
Declaration of Principles of The Social Democracy of America: Adopted at the Special Convention Held Under the Auspices of the American Railway Union, June 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 21, 1897.

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Declaration of Principles.

We hold that all men are born free, and are endowed with certain natural rights, among which are life, liberty, and happiness. In the light of experience we find that while all citizens are equal in theory, they are not so in fact. While all citizens have the same rights politically, this political equality is useless under the present system of economic inequity, which is essentially destructive of life, liberty, and happiness. In spite of our political equality, labor is robbed of the wealth it produces. By the development of this system it is denied the means of self-employment, and by enforced idleness, through lack of employment, is even deprived of the necessities of life.

To the obvious fact that our despotic system of economics is the direct opposite of our democratic system of politics, can be plainly traced the existence of a class that corrupts the government, alienates public property, public franchises, and public functions, and holds this, the mightiest of nations, in abject dependence.

Labor, manual and mental, being the creator of all wealth and all civilization, it rightfully follows that those who perform all labor and create all wealth should enjoy the fruit of their efforts. But this is rendered impossible by the modern system of production. Since the discovery and

application of steam and electric powers and the general introduction of machinery in all branches of industry, the industrial operations are carried on by such gigantic means that but few are now able to possess them, and thus the producer is separated from his products.

While in former times the individual worker labored on his own account, with his own tools, and was the master of his products, now dozens, hundreds, and thousands of men work together in shops, mines, factories, etc., cooperating according to the most efficient division of labor, but they are not the masters of their products. The fruits of this cooperative labor are, in a great measure appropriated by the owners of the means of production, to wit: by the owners of machines, mines, land, and the means of transportation.

This system, by gradually extinguishing the middle class, necessarily leaves but two classes in our country: the large class of workers and the small class of great employers and capitalists.

Human power and natural forces are wasted by this system, which makes "profit" the only object in business.

Ignorance and misery, with all concomitant evils, are perpetuated by this system, which makes human labor a ware to be bought in the open market, and places no real value on human life.

Science and invention are diverted from their

humane purposes and made instruments for the enslavement of men and the starvation of women and children.

We, therefore, hold that 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, will annihilate the middle class, the basis upon which the system rests, and thereby work out its own downfall.

We therefore call upon all honest citizens to unite under the banner of the Social Democracy of America, so that we may be ready to conquer capitalism by making use of our political liberty and by taking possession of the public power, so that we may put an end to the present barbarous struggle, by the abolition of capitalism, 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 cooperative commonwealth for the present state of planless production, industrial war, and social disorder — a commonwealth which, although it will not make every man equal physically or mentally, will give to every worker the free exercise and the full benefit of his faculties, multiplied by all the modern factors of civilization and ultimately inaugurate the universal brotherhood of man. The Social Democracy of America will make democracy, “the rule of the people,” a truth by ending the economic subjugation of the overwhelmingly great majority of the people.

With a view to the immediate relief of the people, all our efforts shall be put forth to secure

to the unemployed self-supporting employment, using all proper ways and means to that end. For such purpose one of the States of the Union, to be hereafter determined, shall be selected for the concentration of our supporters and the introduction of cooperative industry, and then gradually extending the sphere of our operations until the National Cooperative Commonwealth shall be established.

We also make the following specific demands for relief.

Demands for Relief.

1. The public ownership of all industries controlled by monopolies, trusts, and combines.
2. The public ownership of all railroads, telegraph, telephone, all means of transportation, communication, water works, gas and electric plants, and all other public utilities.
3. The public ownership of all gold, silver, copper, lead, coal, iron, and all other mines; also all oil and gas wells.
4. Reduction of the hours of labor in proportion to the progress of production.
5. The inauguration of a system of public works and improvements for the employment of the unemployed, the public credit to be utilized for that purpose.
6. All useful inventions to be free to all, the inventor to be remunerated by the public.
7. The establishment of Postal Savings Banks.
8. The adoption of the Initiative and Referendum, the Imperative Mandate, and Proportional Representation.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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