

---

**National Office Socialist Party, Chicago**

May 5th, 1917

## **Member's Individual Ballot**

National Referendum "B" 1917

# **Anti-War Proclamation and Program**

**Adopted by the National Emergency Convention, St. Louis, Mo., April 7th to 14th, 1917.**

---

Text of SPA referendum ballot, original at Leonard Axe Memorial Library,  
Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg, KS.

---

**Vote for One Report Only. Ballots Marked in Favor of Both Reports Can Not Be Counted.**

### **Majority Report.**

The Socialist Party of the United States in the present grave crisis solemnly reaffirms its allegiance to the principle of internationalism and working class solidarity the world over, and proclaims its unalterable opposition to the war just declared by the government of the United States.

Modern wars as a rule have been caused by the commercial and financial rivalry and intrigues of the capitalist interest in the different countries. Whether they have been frankly waged as wars of aggression or they have been hypocritically represented as wars of "defense," they always have been made by the classes and fought by the masses. Wars bring wealth and power to the ruling classes, and suffering, death, and demoralization to the workers.

They breed a sinister spirit of passion, unreason, race hatred, and false patriotism. They obscure the struggles of the workers for life, liberty, and social justice. They tend to sever the vital bonds of solidarity between them and their brothers in other countries, to destroy their organizations and to curtail their civic and political rights and liberties.

The Socialist Party of the United States is unalterably opposed to the system of exploitation and class rule which is upheld and strengthened by military power and sham national patriotism. We, therefore,

call upon the workers of all countries to refuse support of their governments in their wars. The wars of the contending national groups of capitalists are not the concern of the workers. The only struggle which would justify the workers in taking up arms is the great struggle of the working class of the world to free itself from economic exploitation and political oppression, and we particularly warn the workers against the snare and delusion of so-called defensive warfare. As against the false doctrine of national patriotism we uphold the ideal of international working class solidarity. In support of capitalism, we will not willingly give a single life or a single dollar; in support of the struggle of the workers for freedom we pledge our all.

The mad orgy of death and destruction which is now convulsing unfortunate Europe was caused by the conflict of capitalist interests in the European countries.

In each of these countries, the workers were oppressed and exploited. They produced enormous wealth but the bulk of it was withheld from them by the owners of the industries. The workers were thus deprived of the means to repurchase the wealth which they themselves had created.

The capitalist class of each country was forced to look for foreign markets to dispose of the accumulated "surplus" wealth. The huge profits made by the capitalists could not be profitably reinvested in their

own countries, hence, they were driven to look for foreign fields of investment. The geographical boundaries of each modern capitalist country thus became too narrow for the industrial and commercial operations of its capitalist class.

The efforts of the capitalists of all leading nations were therefore centered upon the domination of the world markets. Imperialism became the dominant note in the politics of Europe. The acquisition of colonial possessions and the extensions of spheres of commercial and political influence became the object of diplomatic intrigues and the cause of constant clashes between nations.

The acute competition between the capitalist powers of the earth, their jealousies and distrusts of one another and the fear of the rising power of the working class forced each of them to arm to the teeth. This led to the mad rivalry of armament, which, years before the outbreak of the present war, had turned the leading countries of Europe into armed camps with standing armies of many millions, drilled and equipped for war in times of "peace."

Capitalism, imperialism, and militarism had thus laid the foundation of an inevitable general conflict in Europe. The ghastly war in Europe was not caused by an accidental event, nor by the policy or institutions of any single nation. It was the logical outcome of the competitive capitalist system.

The six million men of all countries and races who have been ruthlessly slain in the first thirty months of this war, the millions of others who have been crippled and maimed, the vast treasures of wealth that have been destroyed, the untold misery and sufferings of Europe, have not been sacrifices exacted in a struggle for principles or ideals, but wanton offerings upon the altar of private profit.

The forces of capitalism which have led to the war in Europe are even more hideously transparent in the war recently provoked by the ruling class of this country.

When Belgium was invaded, the government enjoined upon the people of this country the duty of remaining neutral, thus clearly demonstrating that the "dictates of humanity," and the fate of small nations and of democratic institutions were matters that did not concern it. But when our enormous war traffic was seriously threatened, our government calls upon

us to rally to the "defense of democracy and civilization."

Our entrance into the European war was instigated by the predatory capitalists in the United States who boast of the enormous profit of \$7 billion from the manufacture and sale of munitions and war supplies and from the exportation of American foodstuffs and other necessities. They are also deeply interested in the continuance of the war and the success of the allied arms through their huge loans to the governments of the allied powers and through other commercial ties. It is the same interests which strive for imperialistic domination of the Western Hemisphere.

