

Revised Draft Program

The following is a revised version of the Red Party's Draft Program. The program has been criticized as overly schematic or too long - but while attempting to avoid unnecessary length, a program should lay out a basic strategic perspective (Section II - 'For a Communist Party'), have a rough description of the era we live in (Section I - 'Our Era'), and a minimum program of immediate demands. (Section III.) This framework must also consider social oppression and maintain our strategic goal of a "revolution on the revolutionary left" / unity in a party on a Marxist program (with the three very broadly defined base points for what that program could look like.)

Changes have been marked in red text. In sections I and II, these changes are in style / presentation. Section III (the minimum program) contains a few revised demands, notably on national self-determination.

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I. Our Era

The present era is one characterized by the contradiction between a dysfunctional capitalism and the objective need for a revolutionary transition to communism.

Capitalism is the dominant social order on the planet, the result of bourgeois revolutions in an earlier historical period that overthrew feudalism and other pre-capitalist systems. In its revolutionary phase capitalism developed human productivity to hitherto-unheard of levels, transforming the world from one of material scarcity into one of material abundance – an abundance necessary but alone insufficient for universal human freedom. Even in its infancy, capitalism developed dripping in blood, from the trans-Atlantic slave trade to the genocide of the American Indians in the United States. Since the past century, capitalism has outlived its historically progres-

sive function. War, social disintegration, economic crisis and catastrophic global warming are not aberrations but inbuilt features of capitalism in decay.

Society is divided between two main classes, the capitalists (or bourgeoisie) and the working class (or proletariat.) The capitalist class, a small minority making up less than one percent of the population, derives its power from private ownership of the “means of production”: the corporate giants of manufacturing, retail and distribution, agriculture, finance, land, and communication. By contrast, the working class – the majority of the population, including those currently in employment and those without – owns no means of production and has nothing but its labor power to sell. That labor, along with nature, is what creates society’s wealth.

Unlike earlier systems based on direct chattel slavery or serfdom, the proletarian is not bound to any particular owner but rather is a wage slave in service of the bourgeoisie as a whole. The worker’s status is reduced to being a cog in a machine: under capitalism, production is socialized but appropriation is private. [example / explanatory sentence removed] The workers generate enough value not only to cover their own wages and other operating costs, but an additional surplus value that is appropriated by the capitalist as profit. This exploitation, with the constant tension between the bourgeoisie’s desire to increase profit by pressing down wages and the proletariat’s efforts to raise them, is the class struggle in its most basic form. Our class derives its power by its separation from the means of production: its ability to withdraw its labor and its ability to take collective action.

Between these two great classes lies the petty bourgeoisie or “middle class.” Contrary to official ideology, the middle class is not based on income or what type of work one does but rather social position. Small-to-medium proprietors and managerial layers make up the middle class, a wide array ranging from natural allies of the working class to elite functionaries and hangers-on of the ruling class. The petty-bourgeoisie tends to [shift] between allegiance to the proletariat and bourgeoisie. A strong, organized proletariat can bring significant layers of the middle class to its side

in struggle; where the proletariat fails to do this, the middle class will often fall under the sway of bourgeois populist and outright fascist demagoguery.

The present era of capitalism is the era of imperialism. The United States cemented itself as the world's leading imperialist power after World War II, and today it stands as the world's only superpower after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. Imperialism is not merely powerful countries doing bad things to less powerful countries, but the world hierarchy of states in conflict for the ever-increasing market reach and super-exploited labor in the neocolonial world that capitalism is compelled to penetrate [removed a subordinate clause]. Just as each capitalist is in competition with other capitalists, the ruling class in each country fights a war of position against the ruling class elsewhere. [removed concluding sentence]

[Aside from this, capitalism employs other methods to overcome its inbuilt boom-and-bust cycle: creating new markets for artificial needs, Keynesian government intervention, neoliberal deregulation, austerity... But owing to private ownership, production for profit, and the market economy – not to mention the undemocratic capitalist state itself.] Capitalism cannot be reformed to put humanity over accumulation. Hence the need for socialist revolution.

The socialist revolution and the transition to communism represent humanity's collective self-liberation. Socialist revolution requires active support from the majority of the population; a socialist society would radically extend democracy into every sphere of life. In place of the wasteful, anarchic market economy there is the democratically planned economy to rationally put humanity's tremendous wealth to use satisfying people's wants and needs, including the need to live sustainably with our planet. In place of the highly limited 'democracy' of capitalist states there is the democratic republic in which people exercise meaningful control over their lives – on the job, in the community, and in the world. A full flowering of science and culture would take place, freed from the war of each against all.

Not only are the end of war, exploitation and environmental destruction bound up with socialism, but so is the end of social oppression. Racism, national oppression and patriarchy serve our rulers' interests by dividing sections of the working class against itself; fighting social oppression is an essential need for working class partisans. In particular, racism in the United States is a bedrock on which the repressive state apparatus is built which is then wielded against the people in general. And women's oppression has propped up exploitative social relationships since the beginnings of class society. Under capitalism, the gendered pay gap and the free domestic labor women disproportionately perform acts as a subsidy to the state. Socialism means genuine equality for the first time in history for people of all genders, races, sexual orientations and national origins.

