the SLP rejects the "social democratic" concept that socialism can be established by "socialist" politicians taking control of and operating the political state, or by gradually reforming capitalism. And it just as firmly rejects the Leninist concept that socialism can be established by a "vanguard party" of elite revolutionaries replacing the capitalist class and state with its own state apparatus. History demonstrates that neither course can lead to socialism, but only to continued class rule.

The SLP holds, in contrast, that the emancipation of the

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working class must be the classconscious act of the workers themselves.

The SLP today embodies these principles of socialist political organization.

Despite the many threats to our lives today, despite the growing poverty and misery that workers are subjected to, a world of peace, liberty, security, health and abundance for all stands within our grasp. The potential to create such a society already exists, but that potential can be realized only if workers act to gain control of their own lives by organizing, politically and industrially, for socialism.

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

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