
Democratic Defense: A Practical Program for Socialism

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The following ideas are submitted by a group of American Socialists who have the welfare of the movement at heart. We have watched with anxiety the world events of the last two years and a half, and their reaction upon our movement. We have learned much in this period, which has been one of the most momentous in human history. We consider it the business of Socialists to adjust themselves to events. To stand immovably by one's opinions may be a sign of heroism, but it may also be a sign of slothfulness, and it is necessary to discriminate between the two.

First: We declare it our conviction that there is a difference, even from the point of view of revolutionary Socialism, between democratic and autocratic governments. To refuse to recognize the difference is to be idealist in the bad sense of the word — to take formulas and abstract ideas in place of realities. We believe that liberal institutions have their value, as making it possible to agitate for Socialism and to progress toward Socialism without destructive internal conflict. Socialists have proven this attitude in Europe by combining with bourgeois parties in order to obtain democratic reforms. As a political party, relying upon the vote, we necessarily in, support, and defend constitutional government; leaving it to anarchists and anti-parliamentarian syndicalists to proclaim the unreality of any distinction among capitalist governmental systems.

Second: We declare it impossible for democratic nations to disarm, or even to weaken their defenses, in the presence of autocratic nations. If we could have the full revolutionary Socialist program in America tomorrow, we might be called upon to defend it against nations which were organized for aggression under military and aristocratic rulers; precisely as revolution-

ary France was called upon to defend her ideals against the rest of Europe. It is futile to talk of appealing to the workers in countries where the workers are unorganized and without power, and would not even be permitted to know of our appeal.

Third: We declare that the proper aim of Socialist world-politics at the present time is an alliance of the politically advanced nations for the defense of the democratic principle throughout the world. If, at the conclusion of the present war, any of the autocratic nations should become democratic, they would of course be welcomed into such an alliance. Thus only can progress toward world peace be secured, and gradual disarmament made practicable.

Fourth: As a means to the working out of this program, we declare for the democratization of diplomacy. We would have the world-policies of America precisely declared. We would provide that diplomatic communications should be published, and a more immediate control of foreign relations insisted upon by the people.

Fifth: Pending the securing of world peace by an alliance of democratic nations, it is necessary that the United States should maintain an army and navy. We Socialists are not sentimental or religious nonresidents. We are willing to fight for democracy, and we prove it by the instant sympathy we give to people who are fighting for democracy whether in St. Petersburg or Colorado. To refuse under any circumstances to vote for military supplies, as has been required by a recent party decree, is to be sentimental rather than scientific, Tolstoian rather than Marxian.

Sixth: If we must have an army and navy, the question becomes, what kind of an army and navy shall we have? We declare that the proper program for

the American Socialist movement is the common ownership and democratic control of the instruments and means of defense. We believe that there is no danger to democracy in a citizen army and navy, controlled by the people. The danger lies in an incompetent army and navy, controlled by grafting politicians and a munitions lobby; a hired army of wage-slaves, officered by a class, and serving as a support to the aristocratic tradition.

Seventh: The true Socialist formula is: No private profit from military supplies. In times of emergency, of course, munitions must be bought wherever they can be found. But under ordinary conditions Socialists should favor the nationalization of munitions manufacture. One of the principal menaces of militarism lies in the lobby.

Eighth: We declare for the democratization of military service. We would democratize West Point and Annapolis by providing the admission to government military and naval schools should be through the ranks, as a reward for physical, mental, and moral efficiency demonstrated in the service. We would have social equality the ideal in both army and navy; there is no reason why that spirit of comradeship which is found in the trenches should not be practicable in the training-camp.

Ninth: We declare for the modernization of military service. Military training is not of necessity futile — it is only stupidity and traditionalism which make it so. The ability to march in a series of perfectly straight lines, which is an important end of the present West Point system, has nothing whatever to do with efficiency in modern warfare. The first essential is that the man should be a part of an organized body, feeling and acting as an organism; that he should be physically fit, able to march long distances and to stand the rigors of the outdoor life; and that he should understand the use, not merely of weapons, but of all kinds of machinery. Training to these ends can be obtained in the forestry service, in railroad work, in the harvest fields, in the police and fire departments, in emergency work

in floods, storms, and accidents; it can be obtained in football, polo, and other organized games, in gymnastic work, manual training, and camp-life. Our military training should be made the physical culture part of our public school education. It should be begun in childhood, through the work of the Boy and Girl Scouts; it should be continued through youth, when hunting, boating, and outdoor activities are the greatest joys in life. Such training could be made so interesting that it would be regarded by everyone as a privilege rather than a duty.

Tenth: We declare that service in such a modern, democratic defense force should be part of the discipline and duty of every citizen, both male and female. To use only volunteers in national defense is to kill off the men of courage and character, and to breed from weakness and incompetence; and this is national suicide. A vital military system should be an organic part of our national life; and as Socialism and democracy bring us towards the World Federation, and put war farther into the background of human possibilities, our military organization would naturally be turned to the ends of peace. The Socialist movement would know how to employ such a disciplined army — in the reconstruction work of industry, the tearing down of the slums and the building of the Cooperative Commonwealth.

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(Walling signs with the reservation of paragraph ten, which he would favor only in case a large land army were needed. Mrs. London states: “Jack London would have signed it, I know.)

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