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SOCIALIST PARTY OF AMERICA  
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L. J. J. J.  
1934

**An Appeal to the Membership  
of the  
Socialist Party**

By

**The Revolutionary Policy Committee**

March 1934

Price 5 cents



## SPONSORS

This "Appeal" is being sponsored by the **Revolutionary Policy Committee** of the Socialist Party which consists of Party members who agree that the present Party program should be changed in conformity with the basic revolutionary principles stated here. This committee is well aware that only a brief summary of the fundamental principles can be printed at this time. Consequently, bulletins will be issued, as often as feasible, elaborating these principles in the light of current events, specific incidents, and historical interpretation. A bulletin is being prepared at the present time on, "The Lessons Learned from the Defeat of the Austrian Workers" and hence there is no mention of Austria in this "Appeal". Bulletins on other topics will be announced later.

The Socialist Party members who have already agreed to work for a Socialist Party program based on the principles briefly stated in this appeal are:

- ALLEN, EDWARD, member of Local Lincoln Park, Michigan.  
BARDACKE, GREGORY, organizer of University Branch, Local Onondaga County, New York.  
BLAYZOR, IRENE, secretary and member of the Executive Committee of Onondaga County Local, New York.  
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COOK, WESLEY, educational director of Local Philadelphia and member of the American Federation of Teachers.  
DANIEL, FRANZ, labor organizer for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union, and member of North Philadelphia Br.  
DOMBROWSKI, JAMES, member of the staff of the Highlander Folk School, Mount Eagle, Tennessee.  
DUVAL, RONALD, member of Morningside Heights Branch, New York Local, and President of the Rand School Fellowship.  
FELIX, DAVID, chairman of Local Philadelphia and member of the Ex. Com. of Germantown Branch.  
FINDLEY, WARREN, elected by the Morningside Heights Branch of Local New York, to serve on the R.P.C., member of Teachers Union, Local 5.  
GENDRAL, FRED, Luzerne, Pa. Local, former Pennsylvania state organizer.

- GREENE, JOHN, treasurer of North Philadelphia Branch, and vice-president of the Marine and Ship Yard Workers of America.  
HANSON, ALICE, member of North Philadelphia Branch, and treasurer of the Teacher's Union, Local 92, Philadelphia.  
HAWES, ELIZABETH, staff of the Highlander Folk School, Mt. Eagle, Tennessee and organizer of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union.  
HENSON, FRANCIS, member of the State Executive Committee of Connecticut, and member of Local New Haven. Member Connecticut State Executive Committee of the Congress of Workers and Farmers.  
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KEMPF, E. H., organizer of Essex County, New Jersey.  
KESTER, HOWARD, Nashville, Tennessee Local and member of Tennessee State Executive Committee.  
KIMBERLY, EVELYN, member of 7th Congressional Branch, Cook County Local, Chicago, Illinois.  
KIMBERLY, PAUL, member of the 7th Congressional Branch, Chicago.  
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REIFF, DONALD, member of the Village Branch of Local New York City.

RIEMENSNYDER, member of North Philadelphia Branch and member of the American Federation of Hosiery Workers Union.

REUTHER, ROY, organizer of Local Detroit, member of County Central Committee, secretary of branch #1, Detroit, Michigan and delegate to Ohio Valley Trades and Labor Assembly. (Now attending Brookwood Labor College).

SANDBERG, SAM, Member of Labor Committee of Massachusetts, S.P.

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SWEETLAND, MONROE, member of Local Ithaca, New York, and former N. Y. state organizer.

VAN GILDER PHILLIP, organizer of North Philadelphia Branch and labor organizer for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union.

WAY, STEWART, Local Wilkesburg, Pa.

ZAMARAS, JOSEPH, national industrial organizer of the Y.P.S.L.S.

Correspondence concerning this "Appeal", the work of the Revolutionary Policy Committee, and the forthcoming bulletins will be handled by Ruth Shallcross, 554 West 114th Street, New York City.

## AN APPEAL TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY

The NRA is engaged in frantic but futile efforts to save the collapsing structure of capitalism in the United States. In the Far East, war has raged between Japan and China, and a Japanese imperialist attack upon the Soviet Union is imminent. In Europe old antagonisms have been sharpened and new ones have appeared. All efforts at disarmament have been abortive. The general staffs of Europe are again studying the deadly time tables of war, calculating the risks involved. Fascism has conquered decisively in Italy and in Germany. It is spreading to other countries, the certainty of world catastrophe in its wake.

In the light of this world situation, the Socialist Party must now prepare for life or death. There is no longer a middle road. The middle road was taken in Germany and led to death. We must in the future not betray our trust by compromise and confusion of principles. It is high time to take stock of ourselves.

