

II. A PLATFORM FOR PEACE

THE Communist Party occupies an exceptionally responsible position in the 1940 election. National and international crises press upon our people. The country gropes to find its way in a world which is falling to pieces about us, and the old guides, in whom the nation had placed its faith for seven years, have failed.

In 1937, the man who had the ear of the American people, the President of the United States, spoke the following words:

In our generation, a new idea has come to dominate thought about government—the idea that the resources of the nation can be made to produce a far higher standard of living for the masses if only government is intelligent and energetic in giving the right direction to economic life. That idea . . . cannot be thrust aside by those who want to go back to the conditions of ten years ago or even preserve the conditions of today. It puts all forms of government to proof.

When President Roosevelt spoke those words, he voiced the views and hopes of the biggest majority that ever assembled in support of a popular cause in this Western world.

The people still hold to this idea. The Communists supported it then and hold to it now. But the man who spoke those words in 1937 now speaks instead of a multiplied navy and fifty thousand airplanes, a program of armaments that means military adventures in the Dutch East Indies and the Far East, in Latin America and on the blood-soaked fields of Europe. And the shrill howl for armaments blots out the call for “a far higher standard of living for the masses.”

The Communist Party gives voice to the deepest convictions of the great majority of the American people, when it calls halt to the deliberate drive into the war, when we cry out to the imperialist war camps: “A plague on both your houses.” We speak for the people when we demand a stop to the blood-soaked trade in munitions and instruments of war. We speak for the millions, when we resolve: “The Yanks are *not* coming.”

THE PEOPLE'S RIGHTS MUST BE PRESERVED

But American economy has been geared to the war market, with immense fortunes accruing to those who already hold immense fortunes, and who dream of realizing their dictatorship through the M-Day plans, which will abolish democracy and clamp down the rigid rule of the plutocrats over the workers, farmers, and all the common people.

In order to have a free hand for war and to rake in the huge profits promised by the war adventure, the plutocrats and their “Fifth Columns” are trying to weaken or abolish the Labor Relations Act, to destroy the right of organization and collective bargaining; they want to break down the Wages and Hours Law, and prevent its being extended to other workers. In this election, only the Communist Party shows the workers and progressive masses how these reactionary forces can be defeated, and labor's rights preserved and extended.

The enemies of the people and their “Fifth Columns” are fighting, openly and secretly, to prevent social legislation on behalf of the disinherited, the aged, the youth and the unemployed, and to weaken the present inadequate provisions for them. Only the Communist Party is willing to withhold from war purposes the necessary funds for old-age pensions of \$60 per month after sixty years of age; for the American Youth Act, providing \$5,000,000,000 for education and jobs to the young people; for expanded public works, employing at least three millions of the unemployed; for a real employment insurance system that will maintain the families of every worker unemployed through no fault of his own until he gets a job; for

national health insurance, to guarantee a minimum of medical, dental, clinical, and hospital care for the entire population.

Our farming population is in perhaps the worst situation of all. Poverty is spreading in the countryside, and hundreds of thousands of farmers from old hardy pioneer stock are in peace-time America thrown into a position resembling that of the war refugees of Europe and China.

Only the Communist Party is willing to go to the necessary lengths to secure the land to the farmers, to lighten the tax burden on the family-size farms and to guarantee them cost of production for their crops, to provide cheap production credits, to remove the foreclosure threat of mortgages, to extend electrical and public service facilities to all the countryside, and to support co-operative marketing and production. This is because only the Communist Party is willing to place the burden where it belongs—on the great fortunes. But the people would be willing.

The rents now paid by the American people amount to enough to pay adequate returns on a capitalist basis, on a modern large-scale housing program that would house the whole American people. Only the Communist Party demands that idle capital and idle building workers be put on the job by the Government, to the tune of five billion dollars per year, to produce modern low-rent housing until every family has a decent home at low cost.

All these measures are absolutely necessary if the United States is to "produce a far higher standard of living for the masses." Yet the Democratic Party, which once put forth a much more modest housing project, has hastily withdrawn it in order to spend the money for a war in Europe, and neither the Republican nor any party except the Communist will adopt and fight for such a program as this one.

THE PLUTOCRATS STAND IN THE WAY

One and all, the "great men" of our land, those who rule by virtue of owning the production plants of the nation, the economic royalists and all their political agents and "Fifth Columnists," unite

in one answer to such a program: "The country could not afford it; it would lead the nation to bankruptcy."

But the same gentlemen who howl about "bankruptcy" when it is a question of investing a few billions of dollars in houses and healthy, strong, well-fed and well-clothed men, women and children, are exactly the same ones who blithely, without a moment's hesitation, vote more billions for airplanes, battleships, bombs and tanks, the only possible use for which is in a foreign war; they all agree upon war plans that envisage that the United States will spend twenty billions of dollars in war the first year. When it comes to war, their fears of "bankruptcy" disappear in dreams of war-time profits. Their motto is: "Billions for war, but not one cent to raise the American standard of living."

