The Breakdown of Capitalism and the Fight for Socialism in the United States Program of the Socialist Equality Party

Part two

The Basic Social Rights of the Working Class

44. Every man, woman and child is entitled to live and enjoy his or her life and develop his or her potential to the maximum, without the curse of poverty and material want. The fact that tens of millions of people in the United States are “ill-fed, ill-clad, ill-housed and in-sure”—nearly 70 years after President Roosevelt declared that such conditions are unbearable—is an unanswerable indictment of American capitalism. The Socialist Equality Party proposes that the working class adopt the concept that there exist social rights that are essential to life in a complex modern society and, therefore, “inalienable.” Working people must resolve to secure these rights through the mobilization of their strength as a class, independent of and in opposition to the corporate-controlled political parties and the institutions of the capitalist state. These rights are:

The right to a job

45. The right to employment is the most basic of all. Without a steady, good-paying job, it is impossible to satisfy all other needs. The loss of a job means the loss of self-esteem and social connection, immense psychological distress, along with the elimination of health care coverage, the destruction of lifetime savings, and vulnerability to poverty and homelessness for oneself and one’s family.

66. Millions of Americans confront this desperate situation. This was once considered unacceptable

in the US is now proclaimed the “new normal.” The official unemployment rate is close to 10 percent, while real unemployment is much higher. Half of the jobless have been without work for more than 27 weeks, and the average length of unemployment is nine months—a level of long-term unemployment unseen since the Great Depression. Some 26 million people are unemployed, underemployed or unemployed. In some states, official unemployment is over 14 percent, while real unemployment in urban centers can approach 50 percent.

49. Against mass unemployment, layoffs and workplace shutdowns, the working class must defend unconditionally the right to a job. Every worker who is laid off and all those entering the workforce must be guaranteed paid job training and employment.

53. Workers have been subjected to a relentless increase in the workweek, with millions dependent on jobs that make ends meet. The eight-hour day, the demand raised by the workers’ movement nearly 150 years ago, is now a distant dream. American workers put in 340 hours more a year on the job than their counterparts in Europe—nearly 400 hours more a year. While millions remain in the workforce, working conditions of life and provide jobs for all, including electricity, gas, phone and other basic necessities.

56. The economic crisis of 2008 was precipitated by a speculative binge in the US mortgage market. Mortgage lenders exploited people’s need for a home in a filthy system to extract as much as possible from those least able to pay. In the process, home prices shot up to record levels. As housing institutions collapsed worldwide over the past two years, millions of people now find themselves “under water,” owing more to the banks than their homes are worth.

57. A major factor in homelessness is the lack of affordable housing. Due to the surge in housing costs and the decline in income, the average American consumer spends 34 percent of his or her income on housing on average, nearly 5 percent more than in any period on transportation. This leaves very little for food, utilities, health care and other basic necessities.

58. There must be an immediate halt to all foreclosures and evictions, which has to be restructured to affordable levels, indexed to income and employment status.

59. The right to decent and affordable housing

55. Over 23 million American families—about one in five—are living inriot or in the midst of violence. People are freezing to death in the streets. People freezing to death in the streets. Shutoffs, which serve the profit system.

62. All the basic utilities—including electricity, gas, phone and water—must be affordable at levels and abolishing usurious interest rates, bank fees and other transportation

60. Every year, millions of households in the US have their electricity, gas and water shut off. Shutoffs, which serve the profit system. The right to a secure retirement

65. Insurance companies have a nearly 10 percent increase in recent

68. Millions of retired workers are struggling on fixed incomes, scraping by with an extra to rising health care costs. Over 60 percent of the elderly depend entirely upon Social Security for survival. Because Social Security benefits are inadequate, more and more elderly families are being forced to retire or go back to work in order to provide for their children.

69. Over 7 million Americans—about one in five—are living in poverty. The right to education

70. Those workers who were able to win decent pensions in an earlier period are seeing their ben-efits eroded: Workers are getting jobs with few or no benefits. The past three decades have seen a proliferation of de-acceleration and the US economy a nearly 450,000 deaths in the US in 2005 associated with lack of health insurance. For some groups—especially workers in low-paying jobs—the rate is as high as 600,000

71. All workers must be guaran-teed pensions that allow for a secure retirement, with an income sufficient to provide for all workers to be re-tired at the age of 60, with a full federal benefits, with the right to vote and run for public office.

The right to health care

51. The current federal minimum wage ($7.25 an hour) condemns millions to poverty. It must be replaced by a guaranteed annual income that covers all needs. The many people unable to work because of old age, disability or ill health must also receive this income.

52. For decades, credit cards, second mortgages and other forms of debt have concealed the decline of living standards. The same banks bailed out with public funds are tightening the reins on working people. To ensure economic security, there must be free childcare and after-school activities.

54. A right to education means the loss of life chances and social connection, the most basic of all. Without a decent education, American capitalism. The Social-ist Equality Party proposes that the working class adopt the concept that there exist social rights that are essential to life in a complex modern society and, therefore, “inalienable.” Working people must resolve to secure these rights through the mobilization of their strength as a class, independent of and in opposition to the corporate-controlled political parties and the institutions of the capitalist state. These rights are:

50. Wages have been under attack for decades. The dismantling of industry has wiped out "middle-class" manufacturing jobs, with decent wages, benefits and job security. In the auto in-dustry, which long set the stan-dard for manufacturing wages, new workers are hired at $14 an hour, barely above the grossly inadequate poverty line for a family of four. Mass unemployment is deliberately used to drive down labor costs and boost prof-its. The Obama administration’s strategy for economic growth is based on turning the US into a cheap labor platform for exports.

41. It is universally acknowl-oped that today’s youth will live in a world very different from the one their parents knew. There exist social rights that are essential to life in a complex modern society and, therefore, “inalienable.” Working people must resolve to secure these rights through the mobilization of their strength as a class, independent of and in opposition to the corporate-controlled political parties and the institutions of the capitalist state. These rights are:

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