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# Platform and Program of the Communist Labor Party of America.

Adopted by its Founding Convention, Sept. 5, 1919.

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## *PLATFORM*

1. The Communist Labor Party of the United States of America declares itself in full harmony with the revolutionary working class parties of all countries and stated by the Third International formed at Moscow.

2. With them it thoroughly appreciates the complete development of capitalism into its present form of Capitalist Imperialism with its dictatorship of the capitalist class and its absolute suppression of the working class.

3. With them it also fully realizes the crying need for an immediate change in the social system; it realizes that the time for parleying and compromise has passed; and that now it is only the question whether all power remains in the hands of the capitalist or is taken by the working class.

4. The Communist Labor Party proposes the organization of the workers as a class, the overthrow of capitalist rule, and the conquest of political power by the workers. The workers organized as the ruling class shall, through their government, make and enforce the laws; they shall own and control land, factories, mills, mines, transportation systems, and financial institutions. All power to the workers!

5. The Communist Labor Party has as its ultimate aim the abolition of the present system of production, in which the working class is mercilessly exploited, and the creation of an industrial republic wherein the machinery of production shall be socialized so as to guarantee to the workers the full social value of the product of their toil.

6. To this end we ask the workers to unite with the Communist Labor Party for the conquest of political power to establish a government adapted to the communist transformation.

## *PARTY AND LABOR PROGRAM*

### **Part I**

The Communist Labor Party of America declares itself in complete accord with the principles of Communism, as laid down in the Manifesto of the Third International formed in Moscow.

In essence, these principles are as follows:

1. The present is the period of the dissolution and collapse of the whole system of world capitalism. Unless capitalism is replaced by the rule of the working class, world civilization will collapse.

2. The working class must organize and train itself for the capture of state power. This capture means the establishment of the new working class government machinery, in place of the state machinery of the capitalists.

3. This new working class government — the Dictatorship of the Proletariat — will reorganize society on the basis of Communism, and accomplish the transition from Capitalism to the Communist Commonwealth.

Communist society is not like the present fraudulent capitalist democracy — which, with all its pretensions to equality, is merely a disguise for the rule of the financial oligarchy — but it is a proletarian democracy, based on the control of industry and the state by the workers, who are thereby free to work out their own destiny. It does not mean capitalist institutions of government, which are controlled by the great financial and industrial interests, but organs of administration created and controlled by the masses themselves; such as, for example, the Soviets in Russia.

4. The Dictatorship of the Proletariat shall transfer private property in the means of production and distribution to the working class government, to be

administered by the workers themselves. It shall nationalize the great trusts and financial institutions. It shall abolish capitalist agricultural production.

5. The present world situation demands that the revolutionary working class movements of all countries shall closely unite.

6. The most important means of capturing state power for the workers is the action of the masses, proceeding from the place where the workers are gathered together — in the shops and factories. The use of the political machinery of the capitalist state for this purpose is only secondary.

7. In those countries in which there is a possibility for the workers to use this machinery in the class struggle, they have, in the past, made effective use of it as a means of propaganda, and of defense. In all countries where the conditions for a working class revolution are not ripe, the same process must go on.

8. We must rally all groups and proletarian organizations which have manufactured and developed tendencies leading in the directions above indicated and support and encourage the working class at every phase of its struggle against capitalism.

## **Part II**

1. The economic conditions in every country determine the form of organization and method of propaganda to be adopted. In order efficiently to organize our movement here, we must clearly understand the political and economic structure of the United States.

2. Although the United States is called a political democracy there is no opportunity whatever for the working class through the regular political machinery to effectively oppose the will of the capitalist state.

3. The years of Socialist activity on the political field have brought no increase of power to the workers. Even the million votes piled up by the Socialist Party in 1912 left the Party without any proportionate representation. The Supreme Court, which is the only body in any Government in the world with the power to review legislation passed by the popular representative assembly, would be able to obstruct the will of the working class even if Congress registered it, which it does not. The Constitution, framed by the capitalist class for the benefit of the capitalist class,

cannot be amended in the workers' interest, no matter how large a majority may desire it.