The war of the United States against Germany cannot be justified even on the plea that it is a war in defense of American rights or American "honor." Ruthless as the unrestricted submarine war policy of the German government was and is, it is not an invasion of the rights of the American people, as such, but only an interference with the opportunity of certain groups of American capitalists to coin cold profits out of the blood and sufferings of our fellow men in the warring countries of Europe.

It is not a war against the militarist regime of the Central Powers. Militarism can never be abolished by militarism.

It is not a war to advance the cause of democracy in Europe. Democracy can never be imposed upon any country by a foreign power by force of arms.

It is cant and hypocrisy to say that the war is not directed against the German people, but against the Imperial Government of Germany. If we send an armed force to the battlefields of Europe, its cannon will mow down the masses of the German people and not the Imperial German Government.

Our entrance into the European conflict at this time will serve only to multiply the horrors of the war, to increase the toll of death and destruction and to prolong the fiendish slaughter. It will bring death, suffering, and destitution to the people of the United States and particularly to the working class. It will give the powers of reaction in this country the pretext for an attempt to throttle our rights and to crush our democratic institutions, and to fasten upon this country a permanent militarism.

The working class of the United States has no quarrel with the working class of Germany or of any

other country. The people of the United States has no quarrel with the working class of Germany or of any other country. The American people did not want and do not want this war. They have not been consulted about the war and have had no part in declaring war. They have been plunged into this war by the trickery and treachery of the ruling class of the country through its representatives in the National Administration and National Congress, its demagogic agitators, its subsidized press, and other servile instruments of public expression.

We brand the declaration of war by our government as a crime against the people of the United States and against the nations of the world.

In all modern history there has been no war more unjustifiable than the war in which we are about to engage.

No greater dishonor has ever been forced upon a people than that which the capitalist class is forcing upon this nation against its will.

In harmony with these principles, the Socialist Party emphatically rejects the proposal that in time of war the workers should suspend their struggle for better conditions. On the contrary, the acute situation created by war calls for an even more vigorous prosecution of the class struggle, and we recommend to the workers and pledge ourselves to the following course of action:

1. Continuous, active, and public opposition to the war, through demonstrations, mass petitions, and all other means within our power.

2. Unyielding opposition to all proposed legislation for military or industrial conscription. Should such conscription be forced upon the people, we pledge ourselves to continuous efforts for the repeal of such laws and to the support of all mass movements in opposition to conscription. We pledge ourselves to oppose with all our strength any attempt to raise money for payment of war expense by taxing the necessities of life or issuing bonds which will put the burden on future generations. We demand that the capitalist class, which is responsible for the war, pay its cost. Let those who kindled the fire, furnish the fuel.

3. Vigorous resistance to all reactionary measures, such as censorship of the press and mails, restriction of the rights of free speech, assemblage, and organization, or compulsory arbitration and limitation of the

right to strike.

4. Consistent propaganda against military training and teaching in the public schools.

5. Extension of the campaign of education among the workers to organize them into strong, class-conscious, and closely unified political and industrial organizations, to enable them by concerted and harmonious mass action to shorten this war and to establish lasting peace.

6. Widespread educational propaganda to enlighten the masses as to the true relation between capitalism and war, and to rouse and organize them for action, not only against present war evils, but for the prevention of future wars and for the destruction of the causes of war.

7. To protect the masses of the American people from the pressing danger of starvation which the war in Europe has brought upon them, and which the entry of the United States has already accentuated, we demand:—

(a) The restriction of food exports so long as the present shortage continues, the fixing of maximum prices and whatever measures may be necessary to prevent the food speculators from holding back the supplies now in their hands;

(b) The socialization and democratic management of the great industries concerned with the production, transportation, storage, and the marketing of food and other necessities of life;

(c) The socialization and democratic management of all land and other natural resources now held out of use for monopolistic or speculative profit.

These measures are presented as means of protecting the workers against the evil results of the present war. The danger of recurrence of war will exist as long as the capitalist system of industry remains in existence. The end of wars will come with the establishment of socialized industry and industrial democracy the world over. The Socialist Party calls upon all the workers to join it in its struggle to reach this goal, and thus bring into the world a new society in which peace, fraternity, and human brotherhood will be the dominant ideals.

### Minority Report.

Congress has declared that a state of war exists between this nation and Germany. War between the two nations is a fact.

We opposed the entrance of this republic into the war, but we failed. The political and economic organizations of the working class were not strong enough to do more than protest.

Having failed to prevent the war by our agitation, we can only recognize it as a fact and try to force upon the government, through pressure of public opinion, a reconstructive program.

Our aim now must be to minimize the suffering and misery which the war will bring to our own people, to protect our rights and liberties against reactionary encroachments, and to promote an early peace upon a democratic basis, advantageous to the international working class.

