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# What Communism Means!

## Proclamation by the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of America. [circa February 1920]

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The government of the United States and of the various states have launched against the Communist Party an attack backed by all the resources at their command, in an effort to destroy it.

Nearly 4,000 workingmen and women have been thrown in the prisons of the United States and are held for deportation or on charges which mean long prison sentences. No country in the world has ever before witnessed an attack upon the working class carried out with such brutality and of such wide scope as that which took place in the United States. America, "the land of freedom," has outdone the blackest acts of the Tsar in the days of Darkest Russia.

What is it that has aroused the fear of the government of the United States and the capitalists of the United States whom that government represents? Why this unparalleled effort to destroy the Communist Party. What is Communism?

Workingmen of the United States, these are questions that concern you, for it is a working class movement that the government seeks to destroy, the working class movement which is endeavoring to educate working people to an understanding of those principles and actions which will bring about their emancipation from the yoke of wage slavery, and to direct their struggle to a final victory.

The aim of the Communist Party of America is to establish a working class government — the Dictatorship of the Proletariat — which will transform the present system of privately owned in-

dustry into a Communist society in which the ownership of the industries will be vested in the community and they will be managed by the workers.

The Communist Party declared that this aim cannot be achieved through the election of representatives to parliaments — through a Congress or Legislature.

It is this principle of the Communist program that has aroused the ruling class to action. It fears the Communist Party because it points out that the "democratic" parliamentary government is an instrument of the capitalists to deceive and delude the workers.

The capitalists and their newspapers tell you that in the United States any political or industrial reform and change in the government can be accomplished through constitutional means. They want you to believe that. They want you to play the game according to their rules.

They know that while we have formal democracy, it is actually a fraud so far as the workers are concerned. They know that while they control the newspapers, the schools, the colleges, the pulpit and politicians, the meeting halls, and in a thousand other ways maintain their grip on the kind of information you receive, while millions of workers are disfranchised through one kind of law or another, they can control the government as surely as if the Tsar ruled for them.

They know also that if there is a final showdown they can do what they are proposing to do

at Albany and what they did at Cleveland two years ago — expel the working class representatives from the legislative body.

The dice are loaded against the workers in the game of electing representatives to Congress and the legislatures to achieve the overthrow of the capitalist system. The capitalists know that, therefore they urge you to rely upon “constitutional means.”

The Communist Party declares that the workers will win only if they develop their own organs of working class power. They must organize in industrial unions in the shops and factories. They must use the strike for political ends. The separate strikes of the workers must be developed into general strikes to achieve political aims. In the hour of crisis the general strike will develop into mass action against the existing government and the workers will set up their own government of Workers Councils — Soviets — in place of the present capitalist government.

But the capitalists and their newspapers shout this means force and violence. Do they hesitate to use force and violence to achieve their ends? What about the millions dead upon the battlefields of Europe, killed in the struggle between the capitalists to achieve economic advantage? What about Homestead, Lawrence, McKees Rocks, the massacre at Ludlow, Colorado, the workers slain at Indiana Harbor, and the thousands of workers who have been murdered by the agents of capital-

ism in the struggle to keep the workers from securing better wages and working conditions?

The Communist Party does not advocate the use of what the capitalists call “force and violence” at present. It advocates the organization of the working class to use its mass power against the existing capitalist government and to establish a working class government in its place. If in the final struggle for power force is necessary to achieve the victory of the working class — as history tells us has always been the case in the hour of revolution — the Communists will not hesitate to use it, even as the capitalists now use it against the working class.

Workingmen of the United States, the capitalists oppress you, exploit you, and when you revolt they use the power of the government against you, as they did against the steel workers and the miners, even to the extent of using armed force. The Communist Party declares that the workers must replace the government of the capitalists with a government of their own as the first step in their emancipation. It is because it points the road to freedom for the working class that the enemies of the working class are attacking it.

Workingmen of the United States, it is for your cause that the Communists are fighting and are being deported and sent to prison. Show your solidarity. Rally to the support of the Communist Party. Stand with your fellow workers in the fight against the capitalists.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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