4. Although all the laws and institutions of Government are framed and administered by the capitalists in their own interests, the capitalists themselves refuse to be bound by these laws or submit to these institutions whenever they conflict with these interests. The invasion of Russia, the raids into Mexico, the suppression of governments in Central America and the Caribbean, the innumerable wars against the working class revolutions now being carried on — all these actions have been undertaken by the Administration without asking the consent even of Congress. The appointment by the President of a Council of National Defense, the War Labor Board, and other extra-constitutional governing bodies without the consent of Congress is a direct violation of the fundamental law of republican government. The licensing by the Department of Justice of anti-Labor strikebreaking groups of employers — such as the National Security League, the American Defense Society, the Knights of Liberty, the American Protective League — whose express purpose was the crushing of labor organization and all class activities of the workers, and who inaugurated in this country a reign of terror similar to that of the Black Hundreds of Russia — was entirely opposed to the principles of the American Government.

Moreover, the War and its aftermath have demonstrated that government power does not reside in the regularly elected, or even the appointed officials and legislative bodies. In every state, county, and city in the Union, the so-called "police power" is shown to be superior to every law. In Minnesota, Wisconsin, and many other states, so-called Public Safety Commissions and similar organizations were constituted by authority of the Governors, made up of the representatives of Chambers of Commerce and Employers' Associations, which usurped the powers of Legislatures and municipal administrations.

6. Not one of the great teachers of scientific Socialism has ever said that it is possible to achieve the Social Revolution by the ballot.

7. However, we do not ignore the value of voting, or of electing candidates to public office — so long as these are of assistance to the workers in their economic struggle. Political campaigns, and the elec-

tion of public officials, provide opportunities for showing up capitalist democracy, educating the workers to a realization of their class position, and of demonstrating the necessity for the overthrow of the present capitalist system. But it must be clearly emphasized that the chance of winning even advanced reforms of the present capitalist system at the polls is extremely remote; and even if it were possible, these reforms would not weaken the capitalist system.

### **Part III**

1. In America, the capitalist class has never had a feudal aristocracy to combat, but has always been free to concentrate its power against the working class. This has resulted in the development of the American capitalist class wholly out of proportion to the corresponding development in other countries. By their absolute control of the agencies of publicity and education, the capitalists have gained a control over the political machinery which is impossible to break by resorting to this machinery.

2. Moreover, in America there is a highly-developed Labor movement. This makes it impossible to accomplish the overthrow of capitalism except through the agency of the organized workers.

Furthermore, there is in America a centralized economic organization of the capitalist class which is a unit in its battle with the working class, and which can be opposed only by a centralized economic organization of the workers.

3. The economic conditions of society, as Marx foretold, are pushing the workers toward forms of organization which are, by the very nature of things, forced into activity on the industrial field with a political aim — the overthrow of capitalism.

4. It is our duty as Communists to help this process, to hasten it, by supporting all efforts of the workers to create a centralized revolutionary industrial organization. It is our duty as Communists, who understand the class struggle, to point out to the workers that upon the workers alone depends their own emancipation and that it is impossible to accomplish this through capitalist political machinery, but only by the exercise of their united economic power.

### **PROGRAM**

1. We favor international alliance of the Communist Labor Party only with the Communist groups of other countries which have affiliated with the Communist International.

2. We are opposed to association with other groups not committed to the revolutionary class struggle.

3. We maintain that the class struggle is essentially a political struggle, that is, a struggle by the proletariat to conquer the capitalist state, whether its form be monarchical or democratic-republican, and to replace it by a governmental structure adapted to the Communist transformation.

4. Communist platforms, being based on the class struggle, and recognizing that this is the historical period of the Social Revolution, can contain only one demand: The establishment of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

5. We favor organized party activity and cooperation with class conscious industrial unions in order to unify industrial and political class conscious propaganda and action. Locals and Branches shall organize shop branches, to conduct the Communist propaganda and organization in the shops and to encourage the workers to organize in One Big Union.