Like capitalism, socialism must be a world system. When the proletariat takes power in one country or in several countries, it will need its own state form (albeit a far more democratic state form) to defend and extend the revolution. While the working class can *make* revolution in any country, socialism in one country is an impossible utopia. This was illustrated in the 20th century when Soviet Russia was consumed by counterrevolution from within the revolution; Stalinism was the logical result of the revolution's isolation in the backward former Russian Empire. The final victory of international socialism is only secured when the working class, in alliance with all oppressed people, has taken power in the advanced imperialist countries. Socialist revolution in the United States or the European Union would rapidly signal capitalism's death knell. When the clear majority of the world is part of the socialist republic, the need for the workers' state itself will fade away along with other inherited vestiges of capitalist society. This is the transition to communism – the stateless, classless, moneyless society that marks humanity's rise from the “kingdom of necessity” to the “kingdom of freedom.”

II. For a Communist Party

The political landscape of the United States is dominated by the two-party system. The ruling class finds its representation through the Republican and Democratic parties. [dependent clause removed] They are, as the great 20th century socialist leader Eugene Debs said, the political

wings of the capitalist system. Millions of working people support the Democratic Party with sincere illusions in its ability to deliver change on their behalf, or as a lesser evil to the GOP, or in the hope that it can be reformed in a left-wing direction.

Communists oppose the Democratic Party as an institutional component of the U.S. capitalist state. Despite its name, the Democratic Party is not democratically structured – even in theory – the same way a trade union is, where even a bureaucratized union can be collectively reclaimed by the workers. In power, it delivers the same imperial foreign policy and anti-worker domestic policy as its counterparts across the aisle, differing only in detail and not substance. In opposition, it acts as a break on struggles from below rather than political representation for those movements – evidenced in recent years by the 2011 Wisconsin uprising and the 2015 Baltimore rebellion. Even progressive icon Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s ‘New Deal’ programs were enacted not from the good conscience of the liberal bourgeoisie but to stave off the threat of socialist revolution from a combative proletariat. As the abolitionist Frederick Douglass observed, power concedes nothing without a fight.

In order to oppose capital at a higher level than ephemeral, elemental outbursts, the working class needs its own organizations – its own political wing. Historically there have been attempts at building political parties based on sections of the workers’ movement in the U.S. The Farmer-Labor Party of the 1920s and the short-lived, stillborn 1996 Labor Party aimed to create parties based on the trade union movement, akin to labour and social-democratic parties in Europe and Canada. Then there are periodic calls for a so-called “broad left” party or “party of the 99%,” which would encompass any force to the left of the Democrats.

Today the far left exists as an alphabet soup of small, mutually hostile sects. While these radical groups of a few dozen or a few hundred members do valuable work, their energies are largely wasted and their potential capped by the sect form of organization. Hyper-activism with little sense of strategy and proportion, undemocratic internal regimes (bureaucratic centralism) and a lack of roots in the working class characterize this form. The *impulse* toward left unity felt by

those who promote the “broad left” party is correct, but ultimately such halfway houses between reform and revolution are doomed to failure. In practice such formations do not act as a stepping stone toward a revolutionary party, because the revolutionary left continues to lack its own banner under which it can fight for a Marxist program. “Broad left” parties in power, like the Greek Syriza or the Brazilian Workers Party in recent years, end up not only failing to transcend the existing order but actually administering neoliberal capitalism. For its part, the Green Party – the largest existing party to the left of the Democrats today – does not even claim to present a systemic alternative to capitalism, nor represent the interests of the proletariat as a class within the confines of capitalism as a social-democratic party would.

The Red Party’s central task is campaigning for principled revolutionary unity in a Communist Party, the highest form of working-class organization. With its party, the working class is no longer simply a class in itself – a class that objectively exists with only potential power – but rather a class *for itself*, organized in conscious pursuit of its interests. The raw material for a party can be found in the already-existing organized left in this country.

Rebuilding a Communist Party worthy of the name will require a revolution on the revolutionary left. We fight for a Marxist program as the unifying basis for the future party: in other words, a program guided by the three principles of working class political independence, internationalism and radical democracy. While the Red Party works toward and engages in any concrete steps toward unity, we do so on the basis of this kind of principled unity around a Marxist program.

Without class-political independence the working class cannot act as an independent social force. Internationalism is not just a moral claim but our indispensable strategic need – an injury to one is an injury to all. A worker in the United States has far more in common with her fellow worker in Syria, or with her immigrant brothers and sisters, than she does with an American capitalist. The interests of the working class in every country are bound together. Despite its internal conflict the ruling class organizes globally; the proletariat must do the same. Therefore the Red Party calls for increased international trade union organization and a Communist International, to be

composed of communist parties in individual countries – a world organization with a world strategy for world revolution.