Furthermore, we must seize the opportunity presented by war conditions to advance our program of democratic collectivism. Every one of the other belligerent nationals has discovered through the war that capitalism is inherently inefficient. To secure a maximum of efficiency, whether for military or civil needs, it has been found necessary to abandon the essential principle of capitalist industry. The warring nations have had to give up the organization and operation of industry and the primary economic functions for profit, and to adopt the socialist principle of production for use. Thus the war has demonstrated the superior efficiency of collective organization and operation of industry.

Guided by this experience, we would so reorganize our economic system to secure for our permanent domestic needs the greatest possible results from the proper utilization of our national resources.

In furtherance of these aims, we propose the following

#### War Program.

1. We propose that the Socialist Party shall establish communications with the Socialists within the enemy nations, to the end that peace may be secured upon democratic terms at the earliest possible moment.
2. We demand that there be no interference with

freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of assemblage.

3. We demand that dealings between the government and the workers in all of the industries and services taken over and operated by the government shall be conducted through their organizations with due regard for the right of organization of those not organized.

4. We demand that conscription, if it comes at all, shall begin with wealth. All annual incomes in excess of \$5,000 should be taken by the government and used to pay the current expenses of the war. If it is just to conscript a human being, it is just to conscript wealth. Money is not as sacred as human life.

5. We demand that there shall be no conscription of men until the American people shall be given the right to vote upon it. Under the British Empire the people of Australia were permitted to decide by ballot whether they should be conscripted. We demand for the American people the same right.

6. We demand that the government seize and operate for the benefit of the whole people the great industries concerned with production, transportation, storage, and marketing of the food and other necessities of the people.

7. We demand that the government seize all available vacant land, and have the same cultivated for the purpose of furnishing food supplies for national use.

8. We demand that the government take over and operate all land and water transport facilities; all water-powers and irrigation plants; mines, forests, and oil fields; and all industrial monopolies; and that this be done at once, before the nation shall suffer calamity through the failure of their capitalist direction and management under war pressure.

#### Names of Delegates Submitting Minority Report Attached by Order of Convention.

Emil Seidel, Wis.  
 Gerrit T. Thorn, Wis.  
 Job Harriman, Cal.  
 J. Mahlon Barnes, Pa.  
 George H. Goebel, NJ  
 Anna A. Maley, Minn.  
 C.M. Wassing, Minn.

W.P. Collins, Col.	Mary Raoul Millis, Ga.
Frederick Krafft, NJ	C.F. Bowman, Ia.
Murray E. King, Utah	Harold Metcalf, Ia.
W.H. Couley, Okla.	A.T. Jones, Okla.
J.C. Duke, Va.	Robert Busch, Wis.
John Spargo, Vt.	Cory Davenport, Ariz.
Cameron H. King, Cal.	W.R. Gaylord, Wis.
G.C. Porter, Neb.	Florence Wattles, Ind.
E.F. Atwood, So. Dak.	Walter J. Millard, Ky.
J.R. Catton, So. Dak.	J.T. Cumbie, Okla.
C.B. Russell, Okla.	N.P. Nielsen, Wis.
I.M. Iverson, So. Dak.	E.L. Moore, Okla.
W.P. Butler, So. Dak.	A.G. Sechrist, Okla.
L.C. Thompson, Okla.	Leonard Johnson, Okla.
S.W. Sample, Okla.	U.C. Tuttle, Okla.
J.A. Lewis, Okla.	J.W. Houchin, Okla.
Leo Krzycki, Wis.	S.C. Stair, Okla.
J.R. Barnette, Ariz.	Ida A. Belsof, Kans.
Clay Fulks, Ark.	Milo M. Mitchell, Kans.
Fred L. Faichild, So. Dak.	G.W. Kleihege, Kans.
Walter Thomas Mills, Cal.	Ella Baldwin, Kans.
C.T. Stony, Utah	John C. Kennedy, Ill.
Elda B. Conly, Ida.	A.H. Strobell, NJ
I.F. Stewart, Ida.	Eugene Hough, Mass.
Sylvester Young, Md.	Allan L. Benson, NY
G.J. Braun, Tenn.	

**Members should file their ballots with the Local or Branch Secretaries not later than June 24, 1917.**

**Secretaries of Branches should file their reports with the Secretaries of the Central Committees on or before June 26, 1917.**

**DO NOT SEND THIS BALLOT TO THE NATIONAL OFFICE.**

**LOCAL SECRETARIES SHOULD FILE THEIR REPORTS WITH THE STATE SECRETARIES ON OR BEFORE JUNE 28, 1917.**

**State Secretaries should compile and file with the Executive Secretary a complete statement of the vote in their respective states on or before July 4, 1917.**

**One of these ballots, properly certified, may be used by the respective officers to file their reports.**

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

*Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2005. • Free reproduction permitted.*