
Keynote Speech to the 1932 Socialist Party Convention

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With this convention the Socialist Party enters the Presidential campaign of 1932.

We open the campaign with a declaration of war against both old parties and the who iniquitous and insane social and economic order for which they stand, a war along the whole line, without truce or compromise, a war to the finish.

The catastrophic industrial crisis has been a crucial test of the political leadership of the Republican Party in the national government and of the Democratic Party in control of the lower house of Congress and of many states and cities. In this test both have lamentably failed.

The administration of Herbert Hoover has been a pitiable fiasco. Confronted with the sudden breakdown of the economic life of the country, the great "engineer" in the Presidential chair proved ludicrously incompetent to cope with it. His naive admonitions, psychological incantations, and financial stunts succeeded in creating a few abortive spurts in the stock market, but did not provide jobs for the unemployed or bread for the starving millions. In fact every master stroke of our ingenious President has been followed by an acuter condition of misery and by a renewed wave of general gloom and despair.

The Failure of a System.

But ineffective as his performances have proved in these trying years, it is safe to assert that Governor Roosevelt, if elected, will not be more successful in solving the knotty problems with his innocuous

liberalism or Al Smith with his unfailing remedy of light wines and heavy beer.

The failure of the Hoover administration is not the failure of a person or a group of persons but of a system. What we are witnessing today is nothing less than the complete bankruptcy of capitalism. An economic system that works through alternate periods of fever and paralysis, a system in which a superabundance of wealth causes destitution and starvation, cannot endure. It must be changed under pain of a total collapse of civilization, and the Republican and Democratic Parties alike are helpless to avert the threatened catastrophe. Neither of them has a social philosophy or practical program. Both drift aimlessly along the uncharted sea of political opportunism.

The Socialist Party alone presents to the people of the United States an effective program of immediate and permanent relief. The economic misery which strangles the nation is not due to any natural and unavoidable calamity. It is wholly unnecessary and wanton and is entirely caused by the absurd workings of the capitalist system.

Poverty Amidst Wealth.

Ours is a country of unlimited natural wealth. We have allowed our rich resources, the common heritage of all the people, to be monopolized by a privileged few, who claim the right of exclusive ownership of our vital industries and pretend to manage them as trustee for the benefit of all. They have betrayed their trust. They have operated the industries solely with a view to their personal enrichment and in total disregard of the needs of the people. They have operated them without plan, system, or responsibility in wild competition and speculation, in disorder and chaos, and they have run them into ruin and destruction. They have paralyzed production and commerce, spread misery and bankruptcy, and deprived millions of workers of their means of life.

Our much vaunted captains of industry have proved themselves as incompetent as they are unscrupulous, and in this hour of their utter failure we Socialists demand that they surrender the country to the people. The welfare, aye, the very life of the 120 millions of men, women, and children who inhabit our great and wealthy country, depend upon the proper use of its vast lands, its inexhaustible natural treasures and perfected machinery for the production and distribution of wealth.

We propose that the people reclaim their common heritage from the usurping owning classes and reorganize the economic life of the country on a basis of planful and steady operation for the common good.

To End All Classes.

If capitalism spells anarchy and chaos, it also means class hatred and war. At no time was the class character of our government and of the old political parties revealed so glaringly and brutally as in this period of national economic crisis. While Congress has appropriated billions for the aid of the high financial and capitalist interests who have brought about the economic breakdown by their own recklessness and mismanagement, it has utterly neglected the pitiable victims of the industrial pirates, the millions of jobless and destitute workers.

It has bestowed "doles" on the rich with lavish hands, but has refused to extend to the poor that minimum protection against starvation which the most poverty-stricken countries of Europe grant to their jobless workers in the shape of unemployment insurance. Taking advantage of the weakened and helpless condition of labor which their own mismanagement had brought about, our captains of industry descended upon the workers like a flock of black crows at the scent of a cadaver, to slash their pay in spite of their solemn public promise that they would maintain wages during the period of depression.

No ruling class in the world wages such an open and relentless war against labor as do our American capitalists. In no country do the employers dare to oppose all efforts of their workers to organize so brutally and ruthlessly as the employers in our great industries. Nowhere do they resort to such savage reprisals against rebellious workers as were exemplified by the cold-blooded judicial class murder of Sacco and Vanzetti in Massachusetts or by the perjured frame-up of Mooney and Billings in California.

In all these ugly class struggles we stand unreservedly with the workers, but it is our unswerving purpose to do away with all classes and class antagonisms, and to create a classless cooperative commonwealth based on social and economic equality.

The Dangers to Peace.

Not only have the ruling classes of America and their political parties brought on economic ruin and civil war at home, but they have vastly intensified the chaos and confusion and endangered the peace of the world. In the face of the most devastating depression the world has ever known and in spite of the imperative need of stimulating international commerce, our government, with the aid of both old political parties, has erected an insane and ruinous tariff wall around the United States.

With the principal countries of Europe economically ruined and financially insolvent, our politicians insist upon the payment of fantastic debts created by our needless participation in the ghastly world war. There is no prospect of our ever collecting any substantial part of the debt, but America's vain insistence on its pound of flesh tends to keep alive Europe's insane entanglements in debts and reparations, to retard economic recovery, to foster animosity and resentment among nations, and to promote reactionary nationalistic political movements. Herbert Hoover and his shortsighted political advisors are to a large extent responsible for Adolf Hitler and the threat of fascism and civil and international wars which hang over Europe.

The stupid, dog-in-the-manger policy of our government is glaringly illustrated by its pretended aloofness from the vital affairs and problems of the rest of the world and its stubborn refusal to recognize Soviet Russia, although we maintained friendly diplomatic and commercial relations with the barbarous regime of tsarist Russia and extend full recognition to fascist Italy.

Under Republican and Democratic rule our country, once the home of pacific democracy, has degenerated into a dangerous militaristic and imperialistic world power. Our government has acquired foreign colonies which it rules like subjugated territories, it has invaded neighboring countries with armed forces, it participates in military campaigns and adventures beyond the seas, it maintains formidable military and naval forces and spends huge fortunes on wars — past, present, and future.

The Socialist Party demands the immediate repeal of high import tariffs, the complete cancellation of all governmental war debts, the withdrawal of all troops from foreign territory, and complete disarmament by international understanding and by our own example. We

want an unarmed and warless world with free frontiers, free business intercourse, and friendly relations between the nations.

These are the principal demands which the Socialist Party will carry into the coming electoral battle. In comparison with them the trivial issues and superficial platform planks which the old parties will adopt in haphazard and fictitious competition with each other are bound to sink into utter insignificance.

What America Needs.

What America needs is not a few threadbare patches on the out-work and tattered outer garment of the capitalist system, but a radically remodeled, new, sane and equitable social order.

The political stand-pattism of the old parties will not provide it — it is an organic part of the old order.

Middle-class liberalism or "progressivism" will not fill the crying needs of the time — it is a confused agglomeration of superficial political views, radical in phrases and gesture, but without sound economic foundation, without definite program, without organization, and without power or will to act.

Communism will not supply the remedy — with its dogmatic creed, sectarian organization, spectacular antics, and destructive tactics it can never become a political power in a democratic country.

Socialism alone offers a reasonable and effective way out to the American people and, above all, to the American workers. Never has its message been more convincing and compelling than at this time of our tragic economic breakdown. The Socialist prospects and opportunities have never been brighter and we propose to take full advantage of them in the coming campaign and thereafter.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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