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# Proclamation to the People of of the United States from the NEC of the Socialist Party of America, February 1918.

Published in *The Eye Opener* (Chicago), v. 9, no. 30, whole no. 276 (Feb. 16, 1918), pg. 4.

Within a few short months, the war has threatened civil and political freedom in our country. The radical, labor, and Socialist papers have been despotically crushed by exclusion from the mails or by heavy burdens imposed upon them. This has resulted in financial loss and great hardship to the organizations publishing them, and, in some cases, to their complete destruction.

In violation of the Constitution of the United States and regardless of its provisions, free assemblage has been denied, meetings have been dissolved or prohibited, free speech has been suppressed, mob violence and personal assaults have been encouraged, and a vast army of paid secret service agents operating as detectives and spies has been foisted upon us.

Brutal persecutions have been followed by cruel sentences of imprisonment. Suspicion, hate, and discord have been sown among us. The many are oppressed by the high prices, which yield immense profits for the few.

Pretentious patriots are now demanding an imperialistic permanent military system. A leading man in the steel industry now publicly suggests the importation of Asiatics for labor and military services in the United States. All of this is so alarming and threatening to the life and liberty of American citizens that it calls for immediate attention and action.

## **Two Problems Confront the Workers.**

Two problems should now engage the energy and ability of the working class:

FIRST — An immediate and democratic peace with full representation of the working class at the peace conference.

SECOND — The reconstruction which must immediately follow upon the close of hostilities.

We declare that all negotiations for peace should be public and accompanied by full reports of all proceedings from day to day. The working people who have sacrificed so much must become familiar with every detail of the negotiations so that they may readily express their opinion upon the various propositions before the peace conference. We declare it to be imperative, therefore, that the people of the various countries should elect representatives to participate in the negotiations.

We demand that all existing treaties, agreements, and pledges involving political, commercial, and territorial arrangements of every kind shall be made public. The conference may thus start with a free hand and without obligations to the past.

We insist upon racial independence and self-determination for small and large nations, freedom of the seas, neutralization of the greater bodies of water, and the destruction of fortresses which threaten navigation. Inland countries which are cut off from the sea should be given access without tribute to seaports and by railroads to markets.

We approve the declaration of the President in favor of open covenants of peace, with no private understandings and we insist that the countries associated with the United States in this war should accept this condition as fundamental for peace negotiations.

The responsibility for the world catastrophe is collective. The outrages of capitalism are national and international. The offense is that of a worldwide capitalist class. Therefore, the burden of restoration becomes an international obligation.

**Russian Revolution Threatens Thrones.**

The revolution of the Russian Socialists threatens the thrones of Europe and makes the whole capitalist structure tremble. With hunger stalking in their midst, without financial credit, without international recognition, and with a ruling caste intriguing to regain control, the Russian Socialists have yet accomplished their revolution and they have inspired the working class of the world with the ideal of humanity's supremacy over class rule.

They come with a message of proletarian revolution. We glory in their achievement and inevitable triumph.

The Socialist Party of the United States offers its encouragement and pledges its support to the fundamental revolutionary aims and purposes of the enlightened workers of every country.

It is to be deplored that the American trade union movement has failed to measure up to the high standards of European workers. It is a humiliating reflection upon the professed power of American labor leaders that a protest in their national convention against the despotic press censor [Albert S. Burleson?], who is trying to destroy not only the freedom of the press but also the right of federal employees to organize, should be disregarded. This tyrannical reactionary was confirmed almost unanimously in a recent secret session of the Senate. And in addition to this the Supreme Court of the United States practically decrees as unlawful a large class of strikes and boycotts, the only weapons the workers have upon the industrial field.

When war ceases, our master class will be in possession of ample court decisions and legislative authority to justify the most ruthless methods of oppression and exploitation of the working class. This will be the result of the reactionary leadership of the American trades unions.

**Necessity for Political Organization Great.**

Never in the history of American labor has the necessity for political organization and influence been so great as now when we face the period of reconstruction.

This was made by the propertied class of the

world — a fearful and logical fulfillment of capitalistic institutions. The collapse of the capitalist system has resulted in incalculable destruction of property, the replacing and rebuilding of which will become the task of the working people. Every effort, therefore, should be made by the proletariat to the end that the rebuilt property shall be for the workers and owned by its producers. Never again should the property created by the working class be returned to the capitalist class which has proven itself so criminally incompetent.

Three years of conflict have tremendously weakened the material resources and political prestige of the ruling class. The power of the working class has correspondingly increased and is greater today than it has been for centuries. This is our opportunity.

The junkers of America persistently accuse of pro-Germanism all citizens who oppose their high-handed and tyrannies and robberies. We reaffirm our unalterable hostility to German autocracy, military and industrial. The Socialist International opposes autocracy everywhere. But the fact that Germany autocracy is now singled out for special attack does not blind us to the evidence of tyranny and autocracy in the United States.

It is of special concern to us that our own country, which purports to be fighting for democracy, should itself become democratic. At present, it is one of the least democratic of all countries. It has neither political democracy nor industrial democracy. There is no other nation on earth in which the highest ruler has greater autocratic power than the President of the United States.

**Demand Political Democracy for America.**

In order that there may be political democracy in this country, secret diplomacy and one man rule in our foreign affairs must be abolished. The veto power of the President must be abolished. The President and cabinet members must be made responsible to Congress and to the people. The initiative, the referendum, and the recall must be put into practice. Proportional representation must be introduced. The President and Vice President must be elected by direct vote of the people. Nationwide equal suffrage for women and men must be established. Congress must work

under rules which will not be subversive of popular government. Federal judges must be elected instead of appointed, and they must be elected for short terms. Free speech, free press, and free assemblage must be kept inviolate since these are the weapons by which all liberties must be defended.

So long as the above measures are not in effect, it is absurd and hypocritical to say that we have political democracy in this country.

Furthermore, political democracy is only one feature of complete democracy. Complete democracy necessarily includes industrial democracy. Without industrial democracy, political democracy is merely a preparation for democracy. Industrial democracy involves the collective ownership and democratic management of the socially necessary industries.

### **Old Parties Opposed to Democracy.**

The administration at Washington and the Democratic and Republican Parties as a whole are opposed to both political and industrial democracy. They are owned by the capitalist class and stand for

the interests of the capitalist class.

The Socialist Party is positive and constructive. It stands for complete political and industrial democracy.

Among the immediate economic measures, the adoption of which we demand, are the following:

The public ownership and democratic control of the railroads, the express, telegraph and telephone lines, the steamship lines, and all other social means of transportation, communication, storage, and distribution.

The public ownership and democratic control of the coal mines, the metalliferous mines, the packing houses, the flour mills, the steel industry, the oil industry, and all trusts.

Guaranteed employment to every willing worker, male and female.

The establishment of these principles is necessary to the emancipation of the people from the thrall-dom of capitalism. We earnestly invite and urge all sincere and patriotic citizens to join with us to bring order out of chaos and happiness out of misery.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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