



# PLATFORM AND CONSTITUTION

OF THE

# Socialist Labor Party

OF THE

## UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



Adopted at the NATIONAL CONVENTION,

held in New York City, July 1896.





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The Socialist Labor Party of the United States, in Convention assembled, re-asserts the inalienable right of all men to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

With the founders of the American republic we hold that the purpose of government is to secure every citizen in the enjoyment of this right; but in the light of our social conditions we hold, furthermore, that no such right can be exercised under a system of economic inequality, essentially destructive of life, of liberty and of happiness.

With the founders of this republic we hold that the true theory of politics is that the machinery of government must be owned and controlled by the whole people; but in the light of our industrial development we hold, furthermore, that the true theory of economics is that the machinery of production must likewise belong to the people in common.

To the obvious fact that our despotic system of economics is the direct opposite of our democratic system of politics, can plainly be traced the existence of a privileged class, the corruption of government by that class, the alienation of public property, public franchises and public functions to that class, and the abject dependence of the mightiest of nations upon that class.

Again, through the perversion of democracy to the ends of plutocracy, labor is robbed of the wealth which it alone produces, is denied the means of self-employment, and, by compulsory idleness in wage slavery, is even deprived of the necessaries of life.

Human power and natural forces are thus wasted, that the plutocracy may rule.

Ignorance and misery, with all their concomitant evils, are perpetuated, that the people may be kept in bondage.

Science and invention are diverted from their humane purpose to the enslavement of women and children.

Against such a system the Socialist Labor Party once more enters its protest. Once more it reiterates its fundamental declaration that private property in the natural sources of production and in the instruments of labor is the obvious cause of all economic servitude and political dependence.

The time is fast coming when, in the natural course of social evolution, this system, through the destructive action of its failures and crises on the one hand, and the constructive tendencies of its trusts and other capitalistic combinations on the other hand, shall have worked out its own downfall.

We, therefore, call upon the wage workers of the United States, and upon all other honest citizens, to organize under the banner of the Socialist Labor Party into a class-conscious body, aware of its rights and determined to conquer them by taking possession of the public powers; so that, held together by an indomitable spirit of solidarity under the most trying conditions of the present class struggle, we may put a summary end to that barbarous struggle by the abolition of classes, the restoration of the land and of all the means of production, transportation and distribution to the people as a collective body, and the substitution of the Co-operative Commonwealth for the present state of planless production, industrial war and social disorder; a commonwealth in which every worker shall have the free exercise and full benefit of his faculties, multiplied by all the modern factors of civilization.



## RESOLUTIONS.

With a view to immediate improvement in the condition of labor we present the following demands:

1. Reduction of the hours of labor in proportion to the progress of production.

2. The United States to obtain possession of the mines, railroads, canals, telegraphs, telephones and all other means of public transportation and communication; the employees to operate the same co-operatively under control of the Federal government and to elect their own superior officers, but no employee shall be discharged for political reasons.

3. The municipalities to obtain possession of the local railroads, ferries, water works, gas works, electric plants and all industries requiring municipal franchises; the employees to operate the same co-operatively under control of the municipal administration and to elect their own superior officers, but no employee shall be discharged for political reasons.

4. The public lands to be declared inalienable. Revocation of all land grants to corporations or individuals, the conditions of which have not been complied with.

5. The United States to have the exclusive right to issue money.

6. Congressional legislation providing for the scientific management of forests and waterways, and prohibiting the waste of the natural resources of the country.

7. Inventions to be free to all; the inventors to be remunerated by the nation.

8. Progressive income tax and tax on inheritances; the smaller incomes to be exempt.

9. School education of all children under fourteen years of age to be compulsory, gratuitous and accessible to all by public assistance in meals, clothing, books, etc., where necessary.

10. Repeal of all pauper, tramp, conspiracy and sumptuary laws. Unabridged right of combination.

11. Prohibition of the employment of children of school age and the employment of female labor in occupations detrimental to health or morality. Abolition of the convict labor contract system.

12. Employment of the unemployed by the public authorities (county, city, state and nation).

13. All wages to be paid in lawful money of the United States. Equalization of woman's wages with those of men where equal service is performed.

14. Laws for the protection of life and limb in all occupations, and an efficient employers' liability law.

15. The people to have the right to propose laws and to vote upon all measures of importance, according to the referendum principle.