For its part, extreme democracy is both the life-giving oxygen of our movement and the only way the working class can become the ruling class. Radical democracy in our movement means reorienting the far left away from the model of bureaucratic centralism and toward a model enshrining free, open discussion and debate while still preserving unity in action – in other words, democratic centralism. Both rigid ideological uniformity and eclectic disorganization are unnecessary for and in fact incompatible with a party capable of winning millions to communism. In the broader workers' movement, communists cannot effectively oppose the class-collaborationist labor bureaucracy without first getting their own house in order.

While a principled unity would not immediately create a *mass* Communist Party, even a party encompassing the thousands of existing socialist militants would greatly strengthen the workers' movement. Its existence would be a pole of attraction for class-conscious workers and oppressed people. It would be an organizing locus for the most politically advanced sections of our class, a vehicle to spread Marxist ideas throughout society, and a center from which the proletariat can rebuild and regenerate its mass organizations – not just the trade unions but cooperatives, mutual aid and youth organizations, *et cetera*. In short, a Communist Party is the precondition for building a mass systemic opposition force in society.

III. Immediate Demands

The nature of the present social order naturally compels the working class to struggle to defend and improve its conditions, on an elemental and limited basis. But in order to overthrow capitalism, the working class must win the battle of democracy. Therefore we present the following immediate demands – our minimum program. While these demands all advance the position of the workers and oppressed, this minimum program is by no means the “final word” on economic, political and social emancipation.

Portions of this program may be achievable under capitalism through mass struggle, but their totality can only be reached when the working class comes to power. While the workers' party is in opposition, the minimum program points toward an alternative to the capitalist system, subordinating the profit motive to human need. When the workers take power, fully implementing the minimum program becomes the first step of the transition to communism.

Democratic Demands

- Abolish Senate and the presidency, their power to an expanded House of Representatives.
- Nationalize all banks and consolidate them into a single, nationally administered central bank.
- Debt relief for small farmers. [The extension of this to “small business” has been stricken.]
- Abolish the electoral college.
- Election of the judiciary.
- Elect all legislatures by proportional representation.
- Right of recall over all elected officials.
- Disband the standing army; expansion of the National Guard and the general arming of the people in its place.
- The right of soldiers to elect and recall their officers. Full trade union rights in the armed forces.
- Immediate closure of all military bases on foreign soil.
- End all foreign aid to repressive, reactionary regimes abroad.
- Unilateral disarmament for all weapons of mass destruction (nuclear, chemical and biological.)
- Replacement of police forces as presently constituted with democratically controlled committees for public safety.

- Immediate release of all non-violent offenders from incarceration; rehabilitation, not prison, as the first resort in criminal justice. Incarcerated persons should maintain the right to vote.
- Citizenship rights for all immigrants residing within the United States. Free movement of people across the borders. Abolish “English only” laws, recognize regional minority languages [and the right to conduct business with the state in one’s own language.]
- The right of self-determination and sovereignty to Native American nations, Puerto Rico, and other overseas colonial possessions. Voluntary union as the basis of the democratic republic. Reparations to American Indian nations.
- [Expand local democracy and community control. Devolve powers of service provision, planning, funding, and law enforcement downward as far as possible and appropriate.]
- Abolish the secret state – repeal the Patriot Act and the NDAA, and immediate shutdown of the CIA and NSA. End secret diplomacy – all international relations to be conducted in public view.
- End the “war on drugs.” Legalization of illicit substances for personal consumption. Treatment of addiction as a social concern rather than criminal.
- Complete separation of church and state, including the removal of tax-exempt status for churches.
- Full sexual education in school. Free access to birth control and abortion.
- Full legal and social equality for LGBTQ people, including adoption for same-sex couples and gender reassignment surgery as a health care concern. Provide housing and quality social services for LGBTQ and other displaced youth.
- Enshrine and extend the right to freedom of speech. Democratize the major media to allow for sustained public participation; protection and expansion of the commons.

Economic Demands

- Abolish private health care; establish a socialized health service to provide free, universal, high-quality care.
- A right to quality housing and utilities without debt, with nominal rent.

- Free higher education, whether college or trade school. Abolish all student debt.
- Repeal of the Taft-Hartley Act and all other anti-union laws. Establish simple card-check unionization.
- Enshrine the right of all people to living-wage employment and a guaranteed minimum income for students and disabled people.
- Abolish unemployment by establishing full-time employment as a six-hour working day and a thirty hour work week with no loss in pay.
- A minimum wage of \$15 an hour as a first step toward a living wage.
- Workplace election of all managers in socialized industry.
- Establishment of socialized, worker-controlled cafeterias, day cares and laundries as a step toward women's liberation.
- Nationalize the energy giants and create a mass public works program to rapidly transition from fossil fuel to renewable energy.
- Free, quality local public transportation and expansion of the Amtrak system to provide low-cost medium- and long-distance transit.