6. The Party shall propagandize industrial unionism and industrial union organization, pointing out their revolutionary nature and possibilities.

7. The Party shall make the great industrial battles its major campaigns, to show the value of the strike as a political weapon.

8. The Party shall maintain strict control over all members elected to public office — not only the local organizations, but the National Executive Committee. All public officials who refuse to accept the decisions of the Party shall be immediately expelled.

9. In order that the Party shall be a centralized organization, capable of united action, no autonomous groups or federations independent of the will of the entire Party shall be permitted.

10. All Party papers and publications endorsed by the Party, and all educational and propaganda institutions endorsed by the Party, shall be owned and controlled by the regular Party organization.

11. Party platforms, propaganda, dues, and

methods of organization shall be standardized.

### ***SPECIAL REPORT ON LABOR ORGANIZATION***

The purpose of the Party is to create a unified revolutionary working class movement in America.

The European War has speeded up social and industrial evolution to such a degree that capitalism throughout the world can no longer contain within itself the vast forces it has created. The end of the capitalist system is in sight. In Europe it is already tottering and crashing down, and the proletarian revolutions there show that the workers are at the same time becoming conscious of their power. The capitalists themselves admit that the collapse of European capitalism and the rise of the revolutionary working class abroad cannot help but drag American capitalism into the all-embracing ruin.

In this crisis the American working class is in need of an alternative. Either the workers will be unprepared, in which case they will be reduced to abject slavery, or they will be sufficiently conscious and sufficiently organized to save society by reconstructing it in accordance with the principles of Communism.

## **II**

1. By the term "revolutionary industrial unionism" is meant the organization of the workers into unions by industries with a revolutionary aim and purpose; that is to say, a purpose not merely to defend or strengthen the status of the workers as wage earners, but to gain control of industry.

2. In any mention of revolutionary industrial unionism in their country, there must be recognized of the immense effect upon the American movement of the propaganda and example of the Industrial Workers of the World, whose long and valiant struggles and heroic sacrifices in the class war have earned the respect and affection of all workers everywhere. We greet the revolutionary industrial proletariat of America, and pledge them our wholehearted support and cooperation in their struggles against the capitalist class. Elsewhere in the organized Labor movement a new tendency has recently manifested itself, as illustrated by

the Seattle and Winnipeg strikes, the One Big Union and Shop Committee movements in Canada and the West, and the numerous strikes all over the country of rank and file, which are proceeding without the authority of the old reactionary Trade Union officials, and even against their orders. This tendency, an impulse of the workers toward unity for common action across the lines of craft divisions, if carried to its logical conclusion would inevitably lead to workers control of industry.

3. This revolt of the rank and file must not be allowed to end in the disorganization of the ranks of organized labor. We must help to keep the workers together, and through rank and file control of the Unions, assist the process of uniting all the workers in One Big Union.

4. With this purpose in view, the Communist Labor Party welcomes and supports, in whatever labor organization found, any tendency toward revolutionary industrial unionism. We urge all our members to join industrial unions. Where the job-control of the reactionary craft-unions compels them to become members of these craft-unions, they shall also join an industrial organization, if one exists. In the district where there are no industrial unions, our members shall take steps to organize one.

## **III**

1. To Labor and Labor alone is industry responsible. Without the power of Labor, industry could not function. The need of the hour is that Labor recognize the necessity of organization and education. This cannot be achieved by attempting to influence the leaders of the Labor movement, as has been clearly shown by the actions of the recent Convention of the American Federation of Labor. It can only be done by getting the workers on the job to come together and discuss the vital problems of industry.

2. Because of the industrial crisis created by the World War, together with the breakdown of industry following the cessation of hostilities, and the interruption of the processes of exchange and distribution, there is great dissatisfaction among the workers. But they can find no means of dealing with the situation. Their Unions have refused to take any steps to meet the grave problems of today; and moreover they obstruct all ef-

forts of the rank and file to find some way by which the workers can act.