16. Abolition of the veto power of the Executive (national, state and municipal), wherever it exists.

17. Abolition of the United States Senate and all upper legislative chambers.

18. Municipal self-government.

19. Direct vote and secret ballots in all elections. Universal and equal right of suffrage without regard to color, creed or sex. Election days to be legal holidays. The principle of proportional representation to be introduced.

20. All public officers to be subject to recall by their respective constituencies.

21. Uniform civil and criminal law throughout the United States. Administration of justice to be free of charge. Abolition of capital punishment.



# CONSTITUTION.

## I. MANAGEMENT.

The affairs of the Party are conducted by the National Executive Committee, the National Board of Appeals, the State Committees, the local Sections, the National Conventions, and by the general vote. At all elections a plurality vote is sufficient to elect; but an absolute majority is required to elect the seat of the National Executive Committee.

## II. SECTIONS.

1. Ten persons may form a Section, provided they acknowledge the Platform, Constitution and Resolutions of the Socialist Labor Party and belong to no other political party.
  - a. They shall report their organization as a Section both to the National Executive Committee and to the State Committee, giving a list of members, and send the dues for the current month to the State Committee, or in the absence of such, to the National Executive Committee.
  - b. Each Section shall send every six months a report of its numerical and financial condition, also its progress and prospects, to the National Executive Committee; and shall report to the State Committee at least once a year the names and addresses of members in good standing and otherwise.
2. The Section shall be the unit of organization.
3. It shall be the duty of the Sections to provide rules governing their action, provided such do not conflict with the rules of the National and State organizations.
4. At every meeting a new Chairman shall be elected, who shall observe the usual parliamentary rules.
5. Every Section shall elect from its members an Organizer and such additional officers as it deems proper. The Organizer shall conduct the correspondence with the National Executive Committee, and shall send an official report once every six months to said Committee; he shall send ten cents of the monthly dues of each member to the State Committee, or in the absence of such to the National Executive Committee; he shall conduct the local organization and agitation.
6. Should a protest be entered against the admission to a Section, of any applicant for membership, a two-thirds vote of all present at a regular business meeting shall be necessary to admit him.
7. Sections shall have jurisdiction over their own members.
8. Every Section shall elect a Grievance Committee of three members, which shall investigate all charges and difficulties in the Section, and report its decision. Sections having a Central Committee may refer such investigations to such committee.
9. Charges against members shall not be debated until the Grievance Committee has thoroughly investigated the case and reported to the Section. All charges must be made in writing, whereupon the committee shall investigate the case and hear the witnesses of both parties. A detailed report of the investigation shall be drawn and laid before one of the next business meetings of the Section. The Section shall then decide the matter, and its decision be entered on the minutes. The minutes and all papers concern-



ing the investigation, shall be delivered to the Secretary for safe keeping. The Secretary shall inform the accused in writing of such decision.

All decisions of the Section may be appealed from to the National Board of Appeals.

10. A majority of two-thirds of the members present at any business meeting shall be sufficient to expel any member; a simple majority shall be sufficient to suspend.

11. No expelled or suspended member shall be accorded the privileges of a member of the Party by any Branch, or Section, or by any City, State or National Committee unless the bar of expulsion or suspension has been removed by the Section expelling or suspending him, or by the National Board of Appeals.

12. Each Section shall hold a regular business meeting at least once a month.

13. In any Section which is divided into two or more branches, all local business of the Section and dealings with the Party's national and State management shall be carried on by a Central Committee.

14. Members who have withheld payment of their dues for more than three months shall be suspended from all rights until they have fulfilled their obligations.

15. Sick or unemployed members will be excused from payment of dues.

16. The result of every election within the Section must be communicated at once to the National Executive Committee and to the State Committee.

17. In case of dissolution of any Section, all property of the same must be delivered to the National Executive Committee.

18. No Section shall enter into any compromise with any other political party.

### III. STATE ORGANIZATION.

1. Whenever there are three Sections in any one State, in three different towns, they shall form a State Organization, to be known as the State Committee. It shall be the duty of such State Committee to conduct systematic agitation within its jurisdiction and form new Sections.

2. Every Section connected with a State Committee must also be connected with the National Executive Committee.

3. The State Committee shall send regular semi-annual reports to the National Executive Committee, and submit monthly a financial report showing receipts and expenditures.

