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Old Age Pensions and Unemployment Insurance

OUR country is the richest in the world. It has as much accumulated wealth and productive resources as the rest of the world combined. Yet millions of people are divorced from all means of livelihood except a precarious and degrading relief system, or a still worse system of charity. Millions of skilled and able workers are no longer needed in our industrial system, and constantly more are being dispensed with, due to new machinery and speed-up. Millions of our young people, with never an opportunity to acquire experience and skill, are facing a future without hope. Millions of the older generation, prematurely aged by the devastating speed-up, are thrown penniless upon the streets to drag out their last years in slow starvation and the destruction of all human dignity. Insecurity, the heritage of everyone under our insane economic system, becomes for these millions the certainty of disaster.

The cause of this social plague, under our present social order, arises out of the very riches of our productive forces. Millions must be deprived of a decent life, because our society has too much wealth. The more rapidly we multiply our wealth and productive forces, the more widespread is this social plague of misery, unemployment, starvation.

Until we are ready to reorganize our social and economic system upon different lines, which will produce different results, that is, until we Americans are ready to go forward to socialism, the first stage of communism, until that time it will be necessary to adopt emergency measures to keep our people from social poisoning and degeneration.

It is this field of emergency measures which has been given the high-sounding title of "social security."

Certain timid and utterly inadequate beginnings toward such emergency measures were taken by the Roosevelt Administration in the so-called Social Security Bill.

The positive features of this bill are, first, that it established the principle of federal legislation for old-age pensions and unemployment insurance; second, it recognized that to leave the question to the initiative of the separate states means to guarantee that nothing at all would be done. Its negative features are, first, that it adopted an unworkable compromise with the state-rights doctrine, refusing a clear-cut federal system; second, that it adopted a vicious method of financing, placing the tax-load upon the masses of people least able to bear the burden, by the tax on wages and payrolls; and, third, that the benefits are so limited in amount, so hedged about with limitations, so postponed to the future, and so circumscribed in application to only about half the suffering population, as to make a mockery of its title of "social security."

Governor Landon in Milwaukee a few days ago made the Republican criticism of the Roosevelt bill, and added his own proposals. What did he tell us? He proposes, if elected, to remedy the inadequacies of the present bill by destroying its two strong points. He would repeal the principle of federal responsibility altogether, and hand the whole problem over to the separate states for "experimentation," which in practice is a guarantee that nothing effective will be done at all.

This practical rejection of all effective old-age pensions and unemployment insurance by Governor Landon was headlined in the newspapers as a promise to give the old people and the unemployed something better than the Roosevelt bill. This is an election fraud on a colossal scale.

In truth, Landon and Knox are the chosen candidates of the most irreconcilable enemies of old-age pensions and unemployment insurance. They represent the Liberty League, Hearst, Morgan, the du Ponts, Mellon, the wealthy families

of our land, whose central policy is to prevent the government from taxing their mounting profits and billions of capital, by so much as a single penny. Landon gave a broad hint that if elected he would finance such federal relief as he could not immediately cut off by a federal sales tax which would fall upon the whole population.

With such a policy, what a cruel hoax is being perpetrated upon the unsuspecting Townsend followers, who are being wooed by Landon with the song that this means the substantial fulfillment of their demands! And what a vicious conspiracy, when in Colorado the Republican State Convention, in the presence of the Honorable John D. M. Hamilton, made the explicit promise that a vote for Landon is a vote for \$200 per month to all old people over 60 years!

All the monopolists of Wall Street will vote for Landon, believing that he will carry out their policy of slashing to the bone all governmental expenditures for social legislation of all kinds, and shift the tax burden even more over onto the poor people. Millions of workers and farmers, including deluded Townsend followers, will vote for Landon believing the newspaper headlines that Landon has promised that our country's wealth will be used for social benefit payments much greater than those of Roosevelt. Some people will have been fooled. Does anybody really think that it is the Wall Street bankers who do not know their Landon?

We of the Communist Party have a program of our own for social security, that is, of emergency measures to rescue the victims of the breakdown of a rotten capitalist system. We have written it into our official platform with the utmost of precision and clarity.

It is common knowledge that our Party played no small role in rallying the unemployed and winning the support of the entire labor movement to force recognition of government responsibility for unemployment. We helped develop the first unemployed organization in the country. Later we helped unite all organizations of the unemployed into one united na-

tional organization of the unemployed—the Workers Alliance of America.

First of all, we declare that when private enterprise cannot or will not provide employment at a living wage, then it is the obligation of the government to step in and fill the breach. Work provided by the government shall be in the production of things the people need—food, clothing and shelter. Public construction shall in the first place provide low-cost housing, schools, recreational centers, hospitals and parks in the workers' districts, etc.

Second, we would provide a guaranteed income to all able-bodied men and women, denied work through no fault of their own, as well as for all unemployed through sickness, and pensions for the aged from the age of sixty years upward. Such compensation, to provide against the deterioration of the American standard of living, should be equal to previous average income when fully employed, in no case falling below \$15 per week. It should apply to all categories of workers without exception, to the farmers, and to the self-employed professions whose employment is wiped out by crises and depression. These principles have been embodied in the Frazier-Lundeen Bill, introduced in the 74th Congress, which is an elaboration of the bill first worked out by the Communists several years ago.

Thirdly, we would save the young generation from their present demoralization which arises from a situation where they are not needed, and who now face a future without hope. We support the American Youth Act, introduced in Congress by Senator Benson at the request of the American Youth Congress, which provides opportunity for education and vocational training, with part-time work, for all young people from 16 to 25 years, at government expense. The present inadequate Youth Administration must be extended and improved.

There is but one serious argument made against these proposals. Everyone will agree that nothing short of these measures will stop the serious social deterioration inflicted upon the American people by the crisis and depression. But,

it is argued, these measures will cost too much, the country cannot afford it!

America must choose between two ways of paying the bills of crisis and depression. One way is to preserve accumulated wealth at all costs, and pay the bill in the destruction of life and happiness of millions upon millions of our people. That is the way of Landon, Hearst, the Liberty League and Wall Street. The other way, the way we propose, is to preserve at all costs the life, health and happiness of our people, and pay the bill out of surplus income and accumulated wealth. The Roosevelt Administration tried to find a third way, but this turned out to be only an unworkable compromise between the two fundamentally opposite paths, a compromise which arouses the wrath of both the rich and the poor.

Social security can be approached only through drawing upon the material wealth of our land. Sales taxes only cut the flesh from the poor in order to feed the same poor. Inflation and currency manipulation only further enrich the speculators, and impoverish the people; credit and currency should be firmly controlled by the government, which can be done only by nationalization of the entire banking system. The budget should be balanced, not by cutting social expenditures, but, on the contrary, by increased taxation of the rich. While exempting small home and property owners from taxes, the present tax exemption of the rich, on thirty-five billion dollars of securities, should be abolished; a sharply graduated income tax, beginning at \$5,000 per year, supplemented by taxes on gifts and inheritances and corporate surpluses, should take what is necessary from the surplus income of the country which now goes to the rich.

America must choose: shall the people pay with their lives, or shall the wealthy pay with their money? We say, make the rich pay! Everything else is only illusion and fraud. This is the only way to give any measure of social security to the American people.

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