3. We suggest that some plan of labor organization be inaugurated along the lines of the Shop Steward and Shop Committee movements. These Committees can serve as a spur or check upon the officials of the Unions; they will necessarily reflect the spirit and wishes of the rank and file, and will educate the workers on the job in preparation for the taking over of industry.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

We recommend the following measures:

1. That all Locals shall elect Committees on Labor Organization, composed so far as possible of members of Labor Unions, whose function shall be:

a) To initiate, or support, the creation of Shop Committees in every industry in their district, the uniting of these Committees in Industrial Councils, District councils, and the Central Council of all Industries.

b) To propagandize and assist in the combining of craft Unions, by industries, into One Big Union.

c) To bring together in the centers of Party activity — Locals and Branches — delegates from factories and shops to discuss tactics and policies of conducting the class struggle.

d) To propagandize directly among the workers on the job the principles of Communism, and educate them to a realization of their class position.

e) To find a common basis for the uniting of all existing economic and political organizations based on the class struggle.

f) To mobilize all members who can serve as organizers to fill the demand for men and women who can organize bodies of workers along the lines indicated above.

g) To direct the activities of local Party organizations in assisting the workers wholeheartedly in their industrial battles, and making use of these battles as opportunities for educating the workers.

2. That a National Committee on Labor Organization be elected by this Convention, which shall cooperate with the local committees above mentioned. In addition, the National Committee shall be charged with the task of mobilizing national support for strikes

of national importance, and shall endeavor to give these a political character.

a) It shall collect information concerning the revolutionary Labor movement from the different sections of the country, and from other countries, and through a Press Service to Labor and Socialist papers shall spread this information to all parts of the country.

b) It shall mobilize on a national scale all members who can serve as propagandists and organizers, who can not only teach, but actually help put into practice, the principles of revolutionary industrial unionism and Communism.



**RESOLUTION DEFINING  
POLITICAL ACTION AND DIRECT ACTION**

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.

The conflict for possession of the means of life has divided Society into two classes: the class who produce but do not own and the class who own but do not produce.

The working class, in order to gain control of the means of life, have by force of economic necessity been compelled to organize into their industrial and political organizations, and wage battle against the capitalist class directly on the industrial field through their industrial organizations (Direct Action) and indirectly on the political field through their political organizations (Political Action).

The development of the capitalist state has made it impossible to gain control of the means of life by a direct struggle with the capitalist class on the industrial field without interference by the capitalist state. Therefore, the struggle by the working class to achieve its revolutionary purposes — the ownership and control of the means of life — cannot be obtained without a struggle against the state, and all struggles for the conquest of the capitalist state are political struggles.

In order to differentiate between Direct Action and Political Action and to clarify the confusion resulting from the improper use of the terms, the Communist Labor Party proclaims that the term “Direct Action” is not to be confused with terrorism or vio-

lence, or any other perverted meaning which capitalist lawmakers have given this phrase, but by it is meant such united action by the workers on the job which they may use in forcing concessions from the employing class directly, without the use of the capitalist state.

That by the term "Political Action" is meant any action by the industrial and political organizations of the working class which the organized proletariat is compelled to adopt in its struggle with the capitalist class for the conquest of the capitalist state, and through the proletarian dictatorship establish the Communist society.

THOMAS CRIMMINS  
MARGARET PREVEY  
EDWIN FIRTH

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"By mass action is not meant or implied crime, sabotage, violence, or terrorism. Mass action by the workers would never take these forms were it not for the prior action of the capitalist class and its mercenaries in the use of crime, sabotage, violence, and unlawful methods of terrorism against the working class. The strike, which is the usual form of mass action by the working class in industrial warfare, is the mere stoppage of work by mutual agreement or simultaneous impulse among the workers, a collective refusal to labor as a protest against exploitation. It would in all instances be free from crime, sabotage, violence, or terrorism were not the political powers, now in the control of the capitalists, ruthlessly and savagely employed against the strikers."

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*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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