4. In the election of a State Committee and its recall, the same rules shall hold good that govern the National Executive Committee.

5. The State organizations shall have power to make regulations governing their form of organization in accordance with the laws of their respective States, provided such regulations do not conflict with the Party's national Constitution and Platform.

### IV. NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

1. The National Executive Committee shall be composed of seven members, to be elected by a general vote of the Section or Sections of the place selected as the seat of the same. The Committee shall elect from its members a Recording Secretary and a Treasurer.

The said Section or Sections shall elect the National Secretary, who shall also act as secretary for foreign affairs. He shall be a member of the Executive Committee, but with an advisory voice only.

It is the right and duty of the said Section or Sections to suspend any member of the National Executive Committee, including the National Secretary, who may be guilty of any neglect of duty; to elect a temporary successor in place of such suspended member, and to submit such action with the reasons therefor to a general vote of the Party.



The said Section or Sections shall also elect an Auditing Committee, which shall have power at any time to inspect and audit the books and the funds on hand.

2. The members of the National Executive Committee shall be elected for the term of one year, but may be reelected at the expiration thereof.
3. The National Executive Committee has for its duty:
  - a. To carry out the resolutions of the National Convention and those adopted by general vote.
  - b. To supervise the agitation throughout the country.
  - c. To establish proper relations and communication with the Socialist parties of other countries.
  - d. To make all necessary preparations for the National Convention, and make a full report to such convention on all party matters.
  - e. To issue to the Sections semi-annually and in a sufficient number of copies a report of the Party's finances.
4. It is also the duty of the National Executive Committee:
  - a. To receive and submit to a general vote propositions sent from any Section if endorsed by at least five others located in at least three different States. If in the opinion of the National Executive Committee a proposition is not in the interest of the Party, it shall not be submitted to a general vote, unless five per cent. of all the Sections in good standing shall subsequently re-endorse it; then the proposition shall be submitted to a general vote.
  - b. To be represented in the National Convention by one of its members, who shall have no vote, but merely an advisory voice in the proceedings, and shall bear no other credentials.
  - c. The National Executive Committee may make its own order of business.
  - d. The National Executive Committee may compensate its officers, according to the labors performed by them, from the treasury of the Party.
5. Annually, and in due time, the National Executive Committee shall call upon the Sections to make nominations for not more than three delegates to represent the Party in the annual convention of the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance. The nominees shall be chosen by a general or referendum vote, and the ones receiving the highest vote shall be declared elected.
6. The National Executive Committee shall issue application cards to the Sections bearing a plain exposition of the principles of the S. L. P., and also of the duties required from the applicant for membership.

#### V. NATIONAL BOARD OF APPEALS.

1. The National Board of Appeals shall be composed of seven members, to be elected by a general vote of the membership of the city selected by the National Convention as the seat of such Board. No member of the Board shall be eligible to any office in the Party during his or her term of office; nor shall the seat of the Board be the same as that of the National Executive Committee.
2. The duties of this Board shall be:
  - a. To settle, upon appeal, all difficulties in the Party within four weeks after receiving the necessary evidence, the decisions to be at once communicated to the National Executive Committee; and to decide appeals in cases of expulsion and of suspension.
  - b. From all decisions of the Board, appeal may be taken to the general vote, or to the National Convention provided a convention is to be held within six months. The Sections must report the result of their vote to the National Executive Committee within six weeks; within two additional weeks the National Executive Committee must publish the result.
  - c. The Secretary of the Board of Appeals shall render to the National Convention a full report of the transactions of the Board during its term of office.



- d. The Board shall declare vacant the seat of any of its members who shall have been absent from three consecutive meetings without sufficient excuse, and order the membership of its locality to fill the vacancy.
3. The Secretary of the Board may, or upon the demand of a majority of the members thereof, shall, call a session.
4. The members making a decision shall sign the same before transmittal to the National Executive Committee.
5. Duplicates of decisions and dissenting opinions shall be filed with the Secretary of the Board before transmittal to the National Executive Committee.
6. No person connected with a case shall be qualified to sit on it. If the issue is one in which the whole Section is interested and such Section happens to be the one that chooses the Board, then the National Executive Committee shall appoint another Section to choose a Board of Appeals for that case.