The Socialist Party can become the effective instrument for bringing about Socialism only if it changes its present principles and tactics. The small growth in membership and the poor showing at the polls are objective evidence that the program and policies of the Party are not adequate. More important, however, the failure of social democracy to take power in Germany, where the Socialists had gained the support of large numbers of the working people, raises grave questions as to its theoretical soundness. All of these considerations require that we analyze thoroughly the Party program and policies to make sure that they will not lead to the same futility and helplessness in the face of the constantly growing menace of fascism.

We appeal to the membership for a new and sound program, conceived realistically to meet the problems which confront us. We are convinced that this program must be based on principles which will be briefly summarized here and that it must be so clearly defined as to make it impossible in the future for Party members to hold diametrically opposite principles. Only on this basis can the Socialist Party be enabled to act as a militant working class party.

## THE ROAD TO POWER

The aim of socialism is to establish a Workers' Republic. In the achievement of this aim it is necessary to acquire possession of the state power so as to transform capitalist society into socialist society by means of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In the conflict against the capitalists, civil liberties are of the utmost importance as means of education and struggle and also for the immediate welfare of the workers. The history of capitalism, however, leaves no room for illusions regarding the behavior of the capitalist class when it is fighting for its life against the advancing workers. The responsibility for the destruction of the civil liberties of the bourgeois democratic state lies clearly and solely at the door of the ruling capitalist state, and is rooted in capitalist development itself. That class has shown with unmistakable clarity that when the decisive hour approaches the conflict between the classes assumes a violent character. To the degree that the revolutionary party of the working class has rallied the working masses and perfected its organization, to that same degree will the violence, which accompanies the transference of power, be reduced.

We make no fetish of legality. The law in a bourgeois democracy is largely the law of property rights, laid down by those who have "rights" because they are owners. The class character of a capitalist society means that no institution or instrument set up by the capitalist class can be depended upon to establish the Workers' Republic. Therefore the working class state will be an entirely new type of state based on workers' councils, historically suited to serve as the organs of liberation. In organic connection with the struggle for the capture of state power the Socialist Party vigorously supports so-called reforms, such as the thirty hour week, unemployment insurance, abolition of child labor, etc., not as steps in a gradual attainment of Socialism within the framework of the capitalist system—but for the three-fold purpose: 1, of drawing in hitherto uninterested workers; 2, for the purpose of imposing upon capitalism economic burdens greater than it can bear; and 3, of giving labor a sense of strength through these partial victories. Thus, the revolutionary crisis is hastened and at the same time workers are being prepared for it.

Once socialists are in possession of the state machinery by the mandate of the workers, their task is to secure and insure the governmental power for the victorious revolution by arm-

ing the workers for its defense against all possibility of a counter revolutionary resistance and to proceed to transform the economic and social basis of society.

## WAR

As long as capitalism exists war is inevitable. Socialists are opposed to all capitalist wars and will exert ceaseless efforts to eliminate them. The League of Nations, Disarmament Conferences, etc., cannot be relied upon to insure peace because permanent peace for the workers can only come after capitalism has been destroyed. It makes no vital difference to the working class which imperialist power resorts to the first act of aggression in the coming war. We stand irrevocably against all capitalist wars regardless of how or by whom they are started.

We fight imperialist wars through general propaganda, demonstrations, organizations and strikes in key war industries including forcible stoppage of munition shipments by workers, and united fronts with all anti-war groups regardless of political beliefs. Anti-war activity must be carried on intensively among the workers with the ultimate aim of, (1) so organizing labor that a threat of a general strike can be held over the heads of government leaders contemplating war, and (2) of preparing the working class to turn imperialist war into class war.

## LABOR POLICY

I. The most decisive role of the Socialist Party is in leading the working class in its day-to-day struggles for immediate demands and in influencing workers to be politically conscious and revolutionary minded. Therefore the Party is for:

1. working within the existing trade union movement—which is today, the American Federation of Labor.
2. the organization of the unorganized—if this is necessarily outside of the A. F. of L. we must strive to affiliate these new unions, retaining their industrial structure, to the Federation, as the main expression of the American trade union movement; and
3. industrial unions.

The Party is against:

1. the policy of passivity and "neutrality" in trade union work; and
2. the policy of dual unionism either to the right or the left.

The Socialist Party in working in the trade union movement always retains its right to analyze and criticize:

1. the reactionary officials of the A. F. of L.;
2. the inadequacy of craft unions;
3. graft and bureaucracy within the existing unions;
4. the widespread discrimination against Negroes;
5. the attempts to drop members because of inability to pay dues; and
6. the official anti-Soviet attitude.

II. The unemployed must be organized in a close relationship to the regular trade union movement. As more workers are unionized, there will be a tendency for the unemployed to be former union members. They should be granted exempt stamps in all cases and retained as active members in the unions. The unemployed must be enlisted as supporters of unionism in strikes and as potentially employed workers. The relationship of Party members working with unemployed groups should be similar to their relationship with unions.