Why do you say that this country and this people cannot afford to go to work producing everything the country needs? Explain it to us more simply, you rich and wise and good gentlemen in whose stewardship America with all its untold riches has been placed? Why is it that America can afford twelve million idle workers; can afford forty million ill-housed, ill-clothed and ill-fed families; can afford mines, mills and factories closed down and rusting; can afford billions of capital lying idle in the banks; can afford accumulating agricultural surpluses, and to pay farmers to produce less; can afford to play the game of war, and can spend many billions preparing for war—but such a country cannot, you say, afford to put these men to work, to put these idle resources to work, because it would bankrupt us?

But you have admitted that such sums can be had; you wish to spend such sums for war.

Perhaps, if we can force you to try to explain this riddle, America will begin to see that there is nothing wrong with the productive resources of our country, nothing wrong with the workers and farmers, but that the whole trouble arises from the economic royalists, who stand as a barrier between the workers and the country's economy, and refuse to allow them to come together for the enrichment of the country, because you first must have your profit, a

blackmail against production which is dragging the people deeper and deeper into unemployment, misery, poverty—and now into war!

No, the one thing America cannot afford is this war, this insane and catastrophic crushing of the lives of the millions who *are* America.

We are the best defenders of America, we the American workers and farmers, and the Communists in the very first ranks. We defend our country from its real enemies.

Nor can America afford the further development of the war hysteria which is rising to destroy the civil liberties and democratic rights of labor and the people. A great people's movement must assert itself in 1940, to demand with the Communists:

A PEOPLE'S PLATFORM

Defeat every attempt to restrict freedom of speech, press, radio and assembly, and the right to organize and to conduct all activities of the trade unions to raise the standard of living of America.

Rouse the great masses to halt the attacks upon the trade unions, through anti-trust law indictments and "conspiracy" charges.

Demand the immediate enactment of the Federal Anti-Lynching Bill, which has been so shamefully pigeonholed by Congress and the Administration.

Secure the franchise to the Southern masses, white and Negro, by immediate Federal legislation prohibiting and penalizing all poll-tax laws and other limitations on the franchise, as a national issue, not a regional Southern issue, without the solution of which there is no effective democracy for the whole nation.

Abolish all discriminatory legislation and customs directed against the Negro population; unconditional equality, economic, political and social.

Defeat all the anti-alien legislation, and the so-called sedition laws, which are a modern resurrection in a worse form of the ancient "Alien and Sedition Laws" of the Administration of President Adams nearly one hundred and fifty years ago, in the fight against which Thomas Jefferson established American democracy,

in the fight against which today this democracy can alone be preserved.

Defeat the attacks against the labor movement, which begin here as they did in Germany, with attacks on the Communist Party; these attacks constitute a knife at the throat of the Bill of Rights for the whole population.

Defend the Bill of Rights, which is even more important in time of war than in time of peace, which is a guarantee for all or is valid for none.

This immediate platform which the Communist Party offers to the country is not a revolutionary, not a socialist program.

Those who say that our country, with all its tremendous riches and productive forces, cannot realize such a plan should remember that such a program is being more than realized in a big country which only a few short years ago was ruined and poverty-stricken. It is true that it was not through capitalism, but instead through the new system of socialism, that the Soviet Union was able to multiply its national income tenfold during the past twelve years, and to raise the living standards of the masses by 500 per cent, while providing all necessary defense measures, with armed enemies all around on every border. But if capitalism is truly a system which makes it impossible to provide a better life for all the people, then that fact should be admitted, and the American people will have their opportunity to try out the new system of socialism which has proved that it can do so. Americans are as able and intelligent as any people in the world, and we can accomplish anything that has been accomplished elsewhere.

The crisis in America and the world has created a situation similar to that of 1856, when the dominant Whig and Democratic parties were, like the present dominant parties, divorced from the masses and in agreement to thwart their will—a situation which gave birth to a new party, a third party, which began as a desperate minority movement but swept to power in the nation four years

later under Abraham Lincoln, solving the crisis through the abolition of slavery and the victory of the Union in the Civil War.

The masses of the United States cry out for such a new party, a modern Abraham Lincoln, as the only road toward the solution of the crisis of today, of the breakdown of capitalism, the crisis of imperialist war that threatens destruction to the world.

Accepting your nomination I pledge our Party to co-operate with labor and the people toward this goal.

Speech accepting the nomination for President at the Eleventh National Convention of the Communist Party of the United States, Madison Square Garden, June 2, 1940.