#### VI. CONVENTIONS.

1. A National Convention of the Party shall be held every fourth or presidential year; but if five Sections in three different States so demand, a general vote shall be taken as to holding a special convention. A general vote shall decide as to the place, but the date of a convention shall be fixed by the National Executive Committee.

2. The Congressional District shall be the basis of representation.

A Section shall be entitled to one delegate for every one thousand S. L. P. votes cast in the Congressional District or Districts under its jurisdiction, and to one additional delegate for every major fraction thereof.

Sections whose Congressional District or Districts poll a smaller vote than one thousand shall be entitled to one delegate.

Where several Sections have jurisdiction of one or more Congressional Districts, they shall jointly elect the delegates to which they are entitled.

Delegates must be members of the Section or of one of the Sections electing them.

Each delegate shall have only one vote.

3. The expenses of delegates shall be borne by the Sections sending them. The expenses of the National Convention shall be paid by the Party.

4. The National Convention shall frame the national platform, decide the form of organization, select the seats of the National Executive Committee and Board of Appeals and investigate and decide all difficulties within the Party.

5. All acts of the Convention shall be submitted to the Sections for general vote.

#### VII. DUES.

1. The Sections shall levy upon each of their members a monthly tax of ten cents, to be paid monthly to the State Committee or in the absence of such, to the National Executive Committee.

2. The dues shall be receipted for by stamps to be furnished by the National Executive Committee to the State Committees at the rate of five cents each, and in the absence of such to the Sections at the rate of ten cents each.

3. Every State Committee or Section shall receive a first quota of stamps on credit, to be measured by the size of membership; such quota to remain a standing indebtedness. All stamps received subsequently must be paid for in cash, and the Secretary of the National Executive Committee, as well as secretaries of State Committees, shall not send out any stamps other than in compliance with this rule.

#### VIII. THE PARTY PRESS.

1. The National Executive Committee shall have control of the contents of the party organs, and shall act on grievances connected with the same.



2. The editors shall be appointed by the National Executive Committee from such comrades as shall be recommended for appointment by the National Convention. They cannot be members of the committee.

3. The National Executive Committee shall give notice of discharge at least two weeks before the same is to take effect; the editors shall also be bound to give two weeks' notice of their intention to leave their position.

4. Any of the editors who may prove incompetent or violate the Platform or Constitution of the Party shall be forthwith suspended by the National Executive Committee.

#### MISCELLANEOUS REGULATIONS.

1. This constitution may be amended by the National Convention or by a general vote. Within five weeks after the issuance of a call for a general vote relative to changing the constitution, amendments may be proposed by any Section to any proposition so laid before the Party, and such amendments shall then also be submitted to be voted on together with the original proposition. The result of the vote must be reported to the National Executive Committee within ten weeks after the first call was issued.

The National Executive Committee shall forthwith transmit to the Sections a tabulated statement of the vote cast by each Section.

No Section or subdivision shall be designated by race or nationality.

3. All officers, boards or committees of the Party shall be subject to removal by their constituents (see Art. IV., Sec. 1, as to the National Executive Committee.)

4. No applicant shall be admitted to membership without the presiding officer shall explain the significance of the class struggle to him and his pledging himself in writing to its recognition and support. A copy of the constitution and platform shall be handed to every new member.

5. In subscribing to the platform and constitution, the members take upon themselves the obligation to assist each other to the extent of their ability, in case of need.

6. A member in good standing of one Section shall have the right to attend and speak at any meeting of another Section, but shall not be allowed to vote.

7. The National Executive Committee shall immediately after the expulsion of any member publish the name of the expelled in the Party organs.

8. No person shall be nominated as a candidate for any public office unless he has been a member of the Party for at least one year, and has identified himself with the Party by active participation in its work.

9. No candidate of this Party for any public office shall be permitted to accept any nomination or endorsement from any other political party.

10. Any member of the Socialist Labor Party accepting a nomination of the Party, shall at once place in the hands of the Secretary of the Section of which he is a member, his resignation, dated blank, of the office for which he is so nominated, and authorize the Section to have it filed with the proper authorities in case of his election and failure to stand squarely on the Party's platform and to advocate its principles.

11. All former provisions conflicting with this constitution are rescinded.

#### RESOLUTION.

Whereas, we recognize the necessity of carrying on the war against capitalism simultaneously on the political and economic fields; therefore be it

Resolved, that we recommend to all Socialists to join the organizations of the trades to which they respectively belong.