#### A LABOR PARTY

In the event that the rank and file workers, through their daily experience in strikes and other struggles, force the A. F. of L. to reverse its historic policy against working class political action and form a working class party, the Socialists must be in a position to act as vanguard in this labor party, and continue to fight for a revolutionary Socialist position. The prime and sole function in a labor party would be to give it Socialist direction and leadership. However, the maintenance of our distinct party identity would have to be assured in any proposed affiliation to a labor party.

#### THE UNITED FRONT

The continued disunity of the working class is a logical and tragic development of the divided counsels in the labor movement. Ceaseless efforts toward united action against common enemies with full recognition of the right to difference of opinion and free criticism of the larger program of participating elements, is absolutely necessary. Promotion of such united fronts on specific issues and on a minimum program must become a major responsibility of the Socialist Party.

The "united front from below" tactics of the Communist Party have been proven to be disruptive to the development of a revolutionary labor movement. The most effective method of counteracting these tactics is for the Socialist Party to take

the initiative in promoting united fronts of all working class organizations for struggle on specific political issues such as: political prisoners, race discrimination, impending war, dangers of fascism, etc.

#### NRA

The NRA is a gigantic attempt to use methods of planning—state capitalism—in the interest of the most powerful financial and industrial magnates. This "planning" is within the structure of the capitalist state and for the purpose of maintaining the profit system. It is not Socialism nor is it a leftward movement toward Socialism. Workers cannot be fundamentally benefited by the NRA for the following reasons:

1. The NRA, claiming to unite classes, actually increases the economic and political power of the monopoly capitalist, through the suspension of the anti-trust laws and compulsory organization of industries, to the detriment of the workers.

2. The standard of living for the average worker has declined since the NRA went into effect and even should the announced purpose—namely recovery to the 1926 levels—be successful, it would still mean that some 17 million people would live below the standard of health and decency.

3. The most precious weapon labor has is the right to strike and workers must fight every effort on the part of the government to take this right away. NRA machinery is becoming increasingly a strike breaking agency and constant efforts are being made to make arbitration compulsory.

It is clear that where substantial gains have been made under the NRA, these gains have been solely due to the organized efforts of workers. Socialists must continue to rely upon the organization of labor and not upon any instrument—NRA or any other—set up as a part of the capitalist state machinery.

#### FARMERS

Any successful plan for gaining power in the United States must include class conscious action on the part of farm laborers, and impoverished farmers. To this end the Socialist Party must vigorously organize farmers along with its trade union work, instilling in the agricultural communities a realization of their interdependence with the urban workers in their common fight against the owning class. Farmers, like workers, should be organized around immediate demands and led by Socialists who can interpret these demands as training for the revolutionary struggle to establish Socialism.

### NEGROES

All unorganized workers, Negro and white, are by virtue of the lack of solidarity, an easy prey to exploitation and they undermine the better conditions of work which the organized have won. Bosses are quick to exploit racial prejudice to the detriment of all workers. "Labor with a white skin cannot emancipate itself where labor with a black skin is branded." Neither race can win alone. Socialists must energetically fight against every form of race discrimination wherever it appears.

### THE MIDDLE CLASS

As capitalism decays, the economic interests of the lower middle class—the small owner, shop keepers, business men, etc.—clash more and more sharply with the interests of monopoly capitalism. Therefore, this group has a common economic basis of struggle with the working class. It is imperative for the working class to win this group as its ally in order to prevent the introduction of fascism which serves only the interests of monopoly capitalism. Towards this end it is especially important to organize into unions, clerical workers and white collar and civil employees whose ideology is identical with those in the lower middle class. The unionization and struggles of this group of workers will not only strengthen the ranks of organized labor but will help in educating the lower middle class and tend to ally it with the workers to defeat fascism.

### THE SOVIET UNION

The Union of Socialist Soviet Republics—land of proletarian dictatorship—is preeminent, unique among the nations of the world. There, only, are the workers in power and constructing a Socialist society. The danger of attack by imperialist nations upon the Soviet Union is increasing. The Socialist Party must pledge itself to defend the victories for Socialism which have been achieved in the U.S.S.R.

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The Socialist Party of America must make every effort to get the above principles adopted by the Labor and Socialist International in order that it may be the effective instrument in promoting the world revolution. Our Party must also

strenuously urge the L.S.I. to take the initiative in seeking a united front on specific objectives between all working class internationals.

### CONCLUSION

THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO REASON WHY THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF AMERICA CAN NOT MEET THE OPPORTUNITY WHICH CONFRONTS IT TODAY IF IT ADOPTS A CLEAR, WELL-DEFINED PROGRAM BASED UPON THE ABOVE PRINCIPLES AND TACTICS AND SETS UP ADEQUATE MACHINERY FOR EFFECTIVELY PUTTING THESE PRINCIPLES INTO